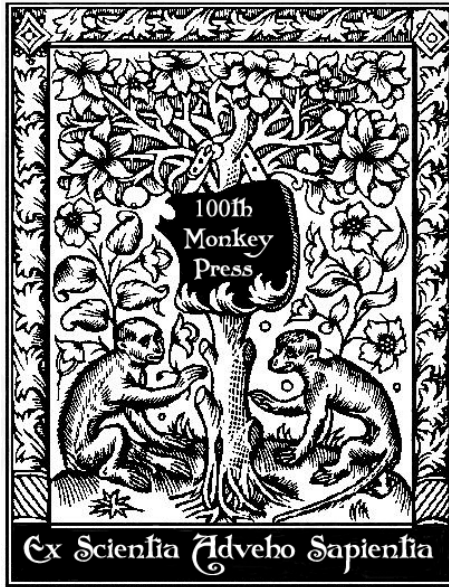


JEPHTHAH ; AND OTHER MYSTERIES
LYRICAL AND DRAMATIC

100th Monkey Press
Austin, Texas
2007



“When a critical mass is achieved within a species, the behavior is instantaneously transferred to and exhibited by all members of the species”

JEPHTHAH ; AND OTHER MYSTERIES
LYRICAL AND DRAMATIC

“ Let my Lamp at midnight hour,
Be seen in some high lonely Tower,
Where I may oft outwatch the Bear,
With thrice-great Hermes, or upshear
The spirit of Plato, to unfold
What Worlds, or what vast Regions hold
The immortal mind that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshy nook ;
And of those Dæmons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or under ground,
Whose power hath a true content
With planet, or with Element.
Some time let Gorgeous Tragedy
In Sceptr’d Pall come sweeping by.”

II Penseroso.

JEPHTHAH
AND OTHER MYSTERIES
LYRICAL AND DRAMATIC
BY ALEISTER CROWLEY

LONDON : KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH,
TRÜBNER AND COMPANY, LTD.
1899

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*Τάδε νῦν ἐταίραις
Ταίς ἐμαιοσι τέρπνα χάλως ζείσω.*
SAPPHO.

“ It need not appear strange unto you that this Book is not all like unto so many others which I have, and which are composed in a lofty and subtle style.”—*The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin the Mage.*

THE DEDICATION

IS TO

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

I N the blind hour of madness, in its might,
When the red star of tyranny was highest ;
When baleful watchfires scared the witless night,
 And kings mocked Freedom, as she wept : “ Thou
 diest ! ”
When priestcraft snarled at Thought : “ I crush thee
 quite ! ”
 Then rose the splendid song of thee, “ Thou liest ! ”
Out of the drakness, in the death of hope,
Thy white star flamed in Europe’s horoscope.

The coffin-nails were driven home : the curse
 Of mockery’s blessings flung the dust upon her :
The horses of Destruction dragged the hearse
 Over besmirchèd roads of Truth and Honour :
The obscene God spat on the Universe :
 The sods of Destiny were spattered on her :—
The rose thy spirit through the shaken skies :
“ Child of the Dawn, I say to thee arise ! ”

Through the ancestral shame and feudal gloom,
 Through mediæval blackness rung they pæan :
Let there be light !—the desecrated tomb
 Gaped as thy fury smote the Galilean.

Let there be light ! and there was light : the womb
Of Earth resounded, and the empyrèan
Roared : and the thunder of the seas averred
The presence of the recreating word.

The stone rolls back : the charioted night,
Stricken, swings backwards on her broken pinions :
Faith sickens, drunken tyranny reels, the spite
Of monarchs, ruinous of their chained dominions :
The splendid forehead, crowned with Love and Light,
Flames in the starry air : the fallen minions
Drop like lost souls through horrid emptiness
To their own black unfathomable abysses !

No Freedom, flower and star and wind and wave
And spirit of the unimagined fire,
Begotten on the dishonourable grave
Of fallen tyranny, may seek her sire
In the pure waters of Man, her lips may lave
In the pure waters of her soul's desire,
Truth : and deep eyes behold thine eyes as deep,
Fresh lips kiss thine that kissed her soul from sleep.

See Italy, the eagle of all time,
Triumphant, from her coffin's leaden prison,
Soar into freedom, seek the heights sublime
Of self-reliance, from those depths new-risen,
Stirred by the passion of thy mighty rhyme :
Eagle and phoenix : shrill, sharp flames bedizen
The burning citadel, where crested Man
Leaps sword in hand upon the Vatican.

Those dire words spoken, that thine hammer beat,
 Of fire and steel and music, wrath god-worDED,
 Consuming with immeasurable heat,
 The styles and kennels of priest and king, that girded
 The loins of many peoples, till the seat
 Of Hell was shaken to its deep, and herded
 Hosts of the tyrant trembled, faltered, fled,
 When none pursued but curses of men dead :—

See, from the Calvary of the Son of Man,
 Where all the hopes of France were trodden under ;
 See from the crucifixion of Sedan,
 Thy thought the lightning, and thy word the thunder !
 See her supreme, kingly, republican,
 New France arisen, with her heart in sunder—
 Yet throned in Heaven on ever-burning wheels,
 Freedom resurgent, sealed with seven seals.

The seal of Reason, made impregnable :
 The seal of Truth, immeasurably splendid :
 The seal of Brotherhood, man's miracle :
 The seal of Peace, and Wisdom heaven-descended :
 The seal of Bitterness, cast down to Hell :
 The seal of Love, secure, not-to-be-rended :
 The seventh seal, Equality : that broken,
 God sets his thunder and earthquake for a token.

Now if on France the iron clangours close,
 Corruption's desperate hand, and lurking treason,
 Or alien craft, or menace of strange blows
 Wrought of her own sons, in this bitter season :

Lift up thy voice, breathe fury on her foes,
 Smite bigots yet again, and call on Reason,
 Reason that must awake, and sternly grip
 The unhooded serpent of dictatorship !

Or, if thou have laid aside the starry brand,
 And scourge, whose knots with their foul blood are
 rotten

Whom thou didst smite ; if thine unwearied hand
 Sicken of slaughter ; if thy soul have gotten
 Its throne in so sublime a fatherland,

Above these miscreants and misbegotten ;
 If even already thy spirit have found peace,
 Among the thronged immortal secrecies ;

If with the soul of Æschylus thy soul

Talk, and with Sappho's if thy music mingle ;
 If with the spirit infinite and whole

Of Shakespeare thou commune ; if thy brows tingle
 With Dante's kiss ; if Milton's thunders roll

Amid thy skies ; if thou, supreme and single,
 Be made as Shelley or as Hugo now
 And all their laurels mingle on thy brow—

Then (as Elijah, when the whirling fire

Caught him) stoop not thy spiritual splendour,
 And sacred-seeking eyes to our desire,

But mould one memory yet, divinely tender,
 Of earth, and leave thy mantle, and thy lyre,

A double portion of thy spirit to render,
 That yet the banner may fling out on high,
 And yet the lyre teach freemen how to die !

DEDICATION

xi

Master, the night is falling yet again.

I hear dim trappings of unholy forces :
I see the assembly of the foully slain :
The scent of murder steams : riderless horses
Gallop across the earth, and seek the inane :
The sun and moon are shaken in their courses :
The kings are gathered, and the vultures fall
Screaming, to hold their ghastly festival.

Master, the sons of Freedom are but few—

Yea, but as strong as the storm-smitten sea,
Their forehead consecrated with the dew,
Their heart made mighty : let my voice decree,
My spirit lift their standard : clear and true
Bid my trump sound, “ Let all the earth be free ! ”
With thine own strength and melody made strong,
And filled with fire and light of thine own song.

Only a boy's wild songs, a boy's desire,

I bring with reverent hands. The task is ended—
The twilight draws on me : the sacred fire
Sleeps : I have sheathed my sword, my bow un-
bended :
So for one hour I lay aside the lyre,
And come, alone, unholpen, unbefriended,
As streams get water of the sun-smit sea,
Seeking my ocean and my sun in thee.

Yea, with thy whirling clouds of fiery light

Involve my music, gyring fuller and faster !
Yea, to my sword lend majesty and might
To dominate all tumult and disaster,

That even my song may pierce the iron night,
 Invoking dawn in thy great name, O Master !
Till to the stainless heaven of the soul
Even my chariot-wheels on thunder roll.

And so, most sacred soul, most revered head,
 The silence of deep midnight shall be bound,
And with the mighty concourse of the dead
 That live, that contemplate, my place be found,
Even mine, through all the seasons that are shed
 Like leaves upon the darkness, where the sound
Of all high song through calm eternity
Shall beat and boom, thine own maternal sea.

For in the formless world, so swift a fire
 Shall burn, that fire shall not be comprehended ;
So deep a music roll, that our desire
 Shall hear no sound ; shall beam a light so splendid
That darkness shall be infinite : the lyre
 Fashioned of truth strung with men's heart-strings
 blended,
Shall sound as silence : and all souls be still
In wisdom's high communion with will.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
DEDICATION.....	v
PRELUDE	xiii
JEPHTHAH, A TRAGEDY	1
MYSTERIES : LYRICAL AND DRAMATIC :	
THE FIVE KISSES. I. After Confession	75
II. The Flight.....	77
III. The Spring After	85
IV. The Voyage Southward....	89
V. The Ultimate Voyage.....	92
THE POEM. A LITTLE DRAMA IN FOUR	
SCENES	99
THE HONOURABLE ADULTERERS :	
I. His Story	119
II. Her Story.....	125
THE LEGEND OF BEN LEDI	127
A DESCENT OF THE MOENCH	130
AN ODE	133
DREAMS	138
THE DREAMING DEATH.....	142
A SONNET IN SPRING.....	146
DE PROFUNDIS.....	147
TWO SONNETS ON HEARING THE MUSIC OF	
BRAHMS AND TSCHAIKOWSKY	157, 158
A VALENTINE	159
ODE TO POESY.....	161

	PAGE
MYSTERIES : LYRICAL AND DRAMATIC--continued.	
SONNETS TO THE AUTHOR OF THE PHRASE :	
“ I AM NOT A GENTLEMAN, AND I HAVE	
NO FRIENDS ”	166, 167
SONNET : A DREAM.....	168
THE EVE OF LOVE	169
THE MORNING OF DISILLUSIONMENT.....	172
BESIDE THE RIVER.....	176
MAN'S HOPE.....	178
SONNET FOR G. F. KELLY'S DRAWING OF AN	
HERMAPHRODITE	179
“ PERFECT LOVE CASTETH OUT FEAR ”	180
A WOODLAND IDYLL.....	183
PERDURABO	186
ON GARRET HOSTEL BRIDGE	187
LOVE	190
SONNET TO CLYTIE.....	193
A VALENTINE, '98.....	194
PENELOPE	199
LOVE ON THE ISLAND	200
A SONNET OF BLASPHEMY	203
THE RAPE OF DEATH	204
IN THE WOODS WITH SHELLEY.....	211
A VISION UPON USHBA.....	215
ELEGY, <i>August 27th, 1898</i>	220
EPILOGUE.....	222

PRELUDE

“ I say fearlessly to the fanatics and bigots of the present day : You have cast down the Sublime and Infinite One from His throne, and in his stead have placed the demon of unbalanced force ; you have substituted a deity of disorder and jealousy for a God of order and Love ; you have perverted the teachings of the Crucified One ! ”—McGregor Mathers.

BEFORE the darkness, earlier than being,
When yet thought was not, shapeless and un-
seeing,
Made misbegotten of diety on death,
There brooded on the waters the strange breath
Of an incarnate hatred. Darkness fell
And chaos, from prodigious gulphs of hell.
Life, that rejoiced to travail with a man,
Looked where the cohorts of destruction ran,
Saw darkness visible, and was afraid,
Seeing. There grew like Death a monster shade,
Blind as the coffin, as the covering sod
Damp, as the corpse obscene, the Christian God.
So to the agony dirges of despair
Man cleft the womb, and shook the icy air
With bitter cries for light and life and love.
But these, begotten of the world above,
Withdrew their glory, and the iron world
Rolled on its cruel way, and passion furlled

Its pure wings, and abased itself, and bore
Fetters impure, and stooped, and was no more.
But resurrection's ghastly power grew strong,
And Lust was born, adulterous with Wrong,
The Child of Lies ; so man was blinded still,
Garnered the harvest of abortive ill,
For wheat reaped thistles, and for worship wrought
A fouler idol of his meanest thought :
A monster, vengeful, cruel, traitor, slave,
Lord of disease and father of the grave,
A treacherous bully, feeble as malign,
Intolerable, inhuman, undivine,
With spite close girded and with hatred shod,
A snarling cur, the Christian's Christless God.
Out ! misbegotten monster ! with thy brood,
The obscene offspring of thy pigrity,
Incestuous wedlock with the Pharisees
That hail the Christ a son of thee ! Our knees
Bend not before thee, and our earth-bowed brows
Shake off their worship, and reject thy spouse,
The harlot of the world ! For, proud and free,
We stand beyond thy hatred, even we :
We broken in spirit beneath bitter years,
Banded with the burnt-offering of tears,
Spit out upon the lie, and in thy face
Cast back the slimy falsehood ; to your place,
Ye Gadarean swine, too foul to fling
Into the waters that abound and spring !
Back, to your mother's filth ! With hope, and youth
Love, light, and power, and mastery of truth

Armed, we reject you ; the bright scourge we ply,
Your howling spirits stumble to your sty :
The worm that was your lie—our heel its head
Bruises, that bruised us once ; the snake is dead.
Who of mankind that honours man discerns
That man of all men, whose high spirit burns,
Crowned over life, and conqueror of death,
The godhood that was Christ of Nazareth—
Who of all men, that will not gird his brand
And purge from priestcraft the uxorious land ?
Christ, who lived, died, and lived, that man might be
Tameless and tranquil as the summer sea,
That laughs with love of the broad skies of noon,
And dreams of lazy kissings of the moon,
But listens for the summons of the wind,
Shakes its white mane, and hurls its fury blind
Against oppression, gathers its steep side,
Rears as a springing tiger, flings its tide
Tremendous on the barriers, smites the sand,
And gluts its hunger on the breaking land ;
Engulphing waters fall and overwhelm :—
Christ, who quelled the wrath of God,
And rose triumphant over faith and trod
With calm victorious feet the icy way
When springtide burgeoned, and the rosy day
Leapt from beneath the splendours of the snow :—
Christ, ultimate master of man's hateful foe,
And lord of his own soul and fate, strikes still
From man's own heaven, against the lord of ill ;

Stage thunders mock the once terrific nod
That spoke the fury of the Christian God,
Whose slaves deny, to cowardly to abjure,
Their desecrated Moloch. The impure
Godhead is powerless, even on the slave,
Who once could scar the forehead of the brave,
Break love's heart pitiful, and reach the strong
Through stricken children, and a mother's wrong,
Day after darkness, life beyond the tomb !
Manhood reluctant from religion's womb
Leaps and sweet laughters flash for freedom's birth
That thrills the old bosom of maternal earth.
The dawn has broken ; yet the impure fierce fire
Kindles the grievous furnace of desire
Still for the harpy brood of king and priest,
Slave, harlot, coward, that makes man feast
Before the desecrated god, in hells
Of darkness, where the mitred vampire dwells,
Where still death reigns, and God and priests are fed,
Man's blood for wine, man's flesh for meat and bread,
The hands of murder, of the obscene things
That snarl at freedom, broken by her wings,
That prop the abomination, cringe and smile,
Caressing the dead fetich, that defile
With hideous sacraments the happy land.
Destruction claims its own ; the hero's hand
Grips the snake's throat ; yea, on its head is set
The heel that crushes it, the serpent wet
With that foul blood, from human vitals drained,
From tears of broken women, and sweat stained

From torturers' cloths ; the sickly tide is poured,
And all the earth is blasted ; the green sward
Burns where it touches, and the barren sod
Rejects the poison of the blood of God.
Yet, through the foam of waters that enclose
Their sweet salt bosoms, through the summer rose,
Through flowers of fatal fire, through fields of air
That summer squanders, ere the bright moon bare
Her maiden bosom, through the kissing gold
Where lovers' lips are molten and breasts hold
Their sister bodies, and deep eyes are wed,
And fire of fire enflowers the sacred head
Of mingling passion, through the silent sleep
Where love sobs out its life, and new loves leap
To being, through the dawn of all new things,
There burns an angel whose amazing wings
Wave in the sunbright air, whose lips of flame
Chant the almighty music of One Name,
Whose perfume fills the silent atmosphere,
Whose passionate melodies caress the ear ;
An angel, strong and eloquent, aloud
Cries to the earth to lift the final shroud,
And, having burst Faith's coffin, to lay by
The winding-sheet of Infidelity,
And rise up naked, as a god, to hear
This message from the reawakened sphere ;
Words with love clothed, with life immortal shed :—
“ Mankind is made a little part of God.”
Till the response, full chorus of the earth,
Flash through the splendid portals of rebirth

Completing Truth in its amazing span :—
“ Godhead is made the Spirit that is Man.”
To whose white mountains, and their arduous ways,
Turn we our purpose, till the faith that slays
Yield up its place to faith that gives us life,
The faith to conquer in the higher strife ;
Our single purpose, till the faith that slays
Yield up its place to faith that gives us life,
The faith to conquer in the higher strife ;
Our single purpose, and sublime intent,
With their spilt blood to seal our sacrament,
Who stand among the martyrs of the Light ;
Our single purpose, by incarnate might
Begotten after travail unto death,
To live within the light that quickeneth ;
To tread base thoughts as our high thoughts have trod,
Deep in the dust, the carrion that was God ;
Conquer our hatreds as the dawn of love
Conquered that fiend whose ruinous throne above
Broke lofty spirits once, now falls with Fate,
At last through his own violence violate ;
To live in life, breathe freedom with each breath,
As God breathed tyranny and died in death ;
Secure the sacred fastness of the soul,
Uniting self to the absolute, the whole,
The universal marriage of mankind,
Free, perfect, broken from the chains that bind
Force infinite, love pure, desire untold,
And mutual raptures of the age of gold,
The child of freedom ! So the moulder, man,
Shakes his grim shoulders, and the shadows wan
Fall to forgetfulness ; so life revives,
And new sweet loves beget diviner lives,

And Freedom stands, re-risen from the rod,
A goodlier godhead than the broken God ;
Uniting all the universe in this
Music more musical than breezes' kiss,
A song more potent than the sullen sea,
The triumph of the freedom of the free,
One stronger song than thrilled the rapturous birth
Of stars and planets and the mother, earth ;
As lovers, calling lovers when they die,
Strangle death's torture in love's agony ;
As waters, shaken by the storm, that roar,
Sea unto sea ; as stars that burn before
The blackness ; as the mighty cry of swords
Raging through battle, for its stronger chords ;
And for its low entrancing music, made
As waters lambent in the listening glade ;
As Sappho's yearning to the amorous sea ;
As Man's Prometheus, in captivity
Master and freeman ; as the holy tune
All birds, all lovers, whisper to the moon.
So, passionate and pure, the strong chant rolls,
Queen of the mystic unity of souls ;
So from eternity its glory springs
King of the magical brotherhood of kings ;
The absolute crown and kingdom of desire,
Earth's virgin chaplet, molten in the fire,
Sealed in the sea. betokened by the wind :
“ There is one God, the Spirit of Mankind ! ”

JEPHTHAH,
A TRAGEDY

“ O Jephthah ! judge of Israel ! ”—HAMLET

TO
GERALD KELLY,
POET AND PAINTER
I Dedicate
THIS TRAGEDY

CAMBRIDGE,
November, 1898.

CHARACTERS.

JEPHTHAH.

ADULAH, *his Daughter.*

JARED, *A Gileadite, cousin to Jephthah.*

A Prophet of the Lord.

ELEAZAR, *Chief of the Elders of Israel.*

AHINOAM, *an aged Priest.*

First Messenger.

Second Messenger.

First Herald.

Second Herald.

Soldiers of Jephthah.

Soldiers of Israel.

Chorus of Elders of Israel.

Maidens of Israel.

SCENE :—An Open Place before Mizpeh. In the midst an
Altar.

TIME :—The duration of the play is from noon of the first
day to dawn of the third.

Jephthah

Eleazar. Prophet. Chorus.

CHORUS.

NOW is our sin requited of the Lord.
For scorning Jephthah for an harlot's son,
We cast him forth from us, and said : Begone,
Thou shalt not enter in with us ; thy mouth
Shall thirst for our inheritance in vain ;
Thou hast no lot nor part in Gilead.
And now, he gathers to himself vain men,
Violent folk, and breakers of the law,
And holds aloof in rocky deserts, where
The land, accurst of God, is barren still
Of any herb, or flower, or any tree,
And has no shelter, nor sweet watersprings,
Save where a lonely cave is hollow, and where
A meagre fountain sucks the sand. Our folk
Are naked of his counsel and defence
Against the tribe of Ammon, and stand aghast ;
Our feeble arms sway doubtfully long swords,
And spears are flung half-heartedly ; and he
With warlike garrison and stronger arms
Who might have helped us, laughs, and violence

Threatens the white flower of our homes : our wives,
 Daughters, and sons are as a prey to them,
 And where the children of the Ammonites
 Throng not swift hoofs for murder, Jephthah's men
 Blaspheme our sanctuaries inviolate,
 And rob us of our dearest. Woe on woe,
 The overwhelming summit of a wave
 Too black, too concentrate, too impious,
 And culminating in a double death,
 Hangs imminent to crush the slender sides
 And battered bulwarks of our state. O thou
 Whose hoary locks and sightless eyes compel
 Our pity and our reverence, and whose mouth
 Foams with the presence of some nearer god
 Insatiate of thy body frail, give tongue,
 If tongue may so far master deity
 As give his fury speech, or shape thy words
 From the blind auguries of madness.

PROPHET.

Ha !

The rose has washed its petals, and the blood
 Pours through its burning centre from my heart.
 The fire consumes the light ; and rosy flame
 Leaps through the veins of blue, and tinges them
 With such a purple as incarnadines
 The western sky when storms are amorous
 And lie upon the breast of toiling ocean,
 Such billows to beget as earth devours
 In ravening whirlpool gulphs. My veins are full,

JEPHTHAH

7

Throbbing with fire more potent than all wine,
All sting of fleshly pangs and pleasures. Oh !
The god is fast upon my back ; he rides
My spirit like a stallion ; for I hate
The awful thong his hand is heavy with.

ELEAZAR.

Speak, for the god compels, and we behold.

PROPHET.

A harlot shall be mother of Israel.

CHORUS.

He speaks of her who sighed for Gilead.

PROPHET.

A maiden shall be slain for many men.

CHORUS.

A doubtful word, and who shall fathom it ?

PROPHET.

Thy help is from the hills and desert lands.

CHORUS.

Our help is from the hills : we know the Lord.

PROPHET.

Death rides most violently against the sun.

CHORUS.

And who shall bridle him, or turn his way ?
For Fate alone of gods, inflexible,
And careless of men's deeds, is firm in heaven.

PROPHET.

I see a sword whose hilt is to thy hand.

CHORUS.

But which of us shall wield the shining blade ?

PROPHET.

I see a dove departing to the hills.

CHORUS.

I pray it bring an olive-branch to us.

PROPHET.

The god has overcome me, I am silent.

CHORUS.

He lies as one lies dead ; none wakens him.
Nor life nor death must touch him now : beware !

ELEAZAR.

Beware now, all ye old wise men, of this.
For high things spoken and unjustly heard,
Or heard and turned aside, are fruitless words,
Or bear a blossom evil and abhorred,
Lest God be mocked : consider well of this.

CHORUS.

A sword, a sword, to smite our foes withal !

ELEAZAR.

A help shall come from desert lands to us.

CHORUS.

Toward what end ? For present help is much,
But uttermost destruction more, for we
Have no strong hope in any hand of man :
God is our refuge and our tower of strength.
In Him if any man abide ; but if
He put his faith in horsemen, or the sword,
The sword he trusted shall be for an end.

ELEAZAR.

But evils fall like rain upon the land.

CHORUS.

Let us not call the hail to give us peace.

ELEAZAR.

Nor on the sun, lest he too eat us up.

CHORUS.

The heart of a man as the sea
Beats hither and thither to find
Ease for the limbs long free,
Light for the stormy mind,

A way for the soul to flee,
 A charm for the lips to bind ;
 And the struggle is keen as the strife to be,
 And the heart is tossed by the thankless wind.

ELEAZAR.

Nay, for a man's sure purpose is of God.

CHORUS.

The large pale limbs of the earth are tanned
 With the sun and the sea and the yellow sand
 And the face of earth is dark with love
 Of the lords of hell and the spirits above
 That move in the foggy air of night,
 And the spirit of God, most like a dove,
 Hovers, and lingers, and wings his flight,
 Spurned and rejected and lost to sight ;
 But we desire him, a holy bird,
 And we turn eyes to the hollow hills ;
 For God is strong , and His iron word
 Mocks at the gods of the woods and rills.

