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Buffalo, N.Y.
1921.



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THE COLLECTED POEMS OF
ARTHUR EDWARD WAITE

VOL. I.

a

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- STRANGE HOUSES OF SLEEP, 1906.
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Photo by F. A. SWAINE

Arthur Howard Waite

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF ARTHUR EDWARD WAITE

IN TWO VOLUMES



VOLUME I

*Tu es Vita et Verbum Vita, Deus meus.
Dona mihi verbum, quia Tuus sum ego.
Dona mihi discretionem Sancti Spiritus
Tui. In terra deserta, terra inbia, terra
inaquosa, mysteria Tua pronuntiabo, et
florebunt omnia.—DE TABERNACULO
MYSTICO LIBELLUS*

WITH A PORTRAIT

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VOL. I

PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR *Frontispiece*

STRANGE HOUSES OF SLEEP

A. GROUND-PLANS OF THE HOUSE OF LIFE.—*When the man of election begins to realise that he is normally in a dreaming state and that he must be aroused to attain himself, he is forthwith impelled to consider the mysteries of his sleep, the greater and lesser also, with the manifestations thereto belonging, and it is in this manner that he becomes dedicated to the interpretation of his dreams. Herein therefore is the general thesis of the dream-life, including certain vestiges, which are memories, of all that which is without it. It is in this way that man awakens to the first sense of the quest. Being thus already in part illuminated, he puts in order several plans for the improvement of his symbolical position. He beholds indeed the first shining of the sacramental life, through which the rivers of sleep may become to him even as fountains of refreshment, and his environment as a Promise of May. There is torpor and there is inhibition, but there are also suggestions of states that have rewards beyond the dreams of avarice. One is in effect already a Postulant at the Pronaos of the Temple.*

B. LESSER LIGHTS AND BROIDERIES OF THE VEIL.—*When man takes thought of Nature and her sacramental service, he may discover after what manner some strange suspensions operate. Herein is the consideration in full of the palmary messages promulgated by the outside world.*

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Strange Houses of Sleep

These are Watches of the Morning, wherein the insufficiency of simple Nature is made evident. The normal ways have been tried, but therein is no satisfaction. Where are the Wings of Healing? Amid such preludes and pastorals of the world which leads to nothing; in the realm of fragilities and the Trivia; we meet with certain mercies and judgments and become neophytes of the Lesser Mysteries, which are as Instructions in Early Alphabets for some who are learning to read. They are also forms of dejection and yet of illumination.

C. LIBER AMORIS SANCTISSIMI.—*Man is also visited by the first pontificals of Dream passing into Vision through the mediation of Human Love and the offices of daughters of desire, even as by the Spirit and the Bride. He enters, therefore, after another manner, into the essence of the sacramental system, which determines true inferences on validity and quest. These are Mysteries of Seeking, Mirrors of Knighthood, the first Elevation of the Host in the Church Visible of the natural world, the first consciousness of Many Presences. They are also certain Legends of the way of the Cross. The Rosary is here recited in a loud voice after new Matins, with the Little Office of the Virgo Intacta. But the days are rogation days.*

D. LEGENDS OF THE GREAT MYSTERY.—*We pass through grades and ministries of the world's legends, which are fables of sleeping men, stories of lights that fail, yet in their manner ceremonies of initiation; the philosophy of sleep stated; the mysteries of expiation and dejection, ending: "I must have Thee." These are hauntings of the places of quest—phantoms of vision; and in this grade man is the Master of Ceremonies, rather than a Master of the House. Here also are Legends of the Soul and certain Propers of Saints.*

E. EXALTED DOCTRINES.—*The man of election is in fine visited by the high ministries of doctrine, pearls of the Dreamer's Faith; the music of many spheres sounds him to the advance. He is exalted and drenched with the*

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greatness and bitterness of the quest. He is conscious of a cloud of witnesses. He becomes Keeper of the Lesser Mysteries.

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The multitude of external quests and voyages of which we read in history, which are witnessed also, and daily, in so many circles, impelled by so many designs, might offer an occasion of wonder, seeing that a much simpler and more requiting mode of travel is within our reach. But the stimulus of such wonder is individual to the few only who have taken out the roots of their nature from the earth of those interests which are about us. The external quests are part of the ever-present hindrances of daily life. The way of the inward life is the one true way of quest, and could we be liberated from the compulsory contracts into which we have been drawn by our first education, this fact would emerge clearly. It is now a longer journey on account of these ; we embark with difficulty, sail perforce slowly and know not whither we are going. At the same time, the beacons start up everywhere, and we set forth amidst the subdued plaudits of all the natural world.

TRANSCRIPTS 101

There is no such thing as common life ; the convention under which we regard it is alone common. The key of the great mysteries lies hidden in all things round us, but the perplexities of the convention hinder us from finding it. The gift of understanding is within us, and we might read the world's language if we dared, but the inherited averseness of all the centuries to a first-hand experience of things sets an effectual check on the attempt. The inclination of the axis of the soul places us outside the direct line of vision ; that inclination can be rectified, and the operation may not be essentially difficult, but it calls for a peculiar courage.

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The instruction of the teaching church of Nature offers a substantial intellectual guarantee not alone for some of the conceded aspirations, but also for those which most persons in the present social order must imply rather than express through all their life. Any aspect of Nature provides this instruction and comprehends this warrant. It is the unceasing grind and jar of the social mechanism which blunts the hearing and darkens or embarrasses the evidence.

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The sacramental life of Nature is often so encouraging in its aspects, that we are inclined to regard it as the only veil which separates us from the Divine. And yet there are other of its aspects which hint at unknown forms of sacramentalism behind it, some of which interpenetrate our own, at least intermittently. There are indications also of the interference of lower sacramental orders quite distinct from the presence of moral evil in the world. While it is the soul's end to rise above all the cosmic systems, it may be doubted whether this is attainable except through the pomp and adornment of several sacramental lives. What follows is therefore the expression of the soul's desire to be dissolved. Things that look near are sometimes very far away—as in the tropics of the physical world, so in certain torrid zones of supersensual thought.

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While our construction of the sacraments is necessarily imperfect, it is never wrong, so only if it be the construction of eternity, within the measures of our comprehension. This holds also in the order of the instituted sacraments. One

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of the most endearing remembrances which must follow us in the mystic life, often so far removed from all instituted ceremonial and all stipulated system, is the recognition of sacramentalism by some of the great churches. It is impossible to deny that they communicate substantially to many believers, and there can be no grade of spiritual ascent from which the Church and her ministry will not be regarded with loving tenderness, or the attempt to restrict that ministry, and to despoil the instituted sacraments, without a very real sense of dereliction.

HOUSE FANTASTIC 109

Certain sources of imperfection are traceable in the ministry of which man is the recipient. Some bear the marks of inherence and some of introduction. The instruments of communication from the noumenal must, in the nature of things, fall short of that Absolute which it would impart, and hence we should not sin against the light by holding that the instrument may improve. We at least are not properly adjusted thereto. It may even be that the leader of the sacramental universe rectifies continually, and thus leads us, in the symbolic language of the poem, into a perfect harmony.

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The ministry between man and man is the most saving ministry of all, and is so great that in a certain sense we might be exempted from the continued regard of all others. Herein is the whole mystery of love, and the sweet reason of the inward way. For the rest, it would seem impossible that man should ever become intelligible to himself except in the universal mode of his intelligence—that is to say, in the Divine Union. How far or how near this may rest upon the path of life we cannot discern in our inverted glass of vision.

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The inward experiences of the saintly men of old, the mystics of all the creeds, attract us magnetically, and yet fail to satisfy. It would seem that the light of glory which they communicate is not actually the first light, but is also derived. They shew forth certain transfigurations, as a garden shews forth in the moonlight, when there are eyes to see. But in the last resource the garden is not large enough for the man, nor the Imitatio for his soul. A sense of deficiency and restriction is experienced by some travellers in the high Alps, and so also there is a sense of arrested experience in the records of those spiritual travellers who have returned from the secret Carmel. They have not encompassed the whole man in their pilgrimage. An omnipresent manhood fills Nature. It is not the dust of dead nations that we press beneath our feet, but the potentiality of the living humanities which supports us. The broken branch can cry out like the wounded man, and by the eyes of many animals we know that their root is in our root, that they also are led by a sacramental ministry, and that, like us, they will be brought forth in their due time. Man has a special ministry of the sacraments to some of these lesser brethren, and there is more than one sense in which we are saviours of men, since man is universal in Nature.

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The sense of loneliness which is inseparable from the great quests of the soul is to some extent illusory, or is at least initial. Many watchers protect us from every side. But it is the fear of this isolation which has often hindered and betrayed the high experiments. The inward world might not be less known at this day than the world without, which we have taken such pains to extend by our explor-

A Book of Mystery and Vision

ations, had we not been continually deterred by the dread of unaccompanied research. Other impediments have been mentioned. The seven senses of mystic Nature should not be understood according to the convention of numbers, for it is economical in the same way that the sacraments of the Church are an economy, summarising the kind of ministry which goes with man in his journey.

OUT OF THE FULNESS 121

Many records of Eucharistic grace and vision bear witness to the true inwardness of the experience mentioned at the close of this poem. What the Vision is and why it connects with rest are questions which are therefore answered simply. It is the awaking of our consciousness to an Eternal Presence within itself. The rest is of that kind which is at the source of activity, namely, the rest of the centre. A certain recognition of the state, which is like a land that is very far away, may be attained by removing from the mind the conception of location or environment, and of time, by presenting to ourselves, as ourselves, the simple notion of activity functioning by an inherent necessity. The vehicle of this sacramental experience is an intense light, heat and rapture. The sense of extension may be lost in a very curious manner by those who are sufficiently self-instructed to make the picture inward and not objective to the mind's eye, as the mind will invariably do with a fatal facility unless there is a strong compulsion of the will drawing in the concept to the centre.

THE HAUNTED DIAL 126

Following from what has been said, one may even dare to hint that among all the sacraments of Nature, that which most shews forth the source and term of the soul is the pageant

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of a vortex of flame. It brings with it a recognition of rest and attainment, of delight at the heart of dread, which is offered by no other symbol among the forces of the universe. This recognition may be taken, from its intentness, to be very close at the roots of all experience.

HOW I CAME TO THE SEA 128

The sea is the most boundless, most catholic, most ascertainable and obvious of all the natural sacraments, and it is in this sense that they are said in the poem to originate from and return to it. Unlike fire, it does not convey a sense of rest, but rather one of action unfinished, and it is therefore here typified as the course of all our quest. For the same reason it is the most eloquent of all the sacraments, and that which most nearly touches on the translatable state. It does not seem impossible that a great poet might rise up among us on a day with the sea's rendering. The least of us can gather something at its margin.

THE SHADOW OF THY WINGS 133

There should be no need to say that the sacraments are ministrant and not explanatory. Their explanation is the call of the prophet, who is also the poet, and, as said formerly, no elucidation can be more than experimental and approximate. In the last resource the mystery always rests. It is the same with the dark or averse sacraments, the ministry of evil. And this is why faith is the most abiding seal of man's life in the universe. There is a very real sense in which the whole life of man is a recurring act of faith, by and in which he is alive. The warrant of faith is in experience, and although this kind of testimony is also recurrent incessantly in the diurnal life of the ages, it has vast fields of untried investigation, some of which have been entered partly, as we know by the annals of sanctity.

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PART II

OF THINGS HEARD AND SEEN

A BALLAD OF WHITE MAIDENS 139

The spirit of man has worshipped at many shrines and has dwelt in many gardens of being. We bear within us the perpetuated memories of several natures from which we have emerged successively. We were doubtless in exile then and we are now in exile. But whence we came first, in so far a past, we stood in no need of education, and we are here as by the last sequence of events in a long series. We are now under the yoke of education for no other reason than our return. We have not perchance learned the final lessons, and hence there may be other gardens.

THE BLESSED LIFE OF SORCERY 143

The inhibited life of man is like a product of sorcery. External things are communicated to us by virtue of their adjustment with the faculties which express us in just that measure, and possessing that correspondence between the appearance and the reality, which suggests the idea of magic, and herein is the mystery of all the sacraments. The transformation of the Magic of Nature into the Divine Magic is the great secret. This transformation takes place in virtue of another adjustment between the mind quickened by a saving light and the external ministry, which thus becomes sacramental. By yielding implicitly to the enchantment of the first sense of Nature, we condone our exile and abide in a continued illusion, though no doubt it remains benevolent and offers a delectable ministry. Such enchantment dissolves under the consciousness of another citizenship.

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HOW ONE OFFERED INCENSE 147

Besides the sorcery of Nature there is the instituted sorcery of the conventions of human life. Nature really opens up her secret at all points, and the unknown surges in through the fissures, but intermittently, because, howsoever our restriction has been brought about, we are not intended as yet to escape from it. The occasional contact with this unknown, which has its physical evidences, is salutary as an assurance of the impermanence of the present sacramental order; but our cortex of convention has so addicted us to what can be discerned through it, and has so encompassed us with a reputed and artificial knowledge, that it is seldom, and as if by accident, that we obtain the brief experiences which are otherwise possible. Convention necessitates convention, and we attain experience now more readily by an instituted process.

A DOOR FOR WHITE DOVES 151

As it is good to make contact occasionally with that unknown which encompasses us, so also it is good on a time for the sacramentalist to renounce all interpretation, and enjoy for a little the beauty and melody of the outward signs.

THE PLACE OF THY GLORY 152

Of how great quests may be voided. It has been agreed that man is passing through a school of experience, and the sense of dependence is necessary if we are to be taught and led, but to this passive condition must be added a strenuous activity in the maintenance of the soul's life. The tongues of men and angels, all power in signs and miracles, all missions and high destinies are surely, apart from this, but the pomp and pride of the outward life, and

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in the end they must fail us. Divorced from these higher considerations, even the simple love of personal independence is an error of enthusiasm, and the toil which secures it is but arrogance. To keep one's soul alive is better than to see God, if that were possible, by an act of objective vision.

A PORTION OF MY INHERITANCE. 157

All highest things appear unpractical to the lesser man, and among others the intimations of sacramental life. They are passed over, therefore, by those who regard the admitted business of existence as of the only moment. That business is of no moment in itself. Even the material welfare of nations is of no consequence apart from eternity: nations must pass. These are hard words to the outward sense. So also when Faith, Hope and the higher Charity call forth a soul, this great election is to simple sense a matter of dole and delusion. It is the result of a bewrayment, as when fairies call forth a maiden to follow some unending quest. A few obey the call indirectly, and, perhaps, outside all expectations, on one great day of the world, those whom these ways have divided will somehow meet and kiss, as the sea kisses the earth in a sleep of sunshine.

LA VIE INTIME 161

Far beneath the soil of history strike deep the roots of legend, and they penetrate sometimes into the sub-conscious abysses of the soul. In truth we know not all that we have passed upon our way, or what mutations are possible to us. Legend says that the sex of a body is changed by passing under the rainbow. The soul in her fantasy undergoes many metamorphoses, and strange gateways of existence open before her. The sense of these experiences and their memory are perpetuated in terrible prehistoric myths. Over the border-line constituted by the convention or adjustment between man and external things, two worlds seem to stretch

Contents

which the mind differentiates most easily by the ideas of upward and downward, but both are really within us. There is a way within the soul by steep paths into the Divine Union; it might be further than the stars—if it were a journey made in space—but it is there. There is a way within the soul to a phantasmal under world which puts on many vestures of the life of sense, but does not really partake it. The source of many physical aberrations may lie in these stagnant tarns and still pools of our submerged being, and still make possible many unsanctified communions.

THE KING'S RENDERING 171

A TRANSCRIPT

Among the veiled memories of the soul two kinds are imperfectly distinguished. One is of the soul's participation in the universal life, as when, like beads and sparkles, welling up from deeps of water, there may rise upon the surface of our consciousness strange sensations of kinship with clouds, birds, the sunlight on a golden vane, and the soul says unto itself: These also have I been. But it is really a fictitious impression which mistakes the present kinship of all being for psychological identity. The true memory is more usually awakened, among external objects, by the opening of vast distances, and the soul knows thereby how far she has travelled; she knows also the vast distances that are within her; she knows, amidst the twilight of our life, that once the King-Spirit dwelt within her, till the great wars and devastations began, and how then the King went forth. Yet he returns surely to enlighten the city of the soul. She dreams even that he tarries in the engirding secret lands, or that he moves slowly through the outskirts and mean places of the suburbs of the city of man. But she looks certainly for his entrance.

The Quest of the Golden Gate

HOW I ALSO SANG MASS 178

When too ardently pursuing the life of outward sense we lose consciousness of spiritual life, something has in a real manner passed away from us which is beyond all price for purity and loveliness; and the way of recovery is often hard and dolorous, haunted by a sense of misery which is for us in its realisation greater than the dereliction of Judas or the timeless want of Lucifer. Yet the sense of loss is the pledge of recovery, and the soul returns into her heritage, as a priest passing into a temple, and saves all her generations and peoples. But the divine must be manifested within us, and the work is not accomplished until we can say in the symbolism of the poem: Ite, missa est.

VALETE 183

Having contemplated all these joyful, sorrowful and glorious mysteries, having found that all sacramentalism and all external things, with their activity, and the enterprise and activity of all outward humanity, are but lights and messages pointing us to another path, these measures end with a certain sense of fulness and accomplishment. As the rendering of a part of that part which reflects the whole, their close, in the seer's mind, is not without summonses and warnings beforehand of other tidings.

THE QUEST OF THE GOLDEN GATE

WOODLAND MYSTICS 189

Man alone is the channel of the Divine Voice, and in a certain secret manner he brings God into activity, effectuating at all points the latent conformities and correspondences which compose the bond of relationship between the human and the Divine. The call of grace in each one of us is like

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a message from man to man, and it follows us with a sense of human companionship. Man is at the heart of the universe.

VISTAS OF COMPASSION 191

As all the greatest things of human life are outside logical demonstration, so there are within us many concealed depths which exceed our powers of expression. The sense of them is frequently awakened in an all-mastering manner by simple and seemingly unconnected things of the outward world.

KNOWING THY LIKENESS. 192

The rest of Nature is in man, and Nature shares his quest, for she is the line of his limitation. He is like the sea, and she is like the great concavity which contains it.

TO YOU IN ABSENCE 194

We do not see Nature as she is, for we behold too much the exhibition of our own limitations. Beyond these there is the fuller man, the higher truth, the greater beauty and the undeclared reality.

FOUNDATIONS OF SAPPHIRE 196

Man is the adornment and illuminator of Nature, and in his light does she behold light. She has meanings only because of him, sacraments because he is in need of them, beauty because he can discern it. He responds to all her prophecies with a complete assurance and realises all her yearnings.

A SONG OF THE SLEEPING WORLD 198

The consciousness of the sleep of Nature is ever present to the mystic and is explicable by the fact that man, her

The Quest of the Golden Gate

informant, is himself in a condition of dream, as indeed is made evident by the grotesque phantasmagoria of accepted human interests. The sleep has, however, so many aspects of lightness that a simple kiss might, we feel, awaken us. Such a kiss is not necessarily that of the death-angel. Prior to this some of us have been awakened wonderfully, while many doubtless continue to sleep thereafter, but such sleep is not the rest which remaineth for the people of God.

MIRRORS OF LIFE 200

We look through many glasses of Nature, and if at times the sacraments do not seem to minister, great parables still speak amidst the melodies. The message of every parable, the deeps of every mirror, proffer to us an universal warrant for all our hopes. And this is so of necessity, because the height is reflected in the depth, and the depth exhales to the height.

TO COME INTO THY PRESENCE 203

Many activities of man, which are not of great interest intrinsically, convert naturally into parables and are then full of precious speech. His wings beat restlessly over many seas and shew forth the soul's great research through the cosmos. But it should be remembered that the soul is not outward bound in reality; it is rather on a journey to the centre.

EVEN LIFE FOR EVERMORE 205

The most concrete comparison which can be made of human life is to liken it to a paper currency. In a bankrupt nation that currency is valueless, and though it may continue in circulation for a time, it must come to nothing in the end. But if there is a treasury where the notes may

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be converted into that for which they stand as tokens, then the paper currency is worth the face-value which it bears. That which gives value to temporal life is its convertibility into life eternal, separated from which it is worthless, as the end of each man makes evident.

A SONG OF SOUND AND OF SILENCE 207

Nature is inarticulate because man is imperfect in his language. He is ever on the point of true speaking, and when he is uttered forth she will answer.

PHASES 210

The proper study of Nature is in its infancy. That study which has been so successful, though from another point of view it is so hopeless, in the hands of material science, increases the temporal providence and comfort by which man is conditioned more favourably for the attainment of his true end, for which a certain fulness of ease is desirable—that distractions and preoccupations may be reduced. Were other things equal, the way to God should be easier in the castle than the cottage, and in purple and fine linen, rather than in coarse garments. In such a quest we should do well to ask for our daily meat and wine to be given, that we may be enabled the better to seek the super-substantial bread. But this apart, the physical investigation of Nature is less important than the study of her symbols, so that we may wrest from her their withdrawn secrets, as storm and darkness shew forth the light of the end.

THERE AND HERE 211

The physical evolution of man is not of much consequence, though it may be true in the temporal order ; but his

The Quest of the Golden Gate

evolution through the universe of voices and of meanings, until he shall comprehend all, is the sublime cosmic plan. It is this which he must follow; and Nature is shouting to him through all her avenues, and would seem to lead on the quest.

BE YE COMFORTED 212

Do not go forth into the universe; let us rather take it within us. When we have received its full communication we shall know of that which is beyond it. In this way environment is transcended. It may be, as we have seen, that there are other and larger forms of limitation awaiting us, but God is within and without, as we shall find at length when all the outward orders are for us dissolved.

QUIET NIGHT AND PERFECT END 214

As there is an outward Nature, so there is an external man, and this also must be dissolved. It is indeed one process. To this Nature aspires blindly, but man knows what he seeks.

THE VOICE OF THE TURTLE 216

In the last resource we can assuredly do nothing for ourselves, and must therefore wait on God. We believe that at length He will manifest within us in His fulness; we trust that the time is at hand; it is always near, according to the measure of eternity. What is slow is our gift of conscious attainment; but the deep goes on calling to the deep, and there will be a great meeting of the waters.

I LOOK TO SEE: A SONG OF VISION 218

Let us desire above all that time when every sacrament shall dissolve. We are in sadness and disunion with them all—very far from our home and our destiny—far from saying what we mean, thinking that which we would—

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possessing as we feel that we could be possessed, seeing as we are seen. We also look, therefore, to see, to feel and to know, and our expectation is voiced forth in a loving note of triumph.

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THE POOR BROTHER'S MASS-BOOK

CONTAINING A METHOD OF ASSISTING AT THE HOLY SACRIFICE FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE NOT OF THIS WORLD. THERE IS ALSO IMPLIED A CERTAIN ASSISTANCE TO SERVERS.

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STRANGE HOUSES OF SLEEP

VOL. I.

A

Sciendum est igitur, dona omnia, in quibus
vita nostra consistit, sacramentis et externis
quibusdam sensibilibus signis tecta ac involuta
esse.—SPECULUM DOMINI JOANNIS; RUSBROCHII
DIVINISSIMI CONTEMPLATORIS, Caput ix.

Strange Houses of Sleep

THE WORK OF OUR HANDS

HAUNTED by memories of his first abode,
Man, in the shadows of this earthly road,
Still vindicates the past his legends claim :
Home is for him the semblance of a name,
Although with steadfastness and frighten'd haste—
By need impell'd—he builds him in the waste
Rude inns and falling houses of his hands—
To overlook the melancholy lands
And all his shrouded, sad environment.

When first, from Life Divine, to exile sent,
About his soul inhibited he wrought
A body fitted to the halting thought
Of those who slowly yield to fever'd sleep,
Praying, if long, it may be also deep,
Yet counting scarcely on a true repose,
Since strife in place of peace such slumber knows.
And then, because that frame was frail and cold,
He built him other tenements to hold
His nakedness, lamenting in the gloom—
Tent, temple, palace—ere, in fine, the tomb.
But though the body, warm'd by hearth and bed,
Came through some makeshifts to be comforted,
His haunted soul, mourning the exile's fate
Still cried aloud that it was desolate.

Strange Houses of Sleep

Moreover, houses of the heart he made—
The House of Love—but Death therein was laid ;
The House of Faith—and there a foeman set
Those strange, sad cups which cause us to forget.
Devices also on the walls he wrote
Which uninscribed all nothingness denote
And writ are nothing. Then the House of Pride
High did he raise, and therein magnified
The hopes and works beguiling his distress—
Yet this was cold through utter emptiness.
So passing thence to where some false lights shone,
He raised up Houses of Ambition ;
But through the portals and the windows pour'd
The vacant faces of a spectral horde.
And the soul built with shame the House of Lust,
Where hands emblazon :—“ Here is also dust ; ”
And though strange voices—crying : “ Come away ! ”—
Sound in the darkness, to this latest day
The transient buildings round about us rise.
One bond connects them in fantastic wise—
Houses of Sleep they are, to anxious dreams
Devoted—semblances of things and themes,
Dim images derived from elsewhere.
Yea, this is also true : the House of Prayer
Is part and parcel of that mystic trance
Through which our Momus pageantries advance,
And no one wakes of all whom sense enrings.

Only the evidence of secret things
Bears witness in us of a kindling hour ;
Through all strange seizures still it speaks with power,
And those most conscious of their sleeping state
Are haply drawing to the waking gate.
Peace on the Houses of their trance ! Unfold,
Great Dawn, on tarnish'd eyes, thy wells of gold !
And past all melancholy, clouded lands
Bring tidings of the House not built with hands.

Alternation

ALTERNATION

I

THOU dost hear the ocean's tale
In the moonlight, very pale,
Since thy chamber opens wide
One great casement towards the tide.
But another window looks
Over marshes and their brooks ;
And thy garden paths, between
Brooks and window, intervene :
When the evening breezes blow,
Hear me in these paths below !

II

Lest the great, insistent sea—
Day and night adjuring thee—
By the secret word it sings,
Take too far from human things ;
For a little space apart,
Hear the singing in my heart !
And if things beyond thee make
So much music for thy sake,
Hearken, from thy seat above,
The unmeasured deep of love !

Strange Houses of Sleep

THE SECOND SENSE

*Renew'd for ever are the lives of books
For every eye that in their pages looks ;
And many are the meanings which they bear :
Like limpid depths of lakes and water-brooks,
Does each who reads discern his image there.*

NATURE and great books have their second sense,
In still cool wells, and some can charm it thence ;
The purports deep by which the soul is stirr'd
Lurk seldom in the manifested word,
As many intimations darkly shew,
Suggesting higher search to those who know.
Far in ourselves the secret meaning lies,
And till we read therein with our own eyes
We miss those heights we dream of and grow lean
Through famish'd longing after things unseen—
Divined, not held.

We give that meaning shapes
Symbolic—in such signs the force escapes.
We take the letter of life's Word ; our wit,
In strange metathesis, we wear on it
And so all trace of any point expel.
We say, the Word is lost : but who shall tell ?
And who has found ? A few fond souls proclaim
Their mission to make known its scope and aim :
O vain assurance of the heart ! As if
Earth's wisest speak, except in hieroglyph,
Or offer more than images ! The deep
Gives these up ; from still tarns of silence leap
Visions and voices, but the things discern'd
Are neither new nor those for which we yearn'd.
One testifies : " The dead in Him abide,
And His forgiveness sets all wrath aside."

The Second Sense

One whispers : " Sweet sleep ! " One, with bended head,
Says : " Tears of joy ! " One : " Here is Living Bread ! "
And an absolving voice, with strength untold
Of pity and sweetness, breathes : " Be then consoled ! "
But underneath them all still flows the sea
Of the soul's unexpress'd immensity.

So leave it therefore, friends—with one last word
I also leave it thus : the sense unheard
Which lies for ever those bright veils behind
Of all the books of Nature and of Mind,
Eluding all approximating art,
Shall yield to—God known truly of the heart.
O did I start in mountain or abyss,
I could not choose but end at last in this !
From wayside taverns turning should behold
That this one key unlocks all towers of gold ;
Or rising fever'd out of beds of sin
Most truly feel it and to speak begin ;
Nor more in cloisters praying could recall
That this is end of end and all in all.
If things so many underneath the sun
Thus lead me ever to the arms of One,
Ye who do likewise deeply crave, forgive—
Turn to this last again and, turning, live.

So much, without distortion or offence,
A man may venture towards the second sense.
All pools heaven rains in and all seas untrod
Go on reflecting heaven—beyond is God ;
And 'twixt the gentleness of Nature's spell
And the unsleeping heights, His people dwell.

*Great is the ministry of books, and great
Their consolation in our mean estate ;
But hearts, whose aches prolong with every beat,
Find them, like Nature's breathings, incomplete.*

Strange Houses of Sleep

CUPS THAT PASS IN THE NIGHT

*Great were the taverns where we used to dwell,
Fired by strong cups which we could drain of yore ;
The stories great which once we used to tell
And maxims, now repeated never more ;
Could any scribe have follow'd us—how great
Were truths we found in cups at early hours and late.*

FIRST there was chaos, out of brooding bred—
Silent, inseparate, dispirited—
And yet with shapeless semblances impress'd—
Like one who drinks alone beside the dead,
Breast over breast !—

He, dipping deeply in a vintage rare,
Sees it is his own body lying there,
And, in confusion, calls on ghosts without
As boon companions in his watch to share—
A sorry rout.

So chaos moved, distracted in the night,
Conceiving horror of its depth and height,
Saw self in self reflect with deadly fear ;
Till that which cried above, Let there be Light,
Made light appear.

Then all great forces strove its rays to reach—
As travellers at an inn the cups of each—
And Tohu held with Bohu orgie high ;
From which creation, full of silver speech,
Sprang by and bye.

Cups that Pass in the Night

Then did the morning stars together sing,
As feasting princes who their glasses ring ;
 The Dionysian chorus swell'd above ;
Joy's shout was lifted upon transport's wing,
 As love lifts love.

And still creation holds that joy divine,
As the uplifted cup holds blood-red wine ;
 And still the Cosmos, in its Mœnad dance,
From age to age, with eyes that brighter shine, '
 Spins into trance.

We too are copies of the cosmic plan,
From earth's quintessence shaped to make us man,
 And that which Nature sketches in first place
We raise through purlieus—out of bar and ban—
 Towards gifts of grace.

Like chaos once, we dwelt, old friend, alone,
And drank with cold hearts, foreign to our own,
 Or, in our solitude, perchance with none ;
So to true life were dead as any stone
 Or corpse 'neath sun.

But now through purple hours of Bacchic night
We pass our cups, and in the depth and height
 Do each in each reflect with love, not fear ;
And—when the heart within us cries for light—
 Great lights appear.

We, like the morning stars, together sing,
What time in unison our glasses ring,
 With cosmic minds matured in vintage fine,
Exalting ever upon rapture's wing
 Æonian wine.

Strange Houses of Sleep

And as creation, on some purpose bent,
Moves grandly forward, fill'd with high content,
We, slowly down the road of years withdrawn,
Note from each tavern where the night is spent
Each breaking dawn.

O world, created in a vintage song,
We know thy goal is good, though ways be long!
Strange cups pass too among the stars encrown'd—
The ecstasy is great, the wine is strong:
WHAT GRAALS ARE FOUND!

THE SCARLET SWAN

HERE is high teaching from the far blue lift,
For Madeline, sweet maid of Mary's gift,
By certain stars transmitted—on a beam
Of argent splendour—through a lilac haze;
A legend of the land which is not dream
Or waking, as of eyes in earthly ways,
Under the crimson splendours of the morn,
But something greater which from both is born
And far o'er life abides, in joyful stress,
Full of high state and thoughtful solemnness.

Now, list! That Madeline of white and red
Rose-blooms was wrought, who doubts?—The wise
have said—

And the gold hair, assuredly, of her
Shone once upon the King-Sun's royal head,
As all the speaking parables aver,
Whence sunshine loves so well to brood thereon;
But all of scarlet was the Flying Swan

The Scarlet Swan

Which, on the day that Madeline was made,
God in such glory of bright plumes array'd,
And so commission'd over starry tides,
Saying :—Dear heart, have courage, a rest abides !

Now thus it is that through the breathless deeps
Of heaven's great space upon his flight he keeps :
Star after star upon the Scarlet Swan,
Pours floods of light, and ever and anon,
Athwart his path, the comets with a crash
Hurtle, the falling meteors seethe and flash ;
Dark worlds, bereft of all the fire within,
Blind in the void about him feebly spin ;
And where in luminous mists the starry eyes
Shew myriad points of light, swift-wing'd, he flies.

Must he not weary ? For deep rest indeed
Longs he not, dreaming of the waters cool,
The clear brown stillness of some shaded pool,
A nest engirded by a world of reed ?
I know at least, with keen eyes fix'd before,
And fill'd with frighten'd longing, evermore
He labours night and day to reach his end ;
On Madeline, of Mary's gift, alone,
As legends tell, for help his wings depend,
Lest he faint somewhere on his paths unknown.

The Scarlet Swan to Mary's gift is bound ;
With her it rests that he shall reach his end :
When she on earth is full of goodness found,
Strength and high purpose to his heart ascend.
When Mary's gift aspires to Mary's throne,
And with the will of heaven unites her own,
Asleep on dreaming wings he softly glides
And towards his end is drawn by silent tides ;
But when from maiden grace and fair estate
She stoops awhile, sad is the wanderer's fate ;

Strange Houses of Sleep

His flagging wings athwart the stir and stress
Of hostile currents wildly forward press ;
Against dark worlds he strikes, and stars that fall
With desolating shrieks his heart appal—
Alone, St. Mary's gift ; what weariness !

Now, therefore, Madeline shall, inly stirr'd
By this most faithful legend's secret word,
Reflect for ever in her heart thereon,
That so all grace and strength the Scarlet Swan
May visit in his flight, and sleep be his,
With winds that favour, till he reach where is—
O joy!—the refuge of a restful town.
Then, Swan no more, Bright Spirit under crown,
After such struggles, shall God applaud the pains,
Saying :—Dear heart, be welcome ; peace remains !

Stars, and a thousand stars, and lilac lift—
God save the Scarlet Swan, save Mary's gift !

THEY THAT WORK IN SILENCE

A SPACE of sleep vouchsafe the Lords of love ;
To wake at length they grant who reign above ;
 Meanwhile, but substitutes for rest their schemes
Dispense, till pity those great hearts shall move
 To free us from our dreams.

They that have rock'd us into swoon so well
Alone can break the bars and bonds of spell ;
 But surely comes the wakening at last,
When each to each of his strange toils shall tell
 As of old dangers past.

The Heights Remain

And towards the place of exile, far away,
We shall look back in our relief and say :

Hard was the bed whereon we writhed in sleep ;
But now the vigils of true life repay
With rest divinely deep.

THE HEIGHTS REMAIN

WE saw thee drop this day in circles down,
Dear lark, to win thy nest ! The stream is brown,
With silver streak'd ; upon the left it glows,
Broad in the summer floods. A South-wind blows,
The road is white in front, and blue thou art,
O summer sky ! Thy beauty takes the heart.
What gleams high up on yonder distant hill,
This moment brought in view ? The white road still !
Great soul, to stand upon that soaring peak
And feel the wind of heaven on either cheek !
But at the base three several tracks divide,
And that which we must take turns there aside ;
Wide uplands slope upon the left and right,
The trees grow denser towards the airy height,
Freshens the wind advancing. We shall pass
A furlong's space over the light lawn-grass ;
The quickset hedge will part, the path will take
Our steps a little into bower and brake,
Then into forest shade and mystery.
So, if we lose the heights, we yet shall see
What revelations may, in glades conceal'd
And sudden clearings, be to eye reveal'd ;
What shapes of beauty down green vistas wait
And who sings sweetly at the farmyard gate ;
Or, when those distant bells' sweet jangles cease,
Feel what it is which gives the woodland peace,

Strange Houses of Sleep

And why the spring, which keeps so still through
noon,
Begins towards eve to chatter for the moon ;
Till, after winding for a mile or less,
The path comes gaily from the wilderness
And gives us back once more to wind and sky.
There, over pleasant meadows, soaring high,
The peak again invites the climber's feet.
So we who have explored the green retreat,
And something of its lesser secrets learn'd,
Lose nothing, from our course a moment turn'd,
Since the exulting heights still rest to climb—
To-day, to-morrow, or in after time.

OF TRUE AND FALSE MARRIAGES

*Earth has its nuptials, and the flesh shall know
What flesh can learn of unions here below ;
But the soul, coming from some far-off place,
Beholds not now the Royal Bridegroom's face,
And therefore goeth sadly here along.
Give up, O void of voids, the marriage-song !
Above earth's jarring measures and their noise,
Call us in peace unto the nuptial joys.*

“WHOM God hath join'd”—aye, that leaves room for
wonder,
Granting—who doubts?—that none can put asunder :
But seeing that two lovers in one bed
—So Love itself will teach—
Seem parted each from each,
As star from star is parted overhead,
This question still recurs :
Whom hath God join'd ?

Of True and False Marriages

Think you, his flesh to hers
Whom stratagem from other arms purloin'd,
And she not surely first, nor he the last—
While simple passion is so quickly past
Or courts remain to utter their decrees?
But think you any marriage of the flesh?
True, they shall part not when their earth is dead
Who, few and rarely, in their souls are wed.
Past doubt, eternity, assuming these,
Transfigures the old bonds or welds afresh;
But their true souls how few on earth have found,
Much less with others have their own been bound,
And skin-deep wedlock—with the joys it brings—
Scarce counts among indissoluble things.

Alas, the souls which once God join'd, through some
Deep-seated mischief, to divorce have come;
And it is only when desires within
From height exceeding height some lustre win;
From space-immensities of winter's clime—
Cold, inaccessible and clear—
Or great distractions fallen on the sea,
Bring subtly-quickening intimations near,
That pasts withdrawn in worlds of memory—
Beyond all deeps of time—
Send faint reports—though bands of sense enfold—
Of great free unions which obtain'd of old.

