

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.
Where to 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.