For our God is as a fire
 That consumeth every one
 That is underneath the sun,
 And our uttermost desire
 Must abase, with rent attire,
 Souls and bodies to His throne,
 Where above the starry choir
 Stands the jasper, where alone
 Palest seraphim respire

Perfumes of a precious stone,
Where beneath His feet the dire
World of shells is pashed with mire,
And the evil spirits' ire
Steams and fumes within the zone
Girt with minaret and spire
Broken, burst, and overthrown,
Dusty, and defiled, and dun,
Palled with smoke of fruitless altars
Cast beneath the ocean now,
Ruined symbols, changed psalters,
Where no lip no longer falters,
And the priest's deep brow
Pales not, flushes not for passion,
Clouds not with concealed thought,
And the worshipper's eye, wrought
To the stars in subtle fashion,
By no magic is distraught.

For our hope is in His holy
Places, and our prayers ascend
Fervent, and may sunder slowly
The blue darkness at the end.
For we know not where to send
For a sword to cleanse the land,
For a sharp two-edged brand,
All our homesteads to defend.
For amid the desert sand
Lives an outcast of our race,
Strong, immutable, and grand,

And his mighty hand
Grips a mighty mace.
He would shatter, did we call,
Sons of Ammon one and all,
Did we fear not lest his eye
Turn back covetous to try
For our palaces, to rule
Where the far blue Syrian sky
Stretches, where the clouds as wool
Mark the white Arabian border,
To become a tyrant king
Where his sword came conquering.
Out of chaos rises order
On her wide unwearying wing,
But the desolate marauder
Never over us shall swing
Such a sceptre as should bring
Sorrow to one home of ours.
Better bear the heavy hours
Under God's avenging breath,
Better brave the horrid powers,
Nor avoid the foreign death,
Humbling all our pride before
God's most holy throne, abasing
Every man's strong soul, and facing
All the heathen Ammon bore
On the angry shore,
Trusting to the mercy rare
Of Jehovah, than to bare
Hearts and bosoms to a friend

Who high truth and faith may swear,
And betray us at the end
To his robber bands.
So we clasp our humble hands,
Praying God to lift His sword
From our bleeding state, that stands
Tottering to its fall.
Though we call not Jephthah back
To repel the harsh attack,
Nor his followers call,
Hear thou, O Most High, give ear
To our pitiful complaint :
Under woes of war we faint.
Pity, Lord of Hosts, our fear !
Hear, Most High, oh, hear !

Enter Messenger.

MESSENGER.

My lords, take heed now, prayer is good to save
While yet the foemen are far off ; but now
They howl and clamour at our very gates.

ELEAZAR.

Blaspheme not God, but tell thy woeful news.

CHORUS.

I fear me for the sorrow that he speaks.

MESSENGER.

The tribe of Ephraim went forth to fight
Armed, and with bows, and turned them back to-day.

For in the South a cloud of many men,
And desert horsemen fiery as the sun,
Swarmed on the plains, a crescent from the hills
That girdle Mahanaim : and behold !
Our men were hemmed before the city gates,
The elders having fortified them : so
They fled about the city, and the horsemen,
Dashing, destroyed them as the wind that sweeps
Sere leaves before its fury : then the city
With arrows darkened all the air ; and luck
Smote down some few pursuing ; but their captain,
Riding his horse against the gate, drove in
His spear, and cried to them that followed him :
Who plucks my spear out shall be chief of all
That ply the short spear : and who breaks the gate
Shall lead my horsemen into Mizpeh : then,
Rushing, their spearmen battered in the gate
And overpowered the youths and aged men,
That put up trembling spears, and drew slack bows,
And flung weak stones that struck for laughter's sake.
And so the city was the spoil of them,
And all our women-folk are slain or violate,
And all our young men murderously slain,
And children spitted on their coward spears.

CHORUS.

How heavy is Thy hand upon us, Lord !

MESSENGER.

Nor stayed they there ; but, firing Mahanaim,
Sweep toward Mizpeh like a locust-cloud.

ELEAZAR.

Get thee to horse and carry me this message :
The Elders unto Jephthah, greeting : Help !
No single cry beyond that Help ! Be gone !

Exit Messenger.

CHORUS.

I fear me our necessity is sure.
But they come hither. Shall we rather flee ?

ELEAZAR.

I stand here manly, and will die a man.

CHORUS.

For cowardice not pleases God, nor fear.
Shall we not take up weapons ? Or shall He
Rather defend us with His Holy Arm,
We not presuming in our arrogance
To come with cunning, and defend ourselves ?

ELEAZAR.

Nay, but God smites with sharpness of our swords.

CHORUS.

The sword is made sharp in our hands, but the point
He shall guide ;
We grasp the tough ash of the spear, but His hand is
beside ;
We drive in a cloud at the foe, but His chariots ride
Before us to sunder the spears.

We trust in His arms, and His prowess shall fledge
 our song's wing ;
 Our triumph we give to His glory, our spoil to the
 King ;
 Our battles He fights as we fight them, our victories
 bring
 For His temple a tribute of tears.

*Enter Jephthah amid his Soldiers, with many young
 men of Israel.*

JEPHTHAH.

Yea, for a man's sword should not turn again
 To his own bosom, and the sword of fear
 Smites not in vain the heart of cowardice.
 But who hath called me hither to what end ?

ELEAZAR.

For these, and for the sake of Israel.

JEPHTHAH.

And who are these ? And who are Israel ?

CHORUS.

Turn not thy face from us in wrath, for we
 Are thine own father's children, and his loins
 With double fervour gat a double flower ;
 And we indeed were born of drudging wives,
 Pale spouses whom his heart despised, but thou
 Wast of a fairer face and brighter eyes,

And limbs more amorous assuaged thy sire ;
And fuller blood of his is tingling thus
Now in thy veins indignant at our sin.
But thou art strong and we are weak indeed,
Nor can we bear the burden, nor sustain
The fury of the Children of the East
That ride against us, and bright victory
Is thronéd in their banners, and on ours
Perches the hideous nightbird of defeat.
Mourn, mourn and cry ; bow down unto the dust
O Israel, and O Gilead, for your son
Comes with unpitying eyes and lips compressed
To watch the desecration of thy shrine,
Jehovah, and the ruin of our hearth.

JEPHTHAH.

I am your outcast brother. At my birth
My father did not smile, nor she who bore
These limbs dishonourable did not smile,
Nor did my kisses soothe a mother's woe,
Because my thews grown strong were impotent
To reign or be a captain any more,
Though I might serve the children who had grown
Less godlike from his loins who made me god.
So when the day was ripe, my brethren turned
And gnashed upon me, mocking, with their teeth :
Thou art the son of a strange woman, thou !
Begone from honest folk !—and I in wrath
Smote once or twice with naked hand, and slew
Two gibing cowards, and went forth an outcast,

And gathered faithful servitors, and ruled
Mightiest in the desert, and was lord
Of all the marches where my spear might throw
Its ominous shadow between night and noon.
Yet always I considered my revenge,
And purposed, seeking out those kin of mine,
To make them as those kings that Gideon slew
Hard by the bloody waters of a brook.
And now ye call me to your help, forsooth !

CHORUS.

Let no ill memory of an ancient wrong,
Most mighty, edge thy sword
Against the prayer of this repentant song.
Dire sorrow of the Lord
Consumes our vital breath, and smites us down,
And desecrates the crown.
For we have sinned against thee, and our souls
Scathe and devour as coals,
And God is wroth because of thee, to break
The spirit of our pride, our lips to make
Reverent toward thee, as of men ashamed.
And now we pray thee for our children's sake,
And thine own pity's sake, to come untamed,
And furiously to ride against our foes,
And be our leader, till one sanguine rose
Spread from thy standard awful leaves of blood,
And thy swords pour their long insatiate flood
Through ranks of many dead, and then to close
The wounds of all the land, and bid it bud

And blossom ; as when two-and-thirty men,
The sons of Jair, on milk-white asses rode,
And judged us righteously, and each abode
Safe in the shadow of his vine ; as when
The peace of Joshua lay upon the land,
And God turned not away His piteous eyes,
Nor smote us with the fury of His hand,
Nor clouded over His mysterious skies,
And storm and wind had no more might at all,
And death and pestilence forgotten were,
And angels came to holy men that call,
And gracious spirits thronged the happy air ;
When God was very gracious to all folk,
And lifted from us the Philistian yoke,
And all the iron power of Edom broke,
And all the Earth was fair !
Now, seeing that we are sinners, wilt not thou
Relent thy hateful brow,
And bend on us a forehead full of peace,
And bid thine anger cease,
And speak sweet words most comfortable, and lose
The bitter memory of the wrong long dead
And be the lord and prince we gladly choose
And crown the mercy of thy royal head,
And be the chief, and rule upon thy kin,
And be not wroth for sin ?
For surely in the dusty days and years
There is a little river flowing still
That brings forgetfulness of woes and fears
And drinks up all the memory of ill.

Wherefore our tribute to thy feet we bring ;
 Conquer our foes, and reign our king !

JEPHTHAH.

Ye have no king but God : see ye to that !

ELEAZAR.

Behold, these people are as children, hiding
 Thoughts beautiful and true in profuse words,
 Not meaning all the lofty flight that fancy
 And the strong urgement of a tune discover.
 Be thou our judge, as Joshua long ago.

JEPHTHAH.

Swear by the Name unspoken that the truth
 Flashes between the lips that tremble thus !
 Ye love me not ; ye fear me ; ye might thrust
 Some petty obstacle before my hands
 When I would grasp your promise, and betray
 Your faith for fear of me. I read thy thoughts,
 Old man ; I trust no word of thine, but these
 Full-hearted mourners, them will I believe
 Upon their oath most solemn and secure.
 But take thou warning now, I shall not spare
 Grey hairs or faltering limbs for treachery.

ELEAZAR.

Lift up your hands, all people of this land,
 And swear with me this oath my lips pronounce :
 By Wisdom, father of the world, we swear ;

By Understanding, mother of the sea,
By Strength and Mercy, that support the throne,
By Beauty, Splendour, Victory, we swear,
And by the strong foundations, and the Kingdom,
Flower of all kingdoms, and by the holy Crown
Concealed with all concealments, highest of all,
We swear to be true men to thee and thine.

JEPHTHAH.

I thank you, people. Let the younger men
Gather their swords and spears, and pass before
This spear I strike into the earth, that so
I see how many fight for Israel.

CHORUS.

The young men are girded with swords,
And the spears flash on high, and each shield
Gleams bright like the fury of lords
Through the steam of the well-foughten field,
And the children of Ammon are broken, their princes
and warriors yield.

The captain is chosen for fight,
The light of his eye is as fire,
And his hand is hardy of might
And heavy as dead desire ;
And the sword of the Lord and of Jephthah shall
build our dead women a pyre.

The people were sad for his wrath,
The elders were bowed with despair,
And Death was the piteous path ;
With ashes we covered our hair ;
The voice of the singer was dumb, the voice of the
triumph of prayer.

But God had pity upon us,
Our evil and fallen way ;
His mercy was mighty on us ;
His lips are as rosy as day
Broken out of the sea at the sunrise, as fragrant as
flowers in May.

Our sin was great in His sight :
We chased from our gates our brother,
We shamed his father's might,
We spat on the grave of his mother,
We laughed in his face and mocked, looking slyly one
to another.

But God beheld, and His hand
Was heavy to bring us grief ;
He brought down fire on the land,
And withered us root and leaf
Until we were utterly broken, lost men, without a
chief.

But whom we scorned we have set
A leader and judge over all ;

His wrong he may not forget,
But he pitieth men that call
From the heart that is broken with fear and the noise
of funeral.

JEPHTHAH.

Are all these ready for their hearth and altars
To perish suddenly upon the field,
Pavilioned with the little tents at noon,
And ere the nightfall tented with the dead,
And every hollow made a sepulchre,
And every hill a vantage ground whereon
Hard-breathing fighting men get scanty sleep
Till the dawn lift his eyebrows, and the day
Renew the battle ? Will ye follow me
Through slippery ways of blood to Ephraim
To beat with sturdy swords unwearying
Our foemen to their Ammon, and to grapple
With red death clutching at the throat of us,
With famine and with pestilence, at last
To reach a barren vengeance, and perchance
An hundred of your thousands to return
Victors—so best God speed us—and for worst
Death round our cities horrible and vast,
And rape and murder mocking at our ghosts ?

A SOLDIER.

Better they taunt our ghosts than us for cowards !
Live through or die, I will have my sword speak
plain

To these damned massacring invaders. Say,
My fellows, will ye follow Jephthah ? Hail !

SOLDIERS.

We follow Jephthah to the death. All hail !

JEPHTHAH.

Go then, refresh yourselves, and sleep to-night.
I will send messages to their dread lord
Demanding his fell purpose, threatening
My present aid to you with men of valour
Chosen of all your tribes, and charging him
As he loves life, and victory, to content
His army with their present brief success,
Lest he pass by the barrier of our suffering,
And find our wrath no broken sword, and find
Despair more terrible than hope. Go now.

A SOLDIER.

We go, my lord, less readily to sleep
Than if you bade us march. No man of us
But stirs a little, I warrant, in his dreams,
And reaches out for sword-hilt. All hail, Jephthah !

SOLDIERS.

Jephthah ! a leader, a deliverer. Hail !

[Exeunt Soldiers and Young Men.]

Enter a Herald.

JEPHTHAH.

Hearken, Jehovah, to thy servant now ;
Fill Thou my voice with thine own thunders ; fill
My swift sharp words with such a lightning-fork
As shall fall venomous upon the host
Of these idolatrous that thus invade
Our fenced cities, these that put to sword
Our helpless. Hear the cry of widowed men !
And young men fatherless ! And old men reft
Of children ! Grant us victory to avenge
Their innocent shed blood, and ruined land.
So, to gain time for prayer and penitence
For grievous trespass of idolatry
Done to th' accursed Baalim, and time
To gather fugitives, and make them men,
And straggling herdsmen for our armament,
We send thee, herald, to the furious king
Who lies with all his power encamped somewhere Hence
southward toward Mahanaim. Say
Unto the king of Ammon : Thus saith Jephthah :
Why hast thou come with bloody hands against us ?
Our holy God, that bound the iron sea
With pale frail limits of white sand, and said :
Thus far, and not one billowy step beyond !
Saith unto thee in like commandment : Thou
Who hast destroyed my people from the land
So far, shalt not encroach upon their places
One furlong more, lest quickly I destroy

Thee and thy host from off the earth. Say thus ;
Ride for thy life, and bring me speedy word.

[Exit Herald.]

CHORUS.

Not winged forms, nor powers of air,
Nor sundered spirits pale and fair,
Nor glittering sides and scales, did bring
The knowledge of this happy thing
That is befallen us unaware.
In likeness to the lips that sing
Ring out your frosty peal, and smite
Loud fingers on the harp, and touch
Lutes, and clear psalteries musical,
And all stringed instruments, to indite
A noble song of triumph, such
As men may go to fight withal.
For freedom on her fiery wings
Flies over camps and tented kings,
And bears a sword avenging us,
And turns her face to Israel thus.
For now a captain brave and strong
Shall break the fury of the thong
Wherewith the sons of Ammon scourge
Our country ; and his war shall urge
Long columns of victorious men
To blackest wood and dimmest den,
Wherever fugitive and slave
Shall seek a refuge, find a grave ;
And so pursue the shattered legions

Through dusty ways and desert regions
Back to the cities whence they came
With iron, massacre, and flame,
And turn their own devouring blade
On city fired and violate maid,
That Israel conquer, and men know
God is our God against a foe.

For the web of the battle is woven
Of men that are strong as the sea,
When the rocks by its tempest are cloven,
And waves wander wild to the lee ;
When ships are in travail forsaken,
And tempest and tumult awaken ;
When foam by fresh foam overtaken
Boils sanguine and fervent and free.

For its sides are a million of paces ;
Its centre is Death as he stands
Pale-horsed, where the iciest places
Chill blood in the furious hands.
He stands like a spectre, and urges
The horsemen in thunderous surges
On columns where blood not asperges
The splashing of struggling bands.

The sword is like lightning in battle,
The spear like the light of a star ;
It strikes on the shield, and the rattle
Of arrows is hail from afar.

For the ways of the anger of lords
Are bloody with widowing swords,
And the roar of contention of chords
Rolls back from the heart of the war.

But Victory lights on the banner
Of Israel like to a bird ; It flaps in the air, and Hosanna !
Flings up to the sky for a word !
Long streams of light horsemen are flashing
Through fields where the tempest was lashing,
Through the pools of the battle-blood splashing,
Long swords to the rout of the herd.

For fighters slip down on the dying,
And flying folk stumble on dead,
And the sound of the pitiless crying
Of slaughter is heavy and red,
The sound of the lust of the slayer
As fierce as a Persian's prayer,
And the sound of the loud harp-player
Like the wind beats to their tread.

A royal triumph is waiting
For the captain of Heaven's choice,
A noise as of eagles mating,
A cry as of men that rejoice.
For victory crowns with garlands
Of fame his valour in far lands,
And suns sing back to the starlands
His praise with a perfect voice.

JEPHTHAH.

Leave prophecy until I come again.

CHORUS.

A prophet told us thou shouldst fight for us
And save thy people from the Ammonites.

JEPHTHAH.

Why look you so ? He told you other thing.

CHORUS.

Nay, lord, no saying that we understood.

JEPHTHAH.

Speak thou its purport ; I may understand.
For, know you, in the desert where I dwelt
I had strange store of books obscure ; books written
Not openly for fools, but inwardly
Toward the heart of wise men. And myself
Studied no little while upon these things,
And, seeking ever solitude, I went
Nightly upon a rock that stood alone
Threatening the sandy wilderness, and prayed.
Where many visions came before mine eyes
So strange—these eyes have started from my head,
And every hair, grown fearful, like a steed
Reared in its frenzy ; see, these lips of mine
Have blanched, these nails have bitten through my
flesh
For sundry things I saw—and these informed

My open spirit by their influence,
And taught mine ears to catch no doubtful sound
Of prophecy, but fix it in my mind,
A lambent liquid fire of poetry
Full of all meaning as the very stars.
Yet of my own life they have never breathed
One chilly word of fear, or one divine
Roseate syllable of hope and joy.
Still less of love. For no sweet life of love
Lies to my hand, but I am bound by Fate
To the strong compulsion of the sword ; my lips
Shall fasten on my wife's not much ; nor those
Pure lips of innocent girlhood that call me
Father ; but my lips must wreath smiles no more,
But set in fearful strength of purpose toward
The blood of enemies, in horrid gouts
And hideous fountains leaping from great gashes,
Rather than that beloved blood that wells
Fervent and red-rose-wise in loving breasts,
And little veins of purple in the arms,
Or cheeks that are already flushed with it,
To crimson them with the intense delight
Of eyes that meet and know the spirit dwells
Beyond their profound depth in sympathy.
Nay, my delight must find some dearest foe,
And cleave his body with a lusty stroke
That sets the blood sharp tingling in my arm.
Yet tell me if perchance I lay aside
One day the harness of cold iron, bind on
The lighter reins of roses deftly twined

By children loving me, to be a harness
 To drive me on the road of happiness
 To the far goal of heaven. Would to God
 It might be so a little ere I die !

CHORUS OF ELDERS.

This doubtful word his fuming lips gave forth :
 A maiden shall be slain for many men.
 This only of his fury seemed obscure.

JEPHTHAH.

A maiden shall be slain for many men.
 Surely, O people, and men of Israel,
 The prophecy is happy to the end.
 For see yon moon that creeps inviolate
 Against the corner of the mountains so,
 Slowly and gracefully to lighten us.
 So, ere three nights be gone, the course of heaven
 Shall be most monstrously o'erwhelmed for us
 Ere sundown, as for Joshua, and the moon,
 The maiden moon, be slain that we may see
 By the large moveless sun to slay and slay,
 More utterly proud Ammon to consume.
 This is the omen. Shout for joy, my friends !
 But who comes whirling in yon dusty cloud
 With trampling charger dimly urging him
 Toward our conclave ? 'Tis our messenger.

Re-enter Herald.

Sir, you ride well. I pray your news be good.

HERALD.

So spake the haughty and rebellious Ammon
 Defying your most gentle words with scorn :
 Tell Jephthah : Israel took away my land
 When they came out of Egypt from the river
 Of Ammon unto Jabbok, and unto Jordan.
 Wherefore, I pray thee, sheathe thy sword, restore
 Peaceably these my lands, and go in peace,
 Lest wrath, being kindled, consume thee utterly.

JEPHTHAH.

Let yet another herald stand before me
 Fresh, and go thou, swiftest of messengers,
 And sleep and eat a little, and to-morrow
 Thou shalt have guerdon of thy faithfulness.

[Exit Herald.]

Enter Second Herald.

But now, sir, go to this rebellious king
 And say to him : Thus Jephthah, judge of Israel,
 With gentle words answers thy greediness :
 Israel took not thy land, nor that of Moab :
 But, coming out of Egypt, through the sea
 And over wilderness, to Kadesh came.
 Our people sent a message unto Edom
 Unto the king thereof, and prayed his grace,
 To let them pass through his dominions
 And unto Moab : and they answered Nay.
 So Israel abode in Kadesh : then
 Passing through all the desert round about

Edom and Moab, pitched their weary tent
Beyond the bank of Ammon ; and they sent
Messengers thence to Sihon, Heshbon's king,
The lord of Amorites, and said to him :
I prithee, let us pass to our own place
Through thy dominions : but his crafty mind,
Fearing some treachery, that was not, save
In his ill mind that thought it, did determine
To gather all his people, and to pitch
Tents hostile in the plains before Jahaz.
And there he fought with Israel ; but God
Delivered Sihon to our hands, and all
That followed him : whom therefore we destroyed
With many slaughters : so we dispossessed
The envious Amorites, and had their land,
A land whose borders were the Ammon brook
On the one hand, and on the other Jabbok
And Jordan : we, who slew the Amorites.
What hast thou, king of Ammon, here to do ?
How thinkst thou to inherit their possessions
That the Lord God hath given us ? Go to !
Chemosh your god hath given you your land ;
Possess that peaceably ; but whomsoever
The Lord our God shall drive before our spears,
His lands we will possess. And thou, O king,
Art thou now better than that bloody Balak
Whose iron hand was upon Moab ? He,
Fought he against us, while three hundred years
We dwelt in Heshbon and her towns, and Aroer
And her white cities, and by Ammon's coast ?

Why therefore did ye not recover them
 Then and not now ? I have not sinned against thee ;
 But thou dost me foul wrong to bring thy sword
 And torch of rapine in my pleasant land.
 Between the folk of Ammon and the folk
 Of Israel this day be God the judge.

[Exit Second Herald.]

ELEAZAR.

Well spoken : but the ear that will not hear
 Is deafer than the adder none may charm.

JEPHTHAH.

I know it, and will not await the answer.
 But dawn shall see a solemn sacrifice,
 And solemn vows, and long swords glittering,
 And moving columns that shall shake the earth
 With firm and manly stride ; and victory
 Most like a dove amid the altar-smoke.

CHORUS.

We, passing here the night in prayer, will wait
 And with thee offer up propitious doves,
 And firstling males of all the flocks of us.

JEPHTHAH.

Not so : but I will have you hence in haste
 To gather food and arms and carriages,
 That all our soldiers may have sustenance,
 And fresher weapons. I alone will spend

The long hours with Jehovah, at His throne,
And wrestle with th' accuser. So, depart !

CHORUS OF ELDERS.

When the countenance fair of the morning
And the lusty bright limbs of the day
Race far through the west for a warning
Of night that is evil and gray,
When the light by the southward is dwindled,
And the clouds as for sleep are unfurled,
The moon in the east is rekindled,
The hope of the passionate world.
The stars for a token of glory
Flash fire in the eyes of the night,
And the holy immaculate story
Of Heaven is flushed into light.
For the night has a whisper to wake us,
And the sunset a blossom to kiss,
And the silences secretly take us
To the well of the water that is ;
For the darkness is pregnant with being,
As earth that is glad of the rain,
And the eyes that are silent and seeing
Are free of the trammels of pain.
Like light through the portals they bounded,
Their lithe limbs with cruelty curled,
And the noise of their crying resounded
To kindle the death of the world.
For the heaven at sunset is sundered,
Its gates to the sages unclose,

And through waters that foamed and that wondered
 There flashes the heart of a rose ;
For its petals are beauty and passion,
 For its stem the foundation of earth,
For bloom the incarnadine fashion
 Of blessings that roar into birth ;
And the gates that roll back on their hinges
 The soul of the sage may discern,
Till the water with crimson that tinges
 Beyond them miraculous burn ;
And the presence of God to the senses
 Is the passion of God in the mind,
As the string of a harp that intenses
 The note that its fire may not find.
For here in the tumult and labour
 And blindness of cowering man,
The spirit has God for a neighbour,
 And the wheels unreturning that ran
Return to the heart of the roses,
 And curl in the new blossom now,
As the holiest fire that encloses
 Gray flame on the holiest brow.
So midnight with magic reposes,
 And slumbers to visions bow.
For the soul of man, being free, shall pass the gates
 of God,
And the spirit find the Sea by the feet of Him
 untrod,
And the flesh, a lifeless ember, in ashen fear grow
 cold,

As the lives before remember the perished hours of
gold. [*Exeunt all but Jephthah.*]

JEPHTHAH.