Naked we are, divorced from our true ends,
And conscious only of what pain attends
The isolation on our course imposed,
The bar on prospects from all points disclosed;
Yea, on the nuptial night man lies alone
And lonely sleeps the wife he calls his own:
Veil'd limbs and shrouded lips—
Of such are our most close companionships,

Strange Houses of Sleep

Sad travesty of joys that once we knew.
Pass as we can this mournful exile through,
But ask not constancy and faith too much ;
Of loving kindness seek the healing touch,
And let us deal with those who share our lot
As if all mercy were, all judgment not ;
Keep, if we may, through this life's stormy weather,
But say not rashly God hath join'd together.
What did God join? Man to the star he seeks,
Sea to the soul to which the sea-deep speaks?
But here are also types: O symbols fair,
Reflecting faintly light from elsewhere!
Off with these bonds! Over the great abyss
The far-off hope proclaims what union is,
And all that cannot rest in man's vast deep
Till it returns to God and there finds sleep
Has since creation in our inmost cried:
What God hath join'd who was it dared divide?

GREAT SILENCES

Ah, sighing grass! Ah, trees that know not rest!
All life of earth, pressing to ends afar,
Heart's flight of man and hurry of every star—
What go ye forth to find? Where ends your quest?

Viaticum

VIATICUM

*He who hath made it will mend it,
He who began it must end it—
Leave it to Him.
Weary and poor thou art,
Weak of purpose and frail in heart—
Thy hopes are vague and dim.
Stretch forth a hand and try
If thou canst touch the sky ;
Lift up thine eyes and see
How far 'tis over thee—
Over all reach !
Quit then—the hour is late—
Leave unto Him, to fate ;
Great may take care of great,
Each star of each !*

THOSE books, my friend, you purchased yester eve,
Though treating faithfully a certain art,
Contain not that you fondly now believe :
(Brother, a little while—and we depart !)

This habitation by the mere and stream,
For wood-shade peace, self-promised long ago,
Will not afford the rest of which you dream :
(Come, lock up house, my friend, and leave it so !)

The wealth which took you hand in hand with sin—
When you stand knocking at a certain gate,
Will forge no golden key to let you in :
(Make haste, one further step, the hour is late !)

Strange Houses of Sleep

Now, well-away! What treasures some things were—
Ah, woe is mine!—which soon are utter dross :
(Toll slowly!—Stifle the unseemly stir—
A horror falls upon the house of loss!)

Be still, pale prophets of disaster, yet
In pace, in idipsum, dormiet!

HEMLOCK

You know that, in the last resource of all,
It matters scarcely how the light may fall,
Or what stars in the night their beacons lift.
So little also brings the morning's gift
That whether late or early Nature stir,
We mark but idly how it fares with her
When in the East the scarlet glories spill,
Or how at noon her children take their fill
Of all the good which warmth in brightness brings.
Who counts these other than as trivial things,
Having so much, un murmuring, left behind
Of all the morning splendours of the mind
And all life's midway majesty and pride?
One great detachment puts the soul aside
From the fair outward fields which Nature owns,
Since some time sadly seeking certain thrones,
Remember'd ever through a world of wrong,
The soul went forth. She, having journey'd long
Amidst the sorrows of secluded tracts,
Among cold snows and frozen cataracts,
Above the common zones of human thought,
One burden of sad knowledge thence has brought :—
That in such altitudes all stars look thin.
So, 'twixt the throne you surely thought to win

Hemlock

And that last dizzy peak of precipice
Where you have dared to stand, the great abyss
Its void unfathom'd offers silently.

Now, hence it is that though the eye may see,
With sight herein it is not satisfied,
Nor is the ear by hearing occupied,
And nothing ministers of all things round.
For as the man who looking to be crown'd
Amidst high pageantry at eve, if left
Outside the palace, of all state bereft,
Would little comfort find that Western skies
Shew over wide meads phantom pageantries,
And though the stars might shine in all their state
Would still keep knocking at the Palace Gate ;
So, dedicated unto larger things
Than all sollicitudes of earthly kings,
And having strongly striven to ascend
Where great gods are, but having miss'd our end,
By reason of the gulfs which intervene :
What wonder now that all this earthly scene
Spectral and pallid to the soul appear ?

And this is desolation ; hemlock here
We drink henceforth through all the aching void,
Taking the cross of our fair hope destroy'd,
No longer with the scheme of things in touch.
But—lest our mingled cup should over-much
Embitter us, and those whom thought intense
Has worn, seem ravaged by the work of sense,
Like any worldling underneath the sun—
We still remember that which once was done,
When, some time sadly seeking certain thrones,
Beyond the outward fields which Nature owns,
On that last dizzy peak of precipice
We were held only by the great abyss ;

Strange Houses of Sleep

And when we most may turn from mortal things
It is in longing for unearthly wings,
Or—at the utmost solitary ridge—
Still in the end to find a secret bridge.

AT THE END OF THINGS

THE world uprose as a man to find Him—
Ten thousand methods, ten thousand ends—
Some bent on treasure; the more on pleasure;
And some on the chaplet which fame attends;
But the great deep's voice in the distance dim
Said: Peace, it is well; they are seeking Him.

When I heard that all the world was questing,
I look'd for a palmer's staff and found,
By a reed-fringed pond, a fork'd hazel-wand
On a twisted tree, in a bann'd waste-ground;
But I knew not then what the sounding strings
Of the sea-harps say at the end of things.

They told me, world, you were keen on seeking;
I cast around for a scrip to hold
Such meagre needs as the roots of weeds—
All weeds, but one with a root of gold;
Yet I knew not then how the clangs ascend
When the sea-horns peal and the searchings end.

An old worn wallet was that they gave me,
With twelve old signs on its seven old skins;
And a star I stole for the good of my soul,
Lest the darkness came down on my sins;
For I knew not who in their life had heard
Of the sea-pipes shrilling a secret word.

At the End of Things

I join'd the quest that the world was making,
Which follow'd the false ways far and wide,
While a thousand cheats in the lanes and streets
Offer'd that wavering crowd to guide ;
But what did they know of the sea-reed's speech
When the peace-words breathe at the end for each ?

The fools fell down in the swamps and marshes ;
The fools died hard on the crags and hills ;
The lies which cheated, so long repeated,
Deceived, in spite of their evil wills,
Some knaves themselves at the end of all—
Though how should they hearken when sea-flutes call ?

But me the scrip and the staff had strengthen'd ;
I carried the star ; that star led me :
The paths I've taken, of most forsaken,
Do surely lead to an open sea :
As a clamour of voices heard in sleep,
Come shouts through the dark on the shrouded deep.

Now it is noon ; in the hush prevailing
Pipes, harps and horns into flute-notes fall ;
The sea, conceding my star's true leading,
In tongues sublime at the end of all
Gives resonant utterance far and near :—

*“ Cast away fear ;
Be of good cheer ;
He is here,
Is here ! ”*

And now I know that I sought Him only
Even as child, when for flowers I sought ;
In the sins of youth, as in search for truth,
To find Him, hold Him alone I wrought.
The knaves too seek Him, and fools beguiled—
So speak to them also, sea-voices mild !

Strange Houses of Sleep

Which then was wisdom and which was folly ?

Did my star more than the cozening guide ?

The fool, as I think, at the chasm's brink,

Prone by the swamp or the marsh's side,

Did, even as I, in the end rejoice,

Since the voice of death must be His true voice.

A BRIDGE FROM EARTH

AWAY with time-worn thought ! Who gives free space
For inward silence, in some form of tongue
Not wholly secret, not at least unknown,
May hear God speak, and shall that speech to men,
His brothers, by the haste of eager days
Distracted, in due season, if in part,
Interpret. A fair world before me now
Spreads, past indeed most bounds of daily walk,
But yet not more than commonly removed,
And, strong and sweet, God's voice moves over it
In winds which freshen ; in the burnish'd sky—
The high, clear sky swept bright by Autumn winds—
His eyes are shining. What if in the South
Some dark clouds roll, and, gather'd in the West
Below great banks, of black, foreboding mien,
Far droop long tendrils down of angry light ?
These hold some other mystery of God
Behind them ; and a pearl is in the mist
On certain fields before me. At my feet,
O'er all this down, the heath's dark green and rich
Begins to burst with blossom. Now it breaks—
Yes, breaks the sunshine forth ; all heaven looks out,
Earth strips all shades to greet me. Like a voice,
The beauty round me calls on every side :
"Awake ! Arise !" And broad on farther slopes

At that Door

The road ascends, while all the loose brown earth
Of fields plough'd newly glows with amber hues.
Fair sleeps the vale between us—pastures rich,
Dark gold of woods. Speech in the winds indeed—
Eyes in the light ; but in the still life too
An eloquence of silence, in the holds
Of solemn shadow such a frequent hint
Of high intelligence, on secret things
So wisely brooding ; by our doors, our hearts,
On every side the earth puts forth a bridge,
Or lifts a ladder, or a path makes smooth
From less to more, till earth of all the worlds
Is nighest thing to heaven and star to man.

Hereof is looking from the world within,
When something learn'd in silence fills the heart
And finds the kindred message spell'd without.

AT THAT DOOR

IN the late night—full sorrowful and cold—
I stood by mine own door and knock'd ;
White mists against the vacant windows roll'd ;
The house was barr'd and lock'd.

The house was lock'd, and desolate and void,
The forecourt wild and damp without ;
The rose was scatter'd and the vine destroy'd ;
Loose tiles were strewn about.

From ragged eaves the stealthy moisture dripp'd ;
The moss upon the steps was green ;
The foot along the reedy pathways slipp'd
On fungus growths unclean.

Strange Houses of Sleep

No link was set within the time-worn sconce,
No lamp in porch to shew the way ;
Cypress and yew made ominous response
To wind more sad than they.

No loving hand was there to let me in,
No voice behind the portal spoke,
But at the knocker's unaccustom'd din
The hall's deep echoes woke.

And yet, meseem'd, I went forth yester morn
From warmth and light and peace within ;
Whence, if I tarried in this state forlorn,
Eftsoons must day begin.

But still for ever, in the vapour's shroud,
The moon leans sideways from the sky,
And in the dark East speaks no saffron cloud
Of morrow's morning nigh.

Ah, what distress!—By mine own house denied,
Acold beside its portals dumb
And vacant windows, staring blind and wide—
If dawn should never come.

ILLUMINATION

I

WITH native ease the serpent sloughs his skin,
But cannot change his old snake-heart within ;
Man does not lay his outward form aside,
Yet can his old life from his new divide.

Illumination

II

The simple words which follow shall direct
Right well and pleasantly all hearts elect,
And little children of the world to come ;
But unto others be in meaning dumb—
Vague voices which delight on inward seas—
All storm and wrath—in cryptic images :
May hearts that read these maxims sweetly reach—
Late, if not soon—the truths exceeding speech !

III

What makes us say that underneath the sun
The toil we call our own is toil undone—
Finds work, when others sleep, for hand and heart,
And from repose shapes obstacles to art ?
It is the sense of trust which burdens thought :
In these wild ways, ungovern'd and untaught,
We came some solemn purpose to fulfil,
But till encompass'd in its whole extent
We cannot prove that we indeed were sent,
Nor yet be sure we do the Master's will.

IV

Something has gone before us in the past,
And something more must follow at the last.

V

Man enters life expectant, and departs
With expectation in his heart of hearts.

VI

He dwelt in darkness ere his birth occur'd
And oft in darkness still his strife is heard,
Toiling a higher title to attain :
His throes are those of being born again.

Strange Houses of Sleep

VII

The universe he enters here bestows
Such earthly lights on him as Nature knows,
And sustenance is his from brimming wells
Of its white sacraments and parables ;
Through all its veils the presages are brought
Of greater orders—passing human thought—
Which interpenetrate at times our own :
In Grace and Nature nothing stands alone.

VIII

When souls come down into this world they take
The letter of the books, their thirst to slake ;
The spirit in the Temple's place conferr'd
Is in the inmost Temple only heard ;
And that which darkness doth from dawn divide
Renders it always night, the soul outside.

IX

As every witness in the heart avers,
No dispensation of the light occurs,
Save in that shrine which earth's eye never sees,
The place withdrawn of the Great Mysteries.
Subject and object there Plotinus found
United truly on a common ground.
What place is that? Ye neophytes—it lurks
Deep in the heart of these external works!

X

High rites in all their stages can dispense
Only the sanctuary's secret sense,
And can at most in empty hearts arouse
The hunger for the beauty of the House.

A Dream of June

XI

Now, last, remember that which none deny—
Clean life can enter into sanctity,
And yet no mere morality shall gain
That vision which the pure in heart attain.

XII

But what is raised magnetically draws
All things to reach it : this is law of laws.

XIII

A golden ring unites such scatter'd Keys,
Which open portals to the Mysteries.

A DREAM OF JUNE

A SPLENDID pageantry of sunset takes
The dreamer forth along this winding road,
What time the dew-fall in the roses makes,
Descending silently, its night abode ;
What time the hedge-rose lifts a coral cup,
About the dew's cool treasure closing up.
*Now sunset roses o'er the wintry way
Alone recall the rose of yesterday.*

With fragile petals delicate of hue—
The sweetest flower that in our country blooms—
This wayside rose, 'neath heaven's imperial blue,
Dispenses its ineffable perfumes,
While dying daylight's gold and scarlet flood
With sudden glory tinges leaf and bud.
*The snow-drift quenches now the dying beam ;
Rose and deep rose of sunset—both a dream.*

Strange Houses of Sleep

O floral chalice, on the hedge so high,
 May gentle rains, that soothe the thirsty land,
Refresh thy blossom from a gracious sky!
 May thorns for ever from the rustic hand
Thine elfin beauties jealously defend,
And thy last petal to its latest end!
 *May dark December's bleak and dreary stress
 Be soothed with memories of thy loveliness!*

May temper'd winds about thy spaces green
 Breathe light in modulated music low!
May golden bees, when thy full bloom is seen,
 Extract its mellow sweets to overflow
The deep recesses of their tree-built homes,
To fill with winter stores their honeycombs!
 *And in man's image-haunted hives of thought
 Not all in vain may thy June sweets be sought!*

Those Ariel children, born of summer's bliss,
 The moths that flit through fruitful fields beyond,
With wings of azure, where thy beauty is
 For ever hover in a silence fond!
And, with deep rapture all the day long ringing,
May thy fair world ne'er want a lark's blithe singing!
 *The leaves of thought which thy sere petals hold
 Shall echoes also of that song enfold.*

O may thy fabled love, the nightingale,
 Through all night's calm and visionary space,
In glow-worm haunted thicket, or deep vale,
 Abide at hand, musician of thy grace;
And all the senses of thy floral soul
With rapture ravish, by delight control!
 *Soft falls the snow from leaden lift above;
 Soft in our hearts repose, O flower of love!*

A Free Way

The poet's benediction dowers thee well—

Was that thy blush upon the western sky?

Was that thy beauty over field and fell

Investing all in gorgeous panoply?

Ah, when deep night envelops all things here,

Thy fragrance still proclaims that thou art near!

Still art thou with us under Christmas snows,

For us the Rose ne'er dies—long live the Rose!

The Rose and Rose, for evermore the Rose,

While days are dwindling towards the least of all

And every utterance sadly sets towards close;

The shadow of life itself has ceased to fall;

Ferment and sap of life no longer work;

All the quick light is still'd in shroud of murk:

Yet it is daylight shortly, torrid sun;

A thousand Roses in the place of one!

A FREE WAY

THE green hedge grows by the dull wayside,

And, for no sweet reason or artful sense,

But merely a landmark, rises the fence,

While a gate in that fence stands wide.

Close—on the further side of the hedge—

To the weedy bank is the oozy edge

Of a shoal and torpid pond.

A random foot-way falters beyond,

Its narrow track in the woodland screening.

The hedge is ragged, the shoots spring high;

Through gaps and breaches one sees the sky—

You would doubt if even a dreamer's eye

Could clothe it with secret meaning:

Nor seems that twig, from the rest up-rising

Twelve inches straight in the air or more,

Strange Houses of Sleep

A guide-post pointing an unknown shore
For a good stout heart's emprizing.

Yet on certain nights—when the moon is late—
In front of the moon's disc, dark and straight,
With a single leaf will the twig stand clear,

Moved by the night-wind's hand unseen ;
And a still small voice in the dreamer's ear
Begins to murmur and keen.

Very softly there, very sadly here,
Sway'd South or North by the viewless hand,

The leaf says : " Here it is Faërie Land ! "

And then, more plainly :

" He that looks further is searching vainly :

Near, near—never so near :

The gate is open, the path is free ;
It is now, if ever, to hear and see ! "

And I see for one—through this message coming
In the midst of the dusk night's drowsy humming—

That to him who can hear and understand

Why this is the entrance of Faërie Land,

May even a twig and a leaf impart

Some secrets hidden in Nature's heart.

Hence I conclude that the end of things

Exceeds not the sweep of an angel's wings,

And, by these spread widely from base to marge,

We know He has given His angels charge.

SEASONS

For ever the autumn and spring
And for ever, on shining wing,
A Summer which goes and returns ;
But oh for the cleansing fount,
Dear heart, of the Holy Mount,
For which ever the true heart yearns !

Of Sleeping and Waking

A NIGHT PIECE

ON the drench'd sands and shallow, windless sea,
On that one boat which rocks, with one bare mast,
At anchor, on a hundred naked groynes,
And on the desolate and sinking house,
With crumbling turrets facing towards the tide,
There falls, like stillness on the close of Time—
In soft and mournful mist—the sad, grey night.

OF SLEEPING AND WAKING

THAT virgin peer who sought the Holy Grail
Found in the castle hall his senses fail,
By heavy slumber strangely overweigh'd.
The pomp, through smoke of censers slowly sway'd,
Swept by him, prone with limbs that never stirr'd
And lips that moved not with the questing word,
Which would the hidden mystery reveal
And the King's hurts and all the country heal.
Therefrom the woe wax'd greater, more and more.
So also we, who our sad state deplore,
Of hidden oracle and holy lips
Ask secret lights, the passwords and the grips;
But when the vision from the veil replies
Sleep falls full heavy on our souls and eyes,
And, whatsoe'er is spoken or withheld,
It utters nothing to our senses spell'd.
O Knight of Arthur's court, after great stress
You saw the hallows which could heal and bless:
May we in time our long enchantment break
And to the word of life from sleep awake!

Strange Houses of Sleep

LOSS AND GAIN

WE lost it long ago ; we dream not how,
We know not where. The spirit—with a brow
Which high thoughts hallow'd, full of peace in them—
Wore, as some say, its royal diadem ;
But crowns are nothing to the soul, and this
High legend only or a symbol is.
Ah, friends! What, therefore, did we lose and why?
Was it our home beyond the far blue sky?
But home is only where the soul, above
These anxious ways, finds sleep of perfect love,
While the same heaven which draws our hearts, we know,
Extends not more above us than below.
Whence, therefore, this so dimly understood
Yet haunting sense within us of the good
Wherein we once rejoiced ; which evermore
Through mournful ways of life we now deplore?
Ah, if the heart could learn, the heart might find!
Or, at least, less inhibited and blind,
Move on more conscious where the ways direct,
What to avoid aware and what expect.
Here is the measure of our loss—perchance
One gain is theirs who thus in dark advance
As best they can, peering with hoodwink'd eyes :
Light comes at last more splendid, and surprise
The sweeter, for the gloom and its dismay,
When night in fine and hoodwinks pass away :
A hand has guided and a hand shall lead
Till loss be loss no more, but gain indeed.

Of Consummation

OF CONSUMMATION

Wise, O heart, is the heart which loves ; but what of the
heart which refrains—
Not as if counting the cost, and preferring the ease to
the pains,
But knowing how treasures of all are neither received nor
given,
The aching void that is under love and above it the
aching heaven ?

Wise are the lips which have learn'd how long may
linger the lips' caress,
But wiser they who the hungering lips can chasten and
repress,
For that which our fain mouths burn to kiss and loving
arms to embrace
Has never been given to lips or arms in the world of
time and space.

Wise therefore, and wise above all, is he who does not
swerve aside,
But knows to his greatest need on earth is service of
earth denied ;
Who, least things asking of flesh and blood, and less
than the least of rest,
Goes on demanding the perfect good and disdaining the
second best.

After much conquest and toil no doubt, but high in his
starry tracks,
Shall the greater ministers come to him burning the
sacred flax,

Strange Houses of Sleep

Saying: So passes the world and so the glory and light
expend;
But the High Term, follow'd unflinching, cries: I can
repay at the end.

IN ANY GARDEN

I

I DREAM'D in a garden when noon was past,
On a thyme-sweet bank reclining—
Half dream'd, half thought of the peace unbroken
After the breeze to the rose has spoken,
And ere it rises, where light so still is,
To breathe of love to the shining lilies.
Over the bower was the bindweed twining,
And beyond the lily's last white cup
Life's mystery yielded its secret up:
So the end seem'd clear at last—
As in any garden, when noon is past.

II

They came who lead me, the Sons of Thought,
That ever my steps attend,
And the first is named the Sense of the End,
But the second the Way that the End is sought:
Now as to the third, I have search'd my soul,
But I know not well, for His face is dim,
If love can divine the great name of Him,
Yet I dream that His name is The Goal—
Say, have you also by these been taught?
Have you not seen them, from first to last,
In any garden, when noon is past?

The Inward Majesty

THE KING'S SECRET

KEPT well—too closely kept—or so it seems—
Few quests disclose the Secret of the King.
That Presence, manifest in evening's cool
Long since in the first garden of the world,
Withdrawn to-day in the most secret place
Of all concealment, baffles reason's search.
God veils His glory from our questing eyes—
We know not why ; few claims are ours to press :
But still the longing and the hope remain.
Poor baffled reason in the end perchance
Finds her spent forces unto new give place,
While in the soul at length, from all apart,
The glory dawns, and in the depths thereof
A still voice breathes the Secret of the King.

THE INWARD MAJESTY

OUR mental dalliance with the lighter vein
Is possible in cities of the plain,
 In pleasant meadows, or where gardens are ;
And on the fringe and margin of the sea,
Such happy refuge comes to you and me.
But compass'd by the immeasurable main,
Or on those heights where nothing intervenes
 Betwixt the climber and a certain star,
Let inward majesty to outward scenes
 So consciously respond,
That, when the shallows into silence fall,
Our soundless deeps within the soul may call
 And Words of Life make answer from beyond.

Strange Houses of Sleep

HAUNTINGS

FROM life's first dawn till now, when life's new stress
Drives all things swifter into consciousness,
Earth has been full of those strange secret things
Which we touch sometimes in our quickenings.
So in the veils which commonly divide
From what we vaguely term the further side,
Rent or thin place makes possible to see
That which encompasses so pressingly.
There is no man, however steep'd in sense,
But can recall some such experience,
When dusk or dark or daylight dimly gave
Suggestions which are deeper than the grave,
Till soul in body for a moment felt
Contact with souls that in no flesh have dwelt.
'Tis then we know there is a houseless host
Of incomplete humanities, of ghost
And spectral people, who, from dregs and lees
And depths of stagnant and unconscious seas
Exhaled, their evolution's course begin,
But, though remote, are still our kith and kin,
And by the process of the years advanced
Shall reach, like us, their share of light enhanced.
You cannot draw your blinds at eventide
And not leave thousands in the dark outside ;
You cannot fling the windows wide at morn
But there are thousands, as on sunbeams borne :
Sad is their lot, midst all their crowds alone,
To none responding and by all unknown.
And yet the pity in the human heart
For life's great travail, of which theirs is part,
By solidarity of all things here,
Helps such poor souls, so far and yet so near ;

The Bridal Journey

Just as our kindness to the dear, dumb beasts
First hallows us, making us Nature's priests,
Then helps their prison'd yearning to assuage,
And lastly leads them in their pilgrimage.

Ah! pity, tenderness and love—these three
And the Great God above—and these are He!

THE BRIDAL JOURNEY

HE call'd her with a mighty cry :—
“Come forth! I need thee, eye to eye!”

Then all of mortal life she set
Aside thereat and, featly, came—
A virgin soul of purest flame :
Their deep eyes met.

From out her house of flesh came she ;
He stood, a spirit grandly free
From mortal veil and bond.
They left their bodies side by side—
The blessed bridegroom and the bride—
And soar'd beyond.

The paths of light their presence own
And zones beyond the starry zone ;
A light outshining suns for them
Is granted as a diadem ;
And, where no mortal steps have trod,
They follow the high quest of God.

Strange Houses of Sleep

DREAMS OF DEATH

*In storm, in darkness and in stress,
In languor and deep weariness,
What wonder if, o'er life's dark deep—
That tossing sea which dare not sleep—
From time to time, on each should come
An exile's sickness for his home?*

THE troubled sleep of man endures, it seems,
Long—and too long—laid waste with evil dreams
Which end not even with his latest breath,
And sad and lonely are the dreams of death.
May those who did with sleep of sense inbind
Vouchsafe, compassioning, to free the mind,
For heavy vapour doth the heart enring !
I, more than all, should pray for waking—
These many years in mortal slumber kept.
What if, indeed, my time is overstept
And the great hour I should have known is past,
So that the only tenant in the vast
And silent place of sleep, in vain I beat
Wings weariful and weary hands and feet
Against the gates, with clamour and ado ;
But there is no more hope of passing through !

If morn will come ! It is so long to wait ;
Long seem'd it never at the cottage gate—
That space of day the morn and night betwixt
When forth I went, and bore, to lighten toil,
A hallow for the crowded day's turmoil,
My bride within the gate, an image fix'd,
Till eve and love should come to hearten me.

Dreams of Death

But I went forth one morning when the free
Spring breath found ambush in her sunny hair,
Which opulence of light encompass'd, there
Standing so statue-tall, as saints might, crown'd,
And the child with her in the garden ground,
Where heavy scent of hyacinths abode.
Hard by the dusty tumult of the road,
That artless picture shone in equal grace
With any sacrament of angel's face ;
And in my soul, as in the street, it stirr'd
The solemn rumours of that secret word
Which Nature must not utter lest she cease.
So as I pass'd abroad, with inward peace,
All suddenly methought that it was long
Betwixt the Matins-time and Evensong ;
Then, midst a strange confusion in the mind
At many cries before me and behind,
I knew that I should go back never more—
That never gate should open as before,
Nor door swing back, nor scented dusk reveal
The eyes which welcome and the hands which heal—
Being by sad calamity or sin
Absorb'd for ever by the gulf within ;
And, disinherited of earthly shape,
Doom'd self in self to find, nor e'er escape
Even by plunging deeper in the gloom—
Such is the unlighted secret of my tomb.

Long have I sought, yet no relief is found,
And my soul sickens in this aching round,
Amidst the purblind air and vapours dim ;
For it seems idle now to call on Him
Who having put to sleep, as I have said,
Is my sole hope of waking from the dead
And all the ghostly semblances which fill
With their own dread these halls of voided will.

Strange Houses of Sleep

O but I pray that I may find some track
At least to my old life directing back,
And that my dreaming arms may there enfold
The wife who shared with me the sleep of old,
The little child whose innocence and mirth
Seem'd newly waken'd in the life of earth
Rather than aught which play'd in dreams of sleep.

There is an anthem full of meaning deep
Which evil thought from souls entranced could drive,
And save from phantoms of the night alive ;
There is a promise which from old has said
How rest from labour on the blessed dead
In peace descends : Give me their balm once more,
And they, perchance, repeated o'er and o'er,
Shall yet become to me a gospel word,
With grace to die hereafter in the Lord.

*Ah, let us rest—as much as men may do—
Those faithful homes within where hearts are true,
Because—without—the darkness and the cold
Hide laidly shapes and monstrous growths from view,
And hard it fares with those who shall behold!*

WORLDS OF DREAM

THE sun descended in a flaming mist
And all God's world beneath it—wide, waste downs,
Blue sky, serene and beautiful, and thou,
Half-shrouded sea, mysterious, with smooth,
Far-reaching bay, for miles and miles the land
Embracing—steep'd therein, divinely glow'd
Through deepening orange clouds . . . A sudden
change,

The Swooning Castle

A shifting wind, a lifting mist, and lo!
Eastwards the sea shone cold and steely grey,
While downs and headlands, with the chalky roads
That wound among them—as the wan, white moon
Rose over like a phantom grandiose—
All these grew sombre. Facing there the main,
I stood, rich Sunset Land upon my right,
With capes and cliffs, with towns and towers therein,
Enchanted, dreaming; on the left, this world,
Which sober'd sadly towards a single tint
As night fell down thereon. It did not sleep,
It did not wake, but ever as the wind
Grew keener, utter'd its disquietude,
Sole sign of life. Of which of these could one
Apart from both—in such a mood—have said
This and not that was true reality?

THE SWOONING CASTLE

SUDDENLY, wide in the night awake—
Do you know what that means?—with a start
And a tremulous heart,
In the dark of the night rose I:
Had a voice unknown of a day to break
Utter'd some warning cry? . . .
But the East was cold, and the thin white fold
Of a light mist up to the windows roll'd,
And the leaves by the windows wept.
'Tis a mournful thing, at a time so dead,
To wake uncall'd and with stealthy tread—
And the hush'd breath inward kept—
From room to room, in the curtain'd gloom,
Pass, and from bed to bed.

Strange Houses of Sleep

They slept :
Some in their peace and some in their grace,
And some there were with a haunted face
And a fever'd head.
Once at the corridor's end I drew
Toward a sheeted figure which glided through
To the top of a stairway steep :
It carried a darken'd lamp and pass'd :
There was none in the house that slept so fast
As he who walk'd in his sleep.
Over the stairs I peer'd and found,
With head to breast, by his lantern's side,
On the porter's bench was the porter bound,
I knew not whether in sleep or swoon,
While heavy-eyed by the doorway wide
Lay drowsy henchman and dreaming hound.

With none to challenge, I slipp'd the latch
And, issuing under the streaming thatch,
I visited stable and stall and sty,
But I never came on an open eye,
For the roosting fowl, that crow'd unbidden,
Slept with his beak in his plumage hidden.
Far and sad, in a world of reeds,
A shoal brook slipp'd through the marsh and meads,
With no more sound than the dark lagoon,
Dead still, outstaring the dripping moon :
The moon on her side in the mist lay red—
Green leaves, but they stirr'd not overhead !

So, seeing the swoon of the world outside
Has more of sorrow and less of kin
Than the torpid heart of the house within—
Like the hush which falls when a ghost has cried—
My heart with its yearning drew me back,
By the creaking stairway's winding track.

How it Falls by the Sea

In an upper room of the roof which faces
East, with the sense of a hope subdued
That a light may whiten the mist-fill'd spaces,
Sleep being out of my thoughts, I brood
And watch ; but I feel that they watch me too,
The unseen ones, sitting this long night through—
Near, as it may be, though out of reach—
Till sleepers shall waken to life and speech
At the end of this sorrowful spell.
And since high up in the belfry tower
There hangs a listless bell,
Some voice may bid me proclaim the hour :
Whence in my comfortless mood I gain
The sense of a vigil not wholly vain.
Shall I not, seeing the Rising Sun,
Cry: "Look; It is Morning"—when night is done?
If I fell at the end into slumber deep,
I should call out such good news in my sleep.

HOW IT FALLS BY THE SEA

THE air was cool, the wind was fresh, the sky
Before him violet, westward tinged with deep
And angry red. Behind him, loose and black,
Great clouds roll'd up ; a church, impending, loom'd ;
He pass'd with awe beneath its tower of stone—
Square, tall and grey—the graveyard cross'd in haste
And reach'd the wood ; beyond its gentle slope
Far stretch'd a plain ; and there thin, early mists
Had gather'd ; from the orange in the West
A dull glow fell on quiet pool and pond ;
The lamps in scatter'd hamlets there and here
Began to glisten. All his later way
The scarlet sunset and the stormy South

Strange Houses of Sleep

Made splendid, and with images sublime
The boy's mind fill'd; while overhead the pale,
Translucent vault of heaven was thinly sown
With gleaming stars; while, above sea, the pure
Unclouded moon her white and crescent disc
Reveal'd, suffusing light sky-wandering clouds
And ether's pensive lilac.

By the shore

He paused, still'd waters washing at his feet,
But far through distance, mingling with the wind,
Giving forth solemn sounds. And turning then,
One mile or more, against keen breeze he kept
His set face steadfast. By his path the wan
And shrinking silverweed, midst stones, maintain'd
A struggling life. A mile or more, sea-waves
Charm'd him with music, moon on moon look'd down
Mirror'd in trembling bosom of the deep.
A mile or more, he watch'd their communing
Till thin clouds stay'd it, till there shew'd alone
One pallid phantom. Then the sun burst forth,
Glory of storm-fill'd wonder, light on dark
Of formless cloud, crying to melt in light.
He stood; heaven's blaze upon his cheek and brow
Smote him. One moment every field and tree—
Great haystacks, fragrant hedges and the thatch
Of cottages—shone in that gorgeous light
As things transfigured. Suddenly the sun—
Beneath grim ruins of empurpled cloud—
Fell swift; the twilight over hills behind
And low campaign in utter gloom devolved.

Awhile the waning glory of the West—
Its broken pageant and fire-shards thereof—
He watch'd; the sullen purple, tinged with gold,
Grew lurid; leaden vapours far away
Were stain'd with blood; but here and there the sky
Laid bare far depths of melancholy blue.

A Grey World

The boy turn'd northward, down a lane which led
Straight from the sea. Beside some stunted elms
He paused; the darkness chill'd him; far and near
He heard loud chafing of incessant waves,
As suddenly a violet dark involved
Their vast expanse, and he, more lone than they,
Knew well how night discourses to the soul.
He started, as a bird, with whirring wings,
Broke forth from covert. The wind died and rose,
But darkness deepening on the early wheat,
Left every green blade visible: his path
Wound pale before him; waver'd stars above;
And still the phantom of the moon behind
Mourn'd at him as he pass'd into the night.

A GREY WORLD

*The horse is warm in his stall,
Warm in his but lies the thrall;
A measured music, grand and dim,
Heard from afar, is the angels' hymn.
Turn horse in stall and churl on bed;
Angels of Issa, bend the head:
Let all waif-children be comforted!*

THESE things in a vision saw I,
But they rest with me till I die;
And ever the pity grows in my heart
For all earth's stray'd ones, her counterpart.

Now, the child was striving where great downs rose,
And about those downs did the steep hills close;
Peak above peak, with a frozen crown,
Each mountain over the hills look'd down.

Strange Houses of Sleep

The sky was snow, and within it all
Was a sense of night that could not fall ;
While the wind, which seem'd to carry a cross,
Scream'd the eternal sense of loss :
Yet through that wailing world of grey
The white waif follow'd her woful way.

The child was wretched, the child was bare,
And, for greater horror, was lonely there ;
No single face in that stricken zone
Had bent in kindness to meet her own ;
None offer'd the grasp of a helping hand,
For no man dwelt in the dreadful land ;
And the tender heart of a woman had not
Sweeten'd or lighten'd her orphan lot.
It seem'd that since the beginning of things
Such feet came less than an angel's wings,
And the kind, sweet angels, it is known,
Only encircle a great white throne,
Or if below them they turn their faces,
'Tis not to gaze on accursèd places.

She went on trying some goal to reach,
As a lost child strives who has none to teach ;
But she knew not whence she had come, nor whither
Tended the path which had brought her thither,
While fear—which is worse than a frozen track
Through an ice-world stretching, at front and back—
Forbade the pulses of thought to stir
And wither'd the poor little heart of her :
One thing only, by waste and hill
Something drove her to hasten still,
Lest cross more dreadful and greater woes,
In that world's unrest, should befall repose.

Over the waste, through the mist so wan,
The tortuous path went on and on—

Burdens of Babylon

What purpose serving exceeded wit :
Say, is there light at the end of it ?
And after all, in the scheme of things,
Is the child protected by unseen wings ?
Or is this only a show which seems ?—
Shall the waif wake up from uneasy dreams
On a bed of down, where bright rays are falling,
To hear the voice of her mother calling,
Saying : “ Sweet maid, it is late, so late,
And out in the garden your sisters wait
In the morning shine, while the bells begin
To usher my dear one’s birthday in ? ”

The grey clouds gather from rim to lift
And the child enters a great snow-drift ;
The sharp flakes stifle her wailing cry,
The peaks are lost in a blank of sky.
If God is behind this doom and wrath,
She will haply issue on smoother path,
But I know not, granting all crowns of bliss,
For what good end it is ruled like this :

*While the horse is warm in his stall,
And warm in his hut lies the thrall ;
And a high chant filling the heavens says thus :—
“ But Thou, O Lord, have mercy on us ! ”
Angels of Issa, bow the head,
Till all waif-children are comforted.*

BURDENS OF BABYLON

WHEN the stars cease to speak to thee ; when all
The silent messages which softly fall
From liquid skies, over dark groves, have said
Their final word ; when ministries are dead,

Strange Houses of Sleep

When winds are voiceless and, from distance brought,
Sea-sounds give up no more the forms of thought ;
Then faded Nature, once in life so glad,
Wears sadder mien than ever mourner had ;
And if one utterance in the world is yet,
'Tis but the burden of a vain regret.

When with a melancholy, helpless trend,
All settles slowly into silent end,
Then the soul also, fickle and deranged,
Too weak for action and from peace estranged,
If offer'd straightway an immortal cup
Might lack the power of hand to lift it up ;
Then hearts no longer struggle to get breath,
But through deep lethargy subside towards death ;
And underneath the swooning moon or sun
There comes no help from any, no not one ;
While of all things that are of least avail,
Love, which we lean'd on, seems the first to fail.
Yet, signs and sacraments of death, bereft
Of death's bleak graces, is there nothing left ?