Surely, my God, now I am left alone
Kneeling before Thy throne,
I may grow beautiful, even I, to see
Thy beauty fair and free.
For on the vast expanses of the wold
I hear the feet of gold,
And over all the skies I see a flame
That flickers with Thy Name.
Therefore, because Thou hast hid Thy face, and yet
Given me not to forget
The foaming cloud that shaped itself a rose,
Whose steady passion glows
Within the secretest fortress of my heart,
Because, my God, Thou Art,
And I am chosen of Thee for this folk,
To break the foreign yoke,
Therefore, Existence of Existence, hear !
Bend low Thine holy ear,
And make Thyself, unseen, most terrible
To these fierce fiends of hell
That torture holiest ears with false complaint :
Bend down, and bid me faint
Into the arms of night, to see Thine hosts
March past the holy coasts,
A wall of golden weapons for the land,
And let me touch Thy hand,

And feel Thy presence very near to-night !
 I sink as with delight
 Through places numberless with fervid fires
 Of holiest desires
 Into I know not what a cradle, made
 Of subtle-shapéd shade,
 And arms most perdurable. I am lost
 In thought beyond all cost—
 Nay, but my spirit breaks the slender chain
 That held it down. The pain
 Of death is past and I am free. Nay, I,
 This body, dead, must lie
 Till Thou come home again, O soaring Soul.
 The gates supernal roll !
 Flash through them, O white-winged, white-blossom
 ghost !
 Ah, God ! for I am lost.

[Jephthah remains motionless.

[Morning dawns.

Enter Jared, Soldiers, Prophet.

SOLDIERS.

Hail, captain ! We are ready now for death,
 Or victory, if shining wings are fain
 To hover over dauntless hearts. Behold
 Our ready bands to follow to the fray.

JEPHTHAH.

Welcome ! hail ye this happy dawn as one

That shall see freedom smile on us, and peace,
And victory, and new hours of happiness.

CHORUS OF SOLDIERS.

Out of the waters of the sea
Our father Abraham beheld
The lamp of heaven arise and be
The monarch quenchless and unquelled ;
But we on this far Syrian shore
See dawn upon the mountains pour.

The limit of the snows is bright ;
As spears that glitter shine the hills ;
The foaming forehead of the light
All air with cloudy fragrance fills ;
And, born of desolation blind,
The young sweet summer burns behind.

The Altar of the Lord is set
With salt and fire and fervid wine,
And toward the east the light is let
For shadow for the holiest shrine :
One moment hangs the fire of dawn
Until the sacrament be sworn.

Behold, the priest, our captain, takes
The sacred robes, the crown of gold,
The light of other sunlight breaks
Upon his forehead calm and cold

And other dawns more deep and wise
Burn awful in his holy eyes.

A moment, and the fire is low
Upon the black stone of the altar,
The spilt blood eagerly doth glow,
And lightnings lick the light, and falter,
Feeling the vast Shekinah shine
Above their excellence divine.

The Lord is gracious to His own,
And hides with glory as a mist
The sacrifice and smitten stone,
And on the lips His presence kissed
Burn the high vows with ample flame
That He shall swear to by the Name.

JEPHTHAH.

Highest of Highest, most Concealed of all,
Most Holy Ancient One, Unnameable,
Receive for these Thy servants this our oath
To serve none other gods but Thee alone.
And for my own part who am judge of these
I vow beyond obedience sacrifice,
And for the victory Thou shalt give, I vow
To sacrifice the first of living things
That with due welcome shall divide the doors
Of my house, meeting me, an offering
Burnt before Thee with ceremony meet

To give Thee thanks, nor take ungratefully
This first of favours from the Hand Divine.

SOLDIERS.

A noble vow : and God is glad thereat.

PROPHET.

I charge you in the name of God, go not !
I see a mischief fallen on your souls
Most bitter. Aye ! an evil day is this
If ye go forth with such a sacrifice,
And vows most hideous in their consequence.

SOLDIERS.

It is the prophet of the Lord.

JEPHTHAH.

Possessed

By Baal ; scourge him hence ; he lies, for God
With powerful proof and many lightnings came
Devouring up the offering at the altar.

PROPHET.

O Jephthah, it is thou on whom it falls,
The sorrow grievous as thy life is dear.

A SOLDIER.

He is the prophet of the Baalim.
We have enough of such : in God's name, home !
[Stabbing him.]

PROPHET.

Thy spear shall turn against thyself, alas !
 But welcome, death, thou looked-for spouse of mine !
 Thy kiss is pleasant as the shaded well
 That looks through palm leaves to the quiet sky.

[Dies.

JEPHTHAH.

Thou didst no evil in the slaying him,
 For God is a consuming fire ; high zeal
 Against idolatry lacks not reward.
 And now the sun is up : for Israel, march !

JARED.

Good luck be with your spears ; and homecoming
 Gladden victorious eyes ere set of sun.

[*Exeunt Jephthah and Soldiers.*

Enter Eleazar, Ahinoam, Chorus of Elders.

CHORUS.

The sun is past meridian. No sound
 Of trampling hoofs assails th' unquiet wind,
 Nor trembles in the pillared echo-places,
 And windy corridors of pathless snow.
 But let us wait, expecting victory.
 No fugitive returns, nor messenger :
 They have not shocked together, or perchance
 The grim fight rolls its sickening tide along

Homeward or southward, undecided yet ;
Or victory made certain but an hour
Lends no such wings to jaded horses as
May bear a jaded rider to our gates ;
Wait only, friends, and calm our troubled mind,
Nor stir the languid sails of our desire
With breath of expectation or despair.
Rather give place to those untroubled thoughts
That sit like stars immobile in the sky
To fathom all the desolate winds of ocean,
And draw their secrets from the hidden mines
Whose gold and silver are but wisdom, seeking
Rather things incorruptible above
Than sordid hopes and fears. But look you, friends,
Where in the sun's eye rolls a speck of cloud
Lesser than the ephemeral gnat may make
Riding for sport upon a little whirl
Of moving breezes, so it glows and rolls,
Caught in the furnace of the sun, opaque
To eyes that seek its depth, but penetrable
By those long filaments of light beyond.
See, the spot darkens, and a horseman spurs
A flagging steed with bloody flanks, and waves
A cloudy sword to heaven—I am sure
He brings us eagle-winged victory,
And tiding of no battle lost for Israel.
Yes, he grows great before the sun, and stands
Now in his stirrups, and shouts loud, and waves
A blade triumphant. Now the weary horse
Stumbles with thundering strides along the last

Furlong, and greets us with a joyous neigh
As if he understood the victory.

Enter Second Messenger.

SECOND MESSENGER.

Rejoice, O Israel, for this day hath seen
Utter destruction overtake, and death
Ride furious over, trampled necks of men
Desperate in vain, and seen red hell gape wide
To swallow up the heathen. Victory
Swells the red-gleaming torrent of pursuit,
And Israel shakes her lazy flanks at last
A lion famished, and is greedy of death.

CHORUS.

O joyful day ! And where is Jephthah now ?

MESSENGER.

Faint with the heat of a hard battle fought,
But following hard after with the horse.
For from Aroer even unto Minnith
He smote them with a slaughter most unheard,
And twenty cities saw from trembling walls
Twice twenty thousand corpses ; stragglers few
Call to the rocks and woods, whose dens refuse
Shelter and refuge to the fugitives,
But, in revolt against the natural order,
Gape like the ravening jaws of any beast
To let the furious invaders down

Into the bowels of the earth, and close
 Upon those grisly men of war, whose life
 Groans from the prison that shall crush it out.

CHORUS OF ELDERS.

Be thou most blessed of the Lord for ever !
 But what shall he that hath delivered us
 Have for his guerdon when he comes in triumph ?
 A milk-white ass shall bear him through the city,
 And wreaths of roses be instead of dust,
 And dancing girls, and feet of maidens most,
 Shall strike a measure of delight, and boys
 With bright unsullied curls shall minister
 Before him all the days of life God grants,
 And all his platters shall be made of gold,
 And jewels beyond price shall stud them all.
 What sayest thou, O wisest of our race,
 Ahinoam, the aged priest of God,
 Who weighest out the stars with balances,
 And knowest best of men the heart of man ?

AHINOAM.

Ye are as children, and nowise your tongues
 Speak sense. I never hear your voice but know
 Some geese are gabbling. Sing to him perchance !
 The voice of old men is a pleasant thing.

CHORUS.

What say ye, brethren, shall we sing to him
 Some sweet low ditty, or the louder pæan ?

AHINOAM.

They verily think I speak, not mocking them.

CHORUS.

Who shall uncover such a tongue for wiles,
And pluck his meaning from his subtle words ?

AHINOAM.

Who shall speak plain enough for such as these
To understand ? Or so debase his thought
As meet their minds, and seem as wisdom's self ?

CHORUS.

Leave now thy gibing in the hour of joy,
And lend sweet wisdom to awaiting ears.
Thy voice shall carry it, thy words shall bear
Full fruit to-day. Speak only, it is done.

AHINOAM.

I am grown old, and go not out to wars.
But in the lusty days of youth my face
Turned from the battle and pursuit and spoil
Only to one face dearer than my soul,
And my wife's eyes were welcome more desired
Than chains of roses, and the song of children,
And swinging palm branches, and milk-white—elders.

CHORUS.

Fie on thy railing ! But his wife is sick,
And cannot leave the borders of her house.

AHINOAM.

But he hath one fair only daughter ! Friends,
With maidens bearing timbrels, and with dances,
Let her go forth and bring her father home.

JARED [*aside*].

Horrible ! I must speak and silence this
Monstrous impossible villainy of fate.

CHORUS.

O wise old man, thou speakest cleverly.

AHINOAM.

So do, and praise be given you from God.

ELEAZAR.

God, Who this day has slumbered not, nor slept,
He only keepeth Israel : He is God !

CHORUS.

When God uplifted hands to smite,
And earth from chaos was unrolled,
And skies and seas from blackest night
Unfurled, twin sapphires set with gold,
And tumult of the boisterous deep
Roared from its slow ungainly sleep,
And flocks of heaven were driven to fold,
Then rose the walls of Israel steep,
For in His promise we behold
The sworded Sons of glory leap
Our tribes in peace to keep.

Deep graven in the rocky girth
 Of Israel's mountains, in the sky,
 In all the waters of the earth,
 In all the fiery steeds that ply
 Their champing harness and excel
 The charioteers of heaven and hell,
 In all the Names writ secretly
 And sacred songs ineffable,
 In all the words of power that fly
 About the world, this song they spell :
 He keepeth Israel.

AHINOAM.

Ye praise God of full heart : I would to God
 Your minds were somewhat fuller, and could keep
 Discretion seated on her ivory throne.
 What folly is it they will now be at,
 Gray beards, and goatish manners ? Hearken them !

CHORUS.

In the brave old days ere men began
 To bind young hearts with an iron tether,
 Ere love was brief as life, a span,
 Ere love was light as life, a feather,
 Earth was free as the glad wild weather,
 God was father and friend to man.

AHINOAM.

Then when with mildness and much joy our judge
 Draw hither, let us send to meet his steps

In sackcloth clad, with ashes on their heads,
His cruel brethren, that he spare their lives.

CHORUS.

In the heart of a conqueror mercy sits
A brighter jewel than vengeance wroken,
And grace is the web that his people knits,
And love is the balm for the hearts nigh broken.
Peace is arisen, a dove for token,
Righteousness, bright as the swallow flits.

JARED [*aside*].

So, in his victory is our disgrace.

CHORUS.

Fair as the dawn is the maiden wise
Pale as the poppies by still white water,
Sunlight burns in her pure deep eyes,
Love lights the tresses of Jephthah's daughter ;
Kissing rays of the moon have caught her,
Rays of the moon that sleeps and sighs.

JARED [*aside*].

In our disgrace, behold ! Our vengeance strikes.
I am inspired with so profound a hate—
He shall not triumph : in the very hour
When his o'ermastering forehead tops the sky
I strike him to the earth. I need not move.
Silence—no more—and all accomplishes.
Leviathan, how subtle is thy path !

CHORUS.

Not now may the hour of gladness fade,
 The wheel of our fate spins bright and beaming ;
 God has fashioned a sun from shade,
 Mercy and joy in one tide are streaming,
 Fortune is powerless, to all good seeming ;
 Fate is stricken, and flees afraid.

JARED.

Bring me the sackcloth and the ashes now.

ELEAZAR.

Behold ! the crown of all our maiden wreath,
 Adulah, white and lissome, with the flames
 Of dawn forth blushing through her flower-crowned
 hair.

CHORUS.

Behold a virgin to the Lord !
 Behold a maiden pale as death,
 Whose glance is silver as a sword,
 And flowers of Kedar fill her breath,
 Whose fragrance saturates the sward,
 Whose sunny perfume floating saith :
 From my ineffable desire is drawn
 The awful glory of the golden dawn.

Behold her bosom bare and bold
 Whose billows like the ocean swing !
 The painted palaces of gold,
 Where shell-born maidens laugh and sing,

Are mirrored in those breasts that hold
Sweet odours of the sunny spring.
Behold the rising swell of perfect calm
In breezy dells adorable of balm !

Behold the tender rosy feet
Made bare for holiness, that move
Like doves amid the waving wheat,
Or swallows silver in the grove
Where sylph and salamander meet,
And gnome and undine swoon for love !
Her feet that flit upon the windy way
Twin fawns, the daughters of the rosy day.

Behold, the arms of her desire
Wave, weave, and wander in the air,
Vines life-endued by subtle fire
So quick and comely, curving bare ;
The white diaphanous attire
Floats like a spirit pale and fair ;
The dance is woven of the breeze, the tune
Is like the ocean silvered by the moon.

Behold the maidens following,
And every one is like a flower,
Or like an ewe lamb of the king
That comes from water at the hour
Of even. See, the dancers swing
Their censers ; see, their tresses shower

Descending flames, and perfumes teem divine,
And all the air grows one pale fume of wine.

Their songs, their purity, their peace,
Glide slowly in the arms of God ;
His lips assume their sanctities,
His eyes perceive the period
Of woven webs of lutes at ease,
And measures by pure maidens trod,
Till, like the smoke of mountains risen at dawn,
The cloud-veils of the Ain are withdrawn.

Pure spirits rise to heaven, the bride.
Pure bodies are as lamps below.
The shining essence, glorified
With fire more cold than fresh-fallen snow,
And influences, white and wide,
Descend, re-gather, kindle, grow,
Till from one virgin bosom flows a river
Of white devotion adamant for ever.

Enter Adulah and Chorus of Maidens.

ADULAH.

Fathers of Israel, we are come to you
With many maidens praising God, for this,
The victory of my father. Happy girls !
Whose brothers struck to-day for Israel,
Whose fathers smote the heathen ; happiest,
Ye blushing flowers, beyond your younger spring

That bends in you toward summer, faint and fair,
 Whose lovers bared their swords to-day ; and ye,
 O reverend heads, most beautiful for gray,
 The comely crown of age, that doth beseem
 Your wise sweet beauty, as the ivy wreathes
 The rugged glory of the sycamore,
 Have ye heard aught of Jephthah's home-coming ?
 For our cheeks tingle with th' expected kiss
 Of hardy warriors dear to us, and now
 By double kinship rendered doubly dear.
 For O ! my father comes to gladden me
 With those enduring kisses that endow
 Heart, hope, and life with gladness. Comes he soon ?

ELEAZAR.

Maiden most perfect, daughter of our lord,
 And ye, most fairest branches of our tree,
 Maidens of Israel, we await you here
 That ye, no other, may go forth to meet
 The chief victorious. And after you
 Those villains that once cast him out shall forth
 In sackcloth to his feet, if haply so
 He spare their vagabond and worthless lives.

ADULAH.

Not so, my father. In my father's name
 I promise unto all great happiness,
 And vengeance clean forgotten in the land ;
 " Vengeance is mine, Jehovah will repay."
 My father shall not frown on any man.

JARED [*aside*].

She is most gracious : I must speak and save.

[*Aloud.*] Friends ! [*Aside.*] Stay—Is this a tempter
voice that soothes

My conscience ? Art thou that Leviathan,

Thou lipless monster, gnashing at my soul

Abominable teeth ? Art thou the fiend

Whom I have seen in sleep, and waking served ?

O horrible distortion of all truth

That I must serve thee still. Thy word's a lie,

That if I keep my silence, I do good

To her, the milk-white virgin sacrifice,

And only smite the bloody father down !

A lie, I say ! A lie ! Yet—dare I speak,

Those eyes upon me, torturing my soul

And threatening revenge ? His fingers gross,

Purple, and horrible, to blister me

With infamous tearing at my throat. O Hell !

Vomit thy monsters forth in myriads

To putrefy this fair green earth with blood,

But make not me the devilish minister

Of such a deed as this ! No respite ?—Must ?

Irrevocable ? I dare not call on God.

Thou, thou wilt serve me if I do this thing ?

Oh, if this be a snare thou settest now,

Who hast once already mocked our pact, I swear

By God, I cast thee off. Leviathan !

Accept the bargain. And I seal it—thus.

[*Writing in the air*

I will keep silence, though they tear my tongue
Blaspheming from my throat. My servant now !

ELEAZAR.

Mingled emotions quickly following
Fear upon fear, and joy and hope at last
Crowning, have maddened Jephthah's kinsman here.
Mark his lips muttering, and his meaningless
Furious gestures, and indignant eyes
Starting, and hard-drawn breath ! Him lead away
Tenderly, as beseems the mercy shown
To his repentance by this maiden queen.
The Lord is merciful to them that show
Mercy, and all such as are pure of heart ;
Thy crown, Adulah, wears a double flower
Of these fair blossoms wreathed in one device
Of perfect love in perfect maidenhood.

JARED [*recovering himself*].

Nay, but my voice must fill the song of joy
With gratitude, and meet thanksgiving. Me
More than these others it beseems, who love
Less dearly for their innocence than I,
Pardoned of my unpardonable sin.

ADULAH.

The flowers turn westerward ; the sun is down
Almost among those clouds that kiss the sea
With heavy lashes drooping over it,
A mother watching her own daughter swoon

To sleep. But look toward the southern sky ;
 It is my father. Let us go to him,
 Maidens, with song and gladness of full hearts.

SEMICHORUS OF MAIDENS I.

The conqueror rides at last
 To home, to love ;
 The victory is past,
 The white-wing dove
 Sails through the crystal air of eve with a pæan deep
 and vast. Jephthah !

SEMICHORUS OF MAIDENS II.

Forth, maidens, with your hands
 White with new lilies !
 Forth, maidens, in bright bands,
 Virgins whose one sweet will is
 To sing the victory of our God in all sky-girdled
 lands !
 Elohim !

SEMICHORUS I.

With dancing feet, and noise
 Of timbrels smitten,
 With tears and tender joys,
 With songs unwritten,
 With music many-mouthed, with robes in snowy
 equipoise.
 Jephthah !

SEMICHORUS II.

With hearts infused of fire,
Eyes clear with many waters,
With lips to air that quire,
We, earth's desirous daughters,
Lift up the song of triumph, sound the lutes of our
desire !
Elohim !

SEMICHORUS I.

With branches strewn before us,
And roses flung
In all the ways, we chorus
With throat and tongue
The glory of our warrior sires whose victor swords
restore us
Jephthah !

SEMICHORUS II.

With angels vast and calm
That keep his way,
With streams of holy balm,
The prayers of them that pray,
We go to bring him home and raise to Thee our holy
psalm,
Elohim !

ELEAZAR.

Go ye, make ready for the happy march.
[Exeunt Adulah and Maidens.]

And we too, changing these funereal vestments
 Will clothe in moonlike splendour, candid robes
 Of priestly purity, our joyous selves.
 O fortunate day ! O measured steps of noon,
 Quicken, if once ye stayed for Joshua,
 To keep sweet music to our hearts. Away !

[Exeunt all but Jared.]

JARED.

I will await, and hide myself away
 Behind yon bushes, to behold the plot
 Bud to fulfilment. Then, Leviathan,
 I am thy master. Mockery of a God
 That seest this thing prosper—Ha ! thine altar !
 Let me give thanks, Jehovah ! O thou God
 That rulest Israel as sheep and slaves,
 But over me no ruler ; thou proud God
 That marshallest these petty thunder-clouds
 That blacken over the inane abyss
 But canst not tame one fierce desire of mine,
 Nor satiate my hatred, nor destroy
 This power of mine over thy devil-brood,
 The hatchment of thine incest, O thou God
 Who knowest me, me, mortal me, thy master,
 Thy master—and I laugh at thee, the slave !
 Down from Thy throne, impostor, down, down, down
 To thine own Hell, immeasurable—

A VOICE.

Strike !

[The storm, gathering to a climax, bursts in a tremendous flash of lightning, and Jared is killed.]

Enter Jephthah and Soldiers.

JEPHTHAH.

A terrible peal of thunder ! And the sky
Seems for an hour past to have been in labour
And, safely now delivered, smiles again.
For see, the sun ! O happy sunlight hours—
What is this blackened and distorted thing ?

A SOLDIER.

Some fellow by the altar that kept watch,
Some faithful fellow—he is gone to God.

JEPHTHAH.

How is't the cattle have been driven home ?
I trusted we had found a tender lamb,
A lamb of the first year, unblemished, white,
To greet me, that we do meet sacrifice,
Fulfilling thus my vow, and all our duty.

[A noise of timbrels and singing.]

Surely some merriment—our news hath reached.
Glad news and welcome : God is very good.

Enter Adulah, running, followed by singing Maidens.

ADULAH.

Father !

JEPHTHAH.

My daughter !

*[He suddenly stops, and blanches, understanding**Alas my daughter !**[He continues in a dazed, toneless voice.*

Thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one
of them that trouble me ; for I have opened my mouth
unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.

ADULAH.

My father, O my father !

Enter Eleazar and Chorus.

ELEAZAR.

Most welcome, conqueror !

[Jephthah waves him aside.

What is this ? What is this ?

CHORUS.

Speak, Jephthah, speak ! What ill has fallen ? Speak !

*[Silence. After a little the Chorus of Maidens under-
stand, and break into wailing. The old men
gradually understand and fill the air with inco-
herent lamentations. Behind Jephthah the sol-
diers, with white lips, have assumed their military
formation, and stand at attention by a visible ef-
fort of self-control.*

ADULAH.

My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth
Unto the Lord, fulfil the oath to me,
Because the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee
Of all thine enemies, the Ammonites.
Let this be done for me, that I may go
Two months upon the mountains, and bewail,
I and my fellows, my virginity !

JEPHTHAH.

Go !

CHORUS OF MAIDENS.

O the time of dule and teen !
O the dove the hawk has snared !
Fate the cruel and obscene,
Fate that snaps us unprepared,
We, who else had dared
Every mountain cold and keen,
Cleft and stricken in between
By the joy our bosoms shared ;
Would to God we had not been,
We, who see our maiden queen,
Love has slain whom hate had spared.
Sorrow for our sister sways
All our maiden bosoms, bared
To the dying vesper rays,
Where the sun below the bays
Of the West is stooping ;
All our hearts together drooping,

Flowers the ocean bears.
All the garb that gladness wears
To a rent uncouth attire
Changed with cares ;
Happy songs our love had made
Ere the sun had sunk his fire,
In the moonrise fall and fade,
And the dregs of our desire
Fall away to death ;
Tears divide our labouring breath
That our sister—O our sister !
Moon and sun and stars have kissed her
She must touch the lips of death,
Touch the lips whose coldness saith :
Thou art clay.
Let us fare away, away
To the ice whose ocean gray
Tumbles on the beach of rock,
Where the wheeling vultures mock
Our distress with horrid cries,
Where the flower relenting dies,
And the sun is sharp to slay ;
Where the ivory dome above
Glimmers like the dawn of love
On the weary way ;
Where the ibex chant and call
Over tempest's funeral ;
Where the hornéd beast is shrill,
And the eagle hath his will,
And the shadows fall

Sharp and black, till day is passed
Over to the ocean vast ;
Where the barren rocks resound
Only to the rending roar
Of the shattering streams that pour
Rocks by ice eternal bound,
Myriad cascades that crowned
Once the far resounding throne
Of the mountain spirits strong.
All the treacherous souls that throng
Desolate abodes of stone,
Barren of all comely things,
Given to the splendid kings,
Gloomy state, and glamour dark,
Swooping jewel-feathered wings,
Eyes translucent with a spark
Of the world of fire, that swings
Gates of adamant below
Lofty minarets of snow.
Thence the towering flames arise,
Where the flashes white and wise
Find their mortal foe.
Let us thither, caring not
Anything, or any more,
Since the sorrow of our lot
Craves to pass the abysmal door ;
Never more for us shall twine
Rosy fingers on the vine ;
Never maiden lips that cull
Myriad blossoms beautiful ;

Never cheeks that dimple over
At the perfume of the clover,
With the laughing summer seas
Of the smile of hearts at ease ;
Never bosoms bright and round
Shall be garlanded and bound
With the chain of myrtle, wreathed
By the fingers of the maid
Each has chosen for a mate,
When the west wind lately breathed
Murmurs in the wanton glade
Of the day that dawneth late
In a maiden's horoscope,
Dawning faith and fire and hope
On the spring that only knew
Flowers and butterflies and dew,
Skies and seas and mountains blue,
On the spring that wot not of
Fruit and falling leaves and love ;
Never dew-dashed foreheads fair
Shall salute the idle air ;
Never feet shall wander deep
Where the fronds of fern, asleep,
Kiss her rosy feet that pass
On the spangled summer grass,
Half awake, and drowse again ;
Never more our feet shall stain
Purple with the joyous grape,
Whence there rose a fairy shape
In the fume and must and juice,

Singing lest our eyes escape
All his tunic wried and loose
With the feet that softly trod
In the vat the fairy god ;
Never more our eyes shall swim,
Looking to the ocean brim
In the magic moon that rose
Through the archipelagos,
When the Grecian woods were wet
With our dewy songs, that set
Quivering all seas and snows,
Stars and tender winds that fret
Lily, lily, laughing rose,
Sighing, sighing violet,
Dusky pansy, swaying rush,
And the stream that flows
Singing, ringing softly : Hush !
Listen to the bird that goes
Wooing to the brown mate's bough ;
Listen to the breeze that blows
Over cape and valley now
At the silence of the noon,
Or the slumber-hour
Of the white delicious moon
Like a lotus-flower.
Let us sadly, slowly, go
To the silence of the snow.

ADULAH [*embracing Jephthah*].
Whose crystal fastnesses shall echo back

The lamentations of these friends of mine
 But not my tears. For I will fit myself
 By solitude and fasting and much prayer
 For this most holy ceremony, to be
 A perfect, pure, accepted sacrifice.
 Only this sorrow—O father, father, speak !

JEPHTHAH.

Go !

ADULAH.

Most unblameable, we come again.
 I would not weep with these ; I dare not stay,
 Lest I weep louder than them all. Fare well,
 My father, O my father ! I am passing
 Into the night. Remember me as drawn
 Into the night toward the golden dawn.

[Exeunt Adulah and Maidens.]

CHORUS.

Toward the mountains and the night
 The fairest of all Israel go,
 Toward the hollows weird and white,
 Toward the sorrow of the snow ;
 To desolation black and blind
 They move, and leave us death behind.

The Lord is great, the Lord is wise
 Within His temple to foresee

With calm impenetrable eyes
The after glory that shall be ;
But we, of mortal bodies born,
Laugh lies consoling unto scorn.

The God of Israel is strong ;
His mighty arm hath wrought this day
A victory and a triumph-song—
And now He breathes upon His clay,
And we, who were as idols crowned,
Lie dust upon the empty ground.

She goes, our sorrow's sacrifice,
Our lamb, our firstling, frail and white,
With large sweet love-illumined eyes
Into the night, into the night.
The throne of night shall be withdrawn ;
So moveth she toward the dawn.

All peoples and all kings that move
By love and sacrifice inspired
In light and holiness and love,
And seek some end of God desired,
Pass, though they seem to sink in night,
To dawns more perdurably bright.

So priest and people join to praise
The secret wisdom of the Lord,
Awaiting the arisen rays
That smite through heaven as a sword

Remembering He hath surely sworn :
Toward the night, toward the dawn !

Behold the moon that fails above,
The stars that pale before the sun !
How far, those figures light as love
That laughing to the mountains run !
Behold the flames of hair that leap
Above her forehead mild and deep !

She turns to bless her people still :
So, passes to the golden gate
Where snow burns fragrant on the hill,
Where for her step those fountains wait
Of light and brilliance that shall rise
To greet her beauty lover-wise.

The silver west fades fast, the skies
Are blue and silver overhead
She stands upon the snow, her eyes
Fixed fast upon the fountain-head
Whence from Eternity is drawn
The awful glory of the dawn !

ELEAZAR.

Let every man depart unto his house.

CHORUS.

He hath made His face as a fire ; His wrath as a
sword ;
He hath smitten our soul's desire ; He is the Lord.

He hath given and taken away, hath made us and
broken ;

He hath made the blue and the gray, the sea for a
token

He hath made to-day and to-morrow ; the winter, the
spring ;

He bringeth us joy out of sorrow ; Jehovah is King.

[*Exeunt. Jephthah is left standing with
white set face. Presently tears come into
his eyes, and he advances, and kneels at
the altar.*

THE END.

A NOTE ON "JEPHTHAH."

A SHORT explanation of the scheme of theology adopted in this play appears necessary. The Hebrews of the period had formulated the idea of Deity as manifesting from the fundamental conception of NEGATIVE EXISTENCE : The אין Ain, negativity, unfolded ; the אין סוף Ain Soph Aur, the limitless light. This limitless ocean of negative light concentrates a centre כתר Kether, the Crown, and this is our first positive manifestation of Deity, or, as the Hebrews technically call it, an emanation or ספירה Sefira. Of these Sephiroth there are ten, each emanating from the last, and successively male or female toward the next below or above. These are 1, the Kether ; 2, חכמה Chokmah, Wisdom ; 3, בינה Binah, Understanding, often symbolized as the great Sea ; 4, חסד Chesed, Mercy (or ברולה Gedulah, Magnificence) ; 5, גבורה Geburah, Strength ; 6, תפארת Tiphereth, Beauty ; 7, נצח Netzach, Victory ; 8, הוד Hod, Splendour ; 9, יסוד Jesod, the Foundation ; and 10, מלכות Malkuth, the Kingdom.

In the Tetragram יהוה, translated in our Bible "Jehovah" or "the Lord," the last nine Sephiroth are summed up. The first also contains the idea of existence, the Divine Name connected with this Sefira being אהיה Eheieh, Existence. Below this world of Atziluth or of God is that of Briah or Thrones ; to this world belong the Archangels ; still lower that of Yetzirah or Formation ; to this world ten orders of angels are attributed ; and lastly, the world of Assiah, or of action (the material world). The further development of these facts, their connection with the numerical system, the parts of the soul, and many other interesting details may be studied in the seventy-two volumes of the written Qabalah, though, perhaps (a word to the wise is enough), truth lies hidden deeper yet in the ten volumes of that Qabalah which is unwritten, and which is only granted to those who by previous

incarnations have fitted themselves for so sublime a knowledge. The brief sketch above will, however, make clear the Oath of the people and the Prayer of Jephthah, among other phrases which may seem at first sight less unintelligible to ordinary analysis.

That I have made Jephthah a Magician is also in accordance with tradition. Great captains were always great priests, in the secret Qabalistical sense. The priests themselves, then as to-day, were foolish old men trained to bolster up the externals of religion. The real rulers, then as to-day, were not, officially, priests ; the sceptre was wielded by those who, swathed in thick darkness, and enthroned on their own thunderclouds, looked with the eye of gods upon this earth, and carried out the designs of God with tranquil power. I have depicted such a Servant of God stepping down from his throne at the precise moment when his presence was required, and the tragedy represented in the play stands for the impotent spite of the Evil One, venting itself in personal malice.

In short, I have ventured (I trust that in so doing the human pathos of the story has lost nothing, even from the merely legendary point of view), behind the veil of man's blindness, and the inexorable Até, to hint at the cloudy conflict of the mysterious forces that rule beyond our vision or our comprehension ; and if, at the end, I have dared to lift that veil, and to put in the mouths of uninitiates words appreciative of those glorious destinies that overrule the cruelties of fate, let me find my excuse in that love for, and faith in, " the holy spirit of man," which itself may do so much toward the final regeneration of humanity, and the uniting of man once more with that God of whom Porphyry has written, " We are but a little part of Him."

MYSTERIES :
LYRICAL AND DRAMATIC.

THE FIVE KISSES.

I.

AFTER CONFESSION.

DAY startles the fawn from the avenues deep
that look to the east in the heart of the wood :
Light touches the trees of the hill with its lips, and
God is above them and sees they are good :
Night flings from her forehead the purple-black
hood.

The thicket is sweet with the breath of the breeze
made soft by the kisses of slumbering maids ;
The nymph and the satyr, the fair and the faulty
alike are the guests of these amorous shades ;
The hour of Love flickers and falters and fades.

O, listen, my love, to the song of the brook, its
murmurs and cadences, trills and low chords ;
Hark to its silence, that prelude of wonder ringing at
last like the clamour of swords
That clash in the wrath of the warring of lords.

Listen, oh, listen ! the nightingale near us swoons a
farewell to the blossoming brake ;
Listen, the thrush in the meadow is singing notes that
move sinuous, lithe as a snake ;
The cushats are cooing, the world is awake.

Only one hour since you whispered the story out of
your heart to my tremulous ear ;
Only one hour since the light of your eyes was the
victor of violent sorrow and fear ;
Your lips were so set to the lips of me here.

Surely the victory ripens to perfect conquest of every-
thing set in our way.
We must be free as our hearts are, and gather strength
for our limbs for the heat of the fray :
The battle is ours if you say me not nay.

Fly with me far, where the ocean is bounded white by
the walls of the northernmost shore,
Where on a lone rocky island a castle laughs in its
pride at the billows that roar,
My home where our love may have peace ever-
more.

Yes, on one whisper the other is waiting patient to
catch the low tone of delight.
Kiss me again for the amorous answer ; close your dear
eyelids and think it is night,
The hour of the even we fix for the flight.

II.

THE FLIGHT.

LIFT up thine eyes ! for night is shed around,
 As light profound,
And visible as snow on steeped hills,
 Where silence fills
The shaded hollows : night, a royal queen
 Most dimly seen
Through silken curtains that bedeck the bed,
 Lift up thine head !
For night is here, a dragon, to devour
 The slow sweet hour
Filled with all smoke of incense, and the praise
 More loud than day's
That swings its barren censer in the sky
 And asks to die
Because the sea will hear no hollow moan
 Beyond its own,
Because the sea that kissed dead Sappho sings
 Of strange dark things—
Shapes of bright breasts that purple as the sun
 Grows dark and dun,
Of pallid lips more haggard for the kiss
 Of Salmacis,

Of eager eyes that startle for the fear
 Too dimly dear
Lest there come death, like passion, and fulfil
 Their dreams of ill !
Oh ! lift thy forehead to the night's cool wind !
 The meekest hind
That fears the noonday in her grove is bold
 To seek the gold
So pale and perfect as the moon puts on :
 The light is gone.
Hardly as yet one sees the crescent maid
 Move, half afraid,
Into the swarthy forest of the air
 And breast made bare,
Gather her limbs about her for the chase
 Through starry space,
And, while the lilies sway their heads, to bend
 Her bow, to send
A swift white arrow at some recreant star.
 The sea is far
Dropped in the hollows of the swooning land.
 Oh ! hold my hand !
Lift up thy deep eyes to my face, and let
 Our lips forget
The dumb dead hours before they met together !
 The snowbright weather
Calls us beyond the grassy down, to be
 Beside the sea,
The slowly-breathing ocean of the south.
 Oh, make thy mouth

A rosy flame like that most perfect star
Whose kisses are
So red and ripe ! Oh, let thy limbs entwine
Like love with mine !
Oh, bend thy gracious body to my breast
To sleep, to rest !
But chiefly let thine eyes be set on me,
As when the sea
Lay like a mirror to reflect the shape
Of yonder cape
Where Sappho stood and touched the lips of death !
Thy subtle breath
Shall flow like incense in between our cheeks,
Where pleasure seeks
In vain a wiser happiness. And so
Our whispers low
Shall dim the utmost beauty of thy gaze
Through moveless days
And long nights equable with tranced pleasure :
So love at leisure
Shall make his model of our clinging looks,
And burn his books
To write a new sweet volume deeper much,
And frail to touch,
Being the mirror of a gossamer
Too soft and fair.
This is the hour when all the world is sleeping ;
The winds are keeping
A lulling music on the frosty sea.
The air is free,

As free as summer-time, to sound or cease :
 God's utmost peace
Lies like a cloud upon the quiet land.
 O little hand !
White hand with rose leaves shed about the tips,
 As if my lips
Had left their bloom upon it when they kissed
 As if a mist
Of God's delicious dawn had overspread
 Their face, and fled !
O wonderful fresh blossom of the wood !
 O purpling blood !
O azure veins as clear as all the skies !
 O longing eyes
That look upon me fondly to beget
 Two faces, set
Either like lowers upon their laughing blue,
 Where morning dew
Sparkles with all the passion of the dawn !
 The happy lawn
Leads, by the stillest avenues, to groves
 Made soft by loves ;
And all the nymphs have made a mossy dell
 Hard by the well
Where even a Satyr might behold the grace
 Of such a face
As his who perished for his own delights,
 So well requites
That witching fountain his desire that looks.
 Two slow bright brooks

Encircle it with silver, and the moon
 Strikes into tune
The ripples as they break. For here it was
 Their steps did pass,
Dreamy Endymion's and Artemis',
 Who bent to kiss
Across the moss-grown rocks that build the well :
 And here they tell
Of one beneath the hoary stone who hid
 And watched unbid
When one most holy came across the glade,
 Who saw a maid
So bright that mists were dim upon his eyes,
 And yet he spies
So sweet a vision that his gentle breath
 Sighed into death :
And others say that her the fairies bring
 The fairy king,
And crown him with a flower of eglantine,
 And of the vine
Twist him a throne made perfect with wild roses,
 And gathered posies
From all the streams that wander through the vale,
 And crying, " Hail !
All hail, most beautiful of all our race ! "
 Cover his face
With blossoms gathered from a fairy tree
 Like foam from sea,
So delicate that mortal eyes behold
 Ephemeral gold

Flash, and not see a flower, but say the moon
 Has shone too soon
Anxious to great Endymion ; and this
 Most dainty kiss
They cover him him withal, and Dian sees
 Through all the trees
No pink pale blossom of his tender lips.
 The little ships
Of silver leaf and briar-bloom sail here,
 No storm to fear,
Though butterflies be all their mariners.
 The whitethroat stirs
The beech-leaves to awake the tiny breeze
 That soothes the seas,
And yet gives breath to shake their fairy sails ;
 Young nightingales,
Far through the golden plumage of the night,
 With strong delight
Purple the evening with amazing song ;
 The moonbeams throng
In shining clusters to the fairy throat,
 Whose clear trills float
And dive and run about the crystal deep
 As sweet as sleep.
Only, fair love of this full heart of mine,
 There lacks the wine
Our kisses might pour out for them ; they wait,
 And we are late ;
Only, my flower of all the world, the thrush
 (You hear him ? Hush !)

Lingers, and sings not to his fullest yet :
 Our love shall get
Such woodland welcome as none ever had
 To make it glad.
Come, it is time, cling closer to my hand.
 We understand.
We must go forth together, not to part.
 O perfect heart !
O little heart that beats to mine, away
 Before the day
Ring out the tocsin for our flight ! My ship
 Is keen to dip
Her plunging forehead in the silvering sea.
 To-morrow we
Shall be so far away, and then to-morrow
 Shall shake off sorrow
And be to-morrow and not change for ever :
 No dawn shall sever
The sleepy eyelids of the night, no eve
 Shall fall and cleave
The blue deep eyes of day. Your hand, my queen !
 Look down and lean
Your whole weight on me, then leap out, as light
 As swallow's flight,
And race across the shadows of the moon,
 And keep the tune
With ringing hoofs across the fiery way.
 Your eyes betray
How eager is your heart, and yet—O dare
 To fashion fair

A whole long life of love ! Leap high, laugh low !
 I love you—so !—
One kiss—and then to freedom ! See the bay
 So far away,
But not too far for love ! Ring out, sharp hoof,
 And put to proof
The skill of him that steeled thee ! Freedom ! Set
 As never yet
Thy straining sides for freedom ! Gallant mare !
 The frosty air
Kindles the blood within us as we race.
 O love ! Thy face
Flames with the passion of our happy speed !
 The noble steed
Pashes the first gold limit of the sand.
 Ah love, thy hand !
We win, no foot pursuing spans the brow !
 Yes, kiss me now !

III.

THE SPRING AFTER.

NORTH, by the ice-belt, where the cliffs appease
Innumerable clamour of Sundering seas,
And garlands of ungatherable foam
Wild as the horses maddening toward home,
Where through the thunderous burden of the thaw
Rings the sharp fury of the breaking flaw,
Where summer's hand is heavy on the snow,
And springtide bursts the insuperable floe,
North, by the limit of the ocean, stands
A castle, lord of those far footless hands
That are the wall of that most monstrous world
About whose pillars Behemoth is curled,
About whose gates Leviathan is strong,
Whose secret terror sweetens not for song.
The hoarse loud roar of gulphs of raging brine
That break in foam and fire on that divine
Cliff-base, is smothered in the misty air,
And no sound penetrates them, save a rare
Music of sombre motion, swaying slow.
The sky above is one dark indigo
Voiceless and deep, no light is hard within
To shame love's lips and rouse the silky skin

From its dull olive to a perfect white.
For scarce an hour the golden rim of light
Tinges the southward bergs ; for scarce an hour
The sun puts forth his seasonable flower,
And only for a little while the wind
Wakes at his coming, and beats cold and blind
On the wild sea that struggles to release
The hard grip from its throat, and lie at ease
Lapped in the eternal summer. But its waves
Roam through the solitude of empty caves
In vain ; no faster wheels the moon above ;
And still reluctant fly the hours of love.
It is so peaceful in the castle : here
The night of winter never froze a tear
On my love's cheek or mine ; no sorrow came
To track our vessel by its wake of flame
Wherein the dolphin bathed his shining side ;
No smallest cloud between me and my bride
Came like a little mist ; one tender fear,
Too sweet to speak of, closed the dying year
With love more perfect, for its purple root
Might blossom outward to the snowy fruit
Whose bloom to-night lay sleeping on her breast,
As if a touch might stir the sunny nest,
Break the spell's power, and bid the spirit fly
Who had come near to dwell with us. But I
Bend through long hours above the dear twin life,
Look from love's guerdon to the lover-wife,
And back again to that small face so sweet,
And downwards to the little rosy feet,

And see myself no longer in her eyes
So perfectly as here, where passion lies
Buried and re-arisen and complete.
O happy life too sweet, too perfect sweet,
O happy love too perfectly made one
Not to arouse the envy of the sun
Who sulks six months for spite of it ! O love,
Too pure and fond for those pale gods above,
Too perfect for their iron rods to break,
Arise, awake, and die for death's own sake !
That one forgetfulness may take us three,
Still three, still one, to the Lethean sea ;
That all its waters may be sweet as those
We wandered by, sweet sisters of the rose,
That perfect night before we fled, we two
Who were so silent down that avenue
Grown golden with the moonlight, who should be
No longer two, but one ; nor one, but three.
And now it is the spiring ; the ice is breaking ;
The waters roar ; the winds their wings are shaking
To sweep upon the northland ; we shall sail
Under the summer perfume of the gale
To some old valley where the altars steam
Before the gods, and where the maidens dream
Their little lives away, and where the trees
Shake laughing tresses at the rising breeze,
And where the wells of water lie profound,
And not unfrequent is the silver sound
Of shepherds tuneful as the leaves are green,
Whose reedy music echoes, clear and clean,

From rocky palaces where gnomes delight
To sport all springtime, where the brooding night
With cataract is musical, and thrushes
Throb their young love beside the stream that rushes
Headlong to beat its foamheads into snow,
Where the sad swallow calls, and pale songs flow
To match the music of the nightingale.
There, where the pulses of the summer fail,
The fiery flakes of autumn fall, and there
Some warm perfection of the lazy air
Swims through the purpling veins of lovers. Hark !
A faint bird's note, as if a silver spark
Struck from a diamond ; listen, wife, and know
How perfectly I love to watch you so.
Wake, lover, wake, but stir not yet the child :
Wake, and thy brow serene and low and mild
Shall take my kisses, and my lips shall seek
The pallid roses on thy perfect cheek,
And kiss them into poppies, and thy mouth
Shall lastly close to mine, as in the south
We see the sun close fast upon the sea ;
So, my own heart, thy mouth must close on me.
Art thou awake ? Those eyes of wondering love,
Sweet as the dawn and softer than the dove,
Seek no quick vision—yet they move to me
And, slowly, to the child. How still are we !
Yes, and a smile betokens that they wake
Or dream a waking dream for kisses' sake ;
Yes, I will touch thee, O my low sweet brow !
My wife, thy lips to mine—yes, kiss me now !

IV.

THE VOYAGE SOUTHWARD.

HOLY as heaven, the home
Of winds, the land of foam,
The palace of the waves, the house of rain,
Deeper than ocean, dark
As dawn before the lark
Flings his sharp song to skyward, and is fain
To light his lampless eyes
At the flower-folded skies
Where stars are hidden in the blue, to fill
His beak with star-dropt dew,
His little heart anew
With love an song to swell it to his will ;
Holy as heaven, the place
Before the golden face
Of God is very silent at the dawn.
The even keel is keen
To flash the waves between,
But no soft moving current is withdrawn :
We float upon the blue
Like sunlight specks in dew,
And like the moonlight on the lake we lie :
The northern gates are past,

And, following fair and fast,
The north wind drove us under such a sky,
 Faint with the sun's desire,
 And clad in fair attire
Of many driving cloudlets ; and we flew
 Like swallows to the South.
 The ocean's curving mouth
Smiled day by day and nights of starry blue ;
 Nights when the sea would shake
 Like sunlight where the wake
Was wonderful with flakes of living things
 That leapt for joy to feel
 The cold exultant keel
Flash, and the white ship dip her woven wings ;
 Nights when the moon would hold
 Her lamp of whitest gold
To see us on the poop together set
 With one desire, to be
 Alone upon the sea
And touch soft hands, and hold white bosoms yet,
 And see in silent eyes
 More stars than all the skies
Together hold within their limits gray,
 To watch the red lips move
 For slow delight of love
Till the moon sigh and sink, and yield her sway
 Unto the eastern lord
 That draws a sanguine sword
And starts up eager in the dawn, to see
 Bright eyes grow dim for sleep,

And lazy bosoms keep
Their slumber perfect and their sorcery,
 While dawning winds arise,
 And fast the white ship flies
To those young groves of olive by the shore,
 The spring-clad shore we seek
 That slopes to yonder peak
Snow-clad, bright-gleaming, as the silver ore
 Plucked by pale fingers slow
 In balmy Mexico,
A king on thunder throned, his diadem
 The ruby rocks that flash
 The sunlight like a lash
When sunlight touches, and sweeps over them
 A crown of light ! Behold !
 The white seas touch the gold,
And flame like flowers of fire about the prow.
 It is the hour for sleep :—
 Lulled by the moveless deep
To sleep, sweet wife, to sleep ! Yes, kiss me now !

V.

THE ULTIMATE VOYAGE.