O inexpressible ! O deeps forlorn !
O wild clouds, collocated eve and morn !
O eyes, imparting through their glooms a sense
Of vast abysses of impenitence,
With gulfs behind of sorrow unreveal'd
And bitter springs of loss in gulfs unseal'd !
Say, is there nothing ? Do ye hold at length
Far off suggestions of some fount of strength—
Far as the stars of peace o'er stars of strife,
And far as life is from the life of life ?

Wrecks on the tide-ways, wrecks upon the sea ;
Black frozen heights, wherein no breath can be ;
Hearts that have broken, hearts in ardent heat
To ashes burnt—vain ways and vain conceit—

Gabriel

Yet, through immeasurable loss and need,
Come hints of One still strong to intercede,
And to the prostrate soul in poison'd lands
Comes grip of the unseen, uplifting hands.

ONWARD

BEYOND the breakers lies the free,
Unfathomable space of sea ;
Beyond the sea some harbour far ;
And that beyond new countries are.
From cliff to hill, from hill to plain,
We pass and find a further main ;
Until we reach where time is not,
Brothers! But then beyond it—what ?
Peace, doubting heart which questions thus—
Peace! Do not all things answer us ?
Or if they speak not, all and each,
Silence gives deeper hints than speech.

GABRIEL

Do you remember, wheresoe'er you keep
Your sponson with eternity, asleep
Or waking, but at least transported now
Beyond all bounds our dreams to earth allow,
And so, I trust, set free from time and space—
Do you remember his unearthly face,
Shining so softly in the temple's band ?
If I spoke riddles, you would understand
Who are—I pray!—intelligence unmix'd ;
But even then, on secret graces fix'd,

Strange Houses of Sleep

You saw with me great miracles in him,
White-vested walking through the cloisters dim.
Hence, knowing that none except yourself above,
With me below, will penetrate our love,
However plainly stands the written word,
Let me conceal no more, whose heart is stirr'd
To tell outright what then I spoke alone
Either to you, apart in undertone,
Or but in parables to other men.
Far have we travell'd both, 'twixt now and then ;
You, as I dream, are something more than earth,
Brought through cold deeps of death to your new
birth,

While I have follow'd for so long the shades
And lights reserved in strange and secret grades
For few indeed, that, set from man apart—
In spite of all corruptions of the heart—
Pursuing a peculiar path of quest,
Shunn'd am I or forgotten by the rest.

As in your ear then, plainly let me tell
When first it was we look'd on Gabriel,
At mass or vespers, guarded, earnest, blythe,
A white-robed, censer-bearing acolythe ;
Only a face amidst an incense cloud—
Silent within the chants which swell'd so loud.
Lovely he was, as human beauty goes—
The lily's lustre, the faint blush of rose,
Met in his face ; his lips were chaste and fair ;
Like a dim nimbus was his auburn hair ;
While his deep eyes had caught, as in a net,
All the dark glories of the violet.
Youth though he was, in our two hands we could
Have ta'en his face to kiss as lovers should,
But on his earthly presence had come down
So high a sense of vision and of crown,

Gabriel

That out of any place where lovers lean
And whisper, he, with his uplifted mien,
So bright uprose that, like the ground he trod,
We knew him seal'd and set apart to God.

As Dante standing in the market-ways,
Who saw his blest Madonna many days,
But did, continually spell'd, defer
Each opportunity of speech with her ;
We with the boy adored the Sacred Host
But challenged not that spiritual ghost—
Until at length his apparition ceased.
This day, perchance, a consecrated priest,
He celebrates, all fairly alb'd and stoled,
The holy mass at which he served of old.
Well, you are dead, and God is strong to save ;
But certain secret matters to my grave
I carry heavily concerning you,
Who were through all so good and more than true :
Still in your heart make them a safe retreat,
If you can do so, at the judgment-seat.
But through the sorrows of your later years,
That boy's face hallow'd you for purer spheres ;
'Mid derelictions of my longer road,
So has it also with myself abode.
Still in the vigils of a wakeful night
It serves like prayer because it shines so white,
And brings, in ushering to slumber deep,
Some of their peace who fall in Christ asleep.

Old friend, whate'er our early verse may tell,
Here is the mystery of Gabriel ;
But the rare seeds sown thus in earth of ours
Once gave us many miracles of flowers ;
Fair fruits too promised—what of these to say?—
Oh, you are dead, and he has gone away !

Strange Houses of Sleep

A LADDER OF LIFE

FROM age to age in the public place,
With the under steps in view,
The stairway stands, having earth for base,
But the heavens it passes through.

*O height and deep,
And the quests in sleep,
Yet the Word of the King says well,
That the heart of the King is unsearchable.*

Of the upmost steps there are legends grand,
And far stars shine as they roll ;
But, of child or man in the wonderful land,
Is there one who has scaled the whole ?

*Yet the great hope stirs,
Though His thoughts as yours
Are not, since the first man fell ;
For the heart of the King is unsearchable.*

A pulsing song of the stairway strange
Sing, lark, dissolved in the sky !
But no, for it passes beyond the range
Of thy song and thy soaring high.

*The star is kin
To our soul within—
God orders His world so well :
Yet the heart of the King is unsearchable.*

A Ladder of Life

They say that the angels thereby come down,
Thereby do the saints ascend,
And that God's light shining from God's own Town
May be seen at the stairway's end :

*For good and ill
May be mix'd at will,
The false shew true by a spell,
But the heart of the King is unsearchable.*

Now, the stairway stands by the noisy mart
And the stairway stands by the sea ;
About it pulses the world's great heart
And the heart of yourself and me.

*We may read amiss
Both in that and this,
And the truth we read in a well ;
Since the heart of the King is unsearchable.*

For a few steps here and a few steps there
It is fill'd with our voices loud,
But above these slumbers the silent air
And the hush of a dreaming cloud.

*In the strain and stress
Of that silentness,
Our hearts for the height may swell ;
But the heart of the King is unsearchable.*

Some few of us, fill'd with a holy fire,
The Cross and the Christ have kiss'd ;
We have sworn to achieve our soul's desire
By mass and evangelist :

*Of step the third
I can bring down word,
And you on the fifth may dwell ;
Yet the heart of the King is unsearchable.*

Strange Houses of Sleep

As each of us stands at his place assign'd
And ponders the things we love,
It is meet and right we should call to mind
That some must have pass'd above :

*Yes, some there are
Who have pass'd so far,
They have never return'd to tell ;
And the heart of the King is unsearchable.*

Some glimpse at least of the end we glean,
Of the spiral curve and plan ;
For stretch as it may through the worlds unseen,
They are ever the worlds of man ;

*And—with all spaces—
His mind embraces
The way of the stairs as well—
For his heart, like the King's, is unsearchable.*

SEVEN WATCHERS

A CERTAIN Son of the Desire which springs,
From life's heart-deeps unfathom'd, towards the things
Withdrawn in undetermined altitude,
Sat in his silence shrouded and subdued ;
On many fragments of his splendid dreams—
Vocations shadow'd forth by ardent schemes
And haunting insights—pondering alone.
But the height's secrets are a world unknown,
And though we recognise in these our rest,
That which we look to find—has heart express'd
Save in the glowing symbols of the heart ?
Therefore the quest seems vague, and far apart

Seven Watchers

Desire stands, vainly reaching towards its end :
So deeper glooms than with the night descend
Fell on the soul of that aspiring Son.

Thereat, a little space and, after, one
Who enter'd softly in the gloom, and fill'd
A seat beside him, said : "Perchance He will'd
To keep us doubtful of the soul's true aim ;
But there are earthly gifts—and these are Fame
And Wealth and Honour and all high estate."
"I also enter'd by that barren gate,"
The Son of Heaven replied, "and surely found
By what strange sorrows is ambition crown'd."
"Yea," said the other, "I endured as well."

To these a third came in, made visible
By shining eyes—and spake : "The ways of Love
Are to be counted, as I deem, above
All other paths, and he who enters them
Has life in fulness and the diadem."
The Son made answer : "Hast thou counted Loss ?"
But he : "My sorrow is my crown and cross ;
The tears of Loss are bitter as the sea,
And, sword in heart, behold I wait with thee."

Then silence follow'd, till a fourth broke in,
Flush'd from the revel, singing : "I am Sin,
And I have known all raptures and the bliss
Of shame which meets with shame, to mix and kiss."
Then said the Son of the Desire which lifts
The heart in search of the unearthly gifts :
"What wages, brother, doth thy rapture earn ?"
"From death they come and unto death return,"
The child of Bacchus and the Mœnads cried,
"And many deaths in life my soul has died ;

Strange Houses of Sleep

But I will wait with thee for evermore."

"Kings of the earth," said one, who through the door
Had enter'd suddenly, "and crowns of such,
May haply melt to ashes at a touch,
But Knowledge treasures still its proud estate,
And Wisdom's shining grows from less to great."
"O fair, sweet friend! What therefore knowest thou?"
Spake the First Watcher. But with bended brow
The other answer'd—yea, with eyes which burn'd :
"That dust for ever has to dust return'd ;
I also therefore wait dejectedly,
And Truth, though out of sight, perchance is nigh."

There follow'd him who said : "Though all things fail,
Faith's sacred consolations still avail."
"Yea," said the Son, "did we indeed believe,
The star and dust perchance should interweave ;
But the star also into dust may fall."

A deeper silence fill'd that gloomy hall,
And gloom was on the watchers, while the feet
Of hurried passers died along the street.
So all that night the solemn guard was kept :
Some pray'd within them sobbingly, some wept,
As they that melt towards prayer, and other some
Through windows look'd to see if morn would come.
But the air gave up at the darkest hour
A sudden sense of presence and of power,
And where the six had waited through the night,
There stood a Seventh with a guiding light ;
Who said : "May peace be with you ! I have been
Through the great gates of death, and I have seen
That which I testify as surely true.
Give me your hands, for I am made as you,
And look into mine eyes, and speak my Name."
Whereat the Watchers cried with one acclaim :

The End which Crowns

“Master of All, for Thee we waited long
Who to enlighten and to save art strong.”
He answer'd: “Watch with me a little space!”
But they stood raptured, gazing on His face,
So that the world and all therein went by,
And from the eastern heaven the sun rose high.

LOOKING WESTWARD

WORLDS beyond worlds of sunset pageantry—
Wild West: the spirit with a yearning deep
Springs forth to thee! Like ripples are thy long
Low lines of violet cloud: all dreams, all hopes
Seem possible within these earthly bounds
Which heaven enrings and thy bright marge of light—
Set in cerulean circle, jewel-wise.

THE END WHICH CROWNS

THE music falters on the harp of gold;
That which it longs to say is never told:
Stern silence now indraws it evermore.
The thought which scarcely to the heart before
Was half so keenly or so highly given,
Once and for all to speak the heart has striven;
Once and for all the heart has failed therein.
The word and music of the word begin,
But cannot finish; yet the soul shall see;
Light in the soul shall dawn, that light shall be
Extended surely through the great domain,
Nor towards the summits turn her eyes in vain—
Far end, perchance, but still she sees the end.
Clouds intervene indeed and veils extend,
But gifted inly by those ardent rays—
Clouds and the veils thereof before the gaze

Strange Houses of Sleep

Of soul dissolving—shall the soul descry
That which is hidden from the fleshly eye,
The end and high significance of things.
Of old, great Plato said the soul has wings,
And deem not thou that ne'er the soul has risen,
Flame-wing'd, above the ramparts of her prison.
Think not with bolts and bars she strives in vain,
Who can at need the path of stars attain ;
Yet it remains that, stars and heights explored,
Or wheresoe'er the soul has plunged and soar'd,
In deep abysses or on holy hill,
The secret baffles and eludes her still.

Made subject now to terms of time and space,
Drawn by the outward, not the inward place,
She chiefly shares the public pomps and shows :
Therein no star as star that secret knows,
Nor sun divines it. Earth has mighty themes
To guard our sleeping and our waking dreams ;
The peaks have ravishment ; the great sea-deep
Has other mysteries, to yield or keep ;
Those which we lack, the meaning and the goal,
Exceed their depth and height. And hence the soul,
By outward witcheries encompass'd, sees
The glory and the glamour which are these :
She listens, she divines as best she can,
And gathers something of the cosmic plan,
While from the snatches of the secret caught—
Beyond the limit of the world of thought
Withdrawn in regions of which none can tell—
She fashions answers in an oracle
And burning prophecies which inly stir :
She fashions answers, nothing answers her.

Therefore of how it shall at length befall,
The hidden meaning and the end of all—

Of the Deep Seas

Life's crown therein—are hidden from the soul,
Which gleams in part but cannot grasp the whole.
Some voices truly at her door have sung,
But in an unintelligible tongue ;
And flashes sometimes from her centre strike
Which seem to shew her what the end is like,
As if the centre and the end were there.
Such lesson haply might her labours spare :
That which can answer nothing, or, if heard,
Only some unintelligible word,
Serving for presage in divining art,
May after all have little to impart ;
But in the soul herself, if deeply sought,
Will come an answer to our inmost thought.

Let therefore music fail from harps of gold ;
Let words be kept within the heart untold ;
And let the soul no longer use her wings
For ranging through the outward scheme of things,
But inward turn the light of shining eyes—
Be sure, the end is there, the meaning wise.

OF THE DEEP SEAS

SOME world-secret dwells in sadness,
Granting tears at length are dried,
All the cares which mar life's pages,
From the heirship of the ages,
Cast, and once for all, aside.

Take the heights and the abysses,
Those great spaces which are past,
And the forward vistas, blending
With our dreams of life unending—
Holy hopes, attainments vast :

Strange Houses of Sleep

Surely joy, with all its keenness,
Haunts too narrow grooves of change,
On the common sense of pleasure
Draws too much, to serve as measure
Of the world's resource and range.

Morning stars may sing together,
Sons of God for joy may shout ;
But beyond the choric pæan
Spreads the stillness empyrean :
There the anthem falters out.

If we came and passed like summer,
Short of sight though joy would be,
It might help us towards forgetting,
Twixt our rising and our setting,
What a moth's-flight space had we.

But confronting earth's unearnest
And yet ever anxious span
With the undeclared hereafter,
Joy must perish and light laughter
Waver on the lips of man.

Life is so far past all searching,
So much hangs from strings so frail,
That the firmest faith must question
And against all dark suggestion
Hope can never quite prevail.

Love remains and Love can save us,
All the keys of doom are there ;
But if more with gladness blended
Than dejections deep attended,
Those who love shall first declare.

The Wider Prospects

Well then to be self-reliant,
Highest ends with strength achieve,
Hold that life is best expounded
By the faith in goodwill grounded—
So go forward, so believe.

But ask not that joy be with us ;
Light things are by joy express'd :
Unto us the deeps are speaking,
Past the sadness of their seeking
Is God's graveness—and God's rest.

THE WIDER PROSPECTS

ON level meads, as smooth as garden lawns,
Rooks swarm with gleaming plumage, then — with
screams
Discordant—rise and circle high in air !—
God's splendour brightens now their peaceful flight,
To giant elms returning—dizzy nests,
Poised in the air triumphant.

Here my road
Reveals the open country. I see slopes
Of verdant green, wide fields and marshy lands
Low-lying ; I see misty hills against
The distant sky, in outline dimly limn'd—
A long blue line. The land is dark with trees,
Far and away beyond me winds the road,
Ascending ; as I follow, evermore
The prospect widens—round me hills and hills,
And round me all things in the clear, sweet air
Give back the sunset light. Soft winds are held

Strange Houses of Sleep

By silver spells of silence.

The whole earth
Seems mine, and shortly will all heaven put forth
Stars o'er my path. Methinks, this road so broad,
So brown, so pleasant, like the rover's life,
Goes on for ever; it is steep, it curves,
It leaps and dips; it follows all the vale,
Then takes a spiral course to climb the slope,
So to be lost amidst a world of downs.
Here silver willows in the evening wind
Begin to stir; by hedges do the oaks
Rich foliage rustle; on the open mead
A brown horse browses, while in one beyond
A stalwart beast—with black and burnish'd sides—
Draws on the loaded wain to reach the track;
And at that bend he gains it. As I walk
Behind, a dry and subtle incense fills
The cool air round me; but I hasten now
And see the farm before me: so mine eyes
At every turn are met by something new
Which gratifies the senses and the mind.

All suddenly the golden air is changed
To purple, passing swiftly into grey,
And there is mist about me; it is chill:
The sense of sadness settles, but I reach
A clear space free upon the West and pause
To mark, in contrast, certain blurr'd, green trees
Thrown on a vivid and illumined sky—
Ere night one hour has fallen—O first star,
With lamp enkindled in the South so high!—
To mark it and to worship. Now the moon,
Out from bleak vapours of the East, aglow,
With not one touch of sadness, o'er the marsh
Her orb uplifts. How fair, how sweet, how blue,
Looks the high zenith, with faint clouds involved!

Joy of Life

And as the summer breeze, from flute-notes soft,
Turns to a resonant wind and boldly calls
Among the echoing hills, my transient mood
Of graveness passes, for the night is strong,
And passionately the voices of the night
Speak to deep wells within the heart of man,
Till the deep wells make answer. I, at least,
Walking in summer on the winding road,
With downs about me, with the moon above—
With the bright moon which, as it rises, pours
A light increasing through the lilac sky—
Amidst the wine-like fragrance of the air,
Hear depth to depth make answer, height to height.

JOYS OF LIFE

THAT light we know to be only seeming ;
Those stars in dream looking down on dreaming ;
Blank space which cheats us ; quick time which slips ;
Thin ghosts of wines which deride our yearning ;
Pale shadows of love which leave us burning
To gain the rapture of unseen lips :

The faiths too cold for the heart's subsistence ;
Hope's light too faint on a bleak existence ;
All ways too many for ends in doubt :
But though perplex'd by disorder'd courses—
One strength call'd up from the soul's resources—
Still to go on and to do without !

Strange Houses of Sleep

WATERS OF CREATION

THOU dost reflect alone the changeful skies—
A greater speculation fills our eyes :

We are thy masters, for, exceeding thee,
Above thy wildest storm the mind can rise,
Strong sea, great sea !

THE PALACE OF LIFE

MAN'S sacramental house has many halls
And secret passages contrived in walls,
With darken'd chambers, suited for repose,
Down quiet corridors—remote from those
Wherein the guests and menials daily tread.
Sad rooms are set for watchers by the dead,
And secret alcoves, plann'd on lonely stairs,
Open, wherein fond lovers unawares
Are seldom taken by the stealthy spy.
There also towers and turrets are built high,
Where those ascend whom solitary thought
Has inward contemplation's sweetness taught.
Halls of convention may be found and vast
Saloons for banqueting and music ; last,
There, too, are chapels of a thousand creeds,
By hearts devoted to the greater needs,
And solemn places more remote than these
Wherein adepts set forth their mysteries.

Now, howsoe'er a man his life divide
'Midst things of sanctity or things decried,

The Palace of Life

One corner cover'd by the dome alone
Can knowledge or mere rumour make his own ;
Yet in that house are casements opening
On vistas of the strange and unknown thing
Which spreads without humanity's abode.
Where lead the paths therein? Where leads the road?
What lies beyond the fastness and the fell,
Or the great deeps of sea which surge and swell?
O mist of valleys and æonian snows!
O desperate days and nights without repose!
There is no man that knoweth, save a dream
Shall hint him somewhat of the clouded scheme ;
Or voices equally unknown outseek
The watcher on his balcony, and speak
A message in his shrinking ear, about
The joy or sorrow that is stored without.
Thereafter visions and the power of song,
With deep prophetic tongues, to him belong ;
Or, by desirable and awful things
O'erwhelm'd, his body from the house he flings,
When in a twinkling of the eye he learns
The all or nothing, but at least returns
Into the mansion of mankind no more.

The house has seemingly no public door
For coming and for going ; here the dead
Sleep in the vaults beneath with easy head ;
Or if their souls into the unpierced space
Go forth, the watcher cannot see their face ;
And if at times against the windows press
Poor phantom aspects full of dreariness,
The horror of the eyes for those within
Cuts off the sympathy of kith and kin.

Now this is, therefore, to dissuade a few
From heeding tidings, whether false or true,

Strange Houses of Sleep

Which in these later days are rumour'd round—
To say some open portal has been found,
Or one which can be open'd by the hand,
For easy entrance in the unknown land ;
That Nature high-exalted then is seen ;
That dead men greet us with a front serene ;
That when the secret mazes have been trod
The mind may feel itself alone with God,
And can see truth and beauty with pure eyes.
In sooth we know not which way beauty lies,
Or on what heights and in what wells and deeps
Truth, which is also beauty, wakes or sleeps,
Much less of how it shall the soul befall
In this place or in that to find the All.
But not denying that a door may be
Set back by him who hath its master-key,
Let one who, ere the ending of his days,
Has much endured and travail'd in strange ways,
Exhort his brothers not in life's short span
To leave unqualified the roof of man,
Or seek, especially in ways unknown,
What it may feel like when with God alone.
Our sacramental house has veils undrawn
And curtains never raised at eve or dawn ;
It burns alone the instituted lights
And all that shews therein are only rites.
We know indeed the soul with her strong fires
Beyond these human ministries aspires
In spirit and in truth to reach her end ;
But not in vain do veils the soul defend ;
Nor yet in vain do Nature, Grace and Art,
Their ceremonial formulæ impart ;
And not in vain does God His glory dim
By many clouds, that we can gaze on Him.
A time may come when He shall put them by
And, standing lip to lip and eye to eye,
From all conventions sign the soul's release,
With true *Pax tecum* and with kiss of peace

The Palace of Life

More closely married than is rhyme with rhyme.
Great is the speech of parables meantime,
And up and down the house of man there pass
The sacred pageants of a life-long mass :
O let the arid speculations end,
Till from the altar-steps the priests descend !

There is indeed a certain narrow road
Which in a sense leads forth from our abode,
But not by ways from vantage points descried
Through desert places of the world outside.
Open it lies for those to walk therein
Who having put away the life of sin,
With the long quest of their desire and gain,
Do in their own souls seek and so attain
The individual knowledge of their end.
Peace on those paths for the elect attend !
May the great universe expand for them
Through many kingdoms to their diadem !
And underneath the white light of their crown
May those who go to God find God come down,
Since in the secret centre of their heart
Who came from Him from Him did never part.
But howsoe'er encompass'd by the hosts
This is the life of life and not of ghosts,
Nor does it lie beyond the walls of each.
Hard is this path to learn of, hard to reach
And few there are that seek it, or can teach
The rending of the veils that guard it here—
Too well protected since it lies too near.
Therein the waking comes, the rest is dream ;
Yet this is also in the mystic scheme
And, steep'd awhile in life's magnetic trance,
The souls that slumber may in sleep advance
And something still behold through their smoked
lens—

Sic salve, Domine omnipotens !

Strange Houses of Sleep

THE SECRET GARDEN

FRIENDS, it is fair in garden-bowers conceal'd,
When, round the high, fruit-heavy mural shield,
The white wind washes and the corn-fields roll ;
But further still, in the wide world afield,
I found a secret garden of the soul.

O, there is morning glory on the sea,
And fragrant still at eve shall pinewoods be !
While night is grand on mountains, in the glow
And mystery of moonlight ; but for me
One place reserve, of all the world I know !

So, having travell'd long, and fain to rest,
I keep that place a secret in my breast
And secret more than all one bower of love,
Where—sweeter far than Araby the blest—
My spikenard giveth forth the fumes thereof.

BACK TO THE LAND

To silent worlds of music, open'd up
Within the present scheme and scope of things
By audible solemnities of sound,
My soul slipp'd through, and traversed endless
groves
Of immemorial melody. A storm
Of choral praise, unpreluded, with a crash
Burst on me then, the language of dead gods,
And drew me back amidst a Temple's types—
Sign-words and sacraments of mystery.
So to the end it held me, magnet-wise,

Back to the Land

Till thyrsus-bearers pass'd and hierophants ;
But when the darken'd Fane reserved alone
The secret god, I follow'd from afar
Behind a veil into the vestibule,
And saw grey ashes of the charcoal fire
Shew one faint spark ; the open window shew'd,
All bent and twisted through the floral wilds,
A woodland path whence myrrh-like odours rose ;
Low voices came from violets and faint
Song-bursts of birds invisible.

Through such
High offices, the heart, whose seeing sense
Follows election, having Nature heard—
As Nature speaks—has taken to itself
A certain message and the most withdrawn—
To wit, those deeps within the living masque
Of days. Thereafter, in pursuit of signs
More eloquent, of greater testaments,
The heart takes counsel with the sanctuary
And finds the Holy of the Holies, past
All Holy Places, yet at times looks forth,
Where all the chancels of the world without—
Which after their own manner sang of old—
Do now in likeness of One Voice intone.
The chancel walls, expanding thereupon,
Take Nature in ; exalting Nature gives
At every point upon the Temple's gates ;
And if the fires and lights expend in fine,
Her lights, her fires, assume on man's behalf
The offices—not antiphons alone
Reciting, but responses order'd well.
If therefore priests at altars fall asleep,
And in their stalls the choirs forget the Rites,
No psaltery is wanting in the world.

Strange Houses of Sleep

A RITE OF EXALTATION

I THOUGHT at length that haply human love
Might offer refuge from the things above
Which had so long drawn on my life of thought
Through unfrequented pathways, hardly sought,
Full hard to climb; and having climb'd, 'tis still
More dreadful on the summit of such hill
The mind's fastidious balance to preserve,
Nor dizzily towards precipices swerve
And the emerited soul in sense immerge.
Back therefore from the summit and the verge,
Where terribly the known and unknown meet,
For some few seasons baffled, such retreat
As those can find who once the starry track
Have strain'd at and for ever must look back
I made; my peace with Nature, long foregone,
Sign'd, as I best could sign; and so put on
Once more the huddled vesture of my kind.
Then the unearthly beauties, which to find
I strove so long, for me seem'd now to strive;
Their tincture haunted all things here alive,
Suggesting ends desired that were not they;
And that which in the height was far away
On earthly eyes seem'd momentarily to loom—
Clamour of triumph seized, glorious doom.
And in the place of stillness, brooding deep
On frozen summits, or the awful sleep
Which can the soul amidst the heights infold,
All that which beats within the chains of gold
And iris prison of the public things,
Through mystic music, its invisible wings,
Amidst the outward melodies, began
To speak—as Nature never spoke to man.

A Rite of Exaltation

I testify that past mere sense alone
Experience spreads her more exalted zone ;
That past the common range of human mind
There stretch the royal regions undivined,
An undiscover'd country which if trod
Seems to lead backward and be lost in God.
There is a door, which, when we find its key,
Opens therein from our humanity.
So forth on roof and parapet at times
Stealing, I saw what none can speak in rhymes ;
But never came the message to mine ear,
Or saw the visionary eye so near
As when, reluctantly, its potent spell
Breaking, I turn'd from the invisible
And brought the light of all that dwells withdrawn,
The glory of the spiritual dawn,
These fleshly regions to illuminate.

Now, there was one who dwelt within the gate
Of outward dreams, nor ever question'd these,
But rather, awestruck, from realities
Had surely shrunk, if face to face with them.
Yet beauty wore she as a diadem,
And shone in innocence a radiant star :
Gentle and mild was she, as maidens are
Whose souls are subtly link'd with things above
By sanctified capacities of love.
Her from the sons and daughters of the race
I chose, to lift up from her lonely place
Amidst the crowd which sees not where it goes :
I wrought love's work on her, and now she knows.

What follows?—This : that soul can soul uplift ;
Those who have dwelt in light can bring that gift
To something more than isolated fruit
Within themselves, and can at will transmute

Strange Houses of Sleep

Such as they take into their heart of heart,
Making an altar set from earth apart,
Whereon is kindled an eternal flame,
And there the Incommunicable Name
Is utter'd. Or—all symbols set aside—
Learn, simple woman can be deified !
I shew this truth—when one, of light possess'd,
Has all his nature to the task address'd.
Know too the work is love's—and love's the call—
While love is also the material.
And at the end such union comes at length
As to the worker brings another strength
Those heights forsaken once again to dare,
Those realms discover which await him there,
With consciousness of ends beyond them still—
The holy palace, the eternal hill !

PLAY-SCENES

NATURE is pantomime ; some force bestirs
The antic struggles of her characters,
And semblances of life imparts to each,
But no true motion and no gift of speech.
Some mask unknown stands at the stage's wings
And for each mimic actor speaks or sings,
While in the galleries and stalls we sit
But do not rightly catch one word of it.

ABSOLUTION

HERE to me, friends !—Have I wrong'd you?—Come to
me more than all—
That which my lips would utter, with tenderer lips
forestall,

Absolution

Now that the wardens who watch'd me, breaking the
guard they kept—
(Passion and pride)—permit me—(dry-eyed, among those
that have wept,
No longer)—to share in your weeping—set free in a
sense—
Human amidst the human, not as a rock of offence.
The wand has smitten the rock and a plenteous water
springs,
So that my heart is link'd with the pulse at the heart of
things.

Ye that are human, pardon! If any I need forgive,
Rest I wish them and joy, with the life that a man
would live
Who, in spite of adverse omens written on earth and
sky,
Knows well that his Saviour liveth and redemption
draweth nigh.

Ye that in secret, below your coats and plumage and
skins,
Shelter hearts which are human, free from our follies
and sins;
Birds of the air and the beasts, I know by your moans
and cries,
Your songs which pant for language, your sad, deep,
eloquent eyes;
Ye also have needed love, the want of the world ye
know.
Warm be the sunshine about you, soft the winds as
they blow;
If I have wrong'd you—it may be—come ye also—
forgive;
The life of all life uplift you, that ye may also live!

Strange Houses of Sleep

Nature, gracious of seeming, we have met perchance
too late,
Truly to love each other, closely to mingle and mate ;
But, in these latter days, less now than we were out
of reach,
In part I divine your thought, and in part you have
learn'd my speech :
So far as my life has wrong'd you—I pray you also,
forgive !
Some one has wounded you surely : may you be heal'd
and live !

Grace, from a world pour'd down which I knew in the
times of old,
Or ever my star was barter'd, or ever my birthright sold ;
Surely I loved thee always, wherever my steps have stray'd ;
To leave is still to love thee ; I loved thee, though I
betray'd !
For all my wrongs forgive me, and here, in this empty
heart,
Till it fills, pour down thine unction ; the life of my
life thou art.

Yet if man and brute deny me, if Nature spurn me back,
If Grace deflect her channels, bear witness, thou starry
track !
I know in my heart of hearts the hills that can yet be
trod ;
I will take up my heart in my hands, and go up to Thee,
my God—
I come to Thee last, but I come ; they fail'd me in all
the strife—
Those signs of help and comfort ; here is the end of my
life.
I find no refuge but Thee, O last and first in the wide
And empty worlds of the soul ; Thou canst not cast me
aside !

Insufficiency

Yet hearts which are offer'd to anything under the sun
Are not for long rejected, at least by Nature for one ;
And though the hands which are wise, high gifts may
 hold for a space,
We are not defrauded long of all communion with
 Grace ;
Man never truly waited, if man could ease him a smart ;
The rudest beast of the field responds to the human
 heart ;
While those who cry, "O, my darling!" with great
 hearts inly stirr'd,
Are little less than the angels—that is my gospel word !

VEILS OF ISIS

NATURE is naked until man's own mind
Has rainbow hues to all her form assign'd ;
 And she in turn provides his garments dim :
Say, who shall robe her when his hands unbind,
 Who unclothe him ?

INSUFFICIENCY

THOU, having seen it, art thou satisfied?—
That platform of the morning bulges wide
Above the purple gorges, in the dim,
Exalted light. Far down the sea-mews swim ;
Far down the breakers on the crags expend
Their strength in gulfs where never men descend
And thou, awhile from sea and shore aloof,
Art as one issued on a palace-roof
In Esclair-Monde, from its exalted tiers
Gazing serenely down on moving spheres,

Strange Houses of Sleep

And far above the night's infolding arch
Beholding systems in their stately march,
With dark, dead stars lamenting as they glide :
Say, having seen this, art thou satisfied ?

Alas, the halting accents of thy speech
Can scarce another thine experience teach,
Nor can thy brain, by wonders overwrought,
Shape as thou wouldst the higher course of thought,
Since in reflection's hush do thoughts most come !
So pass the moods of ecstasy to some
More temper'd state, which knows not throne or crown,
And at the last thou goest slowly down,
With weaker steps, along the arduous slope,
Somewhat disorder'd with thy former hope—
A little dazed—but conscious on the whole
That these high places cannot fill the soul ;
That Nature's peaks, which few before have trod,
Do not specifically lead to God,
And are not therefore of the soul's concern.
Only when recollections shall return
In after hours, the soul may then look back,
From quiet ways, up the precipitous track,
Where saffron morning o'er the sea spreads fair,
And know that the soul's ends are everywhere.

A CONFIDENCE

THAT which you seek for in your heart of hearts—
That which transcends both Nature and the Arts—
Great beyond conscious grasp of human mind,
But ever as the rest and goal
Acknowledged by your secret soul—
Brother, I promise, you shall surely find.

How it is Attained in the Sunset

And if you ask me—knowing it so great—
The solid ground on which I dare to state
That you shall certainly attain at length ;
Learn that beyond the things which seem
I have divined your dream,
And also know your hidden source of strength.

Have courage, therefore ! Keep your daily road,
And after your own individual mode
Do that which comes to hand—the good, the true ;
For failures sometimes made—as such—
Be not concern'd too much ;
Fear not yourself—I have no fear for you.

HOW IT IS ATTAINED IN THE SUNSET

Now this is true philosophy, that sense
Is sometimes held in such a high suspense
As might a man be, ravish'd from the ground—
The world beneath him spinning round and round—
Who finds, at length permitted to descend,
Familiar scenes withdrawn to some far end,
And where the runnel by his thatch should be
Hears the loud organ of an open sea.

Of such suspension hear a little space—
That which bechanced me in an hour of grace,
When the time-limits fixing life and thought,
Like landmarks storm-effaced, to nothing brought,
Permit that in the circle of a dream
There slips, unnoticed by, a century's scheme,
Or, twixt the lark's last note and swift descent,
That years of rapture to the soul are lent.

Strange Houses of Sleep

It fell upon an eve made rich with heat
Of spikenard odours and frankincense sweet,
Which the deep-breathing earth gave forth from her—
ITEM—an ecstasy of nard and myrrh—
That a fair haunt which in the woods I trod
Turn'd on a sudden to a church of God,
And down the path, as down an aisle, I pass'd,
Through umbrage issuing to light at last ;
An hundred feet above the plain, some crest
Attain'd, confronted by the burning West.

Scarlet and gold, how vividly, had met,
And gulfs beyond all gulfs of violet
Open'd behind ; above was snowy fleece
Of stainless vapour : glory, one with peace,
Was blazon'd there. The heart of solar fire
Outdrew me by ineffable desire,
Till it flashed on me, with o'ermastering force,
That I was native to the starry course,
And that the peace of God, surpassing speech,
Through the light only could my spirit reach.
Deep, deep, I gazed, till deeps within me yearn'd ;
Deep, till that light to other splendours turn'd ;
Deep, till those splendours to a point drew in,
And the eye's sense alone I lived within—
Lived, from the flesh set free, the soul upcaught
Far past the heaven of stars, the heaven of thought.
And the soul died, but something greater still
Leap'd flame-like into me, her place to fill ;
I was keen spirit, from the soul made free,
Which is, which hath been, and through all will be,
And then once more I was an eye which sees
Into unutterable mysteries,
While undiffused, yet limitless, thereon
The searching point of naked splendour shone—
A dreadful rapture rending through and through—
As I was known therein, I also knew.

Plumes of Sable

Yes, in the light, I knew, with all made one
By the same law which poises star and sun ;
For moving systems marks a single track ;
Which sends forth pilgrim souls and draws them back ;
From out of One the multiple evolves
And then the many in the One dissolves,
That when the end—which is no end—shall fall
Nothing be lost, but God be all in all.

Out of all time, in that great day's decline,
All love, all knowledge, for a space were mine,—
But holy words are wanting to declare ;
And at the fine thereof, returning where—
Five hundred feet above the plain—that crest
I found, confronted by the burning West :
Lo, scarlet—gold—how vividly !—had met
And deeps beyond all deeps of violet,
While sinking in the lowland at my feet
The lark his brown wings hid in meadow-sweet.

PLUMES OF SABLE

WASTE, waste, waste,—but the voice in the waste of
the sea !
The dread, sheer height of an empty night ! And the
heart—Ah, the heart in me !
I know where the deep is wider, I know of a gloom
more dread—
O the waste and the night of the heart, when the star
from the heart has fled !

Strange Houses of Sleep

THE INTERLOCUTORY DISCOURSE

FORTH on our quest, some years ago, we set :
How fares it with us? If the end is yet,
Or if we still must follow elsewhere,
Straightway in brief to each let each declare.
For me, I pause a moment on the road
To mark how far is still the heart's abode.
As one, towards morning-tide, a dream recalls
While heavy sleep as yet his sense enthrals,
I look on those long spaces over-past,
And forward, dreaming if the trance will last,
While round me move the deeper dreamers here.
Perchance for us the waking time is near
Since one advantage over these have we,
Who know how sleep expands her sorcery,
While others in their spell such comfort take
As comes to those who hold they truly wake.
Perchance we felt it from the first—who knows?—
When that bestir'd to trouble our repose,
The grand debate which did our quest begin—
Life, and the ways of life, and how therein
Best might ambition and its force applied
Insure our getting on before we died.
In either case, whate'er the cost or pain,
Resolved were we to triumph, to attain ;
And yet, despite this effort of the will,
Much, it would seem, remains to tax our skill. . .
Set forth the subject as we view'd it then—
That life one duty has imposed on men :
How to get on—the lesson all must learn ;
By open ways if possible to earn
Their high success, if not by ways unknown.
All ends worth seeking, say, from star to stone,

The Interlocutory Discourse

We pass'd in thought before us, ere our choice
Was made ; but those which earthly hearts rejoice
Look'd scarcely worth life's dedicated span,
Nor did some greater aims pursued by man
Seem likely to avail him in the end :
Such signal triumphs as on art attend ;
The crowns in paths of progress seized at times ;
The laurel wreaths of rhymers and their rhymes ;
Devotion's guerdon for a country's weal :
Due lauds we gave them, owning their appeal,
But did with blessing true their claim dismiss.
Full long we ponder'd, weighing that with this,
Nor did the humbler walks of life disdain ;
But in the end we found that trades were vain,
And all the crowded ways where men compete ;
That e'en the daily bread which all must eat
'Twere better, if it might be, to forego
Than daily bread for our sole object know ;
That wealth and luxury and social place,
And seats among the mighty of the race,
May in themselves be honourable things,
But insufficient for ambition's wings.
How, therefore, truly to get on ? said we ;
Then paused a moment, since it seem'd to be
No small achievement that, with hearts content,
We could from public interests dissent
And from all competitions stand aside.
But presently we found that ere he died
Each son of man saw vanity in these,
And now, as then, the saint their contact flees.
What true end, therefore, over and before
All these remains ?—O knowledge, evermore
Follow'd and worshipp'd ! O ye lights of
mind !