THE wandering waters move about the world,
And lap the sand, with quietest complaint
Borne on the wings of dying breezes up,
To where we make toward the wooded top
Of yonder menacing hill. The night is fallen
Starless and moonless, black beyond belief,
Tremendous, only just the ripple keeps
Our souls from perishing in the inane,
With music borrowed from the soul of God.
We twain go thither, knowing no desire
To lead us ; but some strong necessity
Urges, as lightning thunder, our slow steps
Upward. For on the pleasant meadow-land
That slopes to sunny bays, and limpid seas
(That breathe like maidens sleeping, for their breast
Is silver with the sand that lies below,)
Where our storm-strengthened dragon rests at last,
And by whose borders we have made a home,
More like a squirrel's bower than a house.
For in this blue Sicilian summertime
The trees arch tenderly for lovers' sleep,
And all the interwoven leaves are fine

To freshen us with dewdrops at the dawn,
 Or let the summer shower sing through to us,
 And welcome kisses of the silver rain
 That raps and rustles in the solitude.
 But in the night there came to us a cry :
 " The mountains are your portion, and the hills
 Your temple, and you are chosen." Then I woke
 Pondering, and my lover woke and said :
 " I heard a voice of one majestic
 With waving beard, most ancient, beautiful,
 Concealed and not concealed ; and awoke,
 Feeling a stronger compulsion on my soul
 To go some whither." And the dreams were one
 (We somehow knew), and, looking such a kiss
 As lovers' eyes can interchange, our lips
 Met in the mute agreement to obey.
 So, girding on our raiment, as to pass
 Some whither of long doubtful journeying,
 We went forth blindly to the horrible
 Damp darkness of the pines above. And there
 Strange beasts crossed path of ours, such beasts as
 earth
 Bears not, distorted, tortured, loathable,
 Mouthing with hateful lips some recent blood,
 or snarling at our feet. But these attacked
 No courage of our hearts, we faltered not,
 And they fell back, snake's mouth and leopard's
 throat,
 Afraid. But others fawning came behind
 With clumsy leapings as in friendliness,

Dogs with men's faces, and we beat them off
With scabbard, and the hideous path wound on.
And these perplexed our goings, for no light
Gleamed through the bare pine-ruins lava-struck,
Nor even the hellish fire of Etna's maw.
But lucklessly we came upon a pool
Dank, dark, and stagnant, evil to the touch,
Oozing towards us, but sucked suddenly,
Silently, horribly, by slow compulsion
Into the slipping sand, and vanishing,
Whereon we saw a little boat appear,
And in it such a figure as we knew
Was Death. But she, intolerant of delay,
Hailed him. The vessel floated to our feet,
And Death was not. She leapt within, and bent
Her own white shoulders to the thwart, and bade
Me steer, and keep stern watch with sword unsheathed
For fear of something that her soul had seen
Above. And thus upon the oily black
Silent swift river we sailed out to reach
Its source, no longer feeling as compelled,
But led by some incomprehensible
Passion. And here lewd fishes snapped at us,
And watersnakes writhed silently toward
Our craft. But these I fought against, and smote
head from fowl body, to our further ill,
For frightful jelly-monsters grew apace,
And all the water grew one slimy mass
Of crawling tentacles. My sword was swift
That slashed and slew them, chiefly to protect

The toiling woman, and assure our path
 Through this foul hell. And now the very air
 Is thick with cold wet horrors. With my sword
 Trenchant, that tore their scaly essences—
 Like Lucian's sailor writhing in the clutch
 Of those witch-vines—I slashed about like light,
 And noises horrible of death devoured
 The hateful suction of their clinging arms
 And wash of slipping bellies. Presently
 Sense failed, and—Nothing !

By-and-by we woke

In a most beautiful canoe of pearl
 Lucent on lucent water, in a sun
 That was the heart of spring. But the green land
 Seemed distant, with a sense of aery height ;
 As if it were below us far, that seemed
 Around. And as we gazed the water grew
 Ethereal, thin, most delicately hued,
 Misty, as if its substance were dissolved
 In some more subtle element. We heard
 “ O passers over water, do ye dare
 To tread the deadlier kingdoms of the air ? ”
 Whereat I cried : Arise ! And then the pearl
 Budded with nautilus-wings, and upward now
 Soared. And our souls began to know the death
 That was about to take us. All our veins
 Boiled with tumultuous and bursting blood ;
 Our flesh broke bounds, and all our bones grew fierce,
 As if some poison ate us up. And lo !
 The air is peopled with a devil-tribe

Born of our own selves. These, grown furious
At dispossession by the subtle air,
Contend with us, who know the agony
Of half life drawn out lingering, who groan
Eaten as if by worms, who dash ourselves
Vainly against the ethereal essences
That make our boat, who vainly strive to cast
Our stricken bodies over the pale edge
And drop and end it all. No nerve obeys ;
But in the torn web of our brains is born
The knowledge that release is higher yet.
So, lightened of the devils that possessed
In myriad hideousness our earthier lives,
With one swift impulse, we ourselves shake off
The clinging fiends, and shaking even the boat
As dust beneath our feet, leap up and run
Upward, and flash, and suddenly sigh back
Happy, and rest with limbs entwined at last
On pale blue air, the empyreal floor,
As on a bank of flowers in the old days
Before this journey. So I think we slept.
But now, awaking, suddenly we feel
A sound as if within us, and without,
So penetrating and so self-inspired
Sounded the voice we knew as God's. The words
Were not a question any more, but said :
“ The last and greatest is within you now.”
Then fire too subtle and omniscient
Devoured our substance, and we moved again
Not down, not up, but inwards mystically

Involving self in self, and light in light.
 And this was not a pain, but peaceable
 Like young-eyed love, reviving ; it consumed
 And consecrated and made savour sweet
 To our changed senses. And the dual self
 Of love grew less distinct and I began
 To feel her heart in mine, her lips in mine,
 Her spirit absolutely one with mine.
 Then mistier grew the sense of God without,
 And God was I, and nothing might exist,
 Subsist, or be at all, outside of Me,
 Myself Existence of Existences.



We had passed unknowing to the woody crown
 Of the little hill. There was a secret Vault.
 We entered. All without the walls appeared
 As fire, and all within as icy light ;
 The altar was of gold, and on it burnt
 Some ancient perfume. Then I saw myself
 And her together, as a priest, whose robe
 Was white and frail, and covered with a cope
 Of scarlet bound with gold : upon the head
 A golden crown, wherein a diamond shone ;
 Within which diamond we beheld our self
 The higher priest, not clothed, but clothed upon
 With the white brilliance of high nakedness
 As with a garment. Then of our self there came
 A voice : “ Ye have attained to That which Is ;
 Kiss, and the vision is fulfilled.” And so

Our bodies met, and, meeting did not touch
 But interpenetrated in the kiss



This writing is engraved on lamina
 Of silver, found by me, the trusted friend
 And loving servant of my lady and lord,
 In that abandoned Vault, of late destroyed
 By Etna's fury. Nothing else remained
 (Save in the ante-room the sword we knew
 So often flashing at the column-head)
 Within. I think my lord has written this.
 Now for the child, whose rearing is my care,
 And in whose life is left my single hope,
 This writing shall conclude the book of song
 His father made in worship and true love
 Of his fair lady, and these songs shall be
 His hope, and his tradition, and his pride.
 Thus have I written for the sake of truth,
 And for his sake who bears his father's sword—
 I pray God under my fond guardianship
 As worthily. Thus far, and so—the end.

THE POEM.

A LITTLE DRAMA IN FOUR SCENES.

I dedicate this play to the gentleman who, on the evening of June 24th, 1898, turned back in Shaftesbury Avenue to give a halfpenny to a little girl, and thereby suggested to me the idea here rendered.

SCENES.

- I. THE ANGEL OF PITY.
- II. THE ANGEL OF LOVE.
- III. THE ANGEL OF DEATH.
- IV. THE FORM OF THE FOURTH WAS LIKE THE SON OF
GOD.

PERSONS.

PERCY BRANDON (*a Poet*).
ESME VAUGHAN.
MR. VAUGHAN (*her Father*).
MR. BRANDON (*Father of Percy*).
A FRIEND TO VAUGHAN.
Butler, Footmen, etc., etc.

SCENE I.

Shaftesbury Avenue, 8.30 p.m. A gentleman walking with a friend, both in evening dress. A little ragged girl. A young man. The gentleman stops and gives the little girl a halfpenny. The young man smiles. The gentleman notices the smile, and sees how great a sadness underlies it.

VAUGHAN.

[*Turning to the young man.*]

AND you—what are you doing here? Excuse my rudeness—you seem so sad.

PERCY.

I am sad to-night. I am very lonely in this place.

VAUGHAN.

There are plenty of people about.

PERCY.

People—mere shells, husks of the golden wheat that might grow even here.

VAUGHAN.

Why do you stay here?

PERCY.

I cannot think at home.

VAUGHAN.

Why think, if thinking makes you sad ?

PERCY.

That I may write. I have not long to live, and I must write, write always.

FRIEND [*aside to Vaughan*].

Il me semble qu'il a faim.

PERCY.

I am hungry for a little love, a little pity. To-night you have shown me your soul, and I am not hungry any more.

VAUGHAN.

But, boy, you are starving physically. Come home with me and have some dinner. Only my daughter will be there.

PERCY.

You are very kind. Thank you.

FRIEND [*aside*]

He is a gentleman.

VAUGHAN.

But what are you doing to be alone in London ?

PERCY.

Where should I go ?

VAUGHAN.

Your father—

PERCY.

Has shown me the door.

VAUGHAN.

How have you quarrelled ?

PERCY.

Because I must write.

VAUGHAN.

What do you write about that he dislikes ?

PERCY.

He calls it waste of time.

VAUGHAN.

He may be right. What do you write about ?

PERCY.

I write about all the horrible things I see, and try to find beauty in them, or to make beauty ; and I write about all the beautiful things I only dream of. I love them all ; yes, even that woman yonder.

VAUGHAN.

Do you find beauty in her ?

PERCY.

No, but I see in her history a poem, to which I trust that God will write an end.

VAUGHAN.

What end can come but evil ?

PERCY.

O ! if I had not hope for her I should have none for myself.

VAUGHAN.

How ? Have you then fallen ?

PERCY.

Oh, yes, I have fallen. I am older every hour. I have wasted time, I have wasted love.

VAUGHAN.

Perhaps it is not all waste after all. There is a use for everything, nothing is destroyed—believe so, anyhow !

FRIEND.

What about this dinner of yours, Vaughan ? Esme will think us a long while gone.

VAUGHAN.

Hansom !

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

A year later. VAUGHAN'S house in Mayfair. PERCY'S bedroom. Moonlight streams through an open window in the corridor. PERCY asleep. He dreams uneasily, and after a little wakes up with a start and a cry.

PERCY.

OH ! I had such a bad dream. I dreamt I was straining out after a beautiful bird, and suddenly it stopped, and then I held it in my hands, and it was happy, and then I dropped down somehow into the darkness and the bird had gone—only it got so confused, and I woke up. I hear steps !

ESME. [*in corridor*].

Did you call, Percy ? I heard a cry as if you were in pain.

PERCY.

Esme, I will come and talk to you in the moonlight. I want to say something that I couldn't say before, because my heart choked me.

ESME.

Come out, Percy, the moon is so white, looking out of the black sky. The sky is quite black near the moon ; only far down where there are no more bright stars it is a deep, deep blue. It is bluer and deeper than the sea.

PERCY.

It is like your eyes. [*Comes out into corridor.*] Esme ! I have looked into your eyes as your eyes look into Heaven, and there I have found my Heaven. O serene depths ! O faultless face of my desire ! O white brow too clear ! I sin against your holiness by my presence. Only the moon should see you, Esme.

ESME [*half in tears*].

You don't mean like that, Percy, quite. Why do you say that ?

Enter VAUGHAN in shadow. He draws back and stands watching.

PERCY.

Oh, you are crying, my heart ! Do you cry because I have spoken and touched with fire the sweet child-love we have lived in all this year ? Or is it that you do not understand ? Or are you sorry ? Or are you glad ?

ESME.

I am very, very glad. [*They kiss. A little cloud passes across the moon without dimming its brightness.* Percy ! Percy !

PERCY.

My wife, my own wife, will you kiss me ?

ESME.

I am too happy to kiss you !

PERCY.

Esme, my Esme. And we will write our poem now together.

ESME.

I cannot write ; we will live our poem now together.

PERCY.

Dear heart, dear heart ! And she will give us light, our dear moon out yonder, always a pure cold light : and our life shall answer a purer, warmer flame. She is like a maiden covered with lilies ; your lilies have kissed roses.

ESME.

And when the moon's light fails, the light of your song.

PERCY.

Let that light be drawn from Heaven too !

ESME.

Oh, Percy, I am so glad, so glad !

PERCY.

Esme !

ESME.

When will you begin your great poem—now ?

PERCY [*as if in pain*].

Ah ! my poem. I am in despair ! It is so great,

and I am so little ; it is so pure, and I am so dull of understanding. When I write I feel as it were the breath of an angel covering me with holiness, and I know—then ! But now—I only write mechanically. I force myself. To-day I tore up all I wrote last night.

ESME.

Let us ask God to send you the angel, shall we ?

[They kneel, with arms intertwined, at the open window, and bow their heads silently. Vaughan also prays, with arms outspread in blessing. Curtain.]

SCENE III.

Six months later.

The dining-room. Percy, Vaughan, Esme at dinner.

Enter Butler.

BUTLER.

If you please, sir, a gentleman has called ; he says he must see you at once.

VAUGHAN.

Have you told him we are at dinner ?

BUTLER.

Yes, sir ; but he would not take that ; begging your

pardon, sir, he said it was only an excuse, and he wouldn't stand any nonsense.

VAUGHAN.

An excuse ! Who is the fellow ?

BUTLER.

I think he is a friend of Mr. Percy's, sir.

PERCY [*alarmed*].

It might be my father. [*Aside.*] And I could have finished to-night—the very last word. Something has been singing in me all day.

VAUGHAN.

This is a serious matter John. I will come and speak to him. [*Exit. The voices are heard outside.*]

BRANDON [*Stout, purple, knobbed, and ill-tempered*].

Yes, sir. Either I see my son now, or I fetch in a policeman. Kidnapper ! Yes, sir, that's what I call you ! Yes, sir ! my name *is* Brandon. And your damned name is Vaughan, sir ! And I'll drag your damned name through a police-court, sir, as soon as—as—Where's my son ?

[*Is heard to move towards dining-room.*]

VAUGHAN.

John ! shut that door. Mr. Brandon, my daughter is at dinner in that room. I cannot allow you to enter

BRANDON.

That's where he is, you scoundrel. Out of the way, fool !
[Knocking John over, bursts the door open and enters.]
 There you are, you snivelling little swine. My God ! to
 think that damned puppy's my son ! Come out of it !

VAUGHAN *[who has entered and rung the bell for the
 servants].*

I shall have you locked up for assaulting my
 servant.

BRANDON.

And you for abducting my son. He's coming with
 me now or there'll be a fuss. Mark my words, you
 rascal ! *[Enter two Footmen.]*

VAUGHAN

Seize that man. *[They seize and hold him after a
 struggle.]* Esme go away to your room ; this is no
 place for you. Now, sir, say all you have to say !
[Esme waits in the doorway.]

BRANDON.

Give me my son, and be damned to you ! That's all ;
 and it's plain enough, I hope.

PERCY.

Father, I am leaving Mr. Vaughan's house, as I
 shall only get him into trouble if I stay. But I will

not come home with you, you who broke my mother's heart, and turned me from your doors penniless.

BRANDON.

Unnatural puppy !

PERCY.

My mother's spirit forgives you, and in my heart is no longer the desire for vengeance. So far have I risen, but not far enough to forget that you are the most abominable villain that plagues God's beautiful world with his infesting life.

BRANDON [*with sudden calmness*].

This to his father ! What does the Bible say, you wretch ?

PERCY [*To VAUGHAN*].

I will go, my true new father. Kiss Esme for me a hundred times !

BRANDON [*breaking from Footmen*].

Damn you ; that's your game, is it ? No, you go with me, Sir Poet.

[*Rushing at his son, strikes. Percy, warding off the unexpected blow, staggers. Brandon, maddened by the idea of fighting, snatches up a knife and drives it into his heart. He falls with a low cry. Vaughan dashes forward and strikes Brandon heavily. He falls ; footmen drag him off insensible.*]

VAUGHAN [*bending over Percy*].

Are you hurt ?

PERCY.

Oh, hardly hurt at all ! Only my head a little, and I wanted so to finish the poem to-night.

ESME.

Let me come to him, father. Oh, Percy, Percy, look at me, look at me ; you're not hurt, are you ?

PERCY.

Am I ever hurt with your arms round me ?

ESME.

Oh, but you grow whiter ; you must be hurt.

VAUGHAN.

A knife ! He must have stabbed him. Fetch a doctor, one of you, sharp !
[*Exit a man.*]

ESME.

It is his heart ; see, my hand is all covered with blood. Give me a handkerchief. Here, I will staunch the wound. [*She attempts to prevent the bleeding with her handkerchief.*] Oh ! Percy ! [*A pause*] Oh ! Percy !

PERCY.

I am going away, Esme. I shall see you often.

When you think of me I shall always be with you. One day you will come to me, Esme ! Kiss me ! Your kisses must finish my poem. One day your pen must finish it.

ESME.

You know I cannot write a line. Oh, how sorry I am for that !

PERCY [*to Vaughan*].

Good-by, my dear, dear friend. Take care of Esme for me. I shall watch over her myself, I and God together. She is so frail and white, and she understands. She sees my soul, and Heaven is always open to her eyes when she looks up, and she is so beautiful. Will it seem long, Esme, till we kiss again beyond the moon there—it is the moon, isn't it, come to see that Esme is not too sad about my dying ? Be kind to her always, moon, when I am gone beyond you ! You must finish my poem, Esme ; there is only a little to do. Kiss me the last time ! Good-bye, my dear friends. I wish I could take your hands, but I am so weak. Kiss me, Esme, quickly. I feel the voice of God come like a shudder in my blood ; I must go to Him. Esme ! Esme ! Esme ! I am so happy !

[*Dies.*

[*Esme flings herself passionately on to the body, weeping and kissing the dead face, while all the others kneel in prayer. Curtain.*

SCENE IV.

The next morning. ESME in bed asleep.

Enter Vaughan.

VAUGHAN.

P OOR child, poor child, how are you ? You have not slept, I know. Why, she is still asleep ! Hush ! How calmly and regularly she breathes ! How fresh she looks ! How she smiles ! It is wonderful ! It is impossible ! Esme ! Esme ! it is a pity you cannot always sleep so, and never wake up to the cruel sorrow of yesterday. Ah me ! When we all thought to be so happy. And in a month he would have married her : in a day he would have finished the poem. What a wonderful poem it was ! One could hear, above the angels that sang, the voice of God in that awful music that made his lines quiver and shimmer like live coals. And the end was to have been so perfect : there was on the last passage of his work a hush, a silence almost as if the world—his world—awaited the voice of some great one. And now the silence is not broken. Perhaps men were not ready for those final chords. Perhaps to hear them would be to pass where he has passed ! But oh ! the pity ! To leave his greatest task undone ! To be stricken down in the last charge, a good soldier to the end ! Would God he could come back

only for an hour to put the keystone to his palace that he built of running brooks and trees and buds and the sound of the sea, and all the lights of heaven to widow it. [*Esme's eyes open.*] Esme ! you must wake up and kiss father !

ESME [*half awake*].

He sang to me all night, not his voice only, but a deeper voice that I understood so well as I never understood, a voice like his poem, only more beautiful even than that, and I can't remember one word, only that he kissed me all the night ; and there was as it were a vapour, an incense-cloud, about me, and I could not see—and I am so happy.

VAUGHAN.

Esme, I am here, your father.

ESME.

Ah ! it comes back. He is dead. Oh, God ! Oh, God ! And we were to have been married a month to-day.

VAUGHAN.

And he left the poem and could not finish it.

ESME [*pointing to scattered papers on a table*].

What have you been doing with those papers, father ?

VAUGHAN [*astonished*].

They are not mine, child. I did not see them till you showed me. [*Taking papers.*] Why, they are in your handwriting ; what are they ? [*Reading, gradually becomes aware that something strange has happened.*] It is finished—it is finished !

[*Curtain.*

THE HONOURABLE ADULTERERS.

I.

HIS STORY.

I LOOKED beneath her eyelids, where her eyes
Like stars were deep, and dim like summer
skies ;
I looked beneath their lashes ; and behold !
My own thought mirrored in their maiden gold.
Shame drew to them to cloud their light with lies,
And shrank back shamed ; and Love waxed bright
and bold.

The devilish circle of the fiery ring
Became one moment like a little thing,
And Truth and God were near us to withdraw
The veil of Love's unalterable law.
We feared no fury of the jealous King,
But, lest in honour love should find a flaw.

Only our looks and trembling lips we dread,
And the dear nimbus of a lover's head,
The dreamy splendour and the dim delight
That feels the fragrance fallen from the night,

When soul to soul is locked, and eyes are wed,
And lips not touched kiss secretly by sight.

These things we fear, and move as in a mist
One from the other, and we had not kissed.
Only the perfume of her lips and hair
Love's angel wafted slowly to me there,
And as I went like death away I wist
Its savour faded, nor my soul aware.

I turned and went away, away, away,
Out of the night that was to me the day,
And rode to meet the sun to hide in light
The sorrow of the day that was the night.
So I rode slowly in the morning gray,
And all the meadows with the frost were white.

And lo ! between the mountains there uprose
The winter sun ; and all the forest glows,
And the frost burns like fire before my eyes,
While the white breeze awoke with slumberous sighs
And stirred the branches of the pine ; it knows,
It surely knows how weary are the wise.

Even my horse my sorrow understands,
Would turn and bear me to those western lands ;
In love would turn me back ; in love would bring
My thirsty lips to the one perfect spring—
My iron soul upon my trembling hands
Had its harsh will ; my bitterness was king.

So verily long time I rode afar.
My course was lighted by some gloomy star
 That boded evil, that I would not shun,
 But rather welcome, as the storm the sun,
Lowering and red, a hurtful avatar,
 Whose fatal forehead like itself is dun.

It was no wonder when the second day
Showed me a city on the desert way,
 Whose brazen gates were open, where within
 I saw a statue for a sign of sin,
And saw the people come to it and pray,
 Before its mouth set open for a gin.

And seeing me, a clamour rose among
Their dwarfish crowds, whose barbarous harsh tongue
 Grated, a hateful sound ; they plucked me down,
 And mocked me through the highways of the town,
And brought me where they sang to censers swung
 A grotesque hymn before her body brown.

For Sin was like a woman, and her feet
Shone, and her face was like the windy wheat ;
 Her eyes were keen and horrible and cold,
 Her bronze loins girdled with the sacred gold ;
Her lips were large, and from afar how sweet !
 How fierce and purple for a kiss to hold !

But somehow blood was black upon them ; blood
In stains and clots and splashes ; and the mud
 Trampled around her by the souls that knelt,

Worshipping where her false lewd body dwelt
 Was dark and hateful ; and a sleepy flood
 Trickled therefrom as magic gums that melt.

I had no care that hour for anything :
 Not for my love, not for myself ; I cling
 Desperate to despair, as some to hope,
 Unheeding Saturn in their horoscope ;
 But I, despair is lord of me and king ;
 But I, my thoughts tend ever to the rope.

But I, unknighly, recreant, a coward,
 Dare not release my soul from fate untoward
 By such a craven's cunning. Nay, my soul
 Must move unflinching to what bitter goal
 The angry gods design—if gods be forward
 I am a man, nor fear to drain the bowl.

And some old devil, dead no doubt and damned,
 But living in her life, had wisely crammed
 Her fierce bronze throat with such a foul device
 As made her belly yearn for sacrifice.
 She leered like love on me, and smiled, and shammed,
 And did not pity for all her breast of spice.

They thrust me in her hateful jaws, and I
 Even then resisted not, so fain to die
 Was my desire, so weary of the fight
 With my own love, so willing to be quite
 Sure of my strength by death ; and eagerly
 Almost I crossed the barrier keen and white.

And lo ! a miracle ! Her carven hand
Is lifted, and the little space is spanned,
 And I am plucked from out her maw, and set
 Down on the pedestals whose polished jet
Shone like a mirror out of hell—I stand
 Free, where the blood of other men is wet.

So slowly, while the mob stood back, I went
Out of the city, with no life content,
 And certain I should meet no death at least.
 And, riding ever to the stubborn east,
I came upon a shore whose ocean bent
 In one long curve, where folk were making feast.

So with no heart to feast, I joined the mirth,
Mingled the dances that resound the earth,
 And laughing looked in every face of guile,
 And answered fans with quick and subtle smile,
Ten thousand little loves were brought to birth,
 Ten thousand loves that laughed a little while.

No ; for one woman did not laugh, too wise,
But came so close, and looked within my eyes
 So deeply that I saw not anything.
 Only her eyes grew, as a purple ring
Shielding the sun, they grew, they uttered lies—
 They fascinate and cleave to me and cling.

And in their uttermost profound I saw
The veil of Love's unalterable law

Lifted, and in the shadow far behind
Dim and divine, within the shadow blind
My own love's face most amorously draw
Out of the deep toward my cloudy mind.

And suddenly I felt a kiss enclose
My whole live body, as a rich red rose
Folding its sweetness round the honey-bee.
I felt a perfect soul embracing me,
And in my spirit like a river flows
A passion like the passion of the sea.

II.

HER STORY.