Ye secrets of the deeps all deeps behind !
Ye hidden forces ! Man—his height, his deep—
Ways of the waking world and world asleep—

Strange Houses of Sleep

Praise we invoked on all who these pursued ;
For us we left them to their solitude :
How therefore truly to get on? we said.
And so it came to pass our souls were fed
With glimpses of a causeway seldom trod,
When something told us that our end was God.
Thereat we blest, as paths already tried,
The grand old faiths, but put their claims aside,
And forth upon our varied course we went—
What weary days—on God's attainment bent !
Of many men did you perchance inquire,
To saint and sage spurr'd on by one desire,
And over all the world did learn of all.
But whatsoever did your days befall,
The circle of that world has brought you round
Unto the starting point—and how much found?
How much, how little? . . . I inquired of none—
Of One alone by One to seek the One,
For me at least avail'd. Absorb'd in mind,
By blessed contemplation's ruling kind,
From sleep of midnight, watch of noon and dawn
I sought the vision out of these withdrawn ;
And me the circle of the deeps has brought
Back to the starting point—but how much taught?
Leastways one lesson both for me and you—
Ours is the way of the attainment true ;
No better end than that we two divine
Has shone upon your pathway or on mine,
All paths attempting where all lights have shone,
And ours the only way for getting on.
So forward, therefore ; somewhere lurks the end :
All in good time—His time—that's best, my friend !

Grounds of Union

GROUNDS OF UNION

THERE is no need to take thy hand,
To touch thy lips, or thee to greet ;
Nor must I say in what far land,
Out of all time, we first did meet :
As in this russet hour we stand,
That which has parted us meseems
A curtain in some House of Dreams.

Or, in this aching scheme of things,
If memories like these delude,
My yearning towards thee, taking wings,
Doth ever in the past intrude ;
From such dim halls thy picture brings,
And—since it sees thee everywhere—
Can skry no world but thou art there.

I will not speak of love to thee,
For, having look'd in eyes like thine,
Past love's inscrutable mystery,
Something more sacred, more divine
And undeclared than love I see ;
And what those secret depths infold,
That, in my heart, for thee I hold.

TAUGHT in strange schools, this earthly place
Finds task-work in my forms of speech ;
But, looking on thy chasten'd face,
All hast thou learn'd which I would teach :
By thy tired eyes and tortured grace,
Surely when forming thee God sigh'd—
Thou art so wan, so mortified.

Strange Houses of Sleep

From us, whom Nature never knew,
That common health is far removed
Whereof old saints, with instinct true
But angel-mildness, disapproved :
They read our weakness through and through,
Saw that strong thews and nerves of earth
Win hardly towards the second birth.

The knots which bind our souls are such
As earthly ties would strain and start ;
Each would not hold in each so much,
If ill-content on earth to part :
That once the ways we walk should touch
For consolation, not for need,
That which is merciful decreed.

Let then those ways divide, not they
Shall now conjoin or disconnect :
Thou wilt not fail me on a day,
Nor I from love's sheer height deflect
By reaching towards thy house of clay ;
But when that day for me and thee
Comes, at the end, remember me !

In the great session, when They meet
For rites of union, thou wilt wait,
Knowing I follow on thy feet,
And I will pause, if thou be late,
A little at the mercy-seat ;
Till God shall make us one in Him,
Hide under wings of seraphim.

Theophany

THEOPHANY

Too long unmindful of the great concern,
We did from errors of our way return,
From strange side-issues and from paths involved.
Thenceforth on reasonable life resolved,
Our sins fell from us ; and unloosed with these
Were many morganatic marriages,
Incurr'd regardless of the sacred things
Which life imposes on the Sons of Kings—
Who wait for restoration to their own,
Since old mischance deprived of crown and throne.
Full many plans we tried in vain since then,
Nor did neglect the arts and crafts of men
Uncertain of the ends to which they lead ;
But there was little for the greater need
Which on the Sons of Kings full sadly falls,
Hearing their former country's far off calls.

Set now with steadfast feet in these new ways,
What quest might glorify our later days
Whose hearts so high were fix'd on things above ?
Ah, friends ! Regarding thus the place of love,
What could we seek herein to hear or see
But the sweet rumours of its mystery ?
Of Him who shall at length our crown restore
Some faint reflections on this earthly shore ?

And so it fell that from the dream we kept
Within our hearts, a flame of ardour leapt,
Till we, drawn forth to seek in every place
The tidings of His presence and His grace,
Did in the end, by golden legends led,
A realm of mystery and wonder tread,
Chosen from all the places of the earth,
To see God manifest by human birth.

Strange Houses of Sleep

Kings which had follow'd, from their realms afar,
The age-long portent of a certain star ;
Priests of a line which since the world began
Was set to offer sacrifice for man ;
And, far across the melancholy seas,
The silent keepers of the mysteries ;
Met in their crowds upon that haunted ground—
And we, the King's Sons, waiting to be crown'd.

But not alone the royal and the wise,
The pontiffs with illuminated eyes,
Or those who, secretly instructed, knew
How old traditions win fulfilment true :
There also came the shepherds from the hills,
And he who sows the ground and he who tills :
From noisy marts the merchants flock'd in haste ;
Came too the lawless rovers of the waste ;
And from the city hied the child of sin—
To see God born and a new life begin
To make refreshment in a weary world.

So round about the holy place were furl'd
The nations' banners ; peace on nations fell,
And the long strife of creeds was ended well.
The spirit of the world its pride gave up,
And kiss'd the hallows and the holy cup ;
The flesh dissolving utter'd as it died
The sacred mass-words, and was purified ;
And Lucifer, the Prince, who knelt with them,
Turn'd sweetly praying towards Jerusalem.

So thus it fell, upon a certain morn,
All in the hearts of men, that God was born,
And that we also knew what sacred things
Such birth imposes on the Sons of Kings.

Of Faith and Vision

OF FAITH AND VISION

THE life of light, the light which dwells in life,
With perfect, free and undivided love,
We seers have loved for ever ; have abode
In any conscious gloom of heart or mind
Unwillingly ; have ever into day,
With strife and clamour of aspiration, sprung ;
And when we found true sunlight we were blest.
We have not scorn'd the simpler gifts of faith,
Yet sought in knowledge, with the soul's clear sight,
That lucid world, its scatter'd rays of grace
Receiving and reflecting ; but when those
Were granted not, we held to faith and hope ;
And any beam diffused along the dark,
Though less than nothing to the world at large,
Our hearts collected, cherish'd, dwelt therein,
And bless'd the Giver ; counting all things well ;
As grateful for His silence as His speech ;
Keeping His silence with the same brave heart
Which, bidden, would have trumpeted His word ;
For ever waiting on that word by Him
Withheld for ever. . . . To the end of all
Approaching now, we fail but do not faint :
He has not seal'd our mission or granted us
The consolation of His messengers.
We have not heard His voice ; we have not work'd
His miracles, nor stood before His world
And testified that we indeed were sent ;
But we have loved the light, and here and now,
Before the antechamber of the tomb—
Yea, underneath the quiet wings of death—
Faith helps us still, amidst true calm of soul,

Strange Houses of Sleep

To say : The quest is broken for a while,
But ended not ; and, whether life or death,
We still desire the vision and the truth.
Bid therefore, Lord, Thy servants pass in peace,
Beholding Thy salvation with their eyes !

THE PATH

SEEING that all which lives beneath the sun
Is, in the last resource, explain'd by One ;
That every will which works or star which sings
In fine goes back into the font of things ;
That by a final gathering of force
The soul of man shall, to complete its course,
With a great rush return from whence it came ;
The last and first can differ but in name,
And there is one beginning and one end.
How then these varied interests defend
Which now distract and dissipate the soul,
Leading it daily further from the whole—
Wherein we know there lies our only good ?
Ah, we have heard but have not understood !
From the confessions of our lips the heart,
Untouch'd and unconvinced, has stood apart,
So that mere words have trick'd us over long.
But, when the soul is search'd, the soul proves strong ;
Zenith and Nadir and the Sacred Hill
Shew nothing keener than the human will,
Directed wisely unto wisdom's term.
Let us be therefore bold, and here affirm
That one strong wrench and this alone man needs
To set himself apart from evil deeds ;
And if in ceasing utterly from these
The true Path lies, then are all mysteries

The Path

So well within the circle of his days
That if, forsooth, there sounds a seraph's praise
About the white light of a central throne,
Not to the end shall angels serve alone.
Man's voice with theirs may join, he stand with them,
Nor fail at last of any diadem
Which can crown souls in any place unknown,
Nor—if the stars have thrones—lose star and throne.

All this, however, is but mystic speech—
Our lip-confessions shew what man must reach ;
The soul its origin from One discerns,
And the soul's rest is when the soul returns.
But up that steep incline which once we trod,
When we came down—we know not why—from God,
We know indeed that none to climb begin,
Nor dare, until they cast away their sin.

Now, is it hard for man to sin no more ?
To say that all which drew aside before,
Henceforth for him, is of its lure bereft,
That to go upward is the one course left ?
Bear with me, friends, if what I know full well,
Of all evasions free, for once I tell :
This is not hard to any heart resolved,
Since in the soul's bent is one change involved,
One simple reconstruction of the will ;
Then from the soul shall pass the lust of ill.

Think that outside our end all toil is vain ;
Think that who wills can to the end attain ;
Know that what does not to that end belong
Is folly always, if not open wrong :
Fix this before you, and you shall not err ;
Nothing shall tempt you, nothing shall deter.
These are plain words, but their high sense enrings
The solemn secret of acquiring wings,

Strange Houses of Sleep

And from a complex to a simple mode
Can bring the soul, so that it knows the road ;
So, seal'd with all simplicity, discerns
How what was many to the One returns.

VALE

GOOD-NIGHT ; the hour is late, the house is cold,
The fires have smoulder'd down, the lamps are spent,
And all the visitors that came and went,
Sleep—which I also need—doth now enfold.
Late, late it grows : how long before we meet—
Beyond the fells, the fastness, the abyss ?
O ways too far for over-weary feet !
O heart uncertain what the true goal is !
Somehow, somewhere, in darkness or rich gleam,
Yet shall we meet ! Till then—good-night, sweet dream !

A BOOK OF
MYSTERY AND VISION

“Multa quidem sunt sacramenta . . . ut
invisibilis gratia signo aliquo visibili præ-
staretur.”—S. BERNARDI ABBATIS, *In Cæna
Domini Sermo.*

A Book of Mystery and Vision

SALVETE

IN the midst of a world full of omen and sign, impell'd
by the seeing gift,
On auspice and portent reflecting, in part I conjecture
their drift ;
I catch faint words of the language which the world
speaks far and wide
And the soul withdrawn in the deeps of man from the
birth of each man has cried.
I know that a sense is beyond the sense of the manifest
Voice and Word,
That the tones in the chant which we strain to seize are
the tones that are scarcely heard ;
While life pulsating with secret things has many too deep
to speak,
And that which evades, with a quailing heart, we feel is
the sense we seek :
Scant were the skill to discern a few where the countless
symbols crowd,
To render the easiest reading, catch the cry that is trite
and loud.

Wistfully therefore, a mage, I come, but the records
that here I bring
Are light-tongued rumours and hints alone of the songs
I had hoped to sing,

A Book of Mystery and Vision

Could words implied by the heart of song be suffer'd,
without eclipse
Of inborn splendour, their runes to render through
channel of mortal lips.

Only as mystery's scribe I make my script of the things
which seem ;
And this book is a book of the visions beheld by one
who has walk'd in a dream—
Has walk'd in a waking dream apart from the gates and
the walls which fence
The common life of a world enswathed in the dreamless
swoon of sense.

But you, who are keeping a mystic watch in the same
suspended state,
And I, recounting the moods therein, for an hour of
waking wait ;
Triumphant then through the light derived shall light
from the centre blaze,
And that be known which we glimpse alone through the
moon-sweet mist and haze.
How will it come to us, that great day? What will
the dawn disclose?
Past veils expended, all omens ended, what truth at the
heart of those?

PART I
OF SINGLE CHORDS AND OF MONOLOGUES

“⊕ principium primi principii respice finem :
⊕ finis ultimi finis intueri principium.”—
F. BASILII VALENTINI *Practica de Lapide
Sapientum.*

Worlds of Vesture

WORLDS OF VESTURE

FAR spreads a mind-world full of gleam and pomp,
Fictitious parities, fair-seeming shows
And shallow music, on a thousand themes
Discoursing lightly to external sense,
But, void of vital meaning, leaving souls
Untouch'd and unawaken'd. Beauty here
Is specious only; to the heart it brings
No message which can penetrate or bind:
Here lights false fantasy, a moon full-orb'd.
Akin to this, there spreads a wider world
Of sensible impressions and of joys
Bereft of depth or height: what restless crowd
Is surging there! As earth of mother earth,
For inspiration pure, for genius true,
Hold thou these worlds with all their paths and
ways!

All ye who would be saved, come out from them,
And in the heaven of everlasting mind
Surely the Word Divine shall welcome you!
No password there he needs who keeps within
One sacred truth, that man is compass'd now
By many sacraments and parables,
By speaking likenesses and shows which shew
Rich depths for inquisition. Close about
They press, they minister and dimly limn
The infinite behind them. By a quest
Which does not take too far or ask too much
We can achieve their meanings, know the grace
Which lies within, their living language learn,
And this shall take us past all outward pomps
Far into vision, far through mystery.

A Book of Mystery and Vision

In splendid pageantries of holy sea,
As in the mellow hush of moonless nights,
And in the grandeur of that starry vault,
Dare to confess the ministries of deep
And many-sided emblems which unfold
To man alone, developing for him
Resources in the measure of his need,
His insight, inquest and experiment.
All speculation's penetrant research ;
Toil-conquer'd tracts of knowledge and the vast
Beyond—ungain'd ; the solemn sense of things
Immeasurable ; glimpses scarcely caught
Of new worlds glimmering on an utmost verge
And precipice of being ; these are fonts
Of true suggestion ; these awake, uplift
Supreme imagination, and therein
Find proper end and first reality.
Thus, by the glass of the astronomer,
Man searches deeper in his nature's depths,
And by the flights of theosophic thought
He gauges further and surveys himself ;
While in proportion with the mind's advance
Great Nature widens, for the silver links—
Which form the mystic chain of hidden things—
Are multiplied by counting ; the divine
And visionary universe expands
At every bolder plunge of mind therein.

The goal is still within ourselves alone,
The dream is also there, its meaning there—
All in a sense within. The outer world
Marks but one era of the human soul's
Advance, developing her infinite.
O blessed promise of the time to come !
At each succeeding stage more lofty types—
A wider world—significance more deep—
Till, in the full possession of itself,

The Voyage and the Venture

Each soul attains, from every type set free,
The supra-conscious life of pure repose
And unveil'd vision into God, the All.

THE VOYAGE AND THE VENTURE

O to set forth and not to swerve,
Press forward—early, late!—
Thus I, and yet they also serve,
'Tis said, who stand and wait ;
Who wait to hear the Master's charge,
As I, that pause and rest
By this great restless ocean's marge,
Do also urge the quest :—

A quest unknown, pursued through all,
As ships brave storm and stress,
Nor e'er did greater hap befall
In old sea voyages ;
For, compass'd in the flight of thought
What has been or shall be,
I pass beyond whate'er have wrought
The heroes of the sea.

The ships of Colchis slip behind
Through golden seas of dream ;
Columbus in the glass of mind
Sees all his Indies gleam ;
De Gama dares the burning Cape
Through gorgeous zones of day,
Appeasing that portentous shape
Which looms to bar his way.

A Book of Mystery and Vision

O Colchis, keep thy fleece of gold !
O western world, retain
Thine Inca's secret wealth untold !
And thou, far southern main,
Fold all thy jewell'd shores in mist
From Cape to austral pole :
With brilliant, topaz, amethyst,
Tempt eyes—but not the soul !

Those sea-kings safe in harbours far
Found anchor long ago ;
Set forth where further ventures are
Which future ages shew.
The secret of the poles lay bare,
The flight of men with wings,
And past the highest tracts of air
Declare star travellings.

When sounding tocsins, far beyond,
To greater aims adjure—
Which hold man's higher soul in bond—
Will frozen zones allure ?
Nay, nor the eagle's wings uplift,
Nor stars, nor suns extend,
Though past all starry paths we drift,
The lights of our great end.

So therefore days and nights dissolve
By this low-breathing sea,
While here I pause and still revolve
Voyage and venture free !
Dim main, through all my dream intone ;
And far through paths untrod,
Sung on by all life's voices, lone
Let me embark for God.

Transcripts

I know not when my quest comes true,
I seek, I know not Whom,
Ah, life's end, if I only knew,
I should know all life's doom !
Light of the endless East and West,
Shine on me here as there ;
The signs at least of this great quest
Are round me everywhere !

TRANSCRIPTS

SPURR'D on, with zealous soul, to seek
Life's gospel, now unheard,
Boots it to take the mountain peak
Or covet flight of bird ?
The byway too shall hear it speak—
That lost, that only Word.

I sought it long, I seek it yet,
Nor cease while life I own ;
Art to attain her strength has set,
And faith of old has known ;
With longing eyes by tears made wet,
I listen all alone.

The shadows of a thousand leaves
Dance in this dying light ;
The Word for which my spirit grieves
On grass and moss they write ;
There too the blessed zephyr weaves
The Blessed Word of might.

A Book of Mystery and Vision

Old is the soul, and otherwhere
Read once with shining eyes
The Word's compounded meanings rare,
And her own mysteries ;
At Nature's writings now I stare
As seer in crystal skries ;

Who out of mists beholds reversed,
Inchoate shapes emerge,
And deep in waking dream immersed
Seems ever on the verge
Where very life and light shall burst,
To hallow and asperge.

Him the true life escapes, and I
The life of life in vain
From Nature's rapid writings try
To reconstruct again :
A flash comes oft to beautify,
But never to remain.

And yet—in all—the omens found
Through life and time abide ;
They take me far through haunted ground
And far through ways untried ;
Lost Word, thy transcripts still abound
On every country side !

Then, in those moments, rarely known,
When the soul feels her wings,
Emblazon'd upon star and stone
There flash immortal things ;
Through Nature's gates, wide open thrown,
A wild voice sings and sings.

And Hence these Ecstasies

Comes secret sense through veils confess'd,
And God eludes no more,
But doth most surely manifest
And all His worlds restore :
Methinks that Word of peace and rest
High-seated saints read o'er.

Lost Word and Last Word, far and long,
Heard through the closing gate,
Dies the dim echo of thy song !
Soul, is it dark and late ?
Vast is the void, though hope is strong ;
We languish, but we wait.

Yes, we are waiting, I and you ;
The white Kings wait enthroned ;
And life's pale outcasts languish too,
Dishonour'd and disown'd,
Till that Word—searching through and through—
Be suddenly intoned.

AND HENCE THESE ECSTASIES

I KNOW—

When the glorious disc of a moon all gold
Moves swan-like over the spaces high,
And lone unattainable tracts of a purple sky.
The air is rapture of clearness, the air is keen
And the air is cold ;
The stars dissolve in the Artemisian sheen
But gather and cluster and crowd in the quarters
four.
In dark, luxurious olive shadows, the trees

A Book of Mystery and Vision

Twist bending branches, high tops that sway and soar
In the search and swathe of a viewless tide.
It rises up on a sudden with shout and roar,
Latent strength of the storm and eager rush,
Or sinks with the soft and languorous sigh of a
summer breeze,
Swooning, crooning, soft in the mystic arms of
the midnight hush:
So passes the world aside.

I know—

When the shadows lie so rich, so slant, so long,
Over the close-cropp'd lawn which else is white with
dew,
Where the misty vistas shine, and the winding paths
go through
To thickets beyond the garden-ground and a secret
bird in song.
The darkling orbs of the sunflowers, splendidly tall,
Droop in the moon-mist nimbus, dim with a
hallowing tinge,
While from their palm-like leaves the thick dews
trickle and fall;
And the musk-rich scents of the garden rise
To the overshadowing fringe
Of their gorgeous, golden eyes.

I know—

When at last the uttermost stillness steeps
Rose and lily, and laurel and lilac hedge.
The leaf does not stir on the willow, nor the leaf
where the ash-tree weeps,
The topmost twig of the yew and the cypress sleeps—
Like the box of the garden edge.
Solemnly, sweet, serene,
Flowing from vales beyond, and yet beyond from the
hills,
A sense magnetic of expectation fills

And Hence these Ecstasies

The palaces sacramental and high-roof'd halls—
In the haunted place of incense, the wondrous place
Earth and its crown between—
With an unvoiced solemn promise of boundless grace.
High over the East's red ramparts, gateways and
cloudy walls,
And over a thousand changeful turrets and towers,
The morning glory of heaven blooms over and calls
To morning glories of earth in a thousand bowers.

I know—

That the high emprise of the life of quest
Traces the pathway slowly which leads to a glorious
end,
Clambers a winding stairway which takes to the
wondrous height,
Buffets the seas tremendous, but makes for a shining
goal :
That never the starry promise which haunts the
human soul,
And never the hope which holds so high each head
up-turn'd to the light,
Or the great desire which swells and pants in the
breast,
Shall into a world of loss and of death descend :
That all we have dared to dream in the loftiest flight
Is only the rumour and noise of a greater gain
Out of all mind and sight :
That if one tittle of all we fail, as it seems, to attain,
It is never because the dream in the heart was fond,
But because of the height which still soars over the
height,
Of the light within the light,
And the glory of all the glory withdrawn in the great
beyond !

A Book of Mystery and Vision

WINGS OF FIRE

SPRINGS to the West a scarlet bird o'erhead,
Far-darting, circles, sways,
Then swift and straight—as if a spirit sped—
Divides the mellow haze.

The splendid clouds about her burn and glow,
Through liquid gold she glides,
On purple crests floats buoyant, or below
Sinks deep in lilac tides.

What Iris cliffs o'erhang her path, what towers,
White argent, crumble down,
And scatter shards and glitter sparks in showers :
One gems her like a crown.

So all the lambent distance lessening through,
With eager wings address'd,
She merges past man's sight into the blue
Beyond the blazing West.

Do Thou from whom we come, by whom perdure,
Our ways direct and bend,
That—past such pageants—in Thy splendour pure
They may dissolve and end !

Thy rumours fill creation's sounding hall,
Thine omens round us press ;
We hear the holy rapture of Thy call
Through all life's close caress.

O speak incessantly in clouds and veils !
Speak, we have heard through these !
We know what message of all life exhales
In Thy sweet August breeze.

Wings of Fire

The almond blossoms in Thy breath ; the red
Lies richer on the rose ;
Earth yields up fragrant incense ; where we tread
Baptismal water flows.

For Thou hast severally sanctified
And sanction'd all our days,
And dost in many sacraments abide
Thin-veil'd on all our ways.

A priestly chrism fills the scented air
Which brings Thy bridal kiss,
And Eucharistic feasts are lighted where
Thy board of plenty is.

But if the perfect joy of daily life
Some transient sorrow sears,
Thy holy unction falling on the strife
Melts pain to happy tears.

True joy transfigured knows no sense of loss,
The dead return in Thee ;
Our star-bright crowns are shadow'd by no cross :
All's light from sea to sea.

Ah, one thing more, last gift and best, we wait !
Beyond all type and sign,
Teach us to issue out of Nature's gate
On Thine unveil'd Divine.

Pipes on the mountain shrilling, stars supreme
Calling along the height,
Lift us, uplift us, out of this high dream
Into true waking light !

A Book of Mystery and Vision

THE EXTREME SENSE

MAN treads a path with signs and lights ablaze,
Yet scarce conceives of sacrament or sign ;
And hence, ill-starr'd, his genius strays,
Midst things that seem, not are, content
To shine.

When Nature's mystic life at first unfolds,
False sacraments he makes, of veils unclean ;
The open'd eye but part beholds,
Misreads inverted types and tales
Between.

And at the best we catch some hints alone,
The cypher characters in part translate
And then, our powers at fault compell'd to own,
More insight with dejected heart
Await.

Man can but place, in his most lofty dreams,
Constructions on the signs which best accord
With signifying Nature's schemes
And broader gifts to life repress'd
Afford.

Nor saint, nor priest, nor poet can reveal
The true construction which, obscure and grand,
Life's sacramental depths conceal—
Secret of secrets, yet be sure
At hand.

House Fantastic

We hear it spoken round us everywhere,
We know that it is blazon'd far and wide ;
It falls with dew through evening air,
It glitters, with the fallen star
Descried.

Peace—we have heard it understanding not !
Silence—it fills the silent halls of night !
The heart knew once, the heart forgot,
And yet again the heart recalls :
O God, recall it in Thy morning light !

HOUSE FANTASTIC

STOOD the house where I was born
In a garden made of old ;
There the heavy, scented flowers
Lay in wait to trap the hours,
Snare the days in bosks and bowers
And the moons in mazes fold.

In the house where I was born
Vivid light of rose and gold,
Permeating vast and fair
Vaulted heights of heavy air,
Held the netted sunbeams there—
In that mansion, ah, how old !

In the house where I was born
Mystic echoes waking told,
In a legend-haunted tongue,
As of viols half unstrung,
Of the days when life was young,
Pulsing through that mansion old !

A Book of Mystery and Vision

In the house where I was born
On a time the light grew cold,
Columns moulder'd moist and wet—
Walls where little runnels met :
Woe is me, that old spinet
Standing in the mansion old !

In the house where I was born,
Overlooking weir and wold,
Heirs of Kings who once held sway
Mourn'd for grandeur pass'd away,
Fortunes now in such decay
As o'ertook that mansion old.

In the house where I was born,
Meats were meagre, wine was doled :
Would the Genius e'er restore
That exalted state of yore?
To invoke him who forbore,
Praying in the mansion old ?

In the house where I was born,
Long by mystic rites ensoul'd,
That spinet with ghostly tone,
By one melody unknown,
Could the Genius call alone
Watching o'er this mansion old.

In the house where I was born
Gentle maidens, masters bold,
To search out the secret brought
Happy faces, eager thought,
And grew old there—as they wrought,
Perish'd in that mansion old.

House Fantastic

O'er the house where I was born
 Many barren ages trou'd,
Till in singing robes came I,
With a ballad heart to try
Unattempted melody,
 Pouring through the mansion old.

In the house where I was born
 Forth the glorious measures roll'd,
And beneath my fingers playing
That spinet resounded, swaying ;
There was moaning, there was maying
 In the resonant mansion old.

In the house where I was born
 Came the abbot, coped and stoled,
Came the censers, came the lights ;
Lovers lost their bridal nights ;
Rock'd the bases, cried the heights ;
 Answer'd all the mansion old :

*Singing of the splendid Quest,
Nature's secret end confess'd ;
 Type and sign
 And things divine ;
How unskilful senses learn
The true matter to discern ;
How the artist's zeal intense
May the ruling secret wrest ;
Solemn call and sacred mission ;
And beyond—the seeing sense ;
 And yet beyond—the Vision.*

In the house where I was born
 That which hinders yet will hold ;
All the songs to silence ran,
As when first the dole began :
For the anthem and the man
 Tarries still that mansion old.

A Book of Mystery and Vision

From the house where I was born,
 From the mildew, from the mould,
Into this great world I went,
Midst the sign and sacrament,
And another meaning lent
 Legend of the mansion old.

In the house where I was born,
 By unresting ghosts patroll'd,
This old tale of song and art
Of the mystery is part
And the instrument man's heart,
 Waiting in that mansion old ;

In the house where I was born,
 Till the gifted hand unfold
Music living, music rare,
The long-sought forgotten air
Sleeping latent everywhere,
 As within that mansion old.

THE VINDICATION

In the house where I was born
 Let the newer tale be told ;
Clavicord or organ deep,
Open tones from Nature sweep,
But more secret tones asleep
 Rest, as in that mansion old ;

*And the discord heard at times
In the music, in the rhymes,
Tripping stave and jarring tone,
Intimate perchance that He,
Hidden in the mystery,
Artist of the ways unknown,
Also seeks the perfect key
For the cosmic melody.*

Waiting for the Manifestation

WAITING FOR THE MANIFESTATION

I BEHELD a scarlet pageant—in a dream of night—
Spread wide its banners, blazon'd with devices bright ;
Now my waking eyes are tintured by the sheen and
show,
By the glory and the glister and the gorgeous glow.

Hence I hold this truth unquestion'd : from its sources
deep
Comes something into waking out of worlds of sleep,
And like a golden lamp at night held up in garden
closes,
Abounding wealth of magic at our gate exposes.

Now because you are a dreamer I may hint to you
That the world of common eyesight as a veil is true,
And by certain tinctures vested in a light divine,
Is sometimes lifted suddenly to type and sign.

We see that there are sacraments, and grace has means
Incalculable, even in the humblest scenes,
But the richest and the fullest in the mystic plan
Is the sacramental mystery of man to man.

For no man knows another, each is sign to each
Of a labyrinthine nature out of sight and reach ;
By the texture and the outline of the veil alone
Do we gather hint and presage of its form unknown :

The sign of strength and symmetry, the sign of grace,
The sign of sainthood lighting an unearthly face,
And, pregnant with its message from the world within,
The fever and the scarlet of the sign of sin.

A Book of Mystery and Vision

But further out of knowledge, say, in far-off eyes,
Want of virgin lips unconscious or lost children's cries,
The sign that, past all signs, remote as white spume out
at sea,
The vision is which ever was and ever yet will be.

Now this, I think, received into the heart of heart,
Would life of life to mere day's length of shadow-life
impart;
Such sacramental flowers unfold in fair soul-gardens
then
As Carmel and Assisi never gave to men.

But, symbols to each other, to ourselves we are
A light reflected only, not itself the star:
Ah, therefore shine within us, thou sad moon of mind,
To the day-star and the noon-tide and the goal assign'd!

'Till the great time of awaking from the things which
seem
Unto pageantry and splendour which are more than
dream;
'Till the light of further knowledge of ourselves and all
The lords behind the portal in the Father's hall!

O, hold we all our sacraments till that great day
As consecrated altar-lights which shine always,
And on the sign where God Divine may dwell, of man
unseen,
Let saving dread forbid the print of any mouth unclean!

I have dwelt among the tokens, and in types expound
Some fragments of the secrets which our ways surround,
And that you can interpret, as the veils allow,
The bright dream-tincture tells me on your lips and
brow.

Jam Noli Tardare

JAM NOLI TARDARE

VEIL of Nature sacramental,
Thou art close but thou art thin,
And the inward, transcendental
Glory canst at need let in :
Lights engird the chosen head
From no sun of Nature shed.

And to see the veils dissolving
Need we travel fast or far,
Past the flashing suns revolving,
Onward to the furthest star ?
Are they thinner, think you, friend,
Where the cosmic glories end ?

Undetermined starry spaces,
Fill with joy your paths unknown !
But to catch the inward graces
Needs the inward sight alone :
Meanest places hold the spell
Of unfathom'd miracle.

Hence when any hour invites you,
Whether seemly eve's repose,
Or, if better this delights you,
Night august or hush'd moon-close—
Best where best your charm is found—
Pass into your garden-ground.

There a sudden sense supernal
On the mind prepared may fall,
As of haunted thought eternal
And great strangeness vesting all ;
Grass and glebe and grove expound
Thin-veil'd secrets latent round.

A Book of Mystery and Vision

Not in bowers of roses solely
Shall the wondrous tale be told,
But in wild ways meek and lowly,
Beds of burning marigold :
Most betwixt the lilies straight
Swings the visionary gate.

Not devoid of dream—if blended—
Are the windflowers and the docks,
For myself I love a splendid
Place of purple hollyhocks,
And my fancy knows great powers
Which lie rich in the sunflowers.

I could set you in my closes,
With the seeing sense endow'd,
Where the weed is as the rose is,
And the bird's lilt, low or loud,
Voices outward, clear and strong,
Worlds of rapture, worlds of song.

But for you a place of wonder
Your own garden ground must be ;
'Twixt the trees that you stand under,
Seeing what is yours to see :
In my garden, seen aright,
All is scarlet and white light.

Of all flowers the bloom and splendour
Backward, forward sweep and swing,
Light as pampas grass and slender,
Fringe the edge of the world's ring ;
As the wind-tides round them lave,
Cups and patens flame and wave.

Jam Noli Tardare

But when eastward some moon rises
 (Many moons have haunted there,
As the witchcraft pomp devises),
 They are virgins very fair,
In ecstatic motion driven
Towards the virgin born of heaven.

And sweet incense, each exhaling
 From a thurible, ascends,
Drifts, a dim enchanted veiling,
 Eastward as the dew descends :
Hence conceal'd in all that seems,
Truly human nature teems.

Yes, all Nature waits expecting—
 Forest, floral hall and field—
For some vital word directing
 Her those sleep-held forms to yield :
Long expected, long deferr'd,
Come, thou great unutter'd Word !

Then if man through far creation
 Must the secret meaning make,
Fountain, centre, destination,
 Let that secret soul awake,
And present the inmost plan—
Man in all and God in man !

While the Word of Words reposes
 Far beyond the lip's control,
Till the fitting time discloses,
 In the garden of the soul,
Let us dreamers day by day
In the outward gardens pray :

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Pray that flesh divinely sifted
May discern the Word of power ;
Then transmuted Nature, lifted,
Shall confess the crowning hour ;
Putting weed and vesture by,
Shall unveil humanity !

IN THOSE HEIGHTS

If sadness habit in the solitude
And liveness in the uplifted height ;
Stars beyond stars shew light
Where few intrude.

Who knoweth the rapture of exalted thought—
Beyond all covenant of speech—
Where thou art first to reach,
Of thy soul taught ?

And wouldst thou forfeit freedom to explore
Those realms terrific and unknown,
Because thou goest alone
For evermore ?

Disconsolate perchance, yet firm, ascend ;
Thou hast eternity to gain ;
The infinite domain—
That is thine end.

It lies above thee, spotless, cold, serene
And piercing as a polar wind,
But thou must quit—to find—
Seen for unseen.

In those Heights

Dissemble not the joy of this great quest ;
Yet know that all of earthly bliss
Thou hast agreed to miss,
All human rest.

What others prize, on that thou dost not reckon,
What others mean is nought to thee ;
But hopes they dare not see
Rise up and beckon.

Believe not thou that sense—through all repining—
Shall yearn like soul to share, withdrawn,
That light other than dawn
So far off shining.

The simple ministry of sense is dead ;
No surface meanings Nature shews ;
But secrets none disclose
By thee are read.

All things are merged into the sense unspoken,
And up through depths their prize concealing
A dim third sense, appealing,
Sends sign and token.

It lies with thine own will to penetrate
Still further in that daring field ;
What shall the seventh sense yield ?
O gorgeous state !

Seventh sense, the Sabbath of far-cleaving soul—
When all the shining seas are travell'd,
And all the maze-drawn paths unravell'd—
Be thou our goal !

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O sevenfold Cosmos, to the sevenfold man
Responding, set thy veils aside ;
Thine inner self confide,
Thy deep-drawn plan !

Have we not follow'd in the height and deep
The uttermost abstruse invention
Of thy withheld intention,
Waking, asleep ?

Thou know'st, because the outward sense is dumb,
Sight does not satiate the eye,
Nor hearing satisfy,
Nor comfort come.

So through the pageant of this world we move
Demanding ever stronger spells,
Thy greater oracles
To search, to prove.

And if, when weaker sentiments invade,
The rigours of our wintry course,
Abstention and divorce,
Make hearts afraid—

O then be with us and about us then,
And laying bare thine inmost heart,
Make us, when far apart,
Dispense with men !

So shall we not life's outward semblance ask
When face to face with thy true being,
Who know—beyond all seeing—
What seen things mask.

Out of the Fulness

The wise are lone amidst the concourse loud ;
And we, who scan thy mystic pages,
More lone midst all the sages
Than they in crowd :

Alone translated to Olympian places,
Because—if adorations mount
Past common worship's fount—
Shine no gods' faces.

To simple sense, whom signs alone concern,
This world her sacraments dispenses,
But oft starves out the senses
Which signs discern.

On simple souls the Church confers communion,
But him who antitype descries,
And type as type, denies
Her rites, her union.

Therefore be with us—as thou canst defending ;
Light through thine echoing halls ; we are,
Beyond these regions, far
Call'd and ascending !

OUT OF THE FULNESS

To pass from life aside,
And deep on one design,
Less stated than implied
By Nature's heart, incline ;
And passing through, to use
A language long unheard :
These make it vain to muse
On tender glance or word—

A Book of Mystery and Vision

Ask nursing heart of song
Where wingèd thoughts may sleep;
Such nests of love belong
To dreams less grave and deep.

Shall lover, lacing arms
With maid in moonlight, praise
These poems for their charms,
To him attribute bays
Who holds her virgin grace
Can none in truth discern,
Nor clasp with close embrace—
Howe'er his ardours burn.
Yea, though she yielding lies,
She from his grasp has fled
'Midst secret mysteries
Of body and bridal bed.

Will she that heart's spouse greet
By terms to mine akin,
Who does not dream how sweet
The prize she hides within?