HE did not kiss me with his mouth ; his eyes
Kissed mine, and mine kissed back ; it was
not wise,
But yet he had the strength to leave me ; so
I was so glad he loved enough to go.

My arms could never have released his neck ;
He saved our honour from a single speck.
And so he went away ; and fate inwove
The bitterest of treason for our love.

For scarce two days when sickness took the King,
And death dissolved the violence of the ring,
I ruled alone ; I left my palace gate
To see if Love should have the laugh at Fate.

And so I violated Death, and died ;
And in the other land my spirit cried
For incarnation ; conquering I came
Within my soulless body as a flame.

Endowing which with sacred power I sought
A little while, as thought that seeks for thought,
And found his changeless love endure as mine,
And all his passion round me as a vine.

So clinging fibres of desire control
My perfect body, and my perfect soul
Shot flakes of light toward him, and my eyes,
Seeking his face, were made divinely wise.

So, solemn, silent, 'mid a merry folk
I bound him by my forehead's silver yoke,
And grew immense about him and within,
And so possessed him wholly, without sin.

For I had crossed the barrier and knew
There was no sin. His lips reluctant grew
Ardent at last as recognizing me,
And love's wild tempest sweeps upon his sea.

And I, I knew not anything, but know
We are still silent, and united so,
And all our being spells one vast To Be,
A passion like the passion of the sea.

THE LEGEND OF BEN LEDI.

ON his couch Imperial Alpin
In majestic grandeur lay,
Dying with the sun that faded
O'er the plain of granite gray.

Snowy white his beard descended,
Flecked with foeman's crimson gore,
And he rose and grasped his broadsword,
And he prayed to mighty Thor :

“ God of thunder, god of battle,
God of pillage and of war,
Hear the King of Scotland dying
On the Leny's thundrous shore !

“ Thrice three hundred have I smitten
With my single arm this day ;
Now of life my soul is weary,
I am old, I pass away.

“ Grant me this, immortal monarch,
Such a tomb as ne'er before,
Such a tomb as never after
Monarch thought or monarch saw.”

Then he called his Sons around him,
And he spake again and cried :
“ Seven times a clansman’s bowshot
Lay me from the Leny’s side.

“ Where the plain to westward sinketh,
Lay me in my tartan plaid,
All uncovered to the tempest,
In my hand my trusty blade.”

Hardly had he spake the order,
When his spirit passed away ;
And his sons their heads uncovered
As they bore him o’er the brae.

Seven times did Phail McAlpine
Bend his mighty bow of yew ;
Seven times with lightning swiftness
West the winged arrow flew.

Seven times a clansman’s bowshot
From the Leny’s western shore,
Laid they him where on to Ach ray
Spread the plain of Ian Vohr.

Hard by Teith’s tumultuous waters
Camped his sons throughout the night,
Till the rosy blush of morning
Showed a vast majestic sight.

Where of late the plain extended
Rose a mighty mass of stone,
Pierced the clouds, and sprang unmeasured
In magnificence—alone !

There the clansmen stood and wondered,
As the rock, supremely dire,
Split and trembled, cracked and thundered,
Lit with living flecks of fire.

Spake the chief : “ My trusty clansmen,
This is not the day of doom ;
This is honour to the mighty ;
Clansmen, this is Alpin’s tomb.”

*Nymphsfield Rectory,
December, 1893.*

A DESCENT OF THE MOENCH.

JULY 14, 1896.

AN island of the mist. White companies
Of clouds thronged wondrously against the
hills,
And in the east a darkening of the winds
That held awhile their breath for very rage,
Too wild for aught but vaporous quivering
Of melting fleeces, while the sudden sun
Fled to his home. Afar the Matterhorn
Reared a gaunt pinnacle athwart the bank,
Where towered behind it one vast pillar of cloud
To thrice its height. Behold the ice-clad dome
On which we stood, all weary of the way,
And marked the east awaken into scorn,
And rush upon us. Then we set our teeth
To force a dangerous passage, and essayed
The steep slope not in vain. We pushed our way
Slowly and careworn down the icy ridge,
Hewing with ponderous strokes the riven ice
In little flakes and chips, and now again
Encountered strange and fearsome sentinels,
Gray pinnacles of lightning-riven rock
Fashioned of fire and night. We clomb adown

Fantastic cliffs of gnarled stone, and saw
The vivid lightning flare in purple robes
Of flame along the ridge, and even heard
Its terrible crackle, 'mid the sullen roar
Of answering thunder. And the driven hail
Beat on our faces, while we strove to fling
Aloft the axe of forged steel, encased
In glittering ice, and smite unceasingly
On the unyielding slope of ice, as black
As those most imminent ghosts of Satan's frown
That shut us out from heaven, while the snow
Froze on our cheeks. And thus we gained the
field

Where precipice and overwhelming rock,
Avalanche, crag, leap through the dazzled air
To pile their mass in one Lethean plain
Of undulations of rolled billowy snow
Rent, seamed, and scarred with wound on jagged
wound,

Blue-rushing to the vague expanse below
O' th' unknown secrecies of mountain song.
Dragging behind us beautiful weary limbs,
We turned snow-blinded eyes towards the pass
That shot a jasper wall above the mist
Into the lightning-kindled firmament,
Behind whose battlements a shelter lay,
Rude-built of pine, whose parents in the storm
Of one vast avalanche were swept away
Into the valley. Thither we hastened on,
And there, as night stretched out a broken wing

Torn by the thunder and the bitter strife
Of warring flames and tempest's wrath, we came
And flung ourselves within, and laid us down
At last to sleep ; and Sleep, a veined shape
Of naked stateliness, came down to us,
And tenderly stooped down, and kissed our brows.

AN ODE.

O VOICE of sightless magic
Clear through day's crystal sky,
Blithe, contemplative, tragic,
As men may laugh or sigh,
As men may love or sorrow,
Their moods thy music borrow
To bid them live or die.
So sweet, so sad, so lonely,
In silent noontide only
Thy song-wings float and lie
On cloud-foam scarred and riven
By God's red lightnings shriven,
And quiet hours are given
To him that lingers nigh.

Fain would I linger near thee
Amid the poppies red,
Forget this world, and hear thee
As one among the dead,
Amid the daffadillies,
Red tulips and white lilies,
Where daisies' tears are shed

Where larkspur and cornflower
Are blue with sunlight's hour,
 And all the earth is spread
As in a dream before me,
While steals divinely o'er me
Love's scented spring to draw me
 From moods of dreamy dread.

O wingèd passion ! Traveler
 Too near to God to see !
O lyrical unraveller
 Of knotted life to me !
O song ! O shining river
Of thought and sound ! O giver
 Of goodly words of glee !
Like to a star that singeth,
A flower that incense bringeth,
 A love-song of the free !
Oh ! let me sing thy glories
While spring winds whisper stories
Of winter past, whose shore is
 Beyond a shoreless sea.

Spring, with the sea for raiment
 Adorned with winds of night ;
Summer, with fruit for payment
 Of a sun's kiss too bright ;
Autumn, with golden tresses ;
Winter, with wildernesses
 Of steel-black frost, and might

Of crystals for his garland,
Are fled beyond the starland
 On wings beyond sound and sight.
Only desire remaineth
That death's bright chalice draineth
Of blood-red wine that staineth
 The brow of love with light.

World in thy music fadeth
 To what is scarce a sleep,
Life's darkest shadow shadeth
 Memories that chide and weep,
Only delights grow clearer,
More exquisite and nearer,
 And new life-arteries leap
To fresh loves, into being,
From blindness into seeing,
 Beyond God's mountains steep.
The words of promise spoken
Flourish and flower unbroken,
And for His holy token
 The mirror of the deep.

Sing on, thou lyric lover,
 Sing on, and thrill me long
With such delights as cover
 The days and deeds of wrong.
Live lyre of songs immortal
That pierce Heaven's fiery portal
 With shafts of splendour strong,

Winged with thought's sharpest fires,
 Arrowed with soul's desires
 And sped from thunder's thong ;
 Heaven's gates rock, rage, and quiver,
 Earth's walls gape wide and shiver,
 While Freedom doth deliver
 Men's spirits with thy song.

Ah, chainless, distant, fleeting,
 To lands that know no sea,
 Where ocean's stormy greeting
 Fills no man's heart with glee ;
 Where lovers die or sever,
 And death destroys for ever
 And God bears slavery.
 Fly thither, so thou leave us
 That no man's hand may reave us
 Of this—that we are free.
 Free all men that may heed thee,
 On freemen's praises feed thee,
 Who chorus full, “ God speed thee,
 Live lyre of Liberty ! ”

And me, ah ! float above me
 Unseen in limpid air,
 Sing ever, “ Love me, love me,”
 Or ever I despair.
 The longings thou hast given
 With death and dust have striven
 And risen doubly fair.

The joys thy song createth
No languorous spirit sateth,
Nor things that are or were,
Nor death, nor sorrows fated,
May leave their sweet abated,
With thy bright spirit mated,
White warden of the air.

DREAMS.

WHAT words are these that shudder through
 my sleep,
 Changing from silver into crimson flakes,
 And molten into gold
 Like the pale opal through those gray may sweep
 A scarlet flame, like eyes of crested snakes,
 Keen, furious, and too cold.

What words are these ? The pall of slumber lifts ;
 The veil of finiteness withdraws. The night
 Is heavier, life burns low :
 Yet to the quivering brain three goodly gifts
 The cruelty of Pluto and his might
 In the abyss bestow :

Change, foresight, fear. The pageant whirls and boils ;
 Restricted not by space an time, my dream
 Foresees the doom of Fate ;
 My spirit wrestles in the Dream-King's toils
 Always in vain, and Hope's forerunners gleam
 Always one step too late.

Not as when sunlight strikes the counterpane ;
Half wakening, sleep rolls back her iron wave,
And dawn brings blithesomeness ;
Not as when opiates lull the tortured brain
And sprinkle lotus on the drowsy grave
Of earth's old bitterness ;

But as when consciousness half rouses up
And hurls back all the gibbering harpy crowd ;
And sleep's draught deepeneth,
And all the furies of hell's belly sup
In the brain's palaces, and chant aloud
Songs that foretaste of Death.

Maddened, the brain breaks from beneath the goad,
Flings off again the foe, and from its hell
Brings for a moment peace,
Till weariness and her infernal load
Of phantom memory-shapes return to quell
The shaken fortresses.

Till nature reassert her empery,
And the full tide of wakefulness at last
Foam on the shore of sleep
To beat the white cliffs of reality
In vain, because their windy strength is past,
And only memories weep.

Why is the Finite real ? And that world
So larger, so more beautiful and fleet,
So free, so exquisite,

The world of dreams and shadows, not impearled
 With solitary shaft of Truth ? Too sweet,
 O children of the Night,

Are your wide realms for our philosophers,
 Who must in hard gray balance-shackles bind
 The essence of all thought :
 No sorrier sexton in a grave inters
 The nobler children of a poet's mind
 Of wine and gold well wrought.

By the poor sense of touch they judge that this
 Or that is real or not. Have they divined
 This simplest spirit-bond,
 The joy of some bad woman's deadly kiss ;
 The thought-flash that well tunes a lover's mind
 Seas and gray gulfs beyond ?

So that which is impalpable to touch,
 They judge by touch ; the viewless they decide
 By sight ; their logic fails,
 Their jarring jargon jingles—even such
 An empty brazen pot—wise men deride
 The clouds that mimic whales.

My world shall be my dreams. Religion there
 And duty may disturb me not at all ;
 Nor doubts, nor fear of death.
 I straddle on no haggard ghostly mare ;
 Yea, through my God, I have leapt o'er a wall !
 (As poet David saith.)

The wall that ever girds Earth's thought with brass
Is all a silver path my feet beneath,
And o'er its level sward
Of sea-reflecting white flowers and fresh grass
I walk. Man's darkness is a leathern sheath,
Myself the sun-bright sword !

I have no fear, nor doubt, nor sorrow now,
For I give Self to God—I give my best
Of soul and blood and brain
To my poor Art—there comes to me somehow
This fact ; Man's work is God made manifest ;
Life is all Peace again.

And Dreams are beyond life. Their wider scope,
Limitless Empire o'er the world of thought,
Help my desires to press
Beyond all stars toward God and Heaven and Hope ;
And in the world-amazing chase is wrought
Somehow—all Happiness.

THE DREAMING DEATH.

“ Then to me lying awake a vision
Came without sleep over the seas and touched me.”

SWINBURNE, *Sapphics*.

MY beauty in thy deep pure love
Anchors its homage far above
All lights of heaven. The stars awake ;
The very stars bend down to take
From its fresh fragrance for the sake
Of their own cloud-compelling peace.
On earth there lies a silver fleece
Of new-fallen snow, secure from sun,
In alleys, leafy every one
This year already with the spring.
The breeze blows freshly, thrushes sing,
And all the woods are burgeoning
With quick new buds ; across the snow
The scent of violets to and fro
Wafts at the hour of dawn. Alone
I wait, a figure turned to stone
(Or salt for pain). A week ago
Thine arms embraced me ; now I know
Far off they clasp the empty air :

NOTE.—The scene of this poem is a little spinney near the wooden bridge in Love Lane, Cambridge.

Thy lips seek home, and in despair
Lament aloud over the frosted moor.
Sad am I, sad, albeit sure
There is no change of God above
And no abatement of our love.
For still, though thou be gone, I see
In the glad mirror secretly
That I am beautiful in thee.
Thy love irradiates my eyes,
Tints my skin gold ; its melodies
Of music run over my face ;
Smiles envy kisses in the race
To bathe beneath my eyelids. Light
Clothes me and circles with the might
Of warmer rosier suns. Thy kiss
Dwells on my bosom, and it is
A glittering mount of fire, that burns
Incense unnamed to heaven, and yearns
In smoke toward thy home. Desire
Bellies the sails of molten fire
Upon the ship of Youth with wind
Urgently panting out behind,
Impatient till the strand appear
And the blue sea have ceased to rear
Fountains of foam against the prow.
Hail ! I can vision even now
That golden shore. A lake of light
Burns to the sky ; above, the night
Hovers, her wings grown luminous.
(I think she dearly loveth us.)

The sand along the glittering shore
Is all of diamond ; rivers pour
Unceasing floods of light along,
Whose virtue is so bitter strong
That he who bathes within them straight
Rises an angel to the gate
Of heaven and enters as a king.
Birds people it on varied wing
Of rainbow ; fishes gold and fine
Dart like bright stars through fount and brine,
And all the sea about our wake
Foams with the silver water-snake.
There is a palace veiled in mist.
A single magic amethyst
Built it ; the incense soothly sighs ;
So the light stream upon it lies.
There thou art dwelling. I am ware
The music of thine eyes and hair
Calls to the wind to chase our ship
Faster toward ; the waters slip
Smoothly and swift beneath the keel.
The pulses of the vessel feel
I draw toward thee ; now the sails
Hang idly, for the golden gales
Drop as the vessel grates the sand.
Come, thou true love, and hold my hand !
I tremble (for my love) to land.
I feel thy arms around me steal ;
Thy breath upon my cheeks I feel ;
Thy lips draw out to mine : the breath

Of ocean grows as still as death ;
The breezes swoon for very bliss.
The sacrament of true love's kiss
Accomplishes : I feel a pain
Stab my heart through and sleep again,
And I am in thine arms for ever.

* * * * *

There came a tutor, who had never
Known the response of love to love ;
He wandered through the woods above
The river, and came suddenly
Where he lay sleeping. Purity
And joy beyond the speech of man
Dwelt on his face, divinely wan.
“ How beautiful is sleep ! ” he saith,
Bends over him. There is no breath,
No sound, no motion : it is death.
And gazing on the happy head
“ How beautiful is Death ! ” he said.

A SONNET IN SPRING.

O CHAINLESS Love, the frost is in my brain,
Whose swift desires and swift intelligence
Are dull and numb to-day ; because the sense
Only responds to the sharp key of pain.
O free fair Love, as welcome as the rain
On thirsty fallows, come, and let us hence
Far where the veil of Summer lies immense,
A haze of heat on ocean's purple plain.

O wingless Love, let us away together
Where the sure surf rings round the beaten strand ;
Where the sky stands, a dome of flawless weather,
And the stars join in one triumphal band,
Because we broke the inexorable tether
That bound our passion with an iron hand.

DE PROFUNDIS.

BLOOD, mist, and foam, then darkness. On my
 eyes
Sits heaviness, the poor worn body lies
 Devoid of nerve and muscle ; it were death
Save for the heart that throbs, the breast that sighs.

The brain reels drowsily, the mind is dulled,
Deadened and drowned by noises that are lulled
 By the harsh poison of the hateful breath.
All sense and sound and seeing is annulled.

Within a body dead a deadened brain
Beats with the burden of a shameful pain,
 The sullen agony that dares to think,
And think through sleep, and wake to think again.

Fools ! bitter fools ! Our breaths and kisses seem
Constrained in devilry, debauch, and dream :
 Lives logged in the morass of meat and drink,
Loves dipped in Phlegethon, the perjured stream.

Behold we would that hours and minutes pass,
Watch the sands falling in the eager glass ;
 To wile their weariness is pleasure's bliss ;
But ah ! the years ! like smoke They fade, alas !

We weep them as they slip away ; we gaze
Back on the likeness of the former days—
 The hair we fondle and the lips we kiss—
Roses grow yellow and no purple stays.

Ah ! the old years ! Come back, ye vanished hours
We wasted ; come, grow red, ye faded flowers !
 What boots the weariness of olden time
Now, when old age, a tempest-fury, lowers ?

Up to high God beyond the weary land
The days drift mournfully ; His hoary hand
 Gathers them. Is it so ? My foolish rhyme
Dreams they are links upon an endless band.

The planets draw in endless orbits round
The sun ; itself revolves in the profound
 Deep wells of space ; the comet's mystic track
By the strong rule of a closed curve is bound.

Why not with time ? To-morrow we may see
The circle ended—if to-morrow be—
 And gaze on chaos, and a week bring back
Adam and Eve beneath the apple tree.

Or, like the comet, the wild race may end
 Out into darkness, and our circle bend
 Round to all glory in a sudden sweep,
 And speed triumphant with the sun to friend.

Love will not leave my home. She knows my tears,
 My angers and caprices ; still my ears
 Listen to singing voices, till I weep
 Once more, less sadly, and set hounds on fears.

She will not leave me comfortless. And why ?
 Through the dimmed glory of my clouded eye
 She catches one sharp glint of love for her :
 She will not leave me ever till I die :—

Nay, though I die ! Beyond the distant gloom
 Heaven springs, a fountain, out of Change's womb !
 Time would all men within the grave inter :—
 For Time himself shall no god find a tomb ?

Glory and love and work precipitate
 The end of man's desire—so sayeth Fate.
 Man answers : Love is stronger, work more sure,
 Glory more fadeless than her shafts abate.

Though all worlds fail, the pulse of Life be still,
 God fall, all darken, she hath not her will
 Of deeds beyond recall, that shall endure :
 For us, these three divinest glasses fill,

Fill to the brim with lustrous dew, nor fail
 To leave the blossom and the nightingale,
 Love's earlier kiss, and manhood's glowing prime,
 These us suffice. Shall man or Fate prevail ?

Lo, we are blind, and dubious fingers grope
 In Despair's dungeon for the key of Hope ;
 Lo, we are chained, and with a broken rhyme
 Would file our fetters and enlarge our scope.

Yet ants may move the mountain ; none is small
 But he who stretches out no arm at all ;
 Toadstools have wrecked fair cities in a night,
 One poet's song may bid a kingdom fall.

Add to thy fellow-men one ounce of aid—
 The block begins to shift, the start is made :
 The rest is thine ; with overwhelming might
 The balance changes, and the task is paid.

Join'st thou thy feeble hands in foolish prayer
 To him thy brain hath moulded and set there
 In thy brain's heaven ? Such a god replies
 As thy fears move. So men pray everywhere.

What God there be, is real. By His might
 Begot the universe within the night ;
 If he had prayed to His own mind's weak lies
 Think'st thou the heaven and earth had stood upright ?

Remember Him, but smite ! No workman hews
His stone aright whose nervy arms refuse
 To ply the chisel, but are raised to ask
A visionary foreman he may choose

From the distortions of a sodden mind.
God did first work on earth when woman-kind
 He chipped from Adam's rib—a thankless task
I wot His wisdom has long since repined.

Christ touched the leper and the widow's son ;
And thou wouldst serve the work the Perfect One
 Began, by folding arms and gazing up
To heaven, as if thy work were rightly done.

I tell thee, He should say, if ye were met :
“ Thou hadst a talent—ah, thou hast it yet
 Wrapped in a napkin ! thou shalt drain the cup
Of that damnation that may not forget

“ The wasted hours ! ” Ah, bitter interest
Of our youth's capital—forgotten zest
 In all the pleasures of o'erflowing life,
Wine tasteless, tired the brain, and cold the breast !

Ah ! but if with it is one good deed wrought,
One kind word spoken, one immortal thought
 Born in thee, all is paid ; the weary strife
Grows victory. “ Love is all and Death is nought.”

Such an one wrote that word as I would meet,
 Lay my life's burden at his silver feet,
 Have him give ear if I say " Master." Yea !
 I know no heaven, no honour, half so sweet !

He passed before me on the wheel of Time,
 He who knows no Time—the intense sublime
 Master of all philosophy and play,
 Lord of all love and music and sweet rhyme.

Follow thou him ! Work ever, if thy heart
 Be fervent with one hope, thy brain with art,
 Thy lips with song, thine arm with strength to
 smite :
 Achieve some act ; its name shall not depart.

Christ laid Love's corner-stone, and Caesar built
 The tower of glory ; Sappho's life was split
 From fervent lips the torch of song to ignite :
 Thou mayst add yet a stone—if but thou wilt.

And yet the days stream by ; night shakes the day
 From his pale throne of purple, to allay
 The tremors of the earth ; day smiteth dark
 With the swift poignard dipped in Helios' ray.

The days stream by ; with lips and cheeks grown
 pale
 On their indomitable breast we sail.
 There is a favouring wind ; our idle bark
 Lingers, we raise no silk to meet the gale.

The bank slips by, we gather not its fruit,
We plant no seed, we irrigate no root
True men have planted ; and the tare and thorn
Spring to rank weedy vigour ; poisons shoot

Into the overspreading foliage ;
So as days darken into weary age
The flowers are fewer ; the weeds are stronger
born
And hands are grown too feeble to assuage

Their venom ; then, the unutterable sea !
Is she green-cinctured with the earlier tree
Of Life ? Do blossoms blow, or weeds create
A foul rank undergrowth of misery ?

From the deep water of the bitterest brine
Drowned children raise their arms ; their lips combine
To force a shriek ; bid them go contemplate
The cold philosophy of Zeno's shrine ?

Nay, stretch a hand ! Although their eagle clutch
O'erturn thy skiff, yet it is overmuch
To grieve for that : life is not so divine—
I count it little grief to part with such !

We are wild serpents in a ring of fire ;
Our necks stretch out, our haggard eyes aspire
In desperation ; from the fearful line
Our coils revulse in impotence and ire.

An idle song it was the poet sang,
 A quavering note—no brazen kettle's clang,
 But gentle, drooping, tearful. Nay, achieve !
 I can remember how the finish rang

Clear, sharp, and loud ; the harp is glad to die
 And give the clarion one note silver-high.
 It was too sweet for music, and I weave
 In vain the tattered woof of memory.

Ashes and dust !
 Cold cinders dead !
 Our swords are rust ;
 Our lives are fled
 Like dew on glass.
 In vain we lust ;
 Our hopes are sped,
 Alas ! alas !
 From heaven we are thrust, we have no more trust.
 Alas !

Gold hairs and gray !
 Red lips and white !
 Warm hearts, cold clay !
 Bright day, dim night !
 Our spirits pass
 Like the hours away.
 We have no light,
 Alas ! alas !
 We have no more day, we are fain to say
 Alas !

In Love's a cure
 For Fortune's hate ;
 In Love's a lure
 Shall laugh at Fate ;
 We have toiled Death's knell ;
 All streams are pure ;
 We are new-create ;
 All's well, all's well !
 We have God to endure, we are very sure
 All's well !

In such wise rang the challenge unto Death
 With clear high eloquence and happy breath ;
 So did a brave sad heart grow glad again
 And mock the riddle that the dead Sphinx saith.

When I am dead, remember me for this
 That I bade workers work, and lovers kiss ;
 Laughed with the Stoic at the dream of pain,
 And preached with Jesus the evangel—bliss.

When I am dead, think kindly. Frail my song ?
 'Twas the poor utterance of an eager tongue ;
 I stutter in my rhyme ? my heart was full
 Of greater longings, more divinely wrung

By love and pity and regret and trust,
 High hope from heaven that God will be just,
 Spurn not the child because his mind was dull,
 Still less condemn him for his father's lust.