On matron's household ground
What ardours could I stir
By mystic songs profound,
Too sad and strange for her?
She reigns how calm, how safe,
A star above the wild,
A moon, where waters chafe,
Which mellows and makes mild.
Her microcosmos, wrought
By her own hand, she leads,
Quick for the day's import,
Strong for the moment's needs;
But life's eternal sense
Ranks in her sober head
Of lesser consequence
Than the guest's well-air'd bed.

Out of the Fulness

What boots mine art's device
To men on 'change, whose fate
Hangs on a closing price,
A rise, a discount-rate?
The social webs enmesh,
Those webs constrain and drive;
And Toil all human flesh
Scourges, to keep alive.
Why squander time and breath?
Who can, that wills, take heed:
Life is all whirl, and death,
If that be rest, God speed!
E'en thou, O priest, content
In thy peculiar school
To class each sacrament
By number, name and rule!—
Is word of mine endow'd
With skill to catch thine ear?
Are seven in Rome allow'd
And two in England here?

But if, accepting those,
From Nature's teeming store
My secret song disclose
Some saving thousands more;
Nor yet of both kinds these
Exclusively, or one,
But of all stars, all seas,
Each element, each sun;
In all a gate flung back
For grace abounding still,
Floodgate and torrent's track,
Where all partake at will—
How sound my tidings then?
Stars speak to stars, but thou,
O priest-voice, leading men,
And this voice mingle—how?

A Book of Mystery and Vision

All things on sea and land
 Speak to my soul, and each
Blythe voice I understand,
 Answer in flowing speech.
Quantities, measures, rhymes,
 Harp-string and organ note
Surround me at all times ;
 Stars that in ether float,
Sun in his flaming course,
 All the world's lights, and all
Darkness and tempest's force,
 Thrill me with frequent call.

Bear I no tidings true
 Which all might hear and learn,
Plain Nature, simple view
 And little child discern?
Soul, high encompass'd, tell—
 Surely the world can know!—
How the small fonts as well
 As great with mercy flow ;
Grace to the humblest field
 Of daily life is lent,
For each is sign'd and seal'd
 With marks of sacrament.
In Wall Street dare we say
 An office God disowns?
Why, angels pass that way,
 As by the masters' thrones!
The keen winds sweeping there
 Do proud hosannas sing—
Yea, even as in the fair,
 White City of the King.

But ah! those signs august,
 For ever far and nigh
Through all life's fume and dust,
 The sacrament of high,

Out of the Fulness

Aspiring human love,
Spotless and awful, raised
To one White Throne above,
There poised—undimm'd, undazed.
And ah! most blessed feast
Of wonder, to behold
The sacraments no priest
Has ever bought or sold,
Nor saints alone dispense.
Ah! utterly to feel
With fulness deep, intense—
Whatever veils conceal—
Beyond all type and veil,
Deep within deep, far down,
Yet not beyond all hail,
The Vision and the Crown.

Hence to myself I speak,
But not with selfish mind ;
Yea, rather do I seek
Some brothers of my kind,
Who shall discern the drift
Of this my mystic tongue ;
For them my voice I lift,
To them my songs are sung.
They know these measures roll
Set to a sacred rite,
Perform'd within the soul
'Midst incense, pomp and light.
I know what stars have shone
To soothe what seas unblest ;
I fix my faith upon
The Vision, and I rest.

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THE HAUNTED DIAL

WHAT canst thou tell me, O dial!
Of the days which have been and are,
A mystic procession on-flowing,
As star from the East follows star?
I have come through the past from afar,
Yet the vistas stretch solemn and straight;
Can the mind forecall, at the term of all
What things may befall and wait?

O ever as heaven moves round thee,
Thy slow shade forward steals!
It tells of the days and their sequence
But nought of their source reveals,
Nor yet what their end conceals;
Before, behind thee a blank unseen,
At a pageant of days, in a mystic haze,
Thou dost stand and gaze, between.

Therefore thou art as our symbol,
As if in man's image art thou;
For looking before and after,
We know not of whence nor how,
Nor whither our trending now;
But the space between, with its groves and flowers,
But the gloom and glance of the time's advance,
These are thine with their chance, and ours.

Here then in the copse and woodland
And here in the glade, besprent
With a glory of scarlet tulips,
I take thy sacrament;
For I see, with a heart content,
That the signs decreed by the common mind,
Which are none to me, are renounced by thee
For the deeps we see behind.

The Haunted Dial

Thou art not, as some think vainly,
The type of a wing's swift rush,
The sweep of a flood-tide passing,
The vortex and the crush,
But the solemn throb and the hush
Of the great durations which ne'er diminish,
And for evermore are behind, before,
And will not pass o'er, nor finish.

What then is some cloud of a moment
Which hides thy ghostly hand?
The bringer of rain in summer
To a thirsty and panting land;
Herald at most of the storm and grand
Ravage of battle on plain and hill;
Yet brief is the space ere a moon's bright face
Shall the height and the base make still!

Say what dost thou write in the darkness?
Of star or moon record?
The light of all brightness only
Writes on thy mystic board!
Pass, Light withdrawn and restored!
Yet may the infinite, perfect beam,
Intransitory, adorn thy story
With more than glory of dream!

Ah, spell me thy hauntings ever!
Haunted by light thou art,
And time with its changes noting
Dost stand from both apart;
Like the inmost human heart,
One truth confessing 'midst all that shews,
The depth and height of the splendour bright,
When the light of all light o'erflows.

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From home eternal to home eternal,
High soul of man impell'd,
Fling too thine ancient watchwords,
In spite of the light withheld !
Walker in shadows of eld,
Searcher of God by the ways unknown,
The storm and cloud to withstand endow'd,
Unto light being vow'd alone !

O secret of light supernal !
O Dial of God's great sun !
What unto thee shall be darkness,
When darkness is over and done ?
I seize—as the soft hours run—
A hint of the haunting of souls, involved
Where the light rays beat, and the centres meet,
In the great white heat dissolved.

HOW I CAME TO THE SEA

I

A VOICE in the dark imploring,
A sweet flute play'd in the light,
An organ pealing and pouring
Through the world's cathedral height—
And again the charge and the flight,
The clash and hurtle of fight.
O thou art grand, thou art lonely,
In thy melody, in thy moan,
With the sense of a world unknown
Filling the known world only !

How I Came to the Sea

Great voice, which invokes and urges

The strenuous souls to strive,

Gather thy waves, thy surges ;

Thy breakers heap and drive ;

Thy long tides marshal and lead.

The little ripple shall plead

In little whispers on golden sand ;

And further out on the rocky strand,

Where white crests crumble and white spume scourges,

Thy drums and tocsins and horns shall blow.

Thy long reverberant beats shall come and go,

From where thy surf-line in sky-line merges

To where, by sounding buffet and blow—

Blare of peans and muffle of dirges—

Capes which crumble and torn cliffs know

The strength and stress of thine ebb and flow—

Waste and know thee and thee confess.

We do not know thee, we own, we know ;

But our soul's might in thy might rejoices,

Our hearts respond to thy wild vast voices !

Thought with its fleetness swift wings from the course

of thee ;

Tongues in the speech of thee ;

Hope at the source of thee ;

Fire from the gleams of thee, strength from the force

of thee ;

Width through the reach of thee ;

Depth from thy deepness, unfathom'd by plummet,

And height from thy night-sky's impervious summit—

Omen and sign !

These have we drawn from thee, these do we bring to

thee ;

Nature's great sacraments rise from and spring to thee.

All other ministries—sun, when 'tis shrouded,

Moon in the morning light meagre and pallid,

Stars overclouded—

All are invalid

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For spaces and seasons ; but thou,
Thy greatest ministry is always now.
O sacramental sea, terrible sea,
Thine are the words of the mystery—
Grand-Word and Pass-Word and Number thine,
Grades and Degrees to the height advancing,
And the golden dawn and the glory glancing
Far and away to the secret shrine !

II

There shall be no more sea, they say,
On Nature's great coronation day,
When the Bridegroom comes to the Bride.
Shall earth then lose her sacraments of tide—
Motion, measures tremendous, echoing far and long—
Glisten, sparkle and glow, ring of an endless song ?
O words prophetic, ye princes and priests attend ;
This is the Quest's end promised, the marvellous end
Of all our voyage and venture since time began.
To the Quest for ever the sea's voice calleth man ;
And this in a mystery-world, by only the side-light
broken—
That a Quest there is and an end—is the single secret
spoken
All over that vibrant main :
Of the Quest for ever it tells, of the ends and dooms to
gain.

I rise in the half-light early, I vest myself in haste ;
I pass over highway and byway, the fielded land and the
waste ;
As much as a man may prosper, all eager I climb and go
down,
For this day surely meseems that the Quest may receive
a crown.

How I Came to the Sea

To and fro in the search I hurry, and some men bid me
narrate

What means this fever, and why so eager, and whether
their help I wait ;

Not as yet they know of the Quest, although they are
questing early and late.

And others, my brothers, the same great end pursuing,
Stop me and ask, What news? Fellow Craft, is there
anything doing?

Is there light in the East anywhere, some sign set forth
in a star,

Or a louder watchword utter'd from over the harbour
bar?

And above the light swift music of all its fleeting joys
The world spreads daily through length and breadth,
the great Quest's rumour and noise.

Who sought it first, who longest, and who has attain'd
almost?

All this in town and in village its heralds proclaim and
post ;

But the sun goes down and the night comes on for a
space to quench endeavour,

While star after star through the spaces far shew the
track of the Quest for ever!

III

But still, in the hush and the haunting, I stand, even I,
by the shore,

And the sea in the sunshine crooning pervades me with
deep unrest,

For it speaks of the Quest, of the Quest—
With a torrent of tongues in a thousand tones

And a far-off murmur of viewless zones,

Old and new, new and old, of the Quest ;

Amen, it speaks evermore!

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The whole wide world of voice and of rushing sound
You may seek through vainly,
But never a voice is found
To search the soul with such deep unrest,
Or to speak of the Quest
So plainly.

Then surely thither the Quest's way lies
And a man shall not err therein ;
Yet not on the surface surely seen with eyes,
For thence the swallow has come and thereon the sea-
mew flies ;
And the haunting ships with tremulous sails, we learn,
For ever about it hover, pass to their place and return ;
And over the wastes thereof the tempests ravage and
burn,
Or the sea-spouts spin.
But not of these is the Quest ;
In the deep, in the deep it lies—
Ah, let me plunge therein !

But the caves of the deep are silent, and the halls of the
deep are still ;
Not there is the clarion bird
Or the wind's loud organ heard ;
No blythe voice cries on the hill.

A sail, a sail for the seaman, sailing East and West ;
And a horse for the rover when he goeth over the
dappled down and road !
But a man may better remain in his own abode
Who is vow'd to the wonderful end which crowns the
Quest ;
For sail and compass, and coach and steed and the rest,
The king's highway, and the beaten track, and the great
sea-road—
Are these the way of the Quest ?

The Shadow of Thy Wings

Travel, travel and search, eyes that are eager glisten
 (To-day is perchance too late),
I stand on the marge and listen
 (To-morrow is stored with fate);
 I stand on the marge and wait.
I know that the deep, with its secret, is a sacramental
 hymn.
Enough that it speaks to me vaguely with meanings
 reserved and dim,
 Saga and rune of eld;
Enough that its volume and grandeur hint the great tale
 withheld;
While, far through the depth and the darkness, the
 echoing halls of the soul
Reply to the roar and the roll,
 Themselves in the mystery-tongue,
 All the world over sung,
As the sibyl awaking from dream
In oracles hints at the theme
 That has never been spoken or spell'd.

THE SHADOW OF THY WINGS

AWAKE, revolving many troublous themes,
Because of thee I suffer, and in dreams
Am darkly haunted. Yea, with soul adread
I must confess thee, and, inclining head,
To thine admitted majesty defer.
How sovereign wast thou, who wast Lucifer!
And all God's world bears testimony still
To the dark power of thy perverted will.
O, in the days when, first by light renew'd,
I found all Nature and her life endued
With blessed sacraments, at bed and board
The uncreated beauty I adored

A Book of Mystery and Vision

Through shining veils, while—galaxied about
My path—God's omens glitter'd and gave out
Deep meaning and high promise, which compell'd
At once all avenues of sense. I held
All wonder sacred, and, as flame in flint,
Sought God conceal'd in every mystery-hint.
Too soon, as if on moonless nights like this,
All the right order of the world we miss
Amidst thick darkness—as a man his way,
Whom storm surprises in the waste astray ;
Black aspects of the sacramental scheme
Are thrust in roughly on our mystic dream,
And midst the sacred ministries proclaim
A baleful presence and a sign of shame ;
That in the great hierarchic chant of things,
One evil voice continually sings ;
And when our mystic nourishment we take,
That some cups poison which our thirst should slake.

To thee, O Lucifer, for our own woe,
Are many sacraments reserved, I know,
And many likewise in life's holy place
Are set for worship as a sign of grace !
Thy baptisms of water and of fire,
Thine ordinations and thine unctions dire
Hast thou, and efficacies strange subsist,
With a rare savour, in thy Eucharist,
Where lying latent, under semblance dim,
Thou dost win entrance and abide in him
Who cometh, kneeling by thine altar rail.
Thou too hast many priests within the pale
Of thy communion, licensed to dispense
Thy mystic treasures ; and when men go hence,
All seal'd and fortified with thy last rites,
How oft they pass expecting thy delights,
And the good things which thou hast stored to see :
Longing they look and fall asleep in thee.

The Shadow of Thy Wings

How in those sacraments, whose order fair
Is like a wall about us, everywhere
With life our life environs, and in them,
As the hills stand around Jerusalem,
God hidden, in all ages and all lands,
With a great power about his people stands,
Came this invasion of the evil sign?
Prophets shew forth in vain and seers divine;
The old-world legends dimly strive to tell;
And the lone thinkers on the problem dwell,
Break up the answering words and form again.
We must confess where no one can explain—
We must confess at least who speak in song;
We know that mischief and misrule and wrong
Befell the garden of the soul's content.
We know not what laid waste its fair extent,
What fill'd the springs with bitterness, or broke
The music up, and to such sad-eyed folk,
Haunted with memories of some former sin,
Turn'd those who once abode in joy therein.
Yet many fruits and many flowers are left,
Nor is the garden of all lights bereft.
Sacred to incense still are places found,
And psalters also in the garden sound;
Nor, Master, yet so densely intervene
The flaming clouds of any sunset scene,
That cloud or light can veil Thee or make known;
So being mindful of our star and throne—
All attestations of desire and awe,
Thy words flame-written on the soul, her law
And that great longing wherewith all are bent
To get behind the veil of sacrament—
We do believe, past every veil and gate,
That to the centre we shall penetrate,
Which yields no form, nor is by form express'd,
And that this centre is our end and rest.

PART II
OF THINGS HEARD AND SEEN

“☉ sacramenta lucis creatæ, ☉ signa, omnium
apparentium, ad exitum felicem perducite, ad
finem nostrum perfectum, in lumine Dei increato,
in mysterio signato ineffabile.”—*De Concordia
Dei et Animæ.*

A Ballad of White Maidens

A BALLAD OF WHITE MAIDENS

THE KING SPEAKS

As I walk'd in the moonlight, that garden I found
By strange sorcery compass'd within and around ;
Where the voices are muffled, the vistas are blurr'd,
Dense incense makes faint the enamouring word,
And enfolds broider'd vestments or far-flashing gems
Of pontiff's tiaras and king's diadems.
The cups of the tall-springing lilies confuse
With white maidens' faces, moist-eyed, while the dews
Shine ghostlike and pallid on mist-breathing grass,
Where pearl-sprinkled sandals fall light as they pass.
The maid's trailing garments glide softly and raise
Such light stir as June in her slumberous days
Permits to low zephyrs, with pauses between
Lest they wanton too long with the leaf's silver sheen :
Some cooing dove murmurs in languorous elms
Of the dream and the dreamer in reverie's realms.

O willow-sweet maidens ! What maidens are these,
Curd-white in the moonlight and honey-lipp'd breeze ?
Old voices grow faint, from the summit they fall ;
Your measures enchant me, I come at your call.
O faint grow the tocsin, the trumpet, the drum !
Enswathe me, enclose me ; white maidens, I come !

Ah, stay me with lilies, sweet press of your faces,
The nearness and warmth of your mystic embraces,
Dissolving the sacred, inviolate state
Which I shared with the dwellers outside of your gate !
By a superincession fantastical, sweet,
I am merged in the maids of this shadow'd retreat ;
They are I, I am they, neither many nor one,
As the light and the warmth from the fount of the sun.

A Book of Mystery and Vision

THE KING SLEEPS

Within the charm'd walls is a place of delight,
And a world from its windows shines strange to the sight,
In the pomp of deep night and high glory of day,
Where the long golden prospects stretch shining away.
With pennons and banners the pageants pass by,
And the crash of their music goes up to the sky :
The centre and shrine is this paradise fair,
And crown'd midst his maidens the monarch is there.
O wrapp'd all about by a ministry blest
And the intimate sense of the garden of rest,
How vague are the legends, the memories dim
Of the King's distant country surviving for him !
But a hint in the stars, but a voice in the wind,
An echo of canticles lost to the mind,
Welling up from the depths in the sea's organ voice,
Bear witness how far he has err'd in his choice.

In the garden are stairways and turrets and towers ;
'Twas spring when he enter'd, and sweet were the flowers ;
The maidens sang ballads, how blithe to the heart !
All bells rang the nuptials of Nature and Art ;
And the world to the walls in high carnival came,
Bright eyes full of rapture, bright faces aflame.
But what of that moaning when music is still'd—
That ache in the pause which no pageant has fill'd ?

The garden has hill-tops, the stars live above ;
It is summertime now and the earth is all love ;
Those maids in full chorus sing jubilant odes ;
A glory abides in the vistas and roads.
O high the emperizes and high the renown,
But the King hath his maidens, the King hath his crown
Now, what of the whispers which hint in his sleep ?
Do hearts never sorrow ? Do eyes never weep ?

A Ballad of White Maidens

The garden has sycamores stately and old ;
O the time is rich autumn ; these leaves are all gold,
Round maids in the moonlight, high-seeming and soft ;
But a mist looking mournful envelopes them oft :
With a voice full of loss falls the wave on the strand ;
Lone horsemen ride hurriedly far through the land ;
Cold sleet against windows beats heavy and drives
On the overblown blooms and the bees' ravish'd hives.
All voice in that garden dies down in a dirge,
And the King hath his sorrow to crown him and scourge.
Far, far through the windows his vision is strain'd ;
The young have grown old, and the old have not gain'd
Save in sense of illusion and measureless loss ;
So the weary wayfarer goes dragging his cross
O'er the stones of the road to the hills out of reach,
Where storms utter faintly their ominous speech.
'Mid the ghosts of the maidens, in vain let him roam,
And remember at last how he strayed from his home !

Deep frost in the garden, the maidens are dead ;
The King is a-cold, with the snows on his head ;
Through the rime on the windows forth-looking sees he
The dearth and the dark when the glory should be.
Where now are the stars and the altitude keen,
All the music of old in the shining demesne,
With fellowships lofty, reserved to adorn
That secret pageant and state inborn ?
The heart cannot dream it, though hearts may yearn,
Nor a way of attainment the eye discern ;
But the King in his garden, of all bereft,
Knows that which was priceless for this was left—
For a paradise fated with time to end,
The Place of that Vision whence Kings descend.
So over the desolate, lonely road
Dim thoughts strain forth from his waste abode,
And hope for a herald with tidings sent
From the land withdrawn of the soul's content ;

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For a beacon speaking the darkness through
Of the light beyond and the further blue ;
Past all sea-cries, for a distant tone
From the royal realm which was once his own.

THE KING'S GOING FORTH

When will they come to him? Come they now?
Falls there a gleam on his clouded brow?
The wasting garden is moist and wan ;
Far has the King of the garden gone!
Whither he travels and what may chance—
Whether restored from the lifelong trance,
Whether to tarry in exile far
Where other illusive gardens are—
Who shall acquaint us? He that knows
The one true place for a King's repose,
And, long though he travel the outward track,
That the King came forth and the King goes back.

CLAVIS ABSCONDITORUM

Therefore, perchance, at a time assign'd
Some key to the mystery Kings may find,
Why maidens five in a garden dwell
And Kings delude by their potent spell.
Peace on the King through his ways attend ;
All things lead him to reach his end ;
Stars be his pathway and suns his track,
For the King comes forth and the King goes back!

EPILOGUE

*Ballad of maidens white to see,
All are spelling thy mystery ;
Faint is the music and low the tone :
Lead us still, lead us to reach our own !*

The Blessed Life of Sorcery

THE BLESSED LIFE OF SORCERY

ARGUMENTUM MIRABILE

VOICE and the Word proclaim, but the outward Voice
may fail,
In song and psalter the numbers falter; yet a hint
may redeem the tale:
Hear therefore why, from a losing quest,
In a place of spells I dream'd of rest,
And there had thought to remain—
But a lone star rose on the heart's repose,
And it drew me to quest again.

PROEM

Short the distance and smooth the road,
Not too far from a man's abode—
Seek, you shall find it; far and nigh
Stretches the Land of Sorcery.

THE PROSE

Where never a sense of the world beyond
On the soul bewitch'd intrudes,
But to soft spells only is sense in bond,
And, if illusion, delight deludes;
Where the heart does not yearn
Past what eyes discern,
Or far in some land remote—
Perchance unfriendly, at least unknown—
Picture the bliss and the vision alone;
Here let me anchor a stranded boat,

A Book of Mystery and Vision

And taste the joy of the heart and eye
In the Blessed Life of Sorcery.

I have voyaged far and my sails are rent ;
The mast is splinter'd ; the rudder is bent.
I have been where billows their might expend
On pitiless walls at the known world's end,
But turret or window or hand extended
Found I none when the quest was ended,
While an icy blast o'er the pathless track
Seized me and toss'd me, and drove me back.

Here the air is heavy with spells ;
From a sky overflowing the soft charm spills ;
A loving litany breathes round wavering hills
And faintly chimes in the bosks from floral bells,
Or sighs in a veil on the surface of tarns and wells.
Here too the sheeted hyacinth meadows
 Suspire and yearn,
Melt in the purple splendour, flicker and burn,
Through vistas of trees prolong'd and the musk-dark
 shadows
 Of haunted dells.

Far off the glister of shining surf looks white ;
How far, how soften'd comes the roll of the open sea !
And the long, low-breathing wind is hush'd as a wind
 may be.
The amber light of the afternoon is caught
And hidden in thickets and traps which mazy leaves
 have wrought,
Or talismanic figures of flowers that none can name—
But the nameless mystic people :
It moves in tongues of fire on vane and steeple,
On crumbling towers in pageants of auburn flame.

The Blessed Life of Sorcery

Hark a little and hark, for close at hand
Is one light voice you can hear and understand
In the plash and purl of the brook!
Otherwise, over the open road, through leafy covert or
lawn,
The silent wain by a silent team with its harvest-load is
drawn,
Though the road may rise or fall;
And only shadow'd figures slip past through the ravish'd
land,
For ever wearing the dreamful elfin look
And ever the wondering guise of him who has heard the
faërie call.

But yet, and now, and surely a theme uplifted,
With subtle, mastering melody suddenly fills the air;
From the midst of a secret centre, suddenly rifted,
The penetrant vibrant music pulses everywhere;
Through every leaf and blade of grass is sent,
As over the strings of its instrument—
Sweeping, sweeping, sweeping. The earth, with its
volume stored,
Is a quivering sounding-board,
And the sea, with melodious roar,
For ever and ever responds on the long, pulsating shore.

The faces of women are faces of strange enchanted
flowers,
Giving forth fragrance of incense and sounds of flutes
on the deep,
In the sweetest, stillest, and gravest charm of the tardy
hours;
And the children are blossoms in bud, which smile in
the light, and sleep.
White lilies, pallid and pure, in a shimmering cloud of
pearls,
Are the choric bands of the girls;

A Book of Mystery and Vision

There are royal, ruddy roses of eager and splendid boys,
Heavy, yet lissom of limb, tan-faced, full of glories and joys.
Their moist lips full and intense,

Well over with rippling speech ;
Yet a strange transfusion of sex and form and sense
Swims undeveloped in each ;
And all the men in the land, if men be a part of the
scheme,
Walk through the haunted places dissolved in vision and
dream.

O holy, holy, holy, wild-sweet to the ear and eye,
Is the Blessed Life and the Haunted Life in the Land of
Sorcery !

Will I not dwell in these ways for evermore ?

Breathe harps and all ye strings in a world of strings,
With every voice in a world of voice and choir.

Breathe over sea and shore
Lowly and faintly and fading far away,
With a sudden tremor and hint of all unspeakable things,
As of dusk in the heart of the fire ;

Lowly and faintly and fading far away,
Over the senses breathe till the senses swim ;
Chant in the dells and dingles, among the groups so dim,
Standing at footpath ends—anthem, litany, hymn
Of the world's delight, from the pleasant rite
In the missal of Faërie !

The anthems swell and never a chord is lost,
The light of the Vision floats for ever around,
And a perfect peace of the heart, by an anxious thought
uncross'd

Of the life in life, in this Blessed Life is found,
All under the purple sky,
Which swoons and falls in a mist—
Of opal and amethyst—
On fields and meadows and hills in the Land of Sorcery.

How One Offered Incense

ENVOY

At evening the light of a lone star fell through the lilac
gloaming and gloom,
But a voice fell with it, meseem'd, in the midst of that
choric spell, on the sorcery craft and bloom,
And, stilling the pulse of a thousand strings,
Said : Sails may fail thee, but wings—take wings !
Then suddenly out of the land withdrew
The savour, the music, the scent, the hue ;
A curtain of darkness droop'd from the sky
On the Blessed Life of Sorcery.
That star in the distance sings and sings ;
I have burn'd my ships, but I come with wings ;
O'er the wall at the world's end, eyes of pity
Shine on the quest for the Mystic City.

HOW ONE OFFERED INCENSE

JUST where the forest thins towards its edge,
On the western side
Is a clearing wide,
Or a glade, if you will,
And beyond the copse is a quickset hedge,
But this is the brow of the hill.
Over the hillside climbs the wheat ;
In the August sun—like a golden tide—
It washes over the whole hillside,
Except for a narrow and tortuous track
Left for the passage of hardy feet.
Far down a little bridge looks black,
Spanning a stream which chimes and tinkles,
Leaps in the sunlight, sparkles and twinkles,
Rolls its smooth white pebbles, and sprinkles
Crisp green turf upon either hand.
Further again is the rising land,

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This time with bearded barley and rye
Draped in the sunlight gorgeously ;
But climb you over that further slope,
For a splendid stretch of the sky's blue cope
Bends to the West, and the breeze comes thence,
Over the low plain, keen and intense—
Rife with rumour of riot and rout—
Salted and strong from the sea far out.

To watch the sunset smoulder and burn
Over the surf-line, churn'd and creamy ;
To see the mists on the plain assemble,
The dotted lamps of the inns dissemble
Their fullest light
Till it's really night ;
To see the sky turn mauve and dreamy
And so many stars in the dark a-tremble ;
To hear the anthem roll of the main
And the strong response of a seawind's strain—
Take your stand on the further height ;
But for real magic 'twixt eve and night,
And a speculation strange and deep
From the inmost heart of the house of sleep,
At a fitting hour the hills forsake
For the edge of the woodland cover and brake.
Over the clearing, high and far,
You shall see only a single star ;
Trees, in the dubious light convoked,
Stand, like mystæ muffled and cloak'd ;
And lone in the midst of the lonely glade
To the cubical stone which no hand has made,
Shalt thou in the border twilight bring—
If thou hast the gift of soul to bear
A glimpse of the secrets of earth and air—
As an outward sign of the heart's desire,
Thy little parcel of sacred fire
And an incense-pot for an offering.

How One Offered Incense

May he who has offer'd his incense tell
Of something which follows this kind of spell?
Say that the smoke will rise and spread,
Making a nimbus round one's head,
While glade and bush through the vaporous mist
Take shapes uncertain, which writhe and twist.
The sky looks marshlike, the star is dim,
And the air, which haply is moist and damp,
Seems to cling close, or just to swim;
The coal glows dull like a dying lamp,
And the moss-grown altar-stone, unbidden
Passing into the cloud, is hidden.
A change comes over the face of things,
And twixt the sense of a soul alone
And the subtle hint of invisible wings,
Tense expectation thrills and swings;
Till suddenly welling and surging round,
Down from the welkin and up from the ground,
From common motion and sight and sound
Isolated and terribly free,
The sense of a thing which is all unknown
Shapes in a moment and pierces thee.

Scatter the coals, for the rite is done;
Go to the hillside—one by one
Number the stones on the downward way;
Note how the wheat-ears bend and sway;
Get with haste to the village and choose
The tavern which most the yokels use;
Or hang on the bridge till one comes near
With a light step and a listening ear.
You have touch'd as close as one rite may reach
To that which lies undeclared behind
The things of Nature and things of mind—
Out of vision, exceeding speech—
And it isn't intended that men should get
A fuller glimpse of the secret yet.

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Meanwhile it shows you that this life's scheme
Has more of omen and sign and dream
Than enters into the hearts of those
Who cannot the inner eyes unclose ;
And that after all the life of man
Is shaped on a sacramental plan ;
That all the light which he gets is clouded
Because of the manifold veils between ;
The truth which he seeks to clasp is shrouded
And thus the beauty he longs for seen.
Yet truth and beauty and light exist,
And the sign is bright and the umbrage mist.
The border twilight melts at times,
And through the twilight or over the verge
Gleams from beyond do at times emerge—
Meaning of sorrow and sense of song,
The second import of runes and rhymes,
The seed of right at the core of wrong,
And in many legends and mystic tales
A rumour of what is behind the veils.

NOTA BENE—*the heart's desire*
Is surely good as a charcoal fire,
And the heart, I think that we all may own,
Is as much an altar as woodland stone ;
Wherefore the incense cloud may well
Be aspiration's transforming spell,
And for shades and forests and woodland dew,
With the lone star's lustre sifting through,
And all other things that I've been telling,
Choose any corner in your own dwelling.

A Door for White Doves

A DOOR FOR WHITE DOVES

I SING not now of a thought from sight
In a word evasive hidden,
Of signs which stand for a sense unseen—
The little signs and the worlds they mean—
But an arch so old and a sward so green,
And the sudden flight in a tawny light
Of doves through that arch unbidden.

Science of motion, wings of white,
Gay, so gay, in the beams so bright,
In the warm rich stream of the amber beam—
Gleam, dream, glory and gleam !
The honey-bee hums in the hawthorn hedge,
The wild rose slumbers on plinth and ledge,
And over the wide world's sapphire edge
The rich ripe corn of the world is roll'd,
As rocks in its laver the burning gold.
The whirr of the wings of the doves goes by,
And a singing bird hangs in the flame of the sky ;
Hot is the scent of the wheat and dry ;
And sinking slowly and circling down
A petal falls from the rose's crown ;
Soft on the soft sward falls and reposes,
As a gentle breath stirs the swooning roses.
But the doves come forth and the doves go in ;
Here in a low flight circle and spin
Over and under the arch and out,
And out and over the arch and in,
Wheel and circle and plunge about.
Sweet and warm is the air they stir,
And pleasant the chirp of the grasshopper ;
Motion, melody, scent are kin,
And the doves come forth and the doves go in.

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The second sense on a day like this,
Meseems, a moment the mind may miss,
Midst incense, music and lights content
With the outward grace of the sacrament.
Therefore for once of mere doves in flight
The rhymes shall end as the rhymes begin;
Of the full rich light upon wings so white,
As the doves come forth and the doves go in.

ENVOR

*Why hint so deeply, O mind within,
Of the going forth and the coming in
Of doves through an arch unbidden?
Do I not know that the whence and where
Of the life of man may be symbol'd there?
But in light so bright and on sward so fair
O let what is hidden be hidden!*

THE PLACE OF THY GLORY

I SHAPED within my thought all goodly aims,
Too grandly built to crumble or incline;
The soul baptizing gave them holy names:
They flourish'd, they were mine.

At first, from man's pursuits my schemes I took
And glorified the world for glory's praise;
In camps and courts and colleges I shook,
With sounding feet, all ways.

But night and silence fall on every quest,
And on ambition's peak I paused and heard
A voice unbidden utter in my breast
One vapid, vacant word

The Place of Thy Glory

*Gold rose and red rose, sun-down glory and all
The tintured flame, and the trump of fame ; but the
rose and the star shall fall !*

Perchance, I cried, a refuge for the heart
Is found in beauty ! And my soul, in her
All life transforming, by the hand of art,
Shall grace on life confer.

So I became an artist, and forth brought
Strange life, begotten but not made, to fill
The world with beauty ; and the canvas taught
Beauty, and teaches still.

Rich wert thou, world, in that imperial time,
By art transfigured and that art mine own ;
But far withdrawn I found one frozen clime
Within me, bleak and lone.

*Soul bless'd is soul express'd ; colour, melody, verse !
High God was lonely when He lived only : thereof
is the universe !*

Dirge-laden winds along the waters sweep ;
E'en storms are chanted ; when the light flows back
Light leaps the carol zephyr, and the deep
Follows a flute-note's track.

So up creation's scale the seeker takes
His search, and music's rapture fills the world ;
But discord inly finds a thousand snakes
In those sweet numbers curl'd.

*Bowl of ill, slowly fill ; acrid cup be fill'd !
A vacant glance in a tongueless trance ! And the
empty soul is still'd !*

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O there are towers which ghosts will not frequent,
And marshes where the bittern will not cry,
And seas accursed where never tide is sent,
And wastes which know not sky!

But if to utter brings at least relief,
And if relief means refuge—space for work,
Free breath—what wonder in the word of grief
The word of grace should lurk?

So in the revolutions of the soul
Was I reborn a poet, and I wed
The wondrous meaning to the metre's roll,
And life interpreted!

Then all the outward life of man and beast,
Transmuting, turn'd to something "rich and strange";
Till a new Eos rose in a new East,
O'er earth of broader range.

The Blessed Vision at the gates abode;
The pageant pass'd in every leafy lane;
The Quest was heard upon the open road;
Strange galleons swept the main.

I look'd within, but there no haunted room
Where ghostly presences sit throned and veil'd—
An empty place which never in the gloom
One form divine exhaled.

*Cross comes, loss comes: thus is the hope destroy'd;
The harp of gold is a symbol cold, if the soul be
vain and void.*

Thereat I sought, because of fell distress,
A higher ministry; the altar blazed
A thousand lights pontifical; to bless,
The Saving Host I raised.

The Place of Thy Glory

O never priest with consecrating word
Lord Christ set thus before adoring sight :
Of sacramental wonders, seen and heard,
Went forth the tale of might.

All men saw angels tarrying in the street,
The rush of white wings over all the land ;
And where the wicked city's pulses beat
The Kingdom was at hand.

But as from lonely fortress, high-erect,
Commanding wastes unmeasured, lone and grey,
And acrid further waters scarcely fleck'd
With cruel points of spray ;

I saw the lone soul's Kingdom stretch within,
Where sat the soul in solitary state—
But dead and pass'd beyond the reach of sin,
Or chrism to consecrate.

*Dark soul, bark ! Toll, bells of the dead without ;
So let it fade, all vain parade : wrap the dark pall
about !*

I made myself a King in my despair :
There fell a glamour upon earth and sea,
While starry banners blazon'd all the air,
And men said : it is He !

The Sabbath splendour of the Prince of Peace
Fell on deliver'd nations bending low ;
All Nature chanted for her heart's release
Grand Antiphons in O.

Great state and golden age and glorious dower :
No King of Kings had ever reign'd till then ;
Yet I alone, in that tremendous hour,
A mendicant of men !

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*Quail not, fail not, Soul, in thy rayless room!
Fair when they rise are the shapes and eyes, as the
faces pass in the gloom!*

Come forth, thou giver, of all gifts bereft,
Who healest all save thine own dread disease:
No further path of ministry is left;
Spare then thy services!

Much didst thou manifest; be now withdrawn;
Much didst thou brighten; now thyself inweave!
Still in thine absence there is scarlet dawn,
Nor lustres fail at eve.

Open, ye gates, and open, portals, wide,
Wild land of Faërie! Let the dreamer through!
Green world and sea-world, past all shore and tide—
Sky-world, beyond the blue!

So I became a prince in Faërie Land;
Mine the weird rite and mine the potent spell,
Stars in my crown and lilies in my hand,
And feet on asphodel.

I was the Vision and the Eye that sees,
The blazon'd symbol and its inmost drift,
The Quest, the Seeker and the Bourne of these,
The Giver and the Gift.

But when I look'd within, the soul was blind,
The pageant tattered and the place unkempt—
Vague quests ill follow'd, by no path defined,
Gifts with no grace to tempt.

*Sink not, think not—all must be night and storm;
To sweeter motion subsides the ocean, and flowers into
light and form.*

A Portion of My Inheritance

So thence I pass'd, outside all elfin reach,
To snatch prerogatives and powers which yield,
Far past the compass of theurgic speech,
Worlds of all dread conceal'd.

I saw the gods which Julian saw of old,
And after others which we name not now
Except with incense-worship, and beheld
Light on the Father's brow.

Ah, woe is me! To see God's shining face
O'er Christ's white throne bend down, yet not to die!
And the great masters in the Holy Place—
How dead within was I!

But humbly now, to this dim world restored,
By temple doors I stand, a man reprieved;
The broken bread, which kindly hands accord,
With bended head received.

God bless the givers and the gifts make blest,
For by this sacrament withheld before,
Deliver'd hardly from a life's unrest,
My soul is dead no more.

A PORTION OF MY INHERITANCE

ONE day ago, one weariful,
One day of faded light,
Of shade that chill'd but could not cool,
Of blister'd bloom and blight!
May-day, fay-day, all the world was bright
Till they lured my lady fond—
Esclairmonde—
By an elfin rite.