Yet I think priests shall answer Him in vain :
Their gospel of disgrace, disease, and pain,
 Shall move His heart of Love to such a wrath—
O Heart ! Turn back and look on Love again !

Behold, I have seen visions, and dreamed dreams !
My verses eddy in slow wandering streams,
 Veer like the wind, and know no certain path—
Yet their worst shades re tinged with dawning
 beams !

I have dreamed life a circle or a line,
Called God, and Fate, and Chance, and Man, divine.
 I know not all I say, but through it all
Mark the dim hint of ultimate sunshine !

Remember me for this ! And when I go
To sleep the last sleep in the slumberous snow,
 Let child and man and woman yet recall
One little moment that I loved you so !

Let some high pinnacle my tombstone be,
My epitaph the murmur of the sea,
 The clouds of heaven be fleeces for my pall,
My unknown grave the cradle of the free.

Without much strength but ever unafraid
I sang to boy and man, to wife and maid ;
 And my last whisper was, “ Though shadows fall,
Love is triumph with a God to aid ! ”

TWO SONNETS.

ON HEARING THE MUSIC OF BRAHMS AND
TSCHAIKOWSKY.*To C. G. LAMB.*

MY soul is aching with the sense of sound
Whose angels trumpet in the angry air ;
Wild maenads with their fiery snakes enwound
In the black waves of my abundant hair.
Now hath my life a little respite found
In the brief pauses exquisite and rare ;
In the strong chain of music I am bound,
And all myself before myself lies bare.

Drown me, oh, drown me in your fiery stream !
Wing me new visions, fierce enchanting birds !
Peace is less dear than this delirious fight !
For all the glowing fragrance of a dream
And all the sudden ecstasy of words
Deluge my spirit with a lake of light

The constant ripple of your long white hands,
The soul-tormenting violin that speaks
Truth, and enunciates all my soul seeks,
That binds my love in its desirous bands,
And clutches at my heart, until there stands
No fibre yet unshaken, while it wreaks
In one sharp song the agony of weeks,
And all my soul and body understands.

The music changes, and I know that here,
In these new melodies, a tongue of fire
Leaps at each waving of the silver spear ;
And all my sorrow dons delight's attire
Because the gate of heaven is so near,
And I have comprehended my desire.

A VALENTINE.

(Feb 14, 1897.)

WHY did you smile when the summer was dying
If it were not that the hours
Might bring in winter, while sad winds are sighing,
Some of Love's flowers ?

Now is beginning of spring, and I ask not
Roses to flame o'er the lawn—
Who should know better that peonies bask not
In the sun's dawn ?

Still, through the snow, it may be there is peeping
Veiled from the kiss of the sun
One lone white violet, daintily sleeping,
Hard to be won.

So with my fairy white maiden (you hear me ?)
Winter may yet pass away ;
Spring may arrive, (will it find your heart near me ?)
Summer may stay.

Passionate roses I seek not, whose glories
Now are too fierce for the spring,
While the white flames of the frost flake that hoar is
Flicker, on wing.

Only a primrose, a violet laden
With the pale perfume of dawn ;
Only a snowdrop, my delicate maiden ;
These have no thorn.

Old-fashioned love, yet you feel it a fountain
Springing for ever, most pure ;
Old-fashioned love, yet as adamant mountain
Solid and sure.

Yes, tender thoughts on your lips will be breaking
By-and-by into a smile ;
Love, ere he springs up divine at his waking,
Slumbers awhile.

So, my kissed snowdrop, you took its white blossom
Tenderly into your hand,
Kissed it three times, wear it yet in your bosom—
I understand.

ODE TO POESY.

UNTO what likeness shall I liken thee,
O moon-wrought maiden of my dewy sleep ?
For thou art Queen of Thoughts, and unto me
Sister and Bride ; the worn earth's echoes leap
Because thy holy name is Poesy.
Whereto art thou most like ?
Thou art a Dian, crescent o'er the sea
That beats sonorous on the craggy shore,
Or shakes the frail earth-dyke.
So calm and still and far, that never more
Thy silken song shall quiver through the land ;
Only by coral isle, by lonely strand
Where no man dwells, thy voice re-wakens wild and
grand.

Thou art an Aphrodite. From the foam
Of golden grape and red thou risest up
Immaculate ; thou hast an ebon comb
Of shade and silence, and a jasper cup
Wherein are mingled all desires. Thine home
Is in the forest shade.

Thy pale feet kiss the daffodils ; they roam
 By moss-grown springs, and shake the bluebell tips.
 Each flower of the deep glade
 Has whispered kisses for thy listening lips,
 While Eos blushes in the sky, to find
 A fairer, queenlier maiden, and as kind
 To man and maid, whose eyes are lit by the same
 mind.

Thou hast, as Pallas hath, a polished shield,
 Whose Gorgon-head is Hatred, and a sword
 Sharper than Love's. Thy wisdom is revealed
 To them who love, but thou hast aye abhorred
 The children of revenge ; to them is sealed
 Thy book, so clear to me.
 Thy book where seven sins their sceptres wield,
 And seven sorrows track them, and one joy
 Cancels their infamy ;
 Shame and regret are fused to an alloy,
 Whose drossy weight sinks down and is consumed,
 While o'er the ruddy metal is relumed
 A purer flame of piece, with knowledge now per-
 fumed.

Thy ways are very bitter. Not one rose
 Twines in the crown of thorns thy spouse must
 wear ;
 There is no Lethe for the scoffs, the blows,
 Nor find they a Cyrenian anywhere

Amid the mob, to lift my cross, to share
Its burden : not one friend
Whose love were silence, whose affection knows
To press my hand and close my dying eyes
There, at the endless end.

I am alone on earth, and from the skies
Sometimes I seem so far—and yet, thy kiss
Re-quickens Hope ; through aether's emptiness
Thou guidest me to touch the Hand of Him who Is.

Thou hadst a torch to lume my lips to song ;
Thou hast a cooler fountain for my thirst,
Lest my young love should work thy fame a wrong ;
So the grape's veins in purple ardour burst,
And opiates in bloomless gardens throng,
And Life, a moon, wanes fast ;
But to thy garden richer buds belong
And hardier flowers, and Love, a deathless sun,
Flames eager to the last,
And young desires in fleeter revels run,
And life revives, and all the flowers rejoice,
Bird and light butterfly have made their choice,
Creation hymns its God with an united voice.

There is a storm without. The hoary trees
Stagger ; the foam is angry on the sea :
I know the secret mountains are at ease,
And in the deepest ice-embroidery
Where great men's spirits linger there is peace.
Heed not the unquiet wind !

Dawn's finger shall be raised, its wrath shall cease,
 The sun shall rouse us whom the tempest lulled,
 And thy poor poet's mind
 For respite by its own deep anguish dulled
 Shall wake again to watch the cruel day
 Drift slowly on its chill and wasted way
 With but thy smile to inspire some sad melodious lay.

From whose rude caverns sweep these gusty wings
 That shake the steeples as they mock at God ?
 Who reared the stallion wind ? Whose foaling flings
 The billows starward ? Whose the steeds fire-shod
 That sweep throughout the world ? What spearman
 sings
 The fearful chant of war
 That fires, and spurs, and maddens all the kings
 That rule o'er the earth, and air, and ocean ?
 Whose hand excites the star
 To shatter into fiery flakes ? No man,
 No petty god, but One who governs all,
 Slips the sun's leash, perceives the sparrow's fall,
 Too high for man to fear, too near for man to call.

O virgin Poesy, the link is thine
 To bring us near ; the suffering of thy path
 Hath its reward, desire that is divine
 Strengthens and gladdens, and thy beauty hath
 This joy moreover—It is strong as wine
 And sweet as honey is.

For at the end, beyond the bitter brine,
A fountain of sweet water ! And thine arms
Embrace me, and thy kiss
Is ever on my lips, and all thy charms
Burn in my blood till pain itself grows sweet,
Reluctant sorrow and quick passion meet ;
We two one day will kneel in Heaven and touch
God's feet.

SONNETS.

TO THE AUTHOR OF THE PHRASE : " I AM NOT A
GENTLEMAN AND I HAVE NO FRIENDS."

I.

S ELF-DAMNED, the leprous moisture of thy
veins
Sickens the sunshine, and thine haggard eyes,
Bleared with their own corrupting infamies,
Glare through the charnel-house of earthly pains.
Horrible as already in hell. There reigns
The terror of the knowledge of the lies
That mock thee ; thy death's double destinies
Clutch at the throat that sobs, and chokes, and strains.

Self-damned on earth, live out thy tortured days,
That men may look upon thy face, and see
How vile a thing of woman born may be.
Then, we are done with thee ; go, go thy ways
To other hells, thou damned of God hereafter,
'Mid men's contempt and hate and pitiless laughter.

II.

Lust, impotence, and knowledge of thy soul,
And that foreknowledge, fill the fiery lake
Of lava where thy lazar corpse shall break
The burning surface to seek out a goal
More horrible, unspeakable. The scroll
Opens, and "coward, liar, monster" shake
Those other names of "goat" and "swine" and
"snake"
Wherewith Hell's worms caress thee and control.

Nay, but alone, intolerably alone,
Alone, as here, thy carrion soul shall swelter,
Yearning in vain for sleep, or death, or shelter ;
No release possible, no respite known !
Self-damned, without a friend, thy eternal place
Sweats through the painting of thy harlot's face.

At the hour of the eclipse, Wednesday, Dec. 28.

SONNET.

A DREAM

C OOL winds are blowing on the healthy brac.
It is the time of night—the world is wrought
For starry contemplation—gusts of thought
Surge in the vast. Before my vision lay
New oceans gemmed about with sun-bright isles,
Peopled with creatures girded up with gold,
Women men's love made glorious to behold,
Men clad with sunshine of fair women's smiles,
Fountains of purity and fadeless youth.
With a glad heart I turned my steps to seek
Their starry groves and streams. A scroll unfurled
A cloud from heaven : “ This people loveth truth.”
I rose and hid my tear-bespangled cheek.
Woe's me ! For I had dreamed it was the world.

THE EVE OF LOVE.

THE sun from the black of the sky unveiled,
The rain and the clouds are dispersed to the
 sea,
He strides through the heaven, a knight brightly
 mailéd
The earth is rejoiced and the fountains are free,
 Leaping, cascades of new song.
Music and myrtle are bound in the forehead
 Golden of dawn's herald strong ;
The sea basks below in the atmosphere torrid,
 Waiting and waiting a lover.
All men despise her : a woman once found
Joy in the kisses whereby she was drowned,
 Love in her death to discover.

I, in the pæan of earth, air, and ocean,
 Join and laugh, loud for the love of my heart ;
Throbs the loud air with my throes of emotion ;
 Love hath prevailed with the adamant dart
 Poisoned, a tooth of a snake ;
They shall grow in my breast and divide me with
 longing
 Dead and asleep and awake.

In my veins all their daughters with joy shall be
 thronging
 Burning my blood with desire ;
 Aye, for I love, with a passion untamed,
 Love, like a tiger, unfed, unashamed,
 Love, like a river of fire.

Love, like a fountain of diamonds, uprises,
 Striking the sky with its blossom of flame ;
 Dews of the grass with a sound of acclaim ;
 Singing, a silver-string lyre,
 Magical chants to awake from their prison
 Spirits to answer desire.
 Demons from palaces fiery arisen
 Now to obey us are flying ;
 All the old leaves of the winter fall fast,
 Swept by the wide-waving wing of the blast
 On to a haven undying.

Here, on the breast of the summer, reposes
 Lover by lover, together, alone.
 Here do I rest, in a garden of roses,
 Here, in the heaven of earth, with my own.
 Earth in our joy is rejoicing.
 Dances the sun as we kiss in his despite ;
 Star unto star still is voicing
 Marvels of song still is voicing
 Tunes her low lute to the even,
 While we lie still, as eternities wend

Slowly along to their ultimate end,
We but indwelling the heaven.

You on my breast your dear forehead reclining,
You with an arm to encircle my head ;
You with your eyes all my secret divining
Rest in my love, as divine as the dead.
Peace is the prize of our passion.
Love springs unfading, a flower unfolding
Petals of marvellous fashion ;
Scarlet and green to our eyes unbeholding,
Fixed on each other so deep ;
Only the light of them flushes our being,
Fills us with music and silence, but seeing
Love, and the vision of Sleep.

THE MORNING OF DISILLUSION-
MENT.

THE Eve of Love has faded
To this unhallowed morn ;
Of which these laughters shaded
With bitterness are born,
With tears and cruel sighing
The day springs up undying
Toward the crucifying
Of Love with nails of scorn.

Nailed to a cross of iron
My bleeding bosom hangs ;
Love's serpents all environ
My heart with tameless fangs.
Unshaken, tortured, stricken
By agonies that thicken
I hang, and sweat, and sicken,
With miserable pangs.

I found out Love new-risen
From seas I thought had slain
His passion in their prison,
And girt their icy chain.

But on their foam did revel
The likeness of a devil
To work me bitter evil,
 This unredeeming pain.

Here cruel winds and biting
 Descend upon the wold ;
Here frost and snow are smiting
 The sons of earth with cold.
The raw air steams and shivers
Above the sluggish rivers,
And birds are dumb, the givers
 Of melodies untold.

Here death has quite forgotten
 An eager lover waits
To pass in yonder rotten
 Black boat his icy gates.
He will not free his lover
Till Proserpine discover
How near he hangs above her,
 And yearns towards the Fates.

Nor life nor death will hear him,
 Nor God nor Satan aid ;
Though Love no more endear him,
 Nor Passion make afraid.
Too cold, too calm, too holy
He stands, consuming slowly
In the strong flame that wholly
 Absorbs his vital shade.

Now Heaven and Hell reject him,
And Earth refuses home ;
He knows not to direct him
To Lesbos or to Rome.
His life he sees unhidden,
A sea of waves unhidden,
Devouring things forbidden
In sacramental foam.

Here come “ the loves that wither,”
And here their heaviest wings
Droop, and “ dead years draw hither
And all disastrous things.”
Pure loves that flowered never,
True loves that none might sever,
The flame that burns for ever,
Love’s ruined water-springs.

Oh, Death ! draw nigh, deliver
My passion from its band ;
Draw nigh, until I shiver
At thy most holy hand.
For Earth’s desires have fled me,
And Earth’s distrusts have fed me,
And Love has come, and shed me
As water upon sand.

Postscript. The Twilight of Eternal Hope.

And yet—perhaps to-morrow
Response and joy and tears ;
A respite unto sorrow,
A putting-by of fears.
A hope and a beginning
Of sweet long days of sinning,
While graying hairs and thinning
Mark the unnoticed years.

A time for song and laughter,
And tender tears that fall ;
A time to think of after,
One long sweet festival ;
A time for love and gladness,
For life and hope and madness,
And scarce a tinge of sadness
To sanctify it all.

Then we may yet, together,
Indwell the land of bliss ;
In blue unclouded weather
By some new Salmacis.
A land where Love engages
Life sweeter than the sage's,
Where cling we through the ages
In one immortal kiss.

BESIDE THE RIVER.

RAIN, rain in May. The river sadly flows,
 A sullen silver crossed with sable bars,
 Damp, gloomy, shivering, while reluctant stars,
 Between swart masses of thick clouds that close,
 Drive with drooped plumes their winged cars
 Toward sleep, the scythe of woes.

Woes, woes in Spring. Ere summer deepeneth
 The pink of roses to a purpler tint ;
 Ere ripening corn shafts back the sudden glint
 Of sunshine that brings healing with the breath
 Of western winds that sigh, they hint
 Of sleep, twin soul with death.

Death, death ere dawn. The night is over dark ;
 Trees are grown terrible ; the shadows wan
 Make shudder all the tense desires of man ;
 No gleam of moonlight bears the golden mark
 Of sunny lips, nor shines upon
 Our sleep—Love's birchen bark.

Love, love to-night. To-night is all we know,
Is all our care ; lips joined to lips we lie,
Tender hands touching, hearts in tune to die,
With willing kiss reluctant to let go ;
So sweet love's last enduring sigh
For sleep, so sure, so slow.

Sleep, sleep to-night. Our arms are intertwined ;
Breath desires breath and hand imprisons hand ;
Breezes cool faces, rosy with the brand
Of long sweet kisses ; sun shall dawn and find
Two lovers who have passed the land
Of sleep—and found Death kind.

MAN'S HOPE.

HERE fades the last red glimmer of the sun ;
Ere day is night, when on the glittering bar
The waves are foaming rubies, and afar
Streaks of red water, gold on the horizon,
On summer ripples rhythmically run ;
Ere dusk is weaned, there sails on silver car
From the expectant East, the evening Star ;
And all the threads of sorrow are unspun.

So He who ordered this shall still work thus,
And ere life's lamp shall flicker into death,
And Time lose all his empire over us,
A gleam of Hope, of Knowledge, shall arise,
A star to silver o'er Death's glooming skies,
And gladden the last labouring torch of breath.

SONNET.

FOR G. F. KELLY'S DRAWING OF AN HERM-
APHRODITE.

O BODY pale and beautiful with sin !
O breasts with venom swollen by the snakes
Of passion, whose cold slaver slimes and slakes
Thy soul-consuming fevers that within
Thy heart the fires of hell on earth begin !
O heart whose yearning after truth forsakes
The law of love ! O heart whose ocean breaks
In sterile foam against some golden skin !

O thou whose body is one perfect prayer,
One long regret, one agony of shame,
Lost in the fragrance, speeding, subtle and rare,
Up to the sky, an avenue of flame !
My soul, thy body, in the same sin curled,
With vivid lust annihilate the world.

“ PERFECT LOVE CASTETH OUT
FEAR. ”

E NGLAND is dreary. In the ashen sky
 I see no sign that the sun will break again,
 And force the clouds to yield their rapid rain,
 And utterly absorb our misery.
 Dull as the day is, in my heart I feel
 An anguish, chill and adamant as steel,
 And, like a mist of poison, heavily
 On my whole soul, bound down upon the wheel,
 There comes a spectre, dead, whose name is Fear.
 Ah God, he comes so near !

in the pale fear of Death I have no share.
 I am through Love triumphant over him ;
 I almost yearn toward the stooping brim,
 And fledge the wings my soul is given to wear,
 And float in sunlight to the dome above,
 Clothed in the light of everlasting Love,
 Till an archangel from the golden stair
 Trumpet me out a welcome, and a dove
 With fiery feet and silver kisses come
 To bid me enter home.

Though for the pleasures of God's house my heart
Has no distaste, yet, should my Love reign
The lips and langours it has made as mine
And of our Godhead sacrifice a part ?
Death were a grief, a parting pang to me,
And nor this Fear that hunts relentlessly
All thoughts about the void, whose veiled dart
Poisons before it strikes ! I would the sea
Swung me about, a corpse inane and cold
On her warm breast of gold !

The Fear of Madness ! Consciousness knows not
Its own decay. I should be happy then,
Cast like a leper from the paths of men,
And this dull earth's desires should be forgot
In my own mind's dear world, where Heaven is blue,
And the green bosom of the land lets through
The purple of the violets, begot
On tears by kisses, where the early dew
Glistens in no sun's beams but in those eyes
Wherein my life-love lies.

The Fear of Hell is past by virtue of
The sweet shed blood that burns out sin ; the Fear
Of living on beyond that silent year
When I shall follow to the grave of love
All that is left of all that I held dear,
And my whole heart is buried with the bier
That is quite hidden with the flowers above—
Jasmine for passion, snowdrop for a tear—

That fear is nothing ; 'twere one strangling pain,
Nor should I feel again.

The Fear of Faithlessness ! But well I know,
Beyond the faith that mortals hold for truth,
That we are wedded, in eternal youth,
In the true marriage. While the rivers flow,
And the sea mourns for Sappho, and the trees
Croon over men their many melodies,
And the sun burns above, and ice and snow
With ermine robes and cloudy canopies
Crown the rock pyramids, and God stands fast
In heaven, our love shall last.

It was the shadow of some cloudy Thing,
That touched my mind a moment, and is past
Into the gloomy kingdom. I may cast
The sandals of the night away, and fling
My body, like a meteor, far and fast
Into the azure, and within the vast
Lift up my voice and eloquently sing,
Till God delight to hear me at the last,
To wed his Love unto my love and me
For a new Trinity !

A WOODLAND IDYLL.

FRESH breath from the woodland blows sweet
O'er the flowery path we are roaming,
On the dimples of light lover's feet
In the mystical charm of the gloaming,
Eveline !
On the buds that blush bright as we meet
In the mystical charm of the gloaming !

A tear for the stars of the night,
And a smile for the avenue shady,
A kiss for the eyelashes bright,
And a blush for the cheek of my lady,
Eveline !
A laugh for the moon and her spite,
And a blush for the cheek of my lady !

We'll tread where the daffodils shake
And the primrose smiles up through her weeping,
Where the daisies dip down to the lake,
Where the wonderful thrushes are sleeping,
Eveline !
By the marge of the maze of the brake
Where the wonderful thrushes are sleeping.

Where the brook trickles clear to the eye
Below dew-spangled frondlets of willow
We will wander to find by-and-by
The sward of our delicate pillow,
Eveline !
Where the mosses so lusciously lie
For the sward of our delicate pillow.

For a bride fairer far than the flower
Is the couch spread by fingers of even,
The blossom of apples for bower,
Its roof-tree the sapphires of heaven,
Eveline !
For the bride of the mystical hour,
Its roof-tree the sapphires of heaven !

With songsters the heavy sweet air
Is trembling and sighing and shimmering,
With meteors magically fair
The sky is ecstatically glimmering,
Eveline !
With splendour and subtlety rare
The sky is ecstatically glimmering.

Sweet bride to fond arms with a sigh,
Strong arms to fond bosom, are twining ;
The winds breathe more musically by ;
The moon has a rosier lining,
Eveline !
The stars grow more dim in the sky,
The moon has a rosier lining.

So, birds, are you shy to awake
Your voices to laughter-tuned numbers ?
So, sun, do you tremble to shake
The dews of the night from our slumbers ?
Eveline !
So, breeze, to reluctant to take
The dews of the night from our slumbers ?

Light breaks, and the breezes caress
Cool limbs and sot eyes and fair faces ;
The nightingales carol to bless
The dawn of our nuptial embraces,
Eveline !
The woods wear a lovelier dress
In the dawn of our nuptial embraces !

PERDURABO.

EXILE from humankind ! The snow's fresh flakes
 Are warmer than men's hearts. my mind is
 wrought
 Into dark shapes of solitary thought
 That loves and sympathises, but awakes
 No answering love or pity. What a pang
 Hath this strange solitude to aggravate
 The self-abasement and the blows of Fate !
 No snake of hell hath so severe a fang !

I am not lower than all men—I feel
 Too keenly. Yet my place is not above,
 Though I have this—unalterable Love
 In every fibre. I am crucified
 Apart on a lone burning crag of steel,
 Tortured, cast out ; and yet—I shall abide.

ON GARRET HOSTEL BRIDGE.

HERE in the evening curl white mists and
wreath in their vapour
All the gray spires of stone, all the immobile towers ;
Here in the twilight gloom dim trees and sleepier
rivers,
Here where the bridge is thrown over the amber
stream.
Chill is the ray that steals from the moon to the
stream that whispers
Secret tales of source, songs of its fountain-head.
Here do I stand in the dusk ; like spectres mournfully
moving
Wisps of the cloud-wreaths form, dissipate into the
mist,
Wrap me in shrouds of gray, chill me and make me
shiver,
Not with the Night alone, not with the sound of her
wing,
Yet with a sense of something vague and unearthly
stalking
(Step after step as I move) me, to annul me, quell

Hope and desire and life, bid light die under my eye-
lids,
 Bid the strong heart despair, quench the desire of
 Heaven.
So I shudder a little ; and my heart goes out to the
 mountains,
 Rock upon rock for a crown, snow like an ermine robe ;
Thunder and lightning free fashioned for speech and
 seeing,
 Pinnacles royal and steep, queen of the arduous
 breast !
Ye on whose icy bosom, passionate, at the sunrise,
 Ye in whose wind-swept hollows, lulled in the moon
 rise clear,
Often and oft I struggled, a child with an angry mother,
 Often and oft I slept, maid in a lover's arms.
Back to ye, back, wild towers, from this flat and deso-
late fenland,
 Back to ye yet will I flee, swallow on wing to the
 south ;
Move in your purple cloud-banks and leap your far-
swelling torrents,
 Bathe in the pools below, laugh with the winds
 above,
Battle and strive and climb in the teeth of the glad
 wild weather,
 Flash on the slopes of ice, dance on the spires of rock,
Run like a glad young panther over the stony high-
lands,
 Shout with the joy of living, race to the rugged cairn,

Feel the breath of your freedom burn in my veins, and
Freedom !