A Book of Mystery and Vision

One night agone ; the stars have shed
All light in tears ; if that be dew,
'Tis meet, since she bewray'd is fled,
That light of verdure follow too !
A venom in the damp distils ;
The long, enchanted lawn exhales
An acrid odour ; hemlock fills
The wingless air ; it dulls and stills
The busy murmur of the vales,
The quicken'd sense which haunts the hills ;
And in the mystic thicket kills
With beldam fumes the nightingales.

Avé, Avé! Voices come and go ;
Baneful, painful, breathing far and low—
“Esclairmonde”—
Throbbing from the bourne beyond,
Liturgic voices slow.

One moon agone ; the moon has ceased
Her hauntings of the starry maze ;
There is no light from West to East ;
The sun is dead, the skies are haze.
Softness and marsh-warmth and decay
Confuse the swimming seasons here,
Till all is fen from May to May
And deeper haze when June is near.
May-day, fay-day, all the spring turn'd sere
When they brought to Esclairmonde
Smoking censers from beyond.
The dark heavy incense swells ;
All the dying dales and dells
Echo still with tinkling bells,
Chimes and spells
Rung from elfin thuribles.

A Portion of My Inheritance

One year agone ; and Nature bleeds
The sap of life from every vein ;
The mould is over-rich ; the seeds
Have rotted ; an unwholesome stain
Makes lepers of the strongest weeds ;
The hemlock only blooms again,
And sickly, fungous growths possess
The monstrous boles of pining trees ;
The nightshade at the air's caress
Feeds with more poison these.

Lightly, brightly, all amidst the vapours light,
Underneath soft eyes and fond—
Esclairmonde !—
Elfin vestments white.

Pomp of elfin, pomp of fay,
Blazon'd banners' soothing sway,
Draw thy dreaming soul away—
Through thine eyes enthrall'd—so vow
Gossips of the vacant brow.
I opine, since loss of mine
Better makes the heart divine,
That three maidens, Esclairmonde,
Coming from the bourne beyond,
In the dusk and ghostly mean
Eventide and night between—
Thy sweet face was peering forth
From the window facing North,
The embay'd window North—
Wailing, wailing, drew thee forth.
And although no human hand
Wipes the tears from Faërie Land ;
And though never human art
Heals the broken elfin heart ;
And no words that man can spell
Shall redeem the tax to hell,

A Book of Mystery and Vision

They have lured thee, Esclairmonde,
Far beyond ;
Choir and incense gone before
And the banners evermore
Dripping with the dreary mist.
They who draw thee know not why ;
They are lonely, they persist ;
When their spells possess the eye
Seldom human wills resist.

Follow fast and follow fond !
They shall lead thee, Esclairmonde ;
And I seek the elfin track
Not to bear thy semblance back,
Since the ghost-world, woe is me,
Touching, makes a wraith of thee !
But to join thy useless quest
And to share thy long unrest—
Esclairmonde, O Esclairmonde !
Homeless, haunted, pass'd beyond,
Wraiths are in the world alone
Where thy steps no more are known.

Thus, a mournful ghost, I take
Woe of mine from bower to brake,
From brake to sodden mead, and see,
Evermore escaping me,
Choir and incense gone before
And the banners evermore,
With fantastic plunge and twist,
Looming strangely in the mist,
As thy pale ghost by maidens three
Evermore removes from me.
Passing every house of rest,
Pass'd love's gateway of the blest,

La Vie Intime

And far into dim lands beyond
The march of muffled music steals ;
The incense vista curls and reels ;
The low chant dieth far beyond ;
Far die the ghostly censer bells,
Confused amid a world of spells.
A ghost behind, a ghost before,
Falls woe on both for evermore,
O Esclairmonde ! O Esclairmonde !

LA VIE INTIME

THE FIRST SCROLL

A BOW OF PROMISE

O BRIGHT between the South and West
That wonder fled before !
So flies, O heart, thy hope of rest
In front for evermore !

Far on the gleam of gorgeous dyes
I spurr'd my russet steed ;
The woof disclosed a thousand eyes—
Now grope I, dark in need.

He rode upon a palfrey white,
More white than milk was he ;
And his white garments gave strange light
Of golden broidery.

Strange rhymes from witch-lips fill'd the glade
And ballad-music stirr'd ;
Rain spangles, hung from leaf and blade,
Shook bells at every word.

A Book of Mystery and Vision

So evermore the rainbow drew,
Betwixt the South and West,
Its shifting pageant mutely through
That strange green world unblest.

O follow fast! O follow far!
O follow fleet! he cried:
Betwixt the sunset and the star
I see the ways divide;

But one shall lead to convent walls,
While one leads on to mine:
The casements of my joyous halls
Beyond the rainbow shine.

O heed not thou the key of gold—
Shall slip into the grass;
And when white hands a wine-cup hold
Set close thy mouth and pass.

For this is the key of the convent door,
And that which the cup conceals,
To him who crosses the convent floor,
Another life reveals.

Farewell all knightly life of earth,
With the gold key in thy hand!
Magic measures, music, mirth,
Quests and gestes of Faërie Land!

Farewell the wassail and the bowl,
When the gold cup is drain'd!
To quench the thirst it brings the soul
Hath never man attain'd.

From out the convent windows gaze
The cloister'd eyes within,
And watch the steep upwinding ways
Which lead from a world of sin;

La Vie Intime

From the world of sin and joy they lead,
By a fasting waste without ;
Through ways of weed, from the green sweet mead,
To the frozen height and drought.

And he that reaches the peaks of ice
Sees over the void untrod
How glisten the gates of Paradise
When shut at the word of God.

But the pleasant arch of the rainbow bends,
And its sheen is fair in the spring-tide sky,
With the earth's green turf at one of its ends ;
At the other is Faërie.

Where the ways divide in the saffron light
A flame in the West leap'd red,
And the Key from the rainbow—burnish'd bright—
Slipp'd out, as the rainbow fled.

In a music-waft the air gave up,
From God's most holy place,
A priestly youth with a golden cup,
White alb and shining face.

The witch-boy over his palfrey lean'd ;
He drew my bridle round ;
The witch-boy croon'd and the witch-boy keen'd :
We sprang into faërie ground.

With the sudden shot of a shaft, the bow
Sprang over and spilt its dyes,
And a sex-change swift, with the gaudy flow,
Forth leap'd in his eager eyes.

Ye wist I knew what the lays foretell ;
My birth-cross saved me there ;
But not from the lips of her evil spell
Nor the twist of her snake-limbs fair.

A Book of Mystery and Vision

O the light, light play of the naked fire,
On face and limbs transform'd,
In the glowing dawn of a red desire,
As the pulse-beats swelter'd and swarm'd.

At the rainbow's end to a witch-maid wed,
In place of a maid of man,
The nameless rites of an elfin bed
In the maze-built halls began.

THE SECOND SCROLL

A VOICE IN THE HEIGHT

If only the blood of the race of man
In the veins of the mother that bore me ran,
And only the soul of the open sea
Dwelt in my father, a rover free,
Then something came from a secret place
And look'd me, a young child, in the face,
Till all the natural world became
A pageant unstable as smoke and flame.
Sunsets faded and stars went out,
But, pressing me closer round and about
Than the common modes by which man is fenced,
Another order and rite commenced.
In quiet garden and market town
Strange processions went up and down ;
In dusky corners and rooms secluded
Warm arms encircled and lips intruded ;
Stealthy tortuous corridors stirr'd
With the whisper of an unearthly word.
In the very bed where my mother placed me
Strange, trembling creatures cried and embraced me.

La Vie Intime

There was no river so high, so clear,
But a face not mine would there appear ;
Or if in summer I plunged therein
Something kiss'd me which seem'd like sin ;
And hands which never could lift to bless me
Up through the cool depths came to caress me.
Over the edge of the world astray,
How swift I pass'd from the world away
To see those sights of glory and joy,
Alike forbidden to man or boy,
In a place so pale with an eye so dim,
Had never the fairies come to him.
Yet the light had something of autumn's shine,
And the blush of the leaf in its last decline,
But the sights if seen by an angel's eyes
Had lost him for æons his native skies.

Why was I taken from Nature's arms,
And taught so early on secret charms
To nourish the innocent heart's desire ?
To fan the flame of a fervent fire
Under the eyes, at the lips of those
Whose kisses are more than Nature knows,
Whose arts far down in the scale of things
Are sweets full of poison and mortal stings ?

Ah, but a melody faint at times
Drown'd for a little those drowsy rhymes
Which the nameless loves of that world unknown
Over the nuptial bowers intone,
Where limbs which have never by man been seen
Poppies and wormwood slipp'd between !
O eyes unsated and grey with want !
O hearts inhuman, of fire the font !
O shameless bodies and eager faces,
With human sex to your scarlet graces

A Book of Mystery and Vision

E'en in the secret of bliss denied !
Who was the bridegroom and who the bride ?
He who hath seen your arms extended
Shall know of a hunger and need unended.

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Gentle melody, tones rejoicing,
Worlds beyond worlds and their secrets voicing,
O but in Faërie I heard the call—
Heard and hearken'd, and over all—
Heart and body and mind and eye—
Fell the great longing to reach your cry !
Not under Nature's rule returning,
Forth I went and carried my yearning,
For he that strays from her realm in vain
May seek therein to return again ;
But somehow, some time the place to reach
Where dwelt that singer of mystic speech,
Chanting clearly—how far, how high—
So blythe, so sacred a litany !
O if the natural world to nought
Brings what the heart and the eyes have sought,
That have look'd on things to our eyes forbidden,
Surely a place of peace is hidden !
Surely that mystic voice which sings
Of the Sacred City and its secret things,
Not in vain on the mountains far,
Nor taken vainly from star to star,
Forth from the great delusion leading,
Carries the heart with a hope exceeding,
Where, in the light of all light desried,
One shall be bridegroom and one the bride !

La Vie Intime

THE THIRD SCROLL

THE EXPENDED WAYS

Ah! whither now shall one bewray'd,
Through listless paths and wrack
Of longing, dull'd but not allay'd,
Descry the true way back?

The mists about me crawl and creep,
Warm folds, which swathe and wind,
The swooning soul in languor steep,
And every nerve unbind.

Landscape and seascape far and near
Are voiceless, void and grey;
Thought sets as moon, if moon were here,
Where two eves make one day.

This pallid screen, which hangs between
All-kindling heaven and earth,
Can bring no purpose fair and clean—
In sodden light—to birth.

O the worn way and the lorn way,
And the way that never ends,
Where the light is as the night is,
But never night descends!

The shapes of all things form and fade,
With outlines vague and strange;
While the pace is slow for the pulse is stay'd,
Where nothing is swift but change;

A Book of Mystery and Vision

And the male rose blooms like the maiden rose
And the maid like the man appears :
Is it night or noon in the sky? God knows—
But the dark mist flows with tears!

Body and ghost are spectres pale,
Shadow and substance fuse in one,
The back-view melts and the prospects fail—
Who knoweth of star or sun?

Mind cannot think, nor sad heart dream,
Maim'd by the dreary spell,
Whence none can issue, by road or stream :
Take the woodland, try the dell;

Try the ghostly, moaning mere,
Take the sand-strewn ways of weed—
Who shall sail and who shall steer?
Who shall spur the flagging steed?

O for a bolt from heaven to fall,
For a rain to follow fast!
Waste and ravage of storm, or all
The strength of a clarion blast!

I yearn for the rainbow's farther side!
I dream of the golden key!
The angel-priest where the ways divide
And the Cup of the Mystery!

The convent gate and the heights untrod
In a silent world of ice!
I ask but to gaze on the hand of God
As it shuts me from Paradise.

La Vie Intime

THE FOURTH SCROLL

RESTORED TO LIGHT

A faint light shining for a space ;
A breath of wind upon the face ;
A stirring in the mist ; a sigh ;
A sense of distance, height and sky ;
A little wave of melody !
O but how beautiful to see
The light leaf dance upon the tree,
The bloom upon a hedgerow stirr'd
By transport of a singing bird,
And—after darkness and eclipse—
The sun upon the sails of ships,
All up and down the dancing sea !
O but how beautiful to hear
A little whisper in the ear,
A smaller voice than note of bird,
A still small voice, a mighty word,
A whisper in the heart to say
That God is not so far away !
And when the torpid soul is stirr'd,
The voices of all the worlds are heard,
And all the world's lights come and kiss
The sleeping soul to waking bliss,
While joy of new-found life and hours
Bursts everywhere into dews and flowers—
Dews and flowers and fragrance sweet,
In the month of May, with her light feet ;
The promise of fuller scent and tune
Under the florid lips of June ;
And the gorgeous glory in the eye,
All among roses, of rich July ;

A Book of Mystery and Vision

The blessed vision which crowns the year,
When August apples and corn appear.
Out of darkness and sorcery,
Out of the spell and the mystery,
As a mother with accents mild,
Nature has call'd back her lost child
From the other side of the world so far.
She has taken him for a little while
Into the refuge of her smile,
Until from one of her far-off heights—
Peak that glisters or gleaming star—
Some hand shall kindle the greater lights,
Shall point to a pathway leading straight,
As it might seem, to the convent gate,
And into a different world of spell,
As it might be, led by a convent bell—
Gently over the hill-tops ringing.
From the star and over the peak,
And over the peak and beyond the star,
Comes voice, or chorus, or cosmos singing
Of one thing needful which, time out of
mind,
All worlds over, the nations seek,
And past all worlds shall the nations find.
By which also, restored to sight,
From the hells of sense and the spells of
night,
Having my peace with Nature made,
And taking humbly, as best I may,
To the convent gate my pilgrim way;
If by a chance that key should slip
From another rainbow into a glade,
And the Mystic Cup be placed to my lip,
O what shall loosen one fervent grip,
And O where else be the thirst allay'd?
Or having the key of the convent door,
Will I not stand on that sacred floor,

The King's Rendering

And gaze with the cloister'd eyes within
On the paths which lead from my great sin
Up to the sacred peaks and light,
Holy and holy and holy height?

But I know that over the void untrod
A way shall be found for the soul with wings,
When the last true path to the summit brings,
And far though they shine from the peaks of ice,
Shall glister the gates of Paradise,
Unbarr'd by the hand of God!

THE KING'S RENDERING

A TRANSCRIPT

'T WAS when the great Telesma of the sun
With ardent flame inform'd the torrid zone,
And summer's heavy heat possess'd the air
With spells successively of rapture, great
Strange longing, ardour dim. A day of bland
And happy parable was 'blazon'd round
With symbols—matron Nature teeming, rich,
Full-lipp'd and yielding. In such tide I left
My house of dreams and forth I fared alone
Into the splendid sacramental world,
Where, all the sacramental veils dissolved,
Shone midst the light flamboyant and flaming heat
The Corpus Christi feast of earth and sea.

A night of ecstasy, so deep, so full,
So holy follow'd—as of mystic death,
When lips of spirit upon spirit lips
Have kiss'd and tasted rapture, unity.
Now, other morn has broken; the hush'd night

A Book of Mystery and Vision

Hath surely pass'd ; without that house of dreams—
Midmost within the city—I pause, and know
What wonder and high truth of all the world
Stands at the doors and knocks. All dream is done !
He then shall hear who will—a rich device—
The quest and pageant of the coming King !

All in the little tower that crowns the Church,
Hear ye the pleasant bells which stir in sleep
With muffled cadences and whisper'd chimes! . . .
Files past the fair procession! Those twin yews,
The two proud peacocks of the legend, shaped
Uncouthly, feeling, through their long drear spell,
That pride and vanity are over, stir
All tremulous, as if with sudden wind.

For in the night we rode to save the town.
And overtaking ever and anon
Belated market-waggon, saw, aroused
And wonderstruck, how yokels heavy-eyed
Marked—scared in vision—that goodly train go by,
With the great Graal's glad light encompassing ;
Fair horses plunging, steaming in the light ;
Vast banners streaming, swirling, taken past
By Gilead winds ; the King of all the world—
So in my heart I hail'd my heart's dear lord—
Rex quondam ille et futurus rex—
Riding his great white horse with reverend mien
Behind the holy vessel, set about
With sweetness and with savour. Next in place,
Of mien erect but still an ancient man,
The King's sword-bearer came ; Excalibur
Lay keen in sheath, the sharp quick light thereof,
Like unto thirty torches, the red gold
Inscription round it, ray'd on every side,

The King's Rendering

And all the scabbard's wealth of jewell'd length
And haft transfigured.

Past the roadside stream,
Where crooked willows trembled, crouch'd and croon'd ;
The windy rookery swaying in the old
Elm-tops ; the narrow bridge—a shallow pool
Below it shining faintly ; and across
The little remnant of the open heath
Dotted with pointed tents all white and ghostly ;
Past old decaying houses shrouded deeply
In ivy thicker than the walls which bore it ;
Past windows dim, with dainty blinds drawn close
In little villas ; and past the creaking sign
Whereby the great roads enter from the West
An abject village street ; past shutter'd shops
Of that mute place ; still eastward, where the bridge
Crosses the road ; and as we drew to this
A train of waggons, steaming slowly, shew'd
Forth-hanging guards and drivers eager-eyed,
Awestruck and crying.

Thereat I fell to dream :
What wonder in the city of the King,
When the King came into his own : what joy
Among the common people, when the King
Stood manifest : what poets should come out
To meet him : with what lights should altars blaze :
What flowers be strewn : what bells and bells peal
forth :
What merchants, councillors and princes haste
To proffer homage : and what peace in all :
What putting by of sorrow and of shame :
What goodness raised to sanctity : what sins
By pardon purified : what wounds made whole :
What sudden change in heart and hope of all.

A Book of Mystery and Vision

Thereafter pass'd the pictures of the quest ;
The inception's fever and high colouring
Kindled its fires within me, going out
From the great city through those long green lanes,
By a free way, far stretch'd into the West.
Came too the pain of doubt, the questioning,
The aching sense of lonesome and of loss,
Faring through mournful marshes—where the mist
At sunset flamed with a dull ruddy light,
Which after ever in the moonlight turn'd
To rolling seas. Again, distraught, I heard,
Through smoke and smoulder of the sunset-time,
The plaint of plovers ; heard the bitterns cry
Strangely, with breasts and wings incarnadined,
Flocking and flying towards the falling sun.
And further still, descending steep hillsides,
I saw below me the forest tree-tops sweep,
Bending and crashing before the risen wind,
Spelling out wild reverberant messages.

'Through fields of bearded barley, fields of rye,
Through winding byways all among tall ripe wheat,
Still faring forward many a morning after ;
Betwixt the teeming life of lush hedgerows,
The rich disorder'd growth of bank and ditch,
Right in the drowsy heat and harvest wealth—
Scented and songful—of early autumn sunshine ;
By circling, gaudy moths, the birr and buzz
Of bees, dove-croonings, splendid heavy flight
Of armour'd dragon-flies ; by lonely wells
Disused and the forgotten source of springs ;
By open roads scored white on breezy hills
And white and brown through miles of lilting vales
And worlds embower'd of pool and meeting stream ;
Past apple-orchards, russet, green and red ;
So to the sea—the questing restless waste
Of the tumultuous ocean ! How it cried

The King's Rendering

Loud in the moonlight terribly—how broke
Ever its long white line of angry surf,
Chafing beyond the bar, broke and reform'd,
Toss'd high, toss'd higher, where the beacon-lamps—
Set in tide-isolated light-house towers—
Seem'd to flash watchwords through the infinite!

But after, in the morning glory's pearl
Of shell, pale pink, convolvulus and rose—
Bell-like, far-echoing, caroll'd along the coast—
Sea voices taking shape, as soul's take flesh,
Scatter'd light music, breath'd between the songs
Sweet little words of prophecy, soft words
Of promise, high resounding words of hope.
Then all the landscapes and the seascapes merged
In world of dream, the hills abode in light
Down streaming from the gold-bright city above;
All visible realities assumed
A richer tincture, an uplifted type;
And in the human side of earthly things
A higher magic confess'd its mystery
Even in cottage homes and humble farms.

So swept the path of quest into a place
Of very sacrament and mystery.
Vested in samite strange ships glided down
Sea-ways, full-tided, swirling, glisterful;
The odour and the spicery of the world
Hung over all the shore; high mystic chants
Swept and re-echoed through the haunted air,
Telling of Aromat and the Holy Cup.
There fell the subtle hint of perilous quests
On turrets dimly seen between old trees,
On moated manors mouldering far away
From all frequented roads. Unlook'd for glades
Of strange encounter open'd out in bosks,

A Book of Mystery and Vision

Where steaming summer draws rich humid scents
From yielding leaf-mould; in waste places rose
Old chapels, and the sieges set therein
Were less for worship than for vision's gifts;
The reverence of high feasting rang throughout
The sparged and censured extent of castle halls;
Pavilions rose on lawns by power of words;
White doves flew past with golden censers borne
In bills anointed, from their choric wings—
Spread wide—expanding measured melody;
Children in sacred vestments went before,
With sacred lights, far-shining priest-like men
From those far countries which are reached by none
That traverse sea or land.

In such a place

The path of quest and promise was closed about
With eager faces; on the faces fell
The white light shining from the Holy Graal.
I saw them—even I—a man unclean:
The faces shone of angels and of men;
The face of Galahad, of Perceval,
The face of Lancelot sanctified by woe
And seal'd by priesthood. More than all I saw
The fair uncover'd visage of the King,
The King's face in his splendour, as the King
Came out of Avalon, in the morning glory
Passing with royal train along the coast,
Whereon the light sea scatter'd foam and song.
Fair orchards ripen'd in the mellow sun;
The white road ran behind his horse's hoofs;
Over the bridges, over the hills, and all
Through fields of barley, miles of wheat and rye;
Out of the West, far forth into the East,
By secret paths for many and many a day
All reverend riding behind the Holy Graal,
Amidst all manner of sweetness and of savour.

The King's Rendering

And reaching now the lion-guarded gates
Of that old convent-house and school of saints
Which, past the river and a hundred meads,
Descries the dim horizon of the hills,
I saw the vision of a pallid nun,
With quivering aureole, watching on her knees
And praying. Then I knew the mourning queen
Had look'd again upon her master's face,
And all must come to pass as I was warn'd
Already in my quest. The glorious train
Swept by; there fell a hush among the stars,
A stir in streets, a spell upon the wind;
And whereabouts the silent highway flows
Beneath the rude arch of a formless bridge,
Some homeless urchin on the kerb asleep,
Lifting his bare head from his ragged knees,
Scream'd worship as an angel's broider'd hem—
The twelfth fair master in a scarlet cope
And white dalmatic—brush'd with sudden touch
His naked feet.

In that same hour a light
Began to kindle faintly in the East;
The eastern heaven dissolv'd its scatter'd stars
In many-hued solutions. For the morn
Was now at hand; the stir of human life
Must soon begin; whereat I felt my heart
Leap in my side, foreseeing those great things
Which every man should witness. As I rode
My palfrey humbly far behind the train,
The narrow street which skirts the water-side
In squalid slumber stirr'd; at early inns
And coffee-houses, waggoners look'd forth
From grimy windows; bargemen crowding doors
Stared as in dream, stone-turn'd for wonderment.
So pass'd the pageant; on the hush thereof
An awestruck sob ensued, a stir spread wide
Through all the ways, shouting of many voices,

A Book of Mystery and Vision

Clatter of doors and casements. Over all
That shoeless urchin shriek'd, and beat the air
With yearning hands, fast following.

Below
The bridge, a whistle of some early steamer
Blew keenly in the thin keen morning air,
As first we enter'd on the smoother ways
And broader streets, where life awaited light
And light of life unlook'd for thus drew nigh.

Amidst dull echoes of a hundred feet
In the old capital of Middlesex,
Again the cloud enveloped us; again
We rode invisible; his own choice kept back
The blessed revelation of the King,
Because the Holy Graal must first be set
For worship on the minster's altar high,
Midmost within the city. Whatso'er
Wild rumours of some unknown mystery
Run like light fire from all the western side,
The great metropolis to light of day
Shall wake once more, on common toil intent,
Nor know what must betide it. . . . I alone,
Foreseeing all, steal hurriedly and close
My house of dreams; I cast the keys away,
And riding thence in haste to reach betimes
The minster shrine, hereby proclaim to all
The quest and pageant of the coming King.

HOW I ALSO SANG MASS

So therefore, when the palsied hours
Reach'd towards an end of all;
When petals from the scarlet flowers
Dropp'd through the empty hall;

How I also sang Mass

And, betwixt a shriek and moan,
All over the floors of stone
Or the scented ivory floors,
The wind of the world outside
Took and scatter'd them wide
And far through the open doors ;
When a shaft of the sunlight broke,
Like smouldering fire and smoke,
Through the painted windows—lifting high
Their forest of tangled tracery ;
And over the dunes, through the brushwood maze,
 The cries which echoed all day drew off afar,
Towards the holocaust fire of the sunset and the long
 drawn under-haze—
Forth I issued alone, and heard
The final note of the day's last fountain-hearted
 bird
Spring to the fountain-beam of the night's first star.

Thereat at length my heart sustain'd
 The utter sense of loss,
And that first ghostly lawn I gain'd—
 Like one who drags his cross.
Thereon—as over a mountain ledge—
At the South horizon's terminal edge,
Where the ragged road of that restless place
Suddenly seems to fall into space,
I saw how the pageant, rank by rank,
Paused on the brink, there gleam'd and sank.
So took they, 'twixt the day and the night,
My wonder forth on her palfrey white,
And the whole world's dissolving spell
Mutter'd and moan'd confused farewell.
Then life fell suddenly dead and cold,
While over the terrace and through the gate,
And far through the woodland and farther still, all
 over the open wold,

A Book of Mystery and Vision

With a vacant heart and a voided will,
Forth I hurried ; but still
Sang, on the crest of the coppice, that bird—which
tarried so late—
To the early star far over the naked crest of the hill.

I will not dwell on this night's eclipse,
When all the world's woes came—
The secret want with shrouded lips,
The grief too deep for name.
They found a name to ease their grief,
They shew'd their wounds to win relief,
And then, confessing, look'd on mine,
Crying : No sorrow is like to thine,
For the Master of all in His great day
Shall scarcely wipe thy tears away.
One also from afar came down,
Who said : Twelve stars were in my Crown ;
The lilies of all the world, besprent
Through bosks and valleys, made white my star of old.
Deep is my loss and far my lapse, but further is thy
descent ;
Yes, I know by thine eyes of doom
That I rise from the curse and gloom,
And the glory of morning blossoms, as lights in the
heart unfold.

Another from the marshes rose,
With dripping cloak and hood—
Wolf-eyes that had not found repose
Through years, nor look'd on good ;
With aspect of a man long dead,
Whom loathing earth refused a bed,
Empty and yet compell'd to be—
O weary of all the skies was he !
And from his neck—what load of pain !—
There hung a heavy and tarnish'd chain,

How I also sang Mass

From the thirty pieces of silver wrought
By which Christs and Kings have been sold and bought.
For a little space he gazed, then cried,
Hands stretch'd, like one that is crucified :—
Woe and woe, but an end of woe—
With a hope at end, as a light in darkness born—
Because it is given to gaze at length on a face from every
 face distinguished here below
By mine own sorrow and loss.
Yet deeper is scored thy cross,
As the pit than the grave is deeper, O thou of all
 forlorn !

So therefore as the night of murk
 Drew towards a morning chill ;
As light began like a yeast to work—
 Nameless, stealthy and still—
And a torpid shuddering life to stir,
It seem'd that the burden of Lucifer,
With the twelve stars dark in his crown,
And of Judas the chain'd fell down,
While those twain over the steep hill trod,
Like souls set free that return to God.
But forth abroad through the day's bright heart,
God's hand under, I moved apart ;
And a Borgia poison as I went
Pass'd into every sacrament.
The vision went out in the eyes that see ;
The star absinthos and wormwood, hissing, into all
 sweet waters fell ;
The chrim destroy'd the dying man, as Nature the
 honey-bee ;
And with heavy feet, as I fared,
I straiten'd the road and prepared
A path, meseems, for the world to take, going down to
 the gates of hell.

A Book of Mystery and Vision

How on this middle deep and dark
Should light and joy be rain'd?
Ah, by what process hard, remark,
Redemption's height is gain'd!
Hence, over the marsh and over the sky
And the unclaim'd wastes, I testify
That the morning comes, how'er delay'd,
Till the saddest feet through a glory wade,
While the aching head cannot fail to lift,
Eyes turn where the white cloud-splendours drift.
And when the eyes behold what gem
Is set in the great world's diadem,
There is no soul in the deep abyss
But shall remember crown and bliss.
Yea, the light behind is the light before,
O'erflowing the wreck and the ravage, suffusing the
day's deep wells;
The light without is for ever and evermore
The sacro-saintly joy of all light within;
High over the cross and the loss the sun-clouds circle
and spin;
And the bane from the soul uplifted its curse from the
earth expels.

So therefore in those softer hours
Which soothe the close of all,
I stood as one midst lights and flowers
By an altar fair and tall;
And in priestly vestments even I
Intoned the mystical liturgy.
Yea, with unearthly and shining eyes,
I, even I, offer'd sacrifice,
And uttered the kingly and terrible terms
Which, veils assuming, the King confirms.
The painted windows lifted high
Their forest of tangled tracery;

Valete

And the heavy shafts of sunlight broke
Through the shifting denseness of incense-smoke ;
When I—even I—with hands made clean
—As God in the past cried : “ Light ”—
Saw light flash forth at the mystic words, and Christ
through His veils was seen.

By this do I testify
That the soul of itself can die,
Yet in death is He strong to save, since I have seen
crown and height.

SUMMA TOTIUS MYSTERII

Now therefore concerning that wonder white
Over a world's edge drawn from sight—
This also surely is thine own loss,
And, because of the crown, like me
Thou must partake of the curse and cross
Till a mass shall be sung by thee.
But that which was taken is not confess'd
Betwixt *introibo* and *missa est* :
Say therefore, as man and his angels do,
Worlds over, *refugium meum es tu* ;
Though, for myself, on that great day
I cried a *Tu Autem, Domine*.

VALETE

THE heart of the woodland
Gives range to the rover,
Each broad tidal ocean
To ships that come over ;
And some on the mountain,
And some in the hollow,
Are free, as it bids them,
Their fancy to follow.

A Book of Mystery and Vision

But song, having bless'd them,
Must leave them unheeded,
Since, more than new accent,
The new theme is needed.
If woods could be greener
And seas might be broader,
More stars overwatch'd them
In luminous order ;
If touch'd by the tincture
Transmuting existence
The height were exalted,
Transfigured the distance ;
If wings should be granted,
Like doves, for swift flying,
And sight, as an eagle's
Sun-bathed, for descrying ;
Still wings would droop downward,
The vision must falter,
And mists would all glory
Diminish or alter.

Ah, ye that go outward,
Where cold lie the snows on
The track up those mountains
'Tis death to repose on !
Ye too that go outward,
Where winds with their moaning—
In spume on the tost seas—
Your dirge are intoning ;
All ye that go outward
Where dryads have hidden
Snake-fangs in the forests
For hunters unbidden ;
Hath dream in the brightness,
When sense-veils grow thinner,
No vision's bright prospect
Conjured from the inner ?

Valete

With mournful and mystic
Penumbra is shrouded
That threshold which opens
On splendours unclouded.
O ways unfrequented,
Eluding detection,
I found you, I enter'd,
One day of election!
And, lo! through what regions,
Because of her trances,
The spirit, unbonded
By vision, advances!

O beautiful outward!
O inward! Divine is
Your ray on the outward,
Now each of them mine is!
What secrets, what meanings,
Informing, uplifting!
This life's common story
Turns mystical writing;
All that which is beauty
A light is shed down on,
While thought is new vested,
High song hath its crown on;
And all is romance, from
The green leaf's light flutter
To strong spirit music
Which tongue cannot utter.
And seen in the brightness
And heard in the glory,
By this book of vision
And magical story,
In strange ballad measures,
Some part have I striven
To give of those marvels
Which I have been given.

THE QUEST
OF THE GOLDEN GATE

“Benedictus Deus hæc sua sapientia mirabiliter
ordinabit.”—*Scala Philosophorum.*

The Quest of the Golden Gate

WOODLAND MYSTICS

THE Blessed Master from the world beyond
Came in the morning redness of my life ;
He singled me from all my name and race
For ministry in secret through the world,
And I have never left Him, night or day,
Through all the lonely wanderings and ways.
Great is the enterprise, the end is sure :
In very truth the Blessed Master came !

You ask how first the Blessed Master came :
When first my heart was stirr'd to choose the path
Of quest, the Venerable Master came.
How came the Venerable Master ? Say,
What other likeness could He wear but ours ?
A man of men, of royal aspect He :
By just so much as man, aspiring, shapes
The Ends Divine and them in heart conceives
Do those Great Ends assume the man himself,
And so as man the Blessed Master came.
Where met the Master and the friend He loves ?
Where should they meet but in familiar scenes ?
The cotter need not look beyond his gate,
Nor woodman fare beyond the fallen tree,
Nor any turn the corner of a street ;

The Quest of the Golden Gate

In East or West or Zenith seek him not :
O Blessed Master, he is here and now !

To me at eve the Blessed Master came ;
Thee haply call'd He with the morn's first bird
And other some at middle night or noon :
With Nature round, to me at eve He came.
The sunset's scarlet heart had fix'd mine eyes,
And when they moved, intincted mist and flame
Seem'd rolling round me : a majestic shape,
Dilated in it, suddenly I saw
Beside me, and my spirit by His voice—
The Master's blessed voice—was inly thrill'd.

The Blessed Master came in evening's hush ;
He bade me follow ; in the autumn cold
I cross'd still fields, and through an old swing-gate
Pass'd into spongy marshes. Still my mind
Recalls one copse of willows where the moon
Through naked boughs look'd at us. As I cross'd
The crumbling stile, a minute's space I paused,
For who had stood there set apart so far
In all the world, O Blessed Master, say ?
From mine old house had ever maid or youth,
At the star-promise of Thy word most true,
Gone forth at night to follow far on Thee,
And paused, as I, in that familiar copse,
Where late and early on my face the moon
Had look'd so oft, which would not know me more,
Yet all its woodland mystics spell the same
In calm and wind, while I was call'd away
The hallow'd bound of all man's life to win ?
O Venerable Master, pausing there,
What marvel is it if my human heart
Shall keep the memory of that dreaming copse,
In yellow moonlight lying, fresh for ever,
Though over stars exalted ?

Vistas of Compassion

Long ago—
O long ago! And I have follow'd far—
With Thee, still with Thee, ever, Friend, with Thee!
And the old house from the old roof-tree leans,
For death and change have been at work in all;
But still that woodland spells its mystic speech
In calm and wind, and all its speech I know:
'Tis ever fresh within my human heart.
Since thus the Blessed Master came at eve,
That dreaming copse, in yellow moonlight lying,
Bears witness in me through eternity
How in His very truth the Master came!

VISTAS OF COMPASSION

A LULLABY heard in a sunlit glade
And a voice in a forest bower;
The tender tones of a youth or maid,
And the wistful want of the world display'd
Comes over the heart with power.

Their message of hunger and aching deep
No tongue can in words translate;
But pity flows over for paths so steep,
For the dreadful height where the white worlds sweep
And the cloud on the golden gate.

O lullaby, soothe the babe's repose!
O voice, on the huntsman call!
A tenderness lives in the heart of the rose—
O sweet-lipp'd lovers! Who knows, who knows,
The secret measure of all?

The Quest of the Golden Gate

KNOWING THY LIKENESS

NOR at the gate of heaven, not in the land
Of psychic dream, pours forth thy soul in song,
Lark of the marshes, of the pastures rich!
Enough thou singest in a pearl-grey sky;
The still'd sea rippling on the hush'd sea-sand
Pauses in sunlight with uplifted crests
And listens. . . . Ever in a dream at noon
Lie lake-like, croon upon the crimped shore
And languish, shallow sea! There shall not fail
Slow flights of solan geese with flashing wings,
And round the fosses, over dykes and meads
The martin ever with a plaintive note,
And doleful mew, shall call. So still wash on!
With mazy melodies of winds and birds
Mingle, thou mystery-voice! . . . Life-breathing tract,
Amidst composing magic of a faint,
Ethereal haze, upon that silent verge
Mix with the silent sky! O lambent blue!
Blue of the ocean, glass'd from heaven above,
Still draw the soul, alike on marsh and height,
Where the mole burrows, where the eagle soars;
On bleak, high crests, on the precipitous crests,
Whence torrents plunge to meet thee, draw the soul.
Amid the lonely walks of daily life,
Right on the summits of exalted thought,
Attract her still, and give the wild, white wings
Which o'er thee bear thy furthest-flighted bird.
Then in some vastness of thine underworld
She shall abide with thee—till twilight falls,
Possess thy splendour, thine immensity,
And compass all thy bounds in loving thought—
Yea, in adoring thought—shall so awhile

Knowing Thy Likeness

Be satisfied and deem at length she rests,
Made one with being which is vast as her's.
Yet thou shalt fail, for twilight shuts thee in ;
Thy strong spell utterly dissolves ; thy voice
Grows hoarse and ominous, cold vapours brood
About the shining beauty of thy breast.
And, when the shifting wind begins to chafe,
Thy bitter discontent of brooding depths
Spumes upward ; a vain madness passes through
Thy barren nature ; on the rocks, the beach,
Thou ragest, passionate and anguish-tost.
Grand art thou then, yet peace is far from thee !
But when the startled moon among the clouds
Begins to scurry, and with fitful rays
Thine eager waste illumines, dire thou art,
With wretchedness full-voiced in all thy waves ;
And then we know thee in the want thou hast.
O for the footsteps of the Prince of Peace
To still thy tumult, for His voice to still
Our stormy hearts ! There is no help in thee ;
Our need is thine ; and what, O sea, thou art,
All Nature is, a message to the soul,
Assuagement sometimes and some ministry,
But not true rest or true beatitude !

Yet in the sweet peace of a day to come
There shall be no more sea of storm and pain,
But splendid calm, lucidity and depth,
With gladness in immensity like thine,
O royal ocean whom we hail and love !

The Quest of the Golden Gate

TO YOU IN ABSENCE

WHEN I have seen thy sunset smoke,
How I have long'd for thee !
When through the fire and light
A deeper heart of light and fire
Has open'd from the infinite,
Deep as that void was my desire—
O heart of light ! O heart of fire !—

Thy very self to feel and see
In ecstasy of sense and sight—
In nuptials of the depth and height :
Beyond the outward beauty's show,
The evanescent gleam and glow,
Ah, thee to know, ah, thee to know !

We do but see thy painted face,
Symbol and vesture of thy grace :
The long-drawn forests trail and bend,
The great paths wind and have no end,
The swimming floods their founts pour out,
The tides of the mysterious sea
That writhing vastness turns about,
And all draw out our souls to thee.

When darkness on the earth and ocean
Only unfolds the sense of motion,
Sound, and the echo of all sound,
Surging sharpen'd senses round,
There seems a closer contact made
Than when thy features stand display'd
But oh, not thee, ah no, not thee !
The portrait of a face conceal'd,
An absent person's picture shining ;
And we before it stand divining
What thou art like and where art thou.
Does the light fall thus on thy brow ?

To You in Absence

And do thy sweet eyes glance like this?
Thy lips seem as the lips we kiss,
And has thy voice, to cheer and bless,
Our music's dulcet tenderness?

We know thy picture well, ah well!
From out the blazon'd frame of things
It almost steps at times to tell
How close our heart's imaginings,
 Beata Pulchra, reach to thee!
About thy country's shrouded sphere
Gather we tidings far and near;
And through the sunset and the star,
Through all the fields of space afar,
Through long-drawn fire of light which fills
The openings beyond the hills,
 We pass in flight of thought to see—
O antitype of all things fair,
If thou art there, if thou art there!

Surely thy country is our home,
 And all is exile here;
And surely we shall reach thy place:
We must be meant to see thy face—
Who also from afar have come,
With faces veil'd, as thine is now,
 And other than our looks appear—
We know not how, we know not how!
While still we tarry far away,
 And still pursue the anxious quest,
In beauty let thy picture stay,
 In beauty and in light express'd
Throughout this long dream-haunted day—
On sea and land, on land and sea,
Long haunted with the dreams of thee—
And therefore, till the light shall fail,
O thou in absence, thee we hail!

The Quest of the Golden Gate

FOUNDATIONS OF SAPPHIRE

A KEEPER'S stray shot suddenly divides
This evening's silence, then the dogs respond,
And up the steep hill's moist and rutted road
Hardly the waggon horses toil and strain.
An ancient beech is by me, broad of girth
And all about its roots enrich'd with moss,
While through the wooded vista of the slope
Only the bush makes dark the rover's way.

Now pleasant pools, with basking swans beside,
In dim recesses spread their brown expanse,
While East and South the spell of sunset light
Has visibly transfigured and enrich'd
Those golden slopes of uplands far away.

Her priestly function so the soul assumes—
Invoking, praising. Here the peace without
Makes peace within; the peace profound within
Sheds deeper peace without than Nature knows,
Save in the mystic equipoise of man's
Immortal part with her essential life,
Exalting both; then both repose therein,
In common bliss dependent each on each,
And unified.

Sweet Spirit of the sky—
So speaks the Soul, vibrating, brimm'd with song—
May peace of God o'er all thy broad expanse
Be spread for ever! May thy roving clouds,
Which carry coolness and life-yielding showers,
From zone to zone, to freshen every field,
To swell the streams and seas, thyself invest
With beauties new! May each returning eve

Foundations of Sapphire

From one new star, more bright than all before,
Enrich thy gem-set crown with silver gleam,
Thy lucid spaces purify and fill—
As with the lenity and grace of God !
O may thy peace and beauty's broad increase
On hearts distil in other showers and dew !
May all bright eyes beneath thy glance uplifted
Be with thine azure, with thine argent rays,
Suffused, and melted towards love's mildest mood,
Yet thy full joy reflect in every glance !

Ascending still this winding woodland road,
I see thy gentle blue to golden green,
Like shapes in sleep, transfigure. Then it seems
Thine answer comes ; thy splendour passing down
Invests the soul and blesses in return ;
Man's love for Nature on himself devolves
In lucid gifts ; he sees, he feels, he knows,
And inspiration to a throne of thought
Uplifts him. Take, sweet Nature, take thy child !
Speak in the winds of evening, speak in mists,
Speak in the revelation of the stars !
And in the tremor of the midnight hush,
Wherein the lone sea washes far away,
Reveal and speak !

“So art thou child no more”—

This mystic Nature utters to the soul—
“But, one in essence, thou art old like me,
Yet ever young, for ever changed and born,
As through the pageant of created things
Thou passest slowly towards the utmost point ;
And all my light goes with thee, all my hopes
Spread wings before thee, while the end, the end,
Is not so distant but its glory streams
Far and away, not from the East or West—
O not from star or sun !—far and away,
Where the heart rests—all in the light, the light—

The Quest of the Golden Gate

Truth-light and love-light, splendour of over-soul,
Making the soul a splendour ; and my form,
Which is the circle of created things,
Glow in thy glory, in thy change transmutes.
For what divides us, whether dark or day?
What makes our union? Ever that which joins
The God encompassing to thee within !”

And in the fading splendour of the West,
When spent larks drop, when waters merge in mist,
Who wills may read this message of God's light
And find already in his inmost self
The first faint gleams of that effulgence shine.

A SONG OF THE SLEEPING WORLD

O NOT of the hush when a wind sinks down,
And the sea on its shore lies still,
As a winding highway broad and brown
Which clambers the crest of the hill ;
Or as moonshaft struck through a cloven cloud
To repose on a mist impearl'd,
Where slips some stream through a valley of dream,
Is the song of the sleeping world !

For the world still sleeps when the rack goes past
And the heart of Nature fails
At the bolt's reply to the moaning blast,
As the scattering storm assails ;
Sleeps in the stir which the morning brings,
Sleeps through the Spring's new birth—
O the joyous word of the loudest bird
Is a song of the sleeping earth !

A Song of the Sleeping World

All Nature is steep'd in a trance intense
And strangely moves in a dreamer's round,
As those that walk in their sleep, with sense
And soul unconscious to sight and sound ;
At times to the waking point approaching,
Sinks she again into slumber deep ;
An earthquake rends or a star descends—
She stirs or cries in her sleep.

It is man alone, in a world of spell,
Wakes or believes that he wakes and sees
More than this tremulous pendant bell,
Rock'd in the arms of an evening breeze ;
More than that rack of a sea, distraught
As a dreamer's vision, of darkness born :
He too perchance in an anxious trance
Tosses and waits for the coming morn.

Sleep that has kiss'd us too long, too long,
Where is the prince with the kiss that wakes ?
What will he bring to us, sorrow or song ?
What more sad than the sleep he takes ?
Mournfully, smouldering sunset, fade,
Mournfully kindle, O morning blue !
But a day is at hand for the sea and land,
And a day for the soul is due !

When shall it come with a trumpet's blare,
Fife and tocsin and roll of drum,
Tramp of cavalcades filling the air,
And the prince of all in the morning come ?
Come in the morning or come in the night,
Whence we know not, O Lord of bliss !
Come at our call, and the lips of all
Will be life of life to Thy kiss !

The Quest of the Golden Gate

Wake us ; we sleep, but we dream of Thee :

Dreams, we have known them at board and bed :
Sleep and its rest on the earth or sea

To the heart of Thy heart are wed !

And hark through the wide earth, flushing and stirr'd,

A whisper, a rumour, a hint goes by,
And the breeze falls soft, as Thy lips shall oft—

O kiss us then lest we die !

BURDEN

*For that light is the gleam of Thine eye,
And waking, as yet we must wake, how bright
Is the light in which we shall see Thy light !*

MIRRORS OF LIFE

NIGHT deepen'd round me on those upland slopes ;
The phosphor dome of heaven diffused its green
And failing glow ; yet all the ghostly hills
Loom'd through the dusk distinctly. On the loose
And yielding soil of some fresh-furrow'd field,
Uncertain, lost, I fared, then, stricken, paused ;
For, lo, the dread arc of a flaming disc
Rose o'er the hill, as if an angry eye
Unfolded, loom'd—unradiating, red—
And with an awful aspect seem'd to watch
My doubting steps !

Unwittingly—I thought—
Here have I stepp'd perchance on ghostly ground,
And now some presence of the phantom scene
Comes with accusing front. My steps intrude

Mirrors of Life

One moment more to see that face unveil'd,
Then will I fly!

Advancing there, I met
The lifting moon, who raised her weeds of mist
And sweetly turn'd a bright, benignant brow
To greet me.

Poet, whether peace or storm
Prevail, is Nature ever fair to thee;
And, Man, in her abyss of very dread,
Bares thee a midmost heart of pure goodwill!

The setting sun, an orb of lurid fire
Enring'd with golden mist, stood clear below
A sea-born cloud, with loose serrated fringe
And purple folds, involving heaven in gloom,
While on the earth the patter of the rain
Fell audibly. A sudden rainbow spann'd
Both sea and sky, then as in dream dissolved,
While slowly round, to join the train of night,
With twilight mixing, moved that sombre cloud,
And pass'd at length left bare the heaven o'erhead—
A lucid liac soon with stars besprent.

Once more there rose a huge and angry form,
Like that which first came up out of the sea;
With front appalling, ask'd, it seem'd, of earth
Some vanish'd brother; but the world was mute,
Whereat the rended inmost heart sent forth
Its shaft of lightning; scream'd a riven oak;
Then, shorn of strength, the vapour-pile dissolved
In gentle tears, and, merged with evening dews,
Call'd forth new lives to compensate for life
Destroy'd.

So ever out of wrath and wreck
The living spirit which abides in all
Still reconstructs the plastic house of life:
There is no loss, no waste, rejection none.

The Quest of the Golden Gate

Pass to the height, O Soul, pass to the height !
But in the dregs and depth of very death
The very life shall find and work in thee.

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Night on the waters of the deep ! Those loud
And sullen voices, with the rising wind
Combining, made a roar of sound—confused
And far prolong'd. The zenith of the sky
Was clear and blue ; but hazy vapour dwelt
Along the soft horizon ; and above
The ocean eastward rose fantastic heaps
Of livid haze. Mine eyes were fixed thereon,
When in the midmost heart began to glow
A ruddy point of light. The sinking moon,
September's crescent moon, her golden horn
Protruded, brightening. On a wall I lean'd ;
Its base was in a terrace built above
The loud, besieging sea. With reverend gaze
I watch'd the pregnant struggle in the sky
Of moon descending and of mist which strove
To quench that slanting gift of light, to earth
So welcome, and those eager, moaning waves.
O ever and anon the golden arm,
Again thrust upward, for the queen of stars
Made passage, who emerged at times to fair
But hasty view ! And so, with varying chance,
This war endured, until the wearied orb
Defeated ceased to tinge her sullen foe.
The shallow water shimmer'd in the light
Of harbour lamps, and evermore the main,
From out the depth and vastness of the dark,
Brought voices wild which stir'd within the soul
All heights, all depths ; which spoke and speaketh
still—

One message to the future as the past,

To Come into Thy Presence

Prolong'd from age to age; and there are none
On earth to understand it.

Nay, man's heart
Interprets all the voices of the main,
The low, light whisper under skies serene,
The swell at middle night beneath the stars,
And all the dread and strident trumpet-roar
Of the storm-stricken water's waste distress;
For there is nowhere any voice or sound
Which does not offer in the midst thereof
The hidden secret of a hope ungain'd,
But very sure. The moon shall shine once more,
All clouds shall melt, the light shall fill the world,
The summer glow lead on to rosy dawn
And rosy dawn to perfect noon of bliss;
While this most bright procession of the world
But dimly limns, O soul, thine own romance!
Not only we to reach our end in God
Are moving on, but the divine great ends
Make flight towards us on eager wings of time,
And somewhere surely in the wonder-gleam
Life and that crown of life shall meet and join.

TO COME INTO THY PRESENCE

FORTH! Through the great free world unknown
Of the wonderful, measureless mind,
As who goes sailing over the sea
Till the shore dissolves in the mist behind!
For the soul is free and the sail is free—
Slipping through many a mystic zone
On the light curl'd crests of the sea,
In the lightsome arms of the wind—
On the dancing waves of the fancy-sea,
At the will of the wings of mind.

The Quest of the Golden Gate

Blythely the voyage begins—ahoy!
Shout to the ships with their sails all shrouded,
Safely moor'd in the harbour wide;
Over the bar and beyond the buoy,
Hail to the craft, with its canvas crowded,
Taking the turn of the tuneful tide!
How many ships in the roadstead ride!
Tarry who will till the skies are clouded—
Over the great sea, hearts of joy,
Over the ocean far and wide!

Some for a pilot pause, and some
For convoy tarry, but some slip round
From point to point of the shining shore;
Some will perchance to destruction come
Where, black reefs over, the breakers roar,
Or not far out on the sand-banks ground;
But sail we further and dare we more,
Where never the dripping lead took sound,
Or the look-out sighted a distant shore,
Or a sail in front was found!

Who strives to follow our viewless track?
Who watches for tidings of how we fare?
One God-speed bid us, and so good-bye!
For this is the voyage, whence none comes back,
To the other side of the world so fair.
We cleave the main and we cleave the sky,
And we follow the tide of the starry track,
Through the shining isles of the stars so high;
But whatever befalls us we turn not back—
O we turn not back lest we die!

We hurry in front of the speeding world,
And our flight transcends all flights of time,
For our quest is the end of all.

Even Life for Evermore

The sails are spread and the sails are furl'd,
As make we here for a distant clime
And linger we there at a port of call,
With the flush and rush of the quest on all ;
Till at length we have lost the speeding world,
Till somehow slipping from space and time,
We are moor'd at the end of all.

Swift sky, over our heads run past ;
Swift sea, under our keels slide through ;
Swift worlds, circle about, away !
We cannot travel too fast, too fast,
With thought still chiding the long delay ;
Deep sea's greenness and far sky's blue,
When will you open the pathway true,
Out of the night time and out of the day,
Which, when the worlds and their light are past,
To the light of the end leads through ?

EVEN LIFE FOR EVERMORE

ONE inward hope reads import into life :
We shall not wholly die, our best persists,
And we therein are of eternity.
Seek, it will yield not, through the ample range
Of circumstance, some perfect end of mind
Which man achieving, may desist, and say :
Should I die now and wholly cease to be,
I count it blessed to have lived. Is time
A foreword of eternity ? Is that
Which men call life some transitory mode
Assumed by conscious and eternal truth
Of real being ? Then are all things good.
Does the soul live ? Then is there nothing mean
Or void of worth. Eternity abides

The Quest of the Golden Gate

No trivial and no transitory act,
And time itself, which is a dream thereof,
Has issues passing through the infinite.
But if the testifying voice within,
Which utters forth the watchwords of the soul,
Lies in the dark place of our mystery,
Then life is nothing, for behold it ends!
And love is nothing, for that ends with life;
And sacrifice put up for others' weal
Is folly at white heat. A little while
And death shall swallow up our offering,
While that for which the sacrifice is made
Shall perish too. What then is left of all?
And what shall profit? To upraise the race
Is nothing, serves no purpose at the close;
For in a little age the race itself
Will also vanish—when the stars shall fall
And, drawn into the red sun's flaming font,
This earth shall feed her father and shall end.
Bold minds may face it, striving to extract
Some ghost of joy from very woe thereof,
But all is artifice and counterfeit—
All-worthless that which into nothing leads.

Black frost binds hard and holds the waste of life;
No phantom sun can warm it. Ah, perchance
There shall be morning on the hills! A light
All-proudly bursting from the eternal sun!
No frost is then too black to melt therein.
Nay, mark, it glistens: that is rime alone,
And all the bulbs and buds of blessed spring
Are waiting only the descending ray
To burst and blossom! It is here, the light
Which draws the tender plant of rising life
Up from some dark but serviceable soil
Wherein the sower's hand hath planted it;
And earth no more is barren: from the seed

A Song of Sound and of Silence

A harvest springs, and the whole land is fill'd
With plenty.

On the winter of the mind
So also rises spiritual light,
And all our seeds of hope and thought begin
To germinate ; the wilderness becomes
A planted ground which fructifies and blooms,
And this is presently a paradise
Wherein the soul descends, whose angel rule
Draws all the bitter order of the world
Full sweetly round into a perfect way.

Then not in vain shall man, forsaking sense,
Abide by choice in the domain of mind ;
And not in vain shall soaring mind ascend
The solemn summits of uplifted thought—
There is the mead of souls. The crown is there.
No quest can fail whereof the end is this ;
Wings shall not want when weary feet give way,
Angels shall bear us when our pinions tire,
And if the angels falter in the white
Flame of the holy place, One shall be there,
And under us the Everlasting Arms.

A SONG OF SOUND AND OF SILENCE

THE groves are fill'd with murmurs and the ways
With sound ;
The choric birds sing canticles of praise ;
Along the stony ground
The hoofs of horses clatter and resound,
Waking reverberations strange and deep ;
E'en in the dead of night
Is Nature ever stirring in her sleep,
And the sea, far and near,
With stress and tumult shouts into the ear :

The Quest of the Golden Gate

The winds take up the message and repeat ;
O'er far-off meadows peals their anthem sweet.
 A thousand cries
Are round us ; ever, when a hush succeeds,
 Stars in the circle of the moving skies
Float whispers down, and upon flowers and weeds
 Not without murmur does the dew descend.

O chants and litanies intoned so loud,
O medley'd minstrelsy of pain and mirth,
 Ascending—a confusèd crowd—
And echoing from end to end
 Of all the resonant earth !
 Some spell upon your music lies,
As hangs enchantment upon drooping eyes,
 And howso'er your founts are stirr'd
 There issues not the saving Word ;
The music's volume and the organ's roll—
In place of voice, that melody of soul.
Stars seem to strive at speech and birds at rhyme,
And pregnant rumours pass at even-time,
While out on the tremendous main
The surges break and shout, and break again ;
 We seem to wait
 For ever at the opening gate
Of resonant, intelligible speech,
And ever still the Word is out of reach.

When in the higher moments of the soul,
 Ascending from divided things,
Almost it seems to snatch the whole
 Of that which Nature's chorus sings,
Yet comes there neither note nor tone
It all rejects or all can own—
 A subtle something proving short
Of base and bond subtending all :
How deep is here the chord's report,
How shallow there the notes may fall ;

A Song of Sound and of Silence

So ever on profounder meaning's brink
The oracles back into vagueness sink,
And wanting the true Word, or dispossess'd,
Nature is consolation but not rest!

Maintaining still a solemn state
And pageant, inarticulate
At every gateway of our dreams
Her echo or her rumour seems ;
A tale upon the point of telling,
A prophecy for ever spelling
 And yet not wholly spell'd,
Because the application is withheld ;
The matter of the Word on every side
 Resounding, but the sense denied.

Perchance in some far epoch of the past,
O Nature's music, to the Word thou wast
More closely wedded than is speech to man !
 Perchance thy measure moveth still
 To meet the meaning which shall fill
 Thy widely resonant span.
Howe'er this be, we know the Word is ours,
Though not in all the fulness of its powers ;
And in the great concerted plan
Perchance thy strings and tones are lent
As an accompanying instrument
 By man alone interpreted,
And from his voice and speech, in tone and string,
 Reflected meaning borrowing.
Sound to us therefore as we dream and drift,
Thou who dost aid the soul her voice to lift,
By her unseen conductor taught and led ;
And when time's gates flow open, still prolong—
Great Leader, past these measures—her supernal song!

The Quest of the Golden Gate

PHASES

WINTRY and wild and wasting and above
All winds in woe, out of a bleak grey sky,
With sharp-tooth'd wings, it blows—the eastern wind—
And like a two-edged sword that sleety breath
Cuts and drives through. The bitter sea beneath
Assumes a kindred mood, and, wrought thereby,
Responds in fury, raging on the rocks—
All quiet coves, where sunny shallows smiled,
And splash'd and rippled, in a milder mood,
Filling with savage voices. Pause and watch
The troubled morning ripen far across
Those spuming billows; through this lifting mist
The lone and dreadful ocean shews no life
Of bird or boat. One presence on the peak
Of yon sea-splinter'd spur, with bony arms
Incites all winds and waters on to war;
She only calm, the foe of peace and man,
Bids strife and tempest still possess the world.
An elemental battle, as of old,
Deepens about her. Who shall break her spells?
Who bid the baleful fury hold henceforth
The shafts and fatal watchwords of the fight?

An answer comes: the Rose is in the East;
There at the source of strife comes the Lord Day;
Comes splendid Sun, dispersing dark and cloud;
The driven mists before his rays dissolve,
The phantom flees, a sudden stillness steeps
The weary space of air; the ocean springs
Lightsome and gladsome, blue beneath the blue—
Clear depth and lucent height.

O dark and storm,
O peace and glow, your phases haunt the soul,

There and Here

The world unknown of man within himself!
And from this pageantry of Nature we
May learn the mystic lesson of the East!
Whence first the darkness comes, first comes the light;
Whence bitter winds, the morning's fragrant joy;
And so the desolation and the gloom
Obscure of souls are visitants of God,
From the same world unknown of that dread will
Which brings His morning beam of life and grace
To soothe, to comfort and to purify.

When on the aspirations of our heart
A darkness falls and, all her aids withdrawn,
No comfort comes to cheer thee, lonely soul,
God is not with thee less in dark than light;
So in aridity and drought discern
His ministry and one true way to Him!
A little while He leaves thee, to return
In fuller sweetness—ah, He leaves thee not!
His consolation, not His ward or watch,
Withdraws awhile, and thus He leads thee on,
That thou through dereliction and great pain
Mayest pass forth into felicity.
God waits behind the darkness of thy soul,
As waits the sun to gladden earth and sea;
And bitter winds, possessing all the East,
Can hinder not—nor darkness bar the way.

THERE AND HERE

THE sunset floods these ways with flames,
A glister fills the air,
And sudden pomp of mystic names
Shines burnish'd everywhere:
Far out of sight a lark proclaims
That what we seek is there.

The Quest of the Golden Gate

The sword contracts beneath our feet,
 And softly whispers: "Here!"
Those dingles, full of dim retreat,
 Murmur: "Conceal'd, but near!"
The further vistas all repeat:
 "This way it shall be clear!"

A shoal stream lispers: "Forward still!
 You cannot seek in vain;
Beyond the hollow and the hill
 I hear and hear again!"
The flood cries: "That resistless will
 Draws all my springs amain!"

The ocean, hurtling far away
 Beyond the bay and bar,
Alone moans ever night and day:
 "For ever far and far!"
And yet beyond the spume and spray
 Hope brightens in the star.

BE YE COMFORTED

FOR every man the tangled skein of life
Betrays one leading thread, one Gordian knot
Secures that clue; but howsoe'er we strive,
Twine and untwine the labyrinthine mesh,
Its grand Tantalian maze and mystery,
Line upon line, to more fantastic shape
Is twisted. Baffled ingenuity
Returns upon itself, a vain expense;
For still the leading thread that Fate assign'd
At each one's birth remains within his hands,
Unused: the knot which ties it is himself. . . .
Say, is there any man, however far

Be Ye Comforted

He ventures down into his nature's depths,
Has yet unravell'd his own mystery?

Mournful it is amidst the night to sit
And spell the doubtful message of the stars;
To place what vague construction best appeals
On half-caught voices speaking in the wind;
Mournful to wait until a wiser hand
Unties the knot, or lets the mesh fall down.
Stars, teach us patience; lift upon the wind
Your voices, ministers unseen; and thou,
Take heart, O Soul! Emancipated, wing'd,
Thou shalt come forth and raise into the light
The guiding line which somehow led thee on
Where mazes end, where oracles declare
Their purport, where the light speaks clear and loud.
To-day perchance, to-morrow is not long,
Yet at an age's end, nigh is the time!

But order now the temple of the mind,
That we be ready when the hour arrives;
And let no crookedness or twist within
Prevent the correspondence of the soul
With the best order that the soul has dream'd.
O be we inly rectified and right,
And stand we clear before the mystery,
And open we in all to gain our sun;
But if the light should tarry, be we still
Patient and purged, and not a day too late!
The cords may want some pulling at the end
To straighten them; the parting veil may need
Some happy violence to cast it quite
Aside for ever; the high light beyond
Ask something from the boldness of the eye
Which meets it first. And if indeed there be
God's wisdom latent in life's parables,
Then all the unsolved problem of ourselves,

The Quest of the Golden Gate

Subtended by the sapience of God,
Is sacred through the presence of the King ;
There dwells His secret, there His rumours stir,
And there be sure the royal voice shall first
Proclaim the great arcanum over which
We dream and brood. O long and dolorous way,
Thine end is all within ! O life-long search,
Thy crown is there ! O light of all desired,
There art thou shrouded, there wilt manifest !
O God, our end, if we can meet with Thee
In any place apart from all the world,
It is there only, and abiding there,
Waiting for Thee, our mystic comfort comes—
That none shall lose Thee who makes search within,
If, O our God, Thou art !

And hark, the soul
Speaks in the depths of man and testifies !
Prophets may fail us and the Christs may die,
And many Calvaries and Golgothas
Be waiting still the saviours of the race ;
But never has the sibyl soul adjured
Made any answer from her oracle,
Save—God is with me, and within me God !

QUIET NIGHT AND PERFECT END

THE desert cries for the city,
The city, from strife and stress
Of the weary weeks, for a refuge seeks
In the cave and the wilderness.

I know that the marsh, exhaling
White mists to a liquid star,
In the windless night to a sacred height
Aspires, and the light afar.

Quiet Night and Perfect End

I know that the woods wind-driven
Send thoughts—with a bird on high—
Through white cloud-clusters, when young March blusters,
For the peace of a purple sky.

The torrents pour through their chasms
To the unplumb'd wells below,
And to ocean's vastness, with a sure flight's fastness,
All eager waters flow.

But O the city, the desert,
The founts, the marshes, the streams,
Wild waters falling, which are crying and calling
As they roll, O Soul, in thy dreams!

Earth knows not what it is seeking,
Though still to the search impell'd ;
But thou can'st divine what an end is thine
And the course to that end withheld.

Thou hast sought in the city and desert ;
Thou hast sought in the height and deep ;
Though the goal to win is not found therein ;
Yet a certain trance or sleep,

'Twixt space and time, gives issue
By a wonderful path and lone,
Leading keen and straight to a mystical gate,
And beyond the gate it is known.

It is known, the end of the vision
Which is neither to East nor West,
And the North cannot tell it, nor the sweet South spell it,
But the end of that path is rest.

The high thoughts reel and waver,
And sense in that realm untrod
Has bonds unbelted and cinctures melted,
But the end of the path is God!

The Quest of the Golden Gate

THE VOICE OF THE TURTLE

WHEN valiant souls have climb'd the furthest heights,
And hear beyond all stir of mortal man
A dimmest echo, Thou art far away !
We strive to reach Thee with uplifted heads ;
Our straiten'd natures, bursting bar and bond,
From all of self set free, by yearning's strength
And the fierce energy of consuming will,
Divide this blackness of the night of sense—
The mystic night obscure which parts the Soul,
Ascending Carmel's mount, from her true Spouse.
So upward, upward ; seems there light at hand !
The darkness whitens, morning comes apace !
Faint shines already on her straining sight
The Blessed Master's hills and fair demesne ;
And soon in bush or bower or garden close,
In dighted hold or chamber shall we meet
The Blessed Spouse and Master face to face.

Resplendent Vision of eternal joy,
Best, brightest, dearest, holy, holy One—
Life's measure, life's totality, life's end—
We cannot reach Thee, till Thou come to us,
Nor dwell with Thee, till Thou abide in us,
Nor see Thee, till Thou art reveal'd in us,
Nor any way, till Thou art known in us,
Can we Thy saving beauty's fulness know !
But we must reach Thee, know Thee and possess ;
Thou art our nature's one necessity,
And whatsoever we lose, in life or death,
No part in us of body, mind, or soul
Renounces Thee. All good which works in us,

The Voice of the Turtle

All yearning towards Thee—these are part of Thee,
And Thou art in us when we know it not.
Be more in us, that we may more be Thine ;
Be with us ever till the soul, enlarged
And fortified, grow fit to gaze on Thee !
Then let the night melt on the mountain tops—
Star of the Morning, rise ; lighten us then !
The time is surely near ; our part is done :
Lo, we have search'd the world, crying on Thee !
Lo, we have mounted every steep of mind,
And now we wait upon the utmost range :
Horeb and Calvary and Sinai,
All peaks where man has suffer'd and has seen
Some little corner of the mystery,
Are far below ; they profit nothing more :
We must have all of truth, O Lord, and Thee !

So call we Thee, the infinite between :
We can no more ; therefore Thy time has come.
O Thou, desired of the eternal hills,
Spirit of strength, Spirit of counsel, come,
And come, O holy God ! Come, Prince of Peace !
Lo, we are saint-like, and we call on Thee,
Wasteful and wanton, but the more we call !
Whatever good or evil dwells in us,
The time hath come when Thou must all be ours.
Amen, it shall be so : we will not wait :
Maker of all desire, Thou knowest this,
Thou knowest us. We do not call alone—
The voice of Antichrist and Lucifer,
With every voice, in agonised appeal,
Invoke Thee now. And Thou, O Lord, wilt come,
Thou wilt not fail, nor tarry, nor bestow
A part again, nor offer type and sign,
But Thou wilt wholly give Thy gracious self.
So all our need shall cease, for Thine are we,
Father and Mother of the gods and men !

The Quest of the Golden Gate

I LOOK TO SEE

A SONG OF VISION

WHEN the twilight of autumn falls, sober and grave, on
the brightness;
When, pungent with mystic aroma of turf and of earth,
in its lightness
The mist, from the vague ground exhaling, some
zephyr's breath urges
To form in the hollows, in meadows, midst muffled dead
marches and dirges,
Deploying—battalions in bosks—here a banner un-
furl'd;
There a pennon, a streamer put forth; all the ghosts of
the world
'Twi'x the trees gather'd watching; a man, though the
footway is known—
In the broad road ends yonder—uncertain, impress'd by
the lone
And the sense of the vague and the dim, for some light
in the distance
Looks forward, not lost nor distress'd, guessing well
where the glimmer must be—
As he looks without pausing, so I to sure ends of
existence,
O I look to see!

Yet perchance the unknown shall await him; white bird
on the wing
From out of the mist in the coppice unthought of shall
suddenly spring;

I Look to See

With flight that is low and uncertain, o'er meadow and
brake,
Him who sought but his home in the village shall tempt
and shall take
On the chase, till the moonset may find him astray by
high walls
Of a bright burnish'd palace built fair in a land of en-
chantment and thralls.
Then the task of the world is before him, to win the
world's flower,
One maid of all maids, and behold him, the man in the
magical hour!
So bent upon far-shining ends, pressing on where they
gleam,
By some path unexpected, perchance what was dream'd
not by me
I shall reach in my longing, and that overstanding all
dream
O I look to see!

The thought in its flight may escape me, but I follow
still;
The Word of my art is remote. Where the keen star
broods over the hill,
Where the dark clouds hang out, flashes flame, the red
flame o'er the storm-driven deep,
Where the winds have their caverns, 'tis far, but longer
the way I must keep.
The heart that is flagging goes forward, the eye that is
weary is bent
Where the Thought with the Word is united; and albeit
the day is far spent,
The night comes when no man can labour—see, eve
closes round—
O I know, where the circle is woven which hallows a
glorious ground!

The Quest of the Golden Gate

In the church of all art shall its priest the high union
effect

'Midst the strings and the horns and the organs, and,
bent on the knee,

Shall the great Œcumenical Council confess it; so
therefore erect

Do I look to see!

We clasp but the shadow of love, which is longing and
thirst,

And no man possesses another, for bonds which have
never been burst

Enswathe and divide us from each, and our separate life
Intervenes like a wall in all nuptials; no woman is wife,
Nor ever call'd any man husband, save only in sign;

But because of the want and the longing, the strong
flame which burns in the shrine

And feeds on the heart that sustains it, I know, beyond
sense,

O I know my Redeemer is living; that keen and
intense,

By some change in our substance of being, the union
divine,

To which all our blind motions reach out, shall the ends
of all longing decree;

And that out of the flesh I shall gaze on the love which
is mine—

So I look to see!

The darkness falls over the waste; the great deep in the
darkness roars;

But the shores, it would seem, have no sea, or the sea in
the dark has no shores;

The God-light falls lost, if it shine, on the eye unre-
sponsive and blind;

While the eye that would see hath no light, as we tread
the dark maze of the mind.

I Look to See

Who knows what is urging us forward midst shrill
battle-call?

The arrows scream round ; if we fall, shall we lie—can
we tell?—as we fall?

O light in the darkness, upshining through a world of
false-seeming and wraith,

Our trust may be cold and half-hearted, but yet all our
trust is in thee,

And our peace past the fields of dissension—because of
thee, Faith—

Do I look to see !

To hear and to see and to know, and, immersed where
the lights never fail,

Confess that at length we have truly transcended the
world of the veil ;

We have pass'd through the region of omen, and enter'd
a land of sight.

O thanks be to God for the pillar of smoke by day and
the pillar of fire by night ;

The voice in the cloud and the burning bush and the
holy places trod ;

For the soften'd grace of the shaded face and the back
of the Lord our God ;

For the shadow'd home and the light beyond, for the
secret pulses stirr'd

By the parable dim and the mystic hymn and the first
sense of the Word !

But O for the end and the vision, beyond the gate and
the way,

The light which the eye cannot picture, repose in
activity free !

The veils of the world are about me, sad dreams of the
night and the day,

But I look to see !

The Quest of the Golden Gate

AT PASSING

WHEN the day begins to break
 Call us back to life and light ;
Leaving sweetly now we take—
 And so, good night !

Short or long we do not know,
 Dark at least the night-space seems :
Hearts are weary ; leave it so,
 But kind be dreams !

Wish us thy good speed at end
 Who, committing all to thee—
Truest love and dearest friend—
 At rest would be.

And to keep us free from pain,
 With the eye's light in the eye,
Thus we pray thee : Come again ;
 Till then, good-bye !

Sense of all things slowly slips,
 Utter trust dissolves alarms—
Thus with lips against thy lips !
 And arms in arms !

A GARDEN
OF SPIRITUAL FLOWERS

“Lætabitur deserta et inbía, et exsultabit
solitudo, et florebit quasi lílím.”—PROPHETIA
ISAIAE, cap. xxxv., v. i.

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

WATCHES OF THE NIGHT

ALL day I've tarried in the burning fields,
Awaiting Night. The sun has tann'd my skin,
The heat has sapp'd my strength, an eager thirst
Consumes me. Minister in cooling dew,
In gentle rain, in vivifying wind ;
Most in the shelter of thy plumage soft,
The hallow'd refuge of thy bridal breast,
Receive and hide me now, Supernal Queen !
Bid all thy plaintive nightingales begin
In vale and thicket ! Droop thy mighty wings,
And quench that sudden burst of western light
Which through thy sea-born panoply of clouds
Has torn so strangely. . . . Now the splendour fades :
Where art thou now ? Stoop, beautiful and grand :
Unbind thy tresses ; let them fall on me :
Diffuse thine odours round ! With thy bright eyes—
Thy beautiful, innumerable eyes—
While I adore thee, gaze ! So thrill me through
With crooning whispers in the wind and trees.
How wonderful, how mystical thou art,
How deep thy secrets are ! Thy tenderness
Surpasses all ; thus am I lost in thee !
Thy cool, unconscious kisses on my mouth
Are pattering in aromatic rain ;
Lean over, press me, breathe into my mouth ;

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

I read thine eyes like poems! Speak to me—
Speak ever to the spirit thou hast form'd
And consecrated with uranian love,
With astral chrism as thy scald elect,
O Night of odours and of sanctity!

TAKING THE VEIL

“L'esprit se revête pour descendre et se dépouille pour monter.”

FOLDS of flesh henceforth enwind thee,
Earthly veils thy form conceal,
Five restricted senses bind thee—
Dimly wails our vain appeal.

Wings of those that loved and knew thee
Round about thy house may throng,
But the charm of earth which drew thee
Holds thee by a spell too strong.

Soul of sweetness, thus forsaking
True life's light and love divine,
When the witch-spell fails, awaking—
Light and life and love be thine.

So the walls of sense entomb thee,
So we leave thee—born of men;
May thy sisters' hands assume thee
Born in death to life again.

Entrancement

ENTRANCEMENT

I SEE, my God, thy scarlet sun descend !
There is no shadow on that blazing orb,
There is no mist about it ; magnified,
Still-glowing, rayless—so it sinks in silence ! . . .
Behold the burning circle broken now !
There is no wind on land, no wave at sea ;
Behind this meadow, with the mill beside,
The day-god's head devolves ! A lark's last song,
High in the lavender and opal sky,
To grey refined, through summer silence rings,
And night is held thereby ; with balanced plumes,
The dusk Queen waits. Sustain, sweet mother, Earth,
Thy gifted messenger, deferring still !
Ascend, thou voice ; ring on ; thy parent doth
The aspiration of her evening fragrance
After thy flight direct ! And I too stand ;
I stand a humble, image-haunted man,
Who in that melody and madness loses
The dreamlike, rippled cadence of the sea,
Who loses earth and sea, whose soul ascends,
And, like a fragrance from the earth exhaled,
In aspiration and in ecstasy,
Where thy wings beat the air, wild bird, it dies !

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

WHITHER ?

THE moon does not tire in the sky,
Nor that star which comes after it quail
In the paths that are high :
Do they know where they go,
While we faint and we fail ?
For we know not, ah, no !
Sure light, that has lighted from time out of mind—
From what moon, from what star ?
As we look from our place
Toward thy region afar,
Still we dream by thy grace
We may find !