Freedom ! echoes adown cliff and precipitous ghyll.
Fire and desire and light and youth and passion and
freedom

Race in my blood untamed, laugh in my face for
love.

Down by the cold gray lake the sun descends from
his hunting,

Shadow and silence steals over the frozen fells.

Oh, to the there, my heart ! And the vesper bells awaken ;
Colleges call their children ; Lakeland fades from
the sight.

Only the sad slow Cam like a sire with age grown
heavy

Wearily moves to the sea, to quicken to life at last.

Blithelier I depart, to a sea of sunnier kindness ;
Hours of waiting are past ; I re-quicken to love.

LOVE.

Kjöbnhav, January, '97.

I FEEL thee shudder, clinging to my arm,
Before the battlements of the salt sea,
Black billows tipped with phosphorescent light,
Towering from where we stand to yonder shore
That is no earthly shore, but guards the coast
Of that which is from that which is to be ;
Wherefore it kindles no evasive fire
Nor blazes through the night, but lies forgotten
Gray in the twilight ; never a star is out
To light the broad horizon ; only here
Behind us cluster lamps, and busy sounds
Of men proclaim a city ; but to us
They are not here ; for we, because we love,
Are not of earth, but, as the immortals, stand
With eyes immutable ; our souls are fed
On a strange new nepenthe from the cup
Of the vast firmament. Nor do we dream,
Nor think we aught of the transient world,
But are absorbed in our own deity :
And our clear eyes reflect—(who dares to gaze
Shall see an die !)—the changeless empyrean
Eternity, the concentrated void

Of space, for being the centre of all things,
Time is to us the Now, and Space the Here ;
From us all Matter radiates, is a part
Of our own thoughts and souls ; because we love.
Thou shudderest, clinging to me ; though the night
Jewels her empire with the frosty crown
Of thousand-twinkling stars, whose hoary crests
Burn where light touches them, with diamond points
Of infinite far fire, save where the sea
Is ebony with sleep, and though the wind
Pierces the marrow, since it is the word
Of the Almighty, and cuts through the air
That may not stay its fury, with a cold
Nipping and chill, it is not in the wind ;
Nor though the thunder broke, or flashed the fire
From all the circle of eternity,
Were that the reason ; for thou shudderest
To hear the Voice of Love ; it is no voice
That men may hear, but an intensest rich
Silence, that silence when man waits to hear
Some faint vibration in the smitten air,
And, if he hear not, die ; but we who love
Are beyond death, and therefore may commune
In that still tongue ; it is the only speech
And song of stars and sun ; nor is it marred
By one dissentient tremor of the air
That girds the earth, but in lone æther spreads
Its song. But now I turn to thee, whose eyes
Blaze on me with such look as flesh and blood
May never see and live ; for so it burns

Into the inmost being of the spirit
And stains its vital essence with a brand
Of fire that shall not change ; and shuddering I
Gaze back, spirit to spirit, with the like
Insatiable desire, that never quenched,
Nor lessened by sublime satiety,
But rather crescent, hotter with the flame
Of its own burning, that consumes it not,
Because it is the pure white flame of God.
I shudder, holding thee to me ; thy gaze
Is still on me ; a thousand years have passed,
And yet a thousand thousand ; years they are
As men count years, and yet we stand and gaze
With touching hands and lips immutable
As mortals stand a moment ; and no more
Is any Sequence, nor Position,
Nor any Self, since Death and difference
Of all eternal things are passed away :
The universe is One : One Soul, One Spirit,
One Flame, One infinite God, One infinite Love.

SONNET TO CLYTIE.

C LYTE, beyond all praise, thou goodliest
Of queens, thou royal woman, crowned with
tears,
That could not move the dull stars from their
spheres
To kiss thee. For the sun would fainter rest
In the gold chambers of the glowing west
Than answer thy love, thine, whose soul endears
All souls but his, whose slow desire fears
The fierce embraces of thine olive breast.

O Queen, sun-lover, we are wed with thee
In changeless love, in passion for a fire
Whose lips bind all men in their bitter spell ;
A love whose first caress, hard won, would be
The final dissolution of desire,
A flame to shrivel us with fire of hell.

A VALENTINE, '98.

THE sea laughs jewels, on her breast
The sunbeams bear
Children most delicately drest,
Gold flowers and fair

The blue sea sparkles in the noon,
At dusk is free
At midnight does the sacred moon
Embrace the sea.

And on the land the woods are green ;
A wild bird's note
Shrills till the air trembles between
His beak and throat.

And up through blue and gold and black
The shivering sound
Rushes ; no echo murmurs back
From sky or ground.

In the loud agony of song
The moon is still ;
The wind drops down the shore along ;
Night hath her will.

The bird becomes a dancing flame
In leaf and bower.
The forest trembles ; loves reclaim
Their own still hour.

So are the stars moved ; so the night
Puts off her robe.
So to his music breaks the light
O'er the pale globe.

The dawn is here, and on the sands
Where sun first flames,
I gather lilies from all lands
Of sad sweet names.

The Lesbian lily is of white
Stained through with blood,
Swayed with the stream, a wayward light
Upon the flood.

The Spartan lily is of blue,
With green leaves fresh ;
Apollo glints his crimson through
The azure mesh.

The English lily is of white,
All white and clean ;
There plays a tender flame of light
Her flowers between.

The English lily is a bloom
Too cold and sweet ;
One might say—in the twilight gloom
A maiden's feet.

Silent and slim and delicate
The flower shall spring,
Till there be born immaculate
A fair new thing.

Tall is the mother-lily, still
By faint winds swayed ;
Tender and pure, without a will—
An English maid.

No tree of poison, at whose feet
All men lie dead ;
No well of death, whose waters sweet
Are tinged with red.

No hideous impassioned queen
For whom love dies ;
No warm imperious Messaline
That slew with sighs.

Fiercer desires may cast away
All things most good ;
A people may forget to-day
Their motherhood.

She will remain, unshaken yet
By storm and sun ;
She will remain, when years forget
That fierier one.

A race of clean strong men shall spring
From her pure life.
Men shall be happy ; bards shall sing
The English wife.

And thou, forget thou that my mouth
Has ever clung
To flame of hell ; that of the south
The songs I sung.

Forget that I have trampled flowers,
And worn the crown
Of thorns of roses in the hours
So long dropped down.

Forget, O white-faced maid, that I
Have dallied long
In classic bowers and mystery
Of classic song.

Eros and Aphrodite now
I can forget,
Placing upon thy maiden brow
Love's coronet.

Wake from the innocent dear sleep
Of childhood's life :
An English maiden must not weep
To be a wife.

So shall out love bridge space, and bring
The tender breath
Of sun and moon and stars that sing
To gladden Death.

I see your cheek grow pale and cold,
Then flush above.
Kiss me ; I know that I behold
The birth of Love.

PENELOPE.

U LYSSES 'scaped the sorceries of that queen
That turned to swine his goodly company,
And came with sails broad-burgeoning and clean
Over the ripples of his native sea.
Yet for the shores his eyes had lately seen,
He kept a half-regretful memory ;
And thought, when all the flower-strewn ways were
green,
“ Better love Circe than Penelope ! ”

Yes. A good woman's love will forge a chain
To break the spirit of the bravest Greek ;
While with an harlot one may leap again
Free as the waters of the western main,
And turn with no heart-pang the vessel's beak
Out to the oceans that all seamen seek.

LOVE ON THE ISLAND.

DEEP in the woods where the ocean reaches
Up to the walls of a white-sand bay,
And the sea waves swing to the noise of beeches
Kissed by summer night winds at play,
None may look through the silver-gray
Moonlit haunts, where the sea-gull screeches,
And the nightingale chants the woodland way.

None may see where the leaves are parted,
Where the nymph and the satyr hide,
Where the lips of the tender-hearted
Melt for languor and pout for pride,
Where the birds of the night abide,
Where the songs of the wood are started
Under the moon on the green hill-side.

Maidens white as the doves that hover
Coily hide on the woodland steep,
Maids that the leaves of the beeches cover
Laugh and chide and sigh and weep
And sink back tenderly into sleep,
Into the arms of the happy lover,
On to the breast where delight lies deep.

Cool breeze sings to the glad fresh river,
Stream sings back to the summer leaves,
Little leaves in the moonlight shiver,
Little nets that the moonlight weaves
Round the limbs of a bough that cleaves
Fast to the oak whose branches quiver
With the kiss of the wind as its bosom heaves.

Yonder, far by the gleaming border,
Pale gold reaches of sunny sand
Stretch their arms to the fierce marauder,
The cold sweet sea with its iron hand
Menacing all the fair fresh land,
Where no tall cliff as a faithful warder,
Guarding the coast from its wrath, may stand.

Arrows born of the sunlight gleam
Through the temperate world of spring,
Air moves up in a sweet hot steam,
Where the birds in the wheatfields sing ;
She the queen, and our love the king,
Rule the world, and our banners stream
Gold and green where the vine-leaves cling.

While the moon is above the heather
Here we lie in a pleasant swoon,
Till the blue of the faint fresh weather
Summon the spirits that throng the noon.
Here we lie, till the dawn's best boon
Of a breeze that shall gladden us both together,
Kissing beneath the harvest moon.

Fragrant blooms of fruitless kisses,
Clear and sweet as the stars of night ;
In our Eden no serpent hisses ;
Time and the gods have lost their spite ;
Sleep descends with her tender might ;
Love goes down into sleep's abysses,
Lapped in its waves of moving light.

A SONNET OF BLASPHEMY.

EXALTED over earth, from hell arisen,
There sits a woman, ruddy with the flame
Of men's blood spilt, and her uncleanly shame,
And the thrice-venomous vomit of her prison.

She sits as one long dead : infernal calm,
Chill hatred, wrap her in their poisonous cold.
She careth not, but doth disdainly hold
Three scourges for man's soul, that know no balm

They know not any cure. The first is Life,
A well of poison. Sowing dust and dung
Over men's hearts, the second scourge, above
All shameful deeds, is Lying, from whose tongue
Drops Envy, wed with Hatred, to sow Strife.

These twain are bitter ; but the last is Love.

THE RAPE OF DEATH.

ARGUMENT.—Sir Godfrey, a knight of Normandy, leapeth into a light vessel of Jarl Hungard, while they sit at feast, and, slaying the crew, seeketh the high seas with the Lady Thurla. He slayeth the swiftest pursuers, and escapeth in a great tempest ; which on the second day abating, he maketh the inside of a bar, and must await the breeze. Jarl Hungard coming with his men and two dragons, is wrecked, but a knave shooting, slayeth the Lady Thurla. Sir Godfrey forthwith sinketh the other dragon, and saileth forth into the ocean, and is not heard of ever after.

PALE vapours like phantoms on the sea,
 The tide swells slumberous beneath our keel,
 The pulses of our canvas fail ; and we

No faint sweet summons from the south wind feel :
 The crimson waters of the west are pale,
 And bloodless arrows like a stream of steel

Flash from the moon, that rises where the gale
 Only a day past raged ; the clouds are lost
 In pleasant rains that ripple on the sail.

The sudden fascination of the frost
 Touches the heavy canvas ; now there form
 Reluctant crystals, and the vessel, tossed

The wild night through in the devouring storm,
Glistens with dew made sharp and bright with cold.
For no north wind may drive us to the warm

Long-looked-for lands where day, with plumes of gold,
Flaps like a lazy eagle in the air ;
Where night, a bird of prey divinely bold,

Wings through the sky, intangible but fair,
And pale with subtle passion ; and no wind
Turns our prow southward, till the canvas bear

No more up into it, but still behind
Follow like flame, and lead our love along
Into the valleys of the ocean, blind,

But seeing all the world awake with song
Of many lyres and lutes and reeds of straw,
And all the rivers musical that throng

In bright assemblage of unchanging law,
Like many flute-players ; and seeing this,
(That all the mountains looked upon and saw)

The sweetness of the savour of a kiss,
And all its perfume wafter to the sky.
Nay, but no wind will drive our fortalice

(So strong against the sun) to where they ply
Those pallid wings, or turn our vessel's beak
With utmost fury to the North, to dye

Our prows with seaweed, such as wise men seek
For cleansing of their altars with slow blood
Wrenched from the long dark leaves, with fingers weak

With age and toil ; to stem the restless flood
That boils between the islands ; to attain
The ultimate ice, where some calm hero stood

And looked one last time for a sail in vain,
And looking upward not in vain, lay down
And died, to pass where cold and any pain

Are not. So still the night is, like the crown
Most white of the high God that glittereth !
The stars surround the moon, and Nereids drown

Their rippled tresses in her golden breath.
Let us keep watch, my true love, caught at last
Between my hands, and not remember death.

Only bethink us of the daylight past,
The long chase oversea, the storm, the speed
Whereby we ran before the leaping blast,

And left the swift pursuers at our need
With one wrecked dragon and one shattered ; yea !
And on their swiftest many warriors bleed,

Having beheld, above the gray seaway
Between them and the sun, my sword arise,
Like the first dagger flashing for the day,

My sword, that darts among them serpentwise—
And all their warriors fell back a space,
And all the air rang out with sudden cries,

Seeing the death and fury of my face,
And feeling the long sword sweep out and kill,
Till there was won the slippery path, the place.

Whence I might sever the white cords, and fill
The ship with tangled wreckage of the sail.
All this I did, and bore the blade of ill

Back, dripping blood, to thee most firm and pale
Who held our rudder, all alone, and stood
Fierce and triumphant in the rising gale,

Bent to my sword, and kissed the stinging blood,
While the good ship leapt free upon the deep,
And felt the feet of the resistless flood

Run, and the fervour of the billows sweep
Under our keel—and we were clean away,
Laughing to seethe foamheads sough and sleep,

As we kept pace with ocean all the day
And one long night of toil ; until the sun
Lit on these cliffs his morning beams that play

With our sails rent and rifted white, and run
Like summer lightning all about the deck,
And laugh upon the work my sword had done

When the feast turned to death for us ; we reck
Nothing to-night of all that past despair :
Only to-night I watch your curving neck,

And play with all the kisses of your hair,
And feel your weight, as if you were to be
Always and always—O my queen, how rare

Your lips' perfume ; like lilies on the sea
Your white breasts glimmer ; let us wait awhile.
There is no breeze to drive us down to lee

On the cold rocks of yonder icy isle,
And your sire's passion must forget the chase
As I forget, the moment that you smile,

And sea and sky are brighter for your face—
I hear the sound of many oars ; perchance
Your father's, but within this iron place

The heavy dragons will not dare advance
Where our light vessel barely skimmed the rock :
Their anger may grow cool, the while they dance

Like fools before the bard we crossed, and mock
Pursuit. Behold ! one dragon strikes the reef,
Breaks in the midst before the dreadful shock,

Shattered and stricken by the rousing sheaf
Of wild intolerable foam that breaks
Full on their stem : she sinks. One fierce foul thief

Springs desperate upon her poop ; she shakes ;
He strings a sudden arrow. Ocean sweeps
Over his cursed craft. The arrow takes

The straight swift road—Ah God !—to her who sleeps,
To her bright bosom as at peace she lies.
She is dead quickly, and the ocean keeps

The secret of my sorrow from her eyes.
I will not weep ; I cannot weep ; I turn
And watch the sail fill with the wind that sighs

A little for pure pity—I discern
The cowards shake with fear ; the vessel springs
Light to the breezes, as the golden erne

That seeks a prey on its impetuous wings ;
The reef is past ; I crash upon the foe,
And all the fury of my weapon rings

On armour temperless ; the waters flow
Through the dark rent within the side ; I leap
Back to my dead love ; back, desiring so

That they had killed me, for I cannot weep.
They killed her, and a mist of blood consumes
My sight ; they killed my lover in her sleep.

The breeze has freshened, and the water fumes,
The vessel races on beneath the sky ;
Beneath her bows the eager billow spumes.

I wonder whither, and I wonder why.

No ray of light this sea of blood illumes.

I wonder whether God will let me die.

IN THE WOODS WITH SHELLEY.

SING, happy nightingale, sing ;
 Past is the season of weeping ;
Birds in the wood are on wing,
 Lambs in the meadow are leaping.
Can there be any delight still in the buttercups
 sleeping ?

Dawn, paler daffodil, dawn ;
 Smile, for the winter is over ;
Sunlight makes golden the lawn,
 Spring comes and kisses the clover ;
All the wild woodlands await poet and songster and
 lover.

Linger, dew, linger and gem
 All the fresh flowers in the garland ;
Blossom, leaf, bud and green stem
 Flash with your light to some far land,
Where men shall wonder if you be not a newly-born
 starland.

Ah ! the sweet scents of the woods !
Ah ! the sweet sounds of the heaven !
Sights of impetuous floods,
Foam like the daisy at even,
Folding o'er passionate gold petals that sunrise had
riven !

See, like my life is the stream
Now its desire is grown quiet ;
Life was a passionate dream
Once, where light fancy ran riot,
Now, ere youth fades, flows in peace past woody bank
and green eyot.

Highest, white heather and rock,
Mountain and pine, with young laughter,
Breezes that murmur and mock
Duller delights to come after,
Wild as a swallow that dives whither the sea wind
would waft her.

Lower, an ocean of flowers,
Trees that are warmer and leafier,
Starrier, sunnier hours
Spurning the stain of all grief here,
Bringing a quiet delight to us, beyond our belief,
here.

Lastly, the uttermost sea,
Starred with flakes of spray sunlit,
Blue as its caverns that be

Crystal, resplendent, yet unlit ;
So like a mother receives the kiss of the dainty-lip
runlet.

Here the green moss is my seat,
Beech is a canopy o'er me,
Calm and content the retreat ;
Man, my worst foe, cannot bore me ;
Life is a closed book behind—Shelley an open before
me.

Shelley's own birds are above
Close to me (why should they fear me ?)
May I believe it—that love
Brings his bright spirit so near me
That, should I whisper one word—Shelley's swift
spirit would hear me.

Heaven is not very far ;
Soul unto soul may be calling
When a swift meteor star
Through the quick vista is falling.
Loose but your soul—shall its wings find the white
way so appalling ?

Heaven, as I understand,
Nearer than some folk would make it ;
God—should you stretch our a hand,
Who can be quicker to take it ?
Then you have pacted an oath—judge you if He will
forsake it !

I have had hope in the spring—
Trust that the God who has given
Flowers, and the thrushes that sing
Dawnwards all night, and at even
Year after year, will be true now we are speaking of
heaven.

Breezes caress me and creep
Over the world to admire it ;
Sweet air shall sigh me to sleep,
Softly my lips shall respire it,
Lying half-closed with a kiss ready for who shall
desire it.

A VISION UPON USHBA.

HERE in the wild Caucasian night,
The sleepless years
Seem to pass by in garments white,
 Made white with tears,
A pageant of intolerable light
 Across the sombre spheres,
And, mingling with the tumult of the morn,
Methought a single rose of blood was born.

Far on the iron peaks a voice
 Crystal and cold,
Sharper than sounds the aurochs' choice
 O'er wood and wold,
A summons as of angels that rejoice,
 A pæan glad and bold,
A mighty shout of infinite acclaim
Shrieks through the sky some dread forgotten Name.

Trembles the demon on his perch
 Of crags ice-bound ;
Tremble near forest and far church
 At that quick sound ;

The silver arrows that bedeck the birch
Shiver along the ground :
Priest, fiend, and harpy answer to the call,
And hasten to their ghastly festival.

There in the vale below my feet
I see the crew
Gather, blaspheming God, and greet
Their shame anew.
A feast is spread of some unholy meat ;
Oftimes there murmurs through
Their horrid ranks a cry of pain, as God
Bids them keep memory of His iron rod.

The vale is black with priests. They fight,
Wild beasts, for food,
The orphan's gold, the widow's right,
The virgin's snood.
All in their maws are crammed within the night
That hides their chosen wood,
Where through the blackness sounds the sickening
noise
Of cannibals that gloat on monstrous joys.

The valley steams with slaughter. Here
Shall the pure snow
The bloody reek of murder rear
To crush the foe ?
In Titan fury shall the rocks spring clear,
And smite the fiends below ?

Shall poisonous wind and avalanche combine
To wreck swift justice, human and divine ?

Priests thrive on poison. Carrion
Their eager teeth
Tear, till the sacramental sun
Its sword unsheath,
And bid their horrid carnival be done,
And smite beneath
In their cold gasping valleys, and bid light
Break the battalions of the angry night.

That sword that smote from Heaven was so keen,
Its silver blade
No angel's sight, no fairy's eye hath seen,
No tender maid
With subtle insight may behold its sheen
With light inlaid ;
But God, who forged it, breathed upon its point,
And His pure unction did the hilt anoint.

Within the poet's hand he laid the sword :
With reverent ear
The poet listened to His word
Cleansed through of fear.
The brightness of the glory of the Lord
Grew adamant, a spear !
And when he took the flachion in his hand
Lo ! kings and princes bowed to his command.

Then shall the flag of England flaunt
 In peaceful might,
The sceptred isle of dying Gaunt
 Shall rule by right.
The sons of England shall bid Hell avaunt
 And priest and harlot smite.
Then all the forces of the earth shall be
Untamable, a shield of Liberty.

Freedom shall burgeon like a rose,
 While in the sky
A new white sun with ardour glows
 On liberty.
Men shall sing merrily at work as those
 Who fear no more to die—
Ay ! and who fear no more at last to live
Since man can love and worship and forgive.

Then on these heights of Caucasus
 A fire shall dwell,
Pure as the dawn, and odorous
 Of bud and bell ;
A flower of fire, a flame from heaven to us
 All triumph to foretell,
A glory of unspeakable delight,
A flower like lightning, adamant and white.

There needs no more of sun or sea
 Or any light ;

On golden wheels Eternity
Revolves in Night.
The island peoples are too proud and free
And full of might
To care for time or space, but glorious wend
A royal path of flowers to the end.

I pray thee, God, to weapon me
With this keen fire,
That I may set this people free
As my desire ;
That the white lilies of our liberty
Grow on Life's crags still higher,
Till on the loftiest peaks their blossom flower,
The rampart of a people and their power.

ELEGY, *August 27th*, 1898.

SO have the days departed, as the leaves
Smitten by wrath of Autumn blast ;
So the year, fallen from delight, still grieves
Over the happy past.

The year of barren summer, when the wind
Blew from the south unlooked-for snow,
The year when Collon, desolate and blind,
Gloomed on the vale below,

When logs of pinewood lit the little room,
And friendship ventured in to sit
Beside their blaze, to listen in the gloom
To wisdom and to wit ;

When we discussed our hopes, and told the stories
Of happy climbing days gone by ;
The stubborn battle with the cliffs, the glories
Of the blue Alpine sky.

The keen delight of paths untrodden yet,
And new steep ice and rocky ways
Too dangerous and splendid to forget.
Those dear strong happy days !

And now what happier fate to your brave souls
Than so to strive and fighting fall ?
Think you that He who sees you, and controls,
Did not devise it all ?

The mountains that you loved have taken you,
And we who love you will not weep.
Shall we begrudge ? Your last look saw sky blue ;
You will be glad to sleep.

Your pure names (thrice renowned, yours fresh with
youth
And full of promise) shall be kept
Still in our hearts for monuments of truth,
As if you had not slept.

EPILOGUE.

HORACE, in the fruitful Sabine country,
Where the wheat and vine are most abundant,
Where the olive ripens in the sunshine,
Where the streams are voiced with Dian's whispers,
Lived in quiet, with a woman's passion
To inspire his lute and bring contentment
In the gray still days of early winter.
I, remote from cities, like the poet,
Tune my lesser lyre with other fingers,
Yet am not a whit the less beloved.
Unto me the stars are never silent,
Nor do sea and storm deny their music,
Nor do flower and breeze refuse their kisses :
So my soul is flooded with their magic ;
So my love completes the joy of living.
I am like the earth, to whom there gather
Rays of gold to bid the gray horizon
Melt, recede, and brighten into azure.
Let me sing, O holy one, Apollo !
Sing as Horace sang, and flood the ocean

With a living ecstasy of music
Till the whole creation echo, echo,
Echo till the tune dissolve the heavens ?

Still the song lingers ; lamely from the lute string
Steals a breath of melody ; the forest
Treasures in its glades the sighs I utter.
Yet may I be happy, storing honey
Lover's lips hold, gathering the sunlight
Eyes and hair have kept for me, delighting
In the bells far-off, in yonder thrushes,
In the tawny songster of the forest,
In the stream's song, all the words of passion,
Echoes of the deeper words unspoken
In thy breast and mine, O heart of silence !
Will they pierce one day to other nations
Clear and strong and triumphing ?

It may be.

Then we shall not envy you, my Horace !



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