A DIRGE AT SEA

WELL hast thou chosen who hast made the sea
Thy resting place ! O, all things bright and high
Claim kinship with it ! By an eager moon
'Tis drawn for ever, and in turn the sea
Draws all great souls ; it is the soul of earth.
Bereft thereof all stony coasts would stretch
As bleak and barren as the wilted moon,
Which has no life but that which dwells in deep
Desire of soul, which vainly strives to steal,
O earth, thy soul away !

Sleep, gentle flesh !
The cool sea water takes thee : in its blue
Thine eyes henceforth shall glisten ; there thy lips
Shall tinge its groves of coral ; all the white

In Aridity

And delicate frame dissolving shall become
A portion of its being. So the thought—
The sacred thought of thee—shall still keep fresh
That calm, vast heart.

The sea-maids draw thee down,
To deep sea temples, there with mystic rites
Perform thine obsequies. To its true home
The flesh returns; thy spirit to its place
Is render'd too: throughout all days to come
That soul to mine inseparably join'd,
With light and beauty, like a sacrament,
Shall all my nature penetrate and change.

MYSTERIES OF EXILE

ONE life alone, one end, one way to reach;
But many substitutes and ghosts of each:
 Lord, lest the false lights—moving round and
 round—
Too long bewray, do Thou, with secret speech,
 Direct us truly unto stable ground!

IN ARIDITY

THE road is brown; a hundred yards below
It dives full steeply—aspens, elm and ash,
Make shade and music round it. Heaven has rain'd
Through all the morn, but now the August sun
Is warm and brilliant, flooding mead and down:
Far hills are flooded, tiles of gabled farms

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

And distant churches glow. . . . I gaze on all
The manifested beauties of the world,
And have not lost that vivid sense of charm
Which all can weave. The power of speech is mine,
The strength of love—why seems the tide of song
Arrested in me? Thou inspiring God,
By bard and prophet commonly invoked,
One in thy varied names, on Thee I call :
Forsake me not! Abide in song with me !
The grace of inspiration still vouchsafe !
One soul in all I see reveal'd beneath
This constant flux and sheen of outward things.
I stand by hedges, where the fern and oak
With modest hawthorn interweave and blend
Sun-metamorphosed tints of greenery ;
And there the gnat, which buzzes in the air
A busy message of continual life ;
The cool fresh wind, which stirs in flower and frond,
In leaf and twig, in every blade of grass—
Which tempers summer at its thirsting noon—
These wake some random thought to bless my life,
As dews bless eve. Descend once more on me—
Descend ; I summon in the name of all
Which soothes and vivifies—thou fire of God !
Transform the world ! Thou inner sense of sight,
Transform my soul !

The fountain seal'd awhile
Is open'd now ; the speech from heaven descends—
From that intolerable, azure sky,
Which holds no cloud to stain its virgin depths,
It does descend—and AVE, AVE, EARTH !
The Poet cries ; the Priest of Nature puts
His vestments on, the prophet's mantle wears,
And offers praise again. A thousand trees
Take up the message ; may the winds prolong—
Those distant hills re-echo—all is song !

From Lane to Coast

FLIGHT

I SOOTHED a bird with a broken limb—
Why does a rose so sweetly smell?—
Bright were the eyes and the plumes of him :
O heart beat softer !—
Thou canst not tell.

Safe in a bower he was set to rest—
What is the secret of beauty's spell?—
He was woo'd to health in a lichen nest :
O sweet bird-singer !—
Thou canst not tell.

The bird flew out through a door ajar—
Where flies the soul with the passing bell?—
High sounds his song at the evening star :
O voice of freedom !—
Thou canst not tell.

But why the rose has a scent so sweet—
And where all secrets of beauty dwell—
When souls go up from this dim retreat
Through gates left open—
The soul shall tell.

FROM LANE TO COAST

WHENE'ER I pause in green of summer lane—
Perchance, as now, at evening—nothing more
I ask or need. I see the pale blue sky
Dissolved in dream by melody of larks,
And—all transfigured in the waning light—

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

Far winds the path before me. If an elm
Above the hedge should rise, in the soft warm air
Its lightest branches scarcely seem to move,
And on the soothing green of either bank
The sight rests thankful. There the starwort shines,
The rabbit-parsley spreads its graceful sprays,
The modest musk amidst the grass conceals
A golden head.

When in some mead I stand,
Enring'd by clover scent, a stream mayhap
Winds by, with willows on the banks thereof
And may-trees all in blossom. Then I see,
Amidst its ancient elms, some ancient church
Facing the bright West with embattled tower
And red-tiled roof all glowing. O'er the stream
I lean to watch the dancing swarm of gnats,
And hear far off upon the broad high-road
The beat of horses' hoofs, or sounding horn
Before some thatch'd, old-fashion'd wayside inn ;
And then so long as any bird will sing—
One sings all day—no more I ask than this.

But when from some strait road—as here to-night—
Forth on the lonely sea, with eager steps,
Alone I issue, when I stand thereby,
And feel the gentle winnowing of wings
About me—the soft South-wind's dove-like wings ;
When all the wide expanse of crinkled sea
Expands before me—there no sail in sight,
With faces ruddy in the glare of evening
Forth come the shrimpers with their shoulder'd nets
To dredge the shallows—then my heart no more
Can rest contented. Suddenly reveal'd,
I see the vastness of the world and man,
The ample scope of life ; my nature longs
For some broad sphere of action, speech and thought,
And, "Seek it, seek it now," calls the Sea's voice.

To You in Glory

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

BEYOND the turning in the lane
To issue on the wind-swept plain ;
Across the plain to see from far
How white, how high the mountains are ;
Above the everlasting hills
To watch the royal light, which spills
Such boundless glory on the grand
Expanses of the sea and land ;
Then past created light to find
That which enlightens worlds of mind.

TO YOU IN GLORY

O SILVERY voice across the starless void !
O blessed vision, wonderful, divine !
I see thee standing, and thy radiant face
Smiles down on me through this world's gathering
gloom :

I cannot look at thee, I yearn and stretch
These eager hands to reach thine own in vain.
Gulfs are between us, an eternal sea,
The aching void, an infinite abyss,
Which none may cross ! Gentle and kind and true,
Son of the Morning, star of light and joy,
How fares it with thee in thy Home of Rest ?
I see thee in the sunset, and thine eyes
In every star, and in the rosy morn
Thy maiden blushes ; where thou art is beauty,
And wheresoe'er is beauty there art thou !
When my cleansed soul shall shine with noble deeds,

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

As thou with thy virginity unstain'd,
I shall be with thee in thy glory bright ;
Till then be thou beside me in my dreams,
Till then when dream and waking shall be one—
Thou always, day and night !

THE BLESSED LIFE

FOR thee, in Paradise, be perfect rest,
Cool shade, cool shelter and a fountain cool :
Swan of the snow-white breast,
I see thy plumage shining, white as wool !

A SEA PROPHECY

AN infinite shimmer on the open sea—
A thousand, thousand lights! To cross thee now,
And ever—ever—ever—sail away,
Till with thy vastness, with the mighty vault
Which rounds thine urgent being, I am one—
One with the stellar ministers of night
Who throng the splendid spaces of the air
Above thy breezy bosom, one with her
Whose path of pure, illuminated state,
Through all the three-fold phases of her reign,
Is—eve and night—with blanch'd, transfigured face,
Perform'd in silent ecstasy—with these
To unify existence! . . . I am yours,
Stars, Sea, Moon—Mother of all mystic thought!
Wrap me, ye Winds, away to some wild place,
Where, in the centre of a surging world
Of crested billows, full of stormy speech,
My sea-dream bark is spell'd, awaiting me.

The Invocation of the Soul

There is an ecstasy which passes speech,
There is an inspiration which transcends
Expression, there is joy which deifies ;
The limitations of our mortal life
Dissolve therein ; through every sense enlarged
The floods of rapture pour into the soul.
All these in generous measure have been mine ;
But something waits me far from every coast,
From every harbour far—alone, alone !
The promise, the prevision cannot fail ;
But drifting, drifting, drifting, day by day,
And drifting, drifting, drifting—moon by moon—
Amid revolving galaxies above,
The scenic splendours and the vibrant glare
Of lissome lightnings, the great organ tones
Of rending thunder—over open seas
I go to seek the threshold of my doom.
Thereon the crests and surges and sea-winds,
There all the echoing voices of the sea,
Shall break with one precipitous music-crash,
Break and dissolve in melody, lute-speech
Which wins towards subtle silence, then the deep
And utter stillness of the anchor'd state,
White peace of sleeping sails in harbour furl'd !

THE INVOCATION OF THE SOUL

I CALL'D the Soul from dreamful deeps of sense :
Such silence fell as when expectant Night
Feels some faint presage of approaching light
Her secret nature fill with vague suspense.
Such silence fell—then rose one spark intense
Of purest lustre, beautiful and bright,
And calmly from the intellectual height
All earthly clouds dispersed, all darkness dense.

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

The waxing glory of one sacred deed
That dormant Soul magnetically drew,
As two fond eyes through waters gazing down
Draw mild Undinè to her lover's view:
From depth to height, of all her bondage freed,
High aims lead on the Soul to starry crown.

PER SCALAS RERUM NATURALIUM

BUT I fared forth in thought o'er summer seas,
I paused on mountains in the morning light,
And out from forests in the night and wind
On lonely coasts I issued. Once at eve,
When stormy clouds involved a splendid West,
The sun, departing, drove one blazing shaft
Right up the sky, suffusing all its path
With angry red, and where it smote dispersing
The thin far scatt'ring phantoms of the storm;
Then glancing onward to the blue serene
It melted in the zenith. I beheld
In mine own mind, as in a magic glass,
The spectacle of Nature. "It is well!"
I cried, "Sufficient! There is rest in this,
But light I seek! Achieve, O soul, the light!"
So then my spirit in the waste alone
Her refuge sought, there dwelt and ponder'd there . . .

Was that the hoarse voice of the far-off main
Which on my refuge in the sandy rock,
And on my solitude, my silence there,
On life and death reveal'd, did break at length?
It drew me forth; I cross'd the meads and mounts,
I roved by woods and waters, till I reach'd
The coast once more. I saw the vast sky stretch
Above the vast sea to unearthly height,

The Sea-Fowl

And in the West, beyond all dream remote,
A saffron sunset paled. Thither my soul
Her flight pursued, with eagle wings essay'd
That stormy path, dared winds, dared ocean deep,
Dared lightnings there. The solemn night profound,
A thousand voices speaking in the night,
Did strengthen her, the searching cold inform'd,
And more than all the mystic hope upheld ;
Till, lo, the flight achieved—from West to East,
A still green land, bright morning breaking round !

Have ye not visited, in dreams at least,
The hush'd, deep place of life and peace in God ?

THE SEA-FOWL

Across the wide and high
Vault of the evening sky !
One sea-fowl wings his solitary flight :
Seekest thou, Bird, thy nest,
Or wilt thou journey West,
Where yonder sun descends and clouds burn bright ?

What can compare with thee,
Thou rover of the sea,
So valiant-hearted ? Lo, thy breast is bare
To the wild wind, and thou,
With thine undaunted brow,
Darest the dangers of the sea and air !

The mellow sunbeams shine
On those white wings of thine,
As thou dost voyage o'er the salt sea-foam :
In port for wind and tide
The anchor'd ships abide ;
Thou only can'st uncheck'd, untiring roam.

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

Soul-strength which will not fail
Though wind and storm assail,
This, this supports thee! On one purpose true
Its energies unspent
Are ever kept intent,
And so thou soarest onward through the blue.

Thou dost not pause nor tire,
A subtle inward fire
Is burning in thy heart and in thy brain ;
While mine eyes droop and ache,
Which follow in thy wake ;
My thoughts alone pursue thee o'er the main.

Now art thou lost at length :
God give thy pinions strength !
Fair flight be thine, sweet rest on distant shore !
Thou cam'st I know not whence,
Thou hast departed hence ;
In life and time I may not see thee more.

But souls which dare like thee
The sea-winds and the sea
Have depths and heights unknown to things that die ;
They change but still must be,
And being will be free,
And they are kindred to eternity !

PATHS OF PILGRIMAGE

Thou lurest, ocean grey :
How thy white waves roll in. Dim, clouded sky,
Break over me ; eternal blue come forth !
Dame Nature calls and ballad-voice of Spring ;
Sweet mistress, mother of the life of man,

Titles of Nobility

And gentle maid who dost the world renew,
Behold, I come! A hundred stars unveil,
The clouds have vanish'd, the supernal vault,
A glass of vision and of ecstasy,
Its burnish'd surface spreads. The Moon therein
Doth, like a spirit from the seering glass,
In light pass off; and here, like angel's wings,
The winds of night among the ancient trees—
Thy trees, O God—pass in a storm of sound.

THE POWER AND THE GLORY

O WELL for those whose duty assumes the guise of
beauty,
And well for those whose mission puts on the veils of
grace;
For whom the hopes they rise on are wings Love also
flies on,
And well when God leads onward by light of fairest face.
To them nine choirs of angels at dawn proclaim evangel
And words of peace at vesper time through channels
such as thou;
With glory on the lowly from holy place and holy
Of altar chaste, for shining placed—one radiant vestal
brow!

TITLES OF NOBILITY

THE generations of immortal soul,
High soul irradiating earthly veils
With virginal translucence . . .

Once again
That pungent perfume, changing every step

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

And sweet in each mutation! Does it come
From orchards nigh me, from the garden close,
Or clover meadows? . . . It is evening breath
Of Nature, lapsing towards her night's repose,
In bridal splendour of the latest spring
Right royally invested. How all life
Expands within it, and is bathed therein!—
Deep, deep it drinks. . . .

What golden gates unbar!
What cryptic springs of melody unseal!
I float serenely up life's lucent stream
Into the furthest past. I see thy soul
Serenely dwelling in its fontal home—
A spiritual mansion bright and blest,
A phoenix-home of immortality
And morning joy. The golden rule of life
Evolves from out the pure, subjective state,
A portion of thy nature into form.
The inner essence, taking outward shape
Of holy choirs made visible, accords
With that divine and individual thought
Eternal Cause had consciously express'd
To bring thee into being. . . . Is it well
To call thee fair, to say thy mien is high?
I see thy perfect, superhuman mode,
Like poetry in happy music clothed,
But thine unbonded, quintessential part
Wears human guise alone for human thought.
I sense thy presence in the sphere of mind,
Yet know not what thou art; I call on thee,
And thou respondest in the brightest shape
Supreme imagination pictures, based
On human types. I see thy haunting eyes,
Like evening's grey from Heaven's eternal hills
View'd in a holy trance. Their deeps unfold,
Like fragrant spaces. Poised on eager wings,
I see thy timeless origin express'd

Titles of Nobility

In spiritual symbols—a pure spark
In the electric ocean of God's light. . . .
Support the dreamer now, ye mighty downs,
Thou scarlet sunset, draped in formless cloud ;
Pinewoods and wilderness and windy peaks ;
Ye shadow-haunted prospects far prolong'd ;
Thou, deep'ning night! . . . An inner impulse prompts
That point of light ; above the burning sea
Lifting itself, a radiant globe it grows,
And down creation's stream of forming life
So glimmers into outward consciousness.
At first one thought intent, through ages long,
Revolves about itself ; the depths and heights
Of its own nature, in the stillness, spans,
While contacts form'd with God at either end,
Pulse and vibrate therein. The tide of thought
Turns outward now ; sense-music charms it on,
Desire and will unite ; a secret change
Gives psychic shape, and in a world of souls—
Diaphanously draped, with wide, white wings,
One torch-like star, from pale and lofty brow
Diffusing light—with auburn hair unbound
In rainbow ripples—thus I picture thee.

Still works advancing evolution's law,
And towards the circle of material things
It draws thy nature down the mighty tide.
Thou enterest the generating world—
A narrow passage with a door of night
At either end, a golden hope beyond,
Cross, combat, victory and crown betwixt.

The generations of immortal soul,
High soul in sacred and all-gracious veils,
Splendour of virgin beams, uplifting earth.

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

A SPIRIT IN THE HOUSE

*I saw thee serving on a winter morn,
When all within the church was shadow-dim,
And in some pauses of the priest's deep chant
Thy voice divine, o'er all the choir behind
Pre-eminent, rang out like Michael's voice.
But when the mist began to lift without
And all the windows whiten'd, thy pure face,
Thy saintly face, through clouds of incense shone,
And as that voice rose o'er the rest supreme,
Calming the hearers' hearts, till no foot moved,
Nor bead was told, nor leaf of missal turn'd,
So shone thy virgin beauty there supreme ;
One form divine o'er all adoring there
Erect as Michael stood . . . Then dream'd I thus.*

The Plague had stricken in the stifling town
 Its thousands down ;
And all day long the sun, with blazing eye,
 Burn'd in a brazen sky ;
There was no wind in any lane or street,
 The fervid heat
Of flints and flagstones scorch'd all passers' feet ;
And after sun-down, terrible to mark,
The baleful comet smoulder'd in the dark.
At length it sank ; that spell which held the breeze
Was broken then ; a shiver through the trees—
 As through a dreamer—pass'd ;
The storm's wild spirit o'er the panting town,
Through welcome clouds, long pray'd for, now look'd down ;
And, in brief pauses of a rising blast,
 The sultry rain fell fast ;
In vivid flashes leap'd and danced on high
The steel-blue lightning through the broken sky.

A Spirit in the House

Through all that week the rain and tempest reign'd,
And then dense vapours lifting left unstain'd
 Heaven's shining height ;
The cold, clear air restored by slow degrees
Man's vanish'd vigour, and the dread disease
 Ceased in a single night.
So I went forth one morning in the sun,—
Through cleansed and shining streets again went forth,—
A bracing wind was blowing from the North,
 The Plague was done.

My steps were turn'd to seek the House of Prayer ;
The scatter'd worshippers, in twos and threes
 Assembled there,
Thank'd God for life, still trembling on their knees ;
But in the chancel, serving, there wast thou,
With the same light upon thy pale, broad brow,
The same calm face, the same collected mien,
 All in thy white array'd.
There was no trouble in thy face, thine eyes,
Still on thy book directed, neither turn'd
To left nor right ; there was no motion seen
In thy mild lips—the soul adoring pray'd
Alone in thee ; in thee no fever burn'd
Of fear or grief. . . . The stricken victim's cries,
The sudden seizure in the open road,
The dreadful silence where the pest abode,
The desolation and long reign of death,
Pass'd like a horror of the night alone
Before thy modest mien reserved and stately ;
Sweet incense rose, no more the Plague's foul breath.
I heard God's silver Mass-Bell sweetly ringing,
A heart-felt *Credo* that the choir was singing,
 No more the death-bell's tone,
No more the voice of mourning heard so lately ;
And for the spotted, drawn and fever'd cheek,
The shrunken body, as an infant's weak,

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

Erect I saw thee in thy wonted place,
A youth in vigour and a maid in grace,
With auburn hair, with visage smooth and fair,
And faintly bloom'd the Rose of Beauty there.

Immortal Nature, what is pure like thee
I know is wedded to Eternity;
I know such spirits through the starry spaces
Subsist for ever with increasing graces!
O ever thus do thou, reserved apart,
Thy chaste thoughts cherish in thine inmost heart,
May they, though stain'd, who love to see thee pure,
For that be pardon'd and in that endure!
May he that sought betimes the House of Prayer
And found thee serving when the Plague was there,
Thy gentle picture ever keep within
To save his spirit from the Plague of Sin!

STELLA

THE mystic singer to a certain Star
In salutation! . . . Be thy secret name
Inscribed upon the Palace of the King,
And on the white apocalyptic stone
Engraved indelibly! I paced at night
The City's streets; an inspiration came;
And, like a tempest, suddenly it strove
With all my being. To thyself it bore
A mighty message, until now retain'd—
That from the sacred heart of sylvan things,
From woods and forests, from eternal downs,
From water-sides, the Golden Word might come—
A formal promise of the Crown of Life
Assured in poem which is prophecy.

A Rover's Hymn

It bids me first recall thy nature's depths,
The heights thereof, and then those sacred arts
With whose exalted themes thy longing holds
Impassion'd correspondence. These are proofs
That things undream'd await thee. In thy hands
The future lies; conceive what end thou wilt,
And, on the honour of the angel bands,
Thou shalt attain it, thou shalt reign therefrom!

My soul is set upon an endless quest
To span the bounds of being; on the heights,
Towards which my face is set, behold, I swear
To greet thy spirit, be it late or soon!
Forth to the Light! Forth to the height of God!
The tocsin call comes from the Infinite;
All Nature taking voice, her organ tone
Has culminated in a single cry
Of clamorous accordance, urging on!
Speed on! The arrow to the Star ascends;
Through mortal channel comes immortal speech. . . .

The mystic singer to a certain Star
His salutation sends.

A ROVER'S HYMN

ONCE I wish'd a thousand things,
Thoughts that soar on eagle wings
Follow'd in their soaring;
Now the soul-flights rarely rise
Further than thy dear grey eyes—
There my fervours pouring.

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

Oft in midnights lone and still
Fancy fledted far at will
 Through the starry spaces ;
Now it dreams, both day and night,
Round about one only light,
 Shining where thy grace is.

O for darksome forest haunts,
And—for him no danger daunts,—
 Wilds and wildernesses !
Open seas, to sail far over,
Dizzy peaks, to draw the rover,
 Draped in gleaming dresses !

O to dare both height and deep,
Where the Kraken lies asleep,
 Where the last star quivers,
Where the message of existence—
Through the darkness and the distance—
 Life to void delivers !

Then beyond all space and time,
Far transcending speech or rhyme,
 Out of thought's dimension,
That one midmost point to win
Which all secrets centre in,
 By a soul-ascension. ~

May God's mercy grant me these—
Nature's "primal sanities"
 And high Truth's unfolding !
In such dreams my life exhaled,
Till thy tender form unveil'd
 Unto my beholding.

A Rover's Hymn

Then the light of rose and gold
Gather'd up from vale and wold,
From the sky descended,
Drifted off the open sea,
Came and draped thy symmetry
In a garment splendid.

All the beauty named by truth,
In thy tender human youth
Visibly inhering,
Breaks the ancient spells investing
Speculation's fields of questing,
At its first appearing.

Melody of merle in copse,
Mavis in the poplar tops,
Lark at morning's gateway—
How thy laughter's silver lightness
Robs the bird-world of its brightness,
And absorbs it straightway!

Now the sunset lights may kindle,
Now the mild moon wax and dwindle,
Voice of winds keep calling,
While the Alpine hills point o'er me,
While the long paths wind before me,
Falling, rising, falling.

But for me one dream is o'er—
Through the outer world no more
Roving and exploring;
Past the beauty of thy face
Do I look to greet Christ's grace,
In love daily soaring.

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

Has the rover lost or gain'd?
Has the thinker, tax'd and strain'd,
 Balancing and proving,
Lost the vista, lost the vision,
Sinking all the sense of mission
 In the sense of loving?

Nay, thou art an open sea,
And a green world fair and free
 Meet for love's emprising;
In the depths of thy grey eyes
Brood a thousand mysteries
 Souls may sink or rise in.

So, with mystic love my guide
In thy sacred nature's wide
 Magian world I enter;
There the ravish'd thinker wanders;
Ever there the rover ponders
 Voyaging and venture.

A VISION OF STARS

BEHOLD in Star-Land stood a vacant throne,
None found to fill it! On a lonely height
Raised up, the world commanding, he beheld,
Who reign'd thereon, the plane of time and change
Far reach below him. Passion and anguish there
Play parts, but the illuminated soul
From such great height—with steadfast eyes unmoved—
In silence watch'd, the issues and the end
To him reveal'd, the worth and meaning known.
Thus was it; but to distant heights undream'd

A Vision of Stars

The abstracted soul forth-issuing left below
Its ancient seat ; and he, with anxious mind,
Who o'er those spheres spreads wide his sacred rule,
The Great Star-King, most solemn council held
With messengers and heralds from afar.
But not from out his own divine estate,
Nor realms beyond, was suppliant known whose eyes
Unflinching view'd the vast and varied charge,
The lonely life, the splendour, view'd unchill'd . . .
Behold in Star-Land stood that vacant throne
None found to fill it !

Then the Central Sun,
Intelligence Supreme, Eternity's
Tremendous King, by angels bright at length
Sent tidings down to Star-Land, and the Great
Star-King rose joyful from his throne sublime ;
Long prayer was answer'd—found a soul unstain'd
To fill that empty seat ! It dwelt on earth
Not all unconscious of its destiny,
But, dedicate to ministries most high,
In hopes—though half defined—in yearnings vague
By sacred impulse prompted aye to seek
The Source of Light, at least to gifted eyes
Made evident its origin divine—
Thy shining soul, my white one, my dear, my dove ! . . .
The Star-King paused at hearing, mused a space,
Then pass'd in silence through his lonely hall,
Its pavement vast as ocean, and its dome
As heaven remote. Upon the gleaming wall
Of that most awful temple there was hung
A Magic Glass ; invoking power of will
Constrain'd all souls to manifest within
Its lucent crystal. There he fix'd awhile
His eyes illuminated, clear, profound,
And soon a thin flame started, light and pure,
In brilliance, beauty waxing, till thy self
In semblance perfect shone reflected there.

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

The Mighty Presence that inform'd the place
Breathed once thereon, then answer'd :—" It is well !
His phantom shews no blemish."

There was now
The hour of earthly sunset : sank day's god.
A stealthy, secret whisper of the wind
Among the leaves and grass had call'd me forth,
And I went musing into meads and down
Dark cypress groves. Therein my thoughts were
wrapp'd

Beyond the sphere of time. One Voice of Brightness,
When this creation's furthest star was pass'd,
Still call'd me onward, through unnumber'd ranks
Of radiant intelligences, priests

And princes of eternity ; I paused
Before that veil which hides the Holy Place—
The light unbearable in mercy hides.

This veil was moved by agency within ;
A stream of flame and scorching heat intense
Was pour'd in shafts upon me, and my soul—
Beneath it—shrivell'd like an autumn leaf,
Till one word sounding in the light made strong
My failing nature by its power divine.

Thy destiny surpassing strange, supreme,
Thy star ascending in the house of life,
With light and glory through the infinite,
That mystic word impress'd on heart and mind.

It lives in sense of mission and of high
Election, but the awful sound is lost ;
For flesh-confined intelligence no more
May dare to formulate, nor human speech
Express it, nor this element too gross
Of earthly air to that most subtle sound
Give life in its vibrations. But in dreams
It searches still, and still by dreams my soul
Is lifted into Star-Land ; there I see
Thy vacant throne await thee on that height

A Wraith-Way

Remote and unimagined—thine, pure gift
Of earth to Æther!

Like the hand of God
About the man it leads in spite of self,
The sense of mission circles all my life;
A herald of the stern, primeval, strong
Star-King, I gather for thy crowning day
All gentle souls together, all pure souls,
The silent spaces round thy lonely throne
To people with intelligence and love. . . .
Behold, my thought that chosen band depicts
Above the world exalted, vow'd to thee!
My spirit in eternity's most vast,
God-haunted regions loses life and thought
And sinks in dizzy circles, while thine own
There finds its eyrie, there its native air,
Translucent, tranquil. Mount, mine eagle, mount!
Thy light supreme, thy lone, uplifted state,
I see reveal'd; infinity receives
A starry prince—ascend, achieve and reign!

A WRAITH-WAY

OVER the bridge and athwart the stream,
By a path that I call my own
Is another land that I visit in dream,
And dreamers term it the world unknown.
The paths are clouded, the hollows are dim,
But a pallid and misty host
Is moving there with a vacant air,
For this is the Land of Ghost.

As a Land of Ghost is the Land of Soul:
O Wraiths of the viewless bourne!
Do you hear, as I hear, the waters roll
In the rain of the tears of those who mourn?

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

The darkness deepens, the darkness spreads :
We shrink from the downward track
Which far through the hollow takes those who follow,
For who that descends comes back ?

But there falls a night, or a day will dawn,
When a hand unseen lays hold,
And into the hollow we slip—withdrawn
Over the grey lawns shrouded and cold.
Over the brook by the bridge we go,
Sorrowing voices still'd behind ;
But dole or laughter, who knows what after,
Or what of the end assign'd ?

Who knows ! Who knows ! From the further side
Perchance on a spectral host,
Far over a resonant, splendid tide,
Back we shall gaze on a Land of Ghost—
For a Land of Ghost is this land of life,
With its phantom joys and woes—
From a great true dream upon pomps which seem,
We shall gaze at that last : who knows ?

WHEREFORE, COURAGE

ALONG the grey and saturated shore
A grey sea creeps. There is no wave in sight ;
With gentle ripple and with sad, faint sound,
The evening tide flows in. A wind from shore
Blows cool by fits ; dark clouds about the West
Take angry colours ; and the blue looks dim,
When o'er the sea that pale blue light looms forth.
Will not one star above the waters shine
High over tide and coast ? . . . But, see, the moon—
The moon late born—a slender line of light
Shews faintly towards the West, 'twixt stormy clouds.

The Reaper

MANIFESTATION

A FIGURE sat within the chair
Which was not previously there ;
A voice spoke in the darkness then
More subtly than the voice of men :
The message in the ear it spell'd
Was one great secret long withheld ;
And while I live, or when I die,
O Grave ! where is thy mystery ?

THE REAPER

In simple dreams, I see thy shy blue eyes
Upraised to scan thy sphere of earthly work,
Which spreads like fields all ripe with corn and wheat.
The harvest waits, be thou the reaper there ;
The barns of God stand empty, fill them thou !
There is a sickle in thy strong right hand—
Reap well, reap all, that when the sheaves are bound
No single grain may lie to rot without
In autumn rain and cold. . . . The days go by ;
I see the mellow moon in the starless South
Her magic disc increase. . . . Is thy work done ?
Hard hast thou toil'd, thou hast not thought of self ;
The priest of labour thou, by toil made priest,
Thy work accomplish'd is thy sacrifice.

The wind begins across the naked fields
To breathe and stir, among a thousand sheaves
It laps and lingers. Lo, the moon hath set !
A faint uncertain light about the East
Spreads slowly round ; on thy pale face it falls

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

And on thy prostrate form ; shines keen and blue
The well-used sickle ; at thy side it lies ;
And thy right arm about the latest sheaf
This night has stiffen'd.

Now, the morning breaks ;
They bear the harvest in ; the barns are closed ;
The grain is reckon'd ; there is none left out.
Thy spirit voice repeats the festal hymn
In God's great harvest home !

THE LIGHTER VEIN

READY pen and easy thought,
Turning out a lilting verse ;
Here a flash of fancy caught,
There an artful image wrought—
Could be better, might be worse !

Easy comes and easy goes
The too light, fantastic rhyme—
Tinkles, twitters, sparkles, flows ;
Nothing matters, no one knows :
Who shall care in after time ?

Saving grace, or pleasing wit
Jingling for the hour it can—
Something miss'd and something hit—
He that runs may read in it,
Vex not thou its transient plan !

Leave it—organ songs of old
Peal from out the ages gone ;
Other times shall yet behold
Singers come with mouths of gold ;
Till then let it babble on.

Doom

DOOM

I KNOW some dreadful, most exalted doom
My future waits. My soul is taken hence
And set full often by a stormy sea—
A grey, perturb'd, immeasurable sea,
The desolation of whose terrible voice
Arrests the inward being. There are clouds
Heap'd by some wild art of a winter wind
In wild confusion. There is saffron light
Through lurid rifts. The verge is tooth'd by waves,
The whole sky torn by tempest. There are sharp
And bulging headlands, promontories bleak,
And melancholy miles of winding coast,
With stones and seaweed strewn. No sea-mew cries ;
I stand, wind-wrapp'd, and dream deep dreams thereby,
Or wander aimless, waiting, hush'd and white,
Some fierce convulsion in the boding sky.
Mine eyes are fixed upon the raving waste
Of whirling waves, and, utterly apart
From sympathy or voice of man, I face
The mysteries of being.

I accept

The doom. My spirit has been tested there
But has not fail'd. An inspiration comes
From wretchedness ; in desolation, strength ;
Through Nature in convulsed, terrific moods,
The secret hidden by external things.
I know this terrible and rending scene
Is threshold of revelation. That rent sky
Will open suddenly, in depths serene
A sunset all of majesty and light
Revealing ; clouds transfigured, grouping round,

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

Will lead imagination on from world
To world of thoughts ineffable. Some ray
Will fall full redly on the restless sea
And soothe its tortured surges, smoothing out
A path of magical and mystic light—
Salt breeze and rosy splendour: all its length
My soul, uplifted in a mighty trance,
With faculties made clean, with tranquil step,
Will swiftly traverse. . . . To the Land of Light
Go, favour'd Soul! The prospects open wide;
Dream preludes vision; like a flower of flame,
Unfolds high vision into truth attain'd;
Thy pinions bear thee to ecstatic rest,
In quiet seas of spiritual space
Profoundly lapp'd. . . . A magnet draws thee on;
Thou art awaken'd in the world of mind;
Where blessed hierarchies of perfect life
Are gleaming round thee, poised and sphered at length;
The heights unknown of supersensual things
Prolong their vistas. Thou art taught thereby;
Thou art inspired; an end of all is seen—
As naked and unutterable truth
Whose essence is the Deity reveal'd.

But when the vision into night recedes,
The soul descends, and in some wondrous way
I stand and look into my Lady's eyes,
The whole significance of outward things
Unrolls before me, as a scroll unwinds,
And in the hyaline and crystal depths
Of her unspotted spirit do I read
Infinites of meaning.

The Rosy Cross

A FOUNDATION OF HOPE

A LITTLE while, and we shall then be strong
To vindicate the right, reject the wrong
And follow in the path where we would go.
A little while, my friends, will that be long?
Life is so short—ah, no!

THE ROSY CROSS

I SAW before me loom an ancient house ;
One portal there, with mystic words inscribed,
Had in its centre graved, the single horn
Ascending—sign of the immortal mind
Which rules for ever and is ruled by none,
Because united to the Law Divine
'Tis made for ever to itself a law—
Thy burning star, dread, potent Pentagram!

Before that threshold in the morn's first light,
In wonder lost, in ecstasy of joy,
I stood: Thou spirit to the end attain'd,
Thou crown'd adept, thy long probation done.
Was that the Temple of the Rose and Cross?
Speak, hierophant!

Who stands in starry white?
Who leads me in? Smooth gleams his golden hair,
With comely features mortified and mild,
Cheeks tinged with flower-pale pink! Whose eyes are
those
Which in the sunshine seem like golden grey,
Elsewhere as violets deep? His mien is high;
He bears the fragrance of the morning rose
Round all his form; his hand is raised to bless.

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

Whene'er his eyes look up all heaven looks down ;
About his path the snowdrop sprouts in spring,
Burst buds in blossom upon thorn and tree ;
His voice all solitudes, all silent peaks,
And all the spacious, cool, translucent air,
Fills with melodious souls. His name is Spring ;
His name is Eos, born of dews and light ;
His are a thousand names in one contain'd.
Before the Threshold of the Mysteries,
Before the Temple of the Rose and Cross,
Before the secret, sacred, inmost shrine,
In white refulgent, as he wont, array'd,
He stands in beauty and with open hands
He welcomes in :—"The Light of Christus !" cries,
"Eternal Truth !" And ranged in lines behind,
I see the sages and the scalds of old,
A thousand pontiffs and a thousand kings !
Shines Moses there, and Plato brightly shines ;
And I see the Hermes of the Burning Belt,
The " thrice great Hermes," stand with Enoch there !

IN EXCELSIS THEMA

VOICE that blesses, eyes that light,
Vision on the vestal height,
Bright One,
White One,
Lead aright !

Chaste as lily, mild as dove,
Brave as eagle, fair as love,
Fold us,
Hold us,
Lead above !

Aurelia

Mystic mountains all untrod
We shall pass, with patience shod ;
 Featly,
 Sweetly,
Lead to God !

AURELIA :

THE SPIRITUAL CHRYSALIS

So idly sailing on an August sea
From zone to zone of dream, I look'd and saw,
Through the mauve spaces of litten air at noon,
Some sudden land-breeze bear a frighten'd moth
Far and away, its frail wings beating vainly.
Could my stretch'd hand have reach'd it, I had borne
That blithesome insect gladly back to shore :
It pass'd, blown onward, in the sunlight lost
And distance. Like a death-trap gleam'd the bay
Beneath it, and the dancing waves drew down—
As magnets draw—those drooping, wearied wings.
I will not say the creature sank indeed,
For anchor'd boats rock'd softly far and near,
Where the poor, pitiful, bewilder'd thing
Might rest in truth, though not return to shore :
I think the sea received it, those light wings
Were bruised and buffeted and broken there.

God knows I prize the spirit He pours in me,
And sacred hold for this the meanest life
Which shares my treasure ; so a pang pass'd through
One heart for this sea-drifted butterfly !
My soul in fancy to herself assumed
That feeble shape and beat in fancy there,
On every wind dependent ; watch'd with awe

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

The swirling tide beneath her ; felt the salt
And cold sea-spray her tiny wings benumb ;
And sinking, shrinking, saw those shining waves
Leap up to meet her ; while the death therein—
Because so foreign to a field-born life—
For her seem'd dreadful. But to-night I stand
With all man's spirit by the wind made strong,
And I see eastward an advancing cloud
Of stormy sable fill the midnight sky ;
The high grey sea beats sullenly, its crests
Of seething foam a white, weird light give out.
As now that sea swells, on the wide beach chafing,
The heart expands within me, and the roar
Of breakers surging on the sand and stones
Wakes, in the deeps within, an answering voice,
Which speaks behind the soul, is clear, is loud.

Say, sorrow suffer'd may be progress made ;
Say, pain can lift the nature which endures ;
Bring forth the time-worn maxims of the streets :
But I believe, beyond all pain and grief,
That death lifts life. Friends, if the martyr's pangs
Exalt beyond our measure and enthrone
The steadfast spirit, through its tortures true,
Shall we not hold that hard, untimely deaths,
In some peculiar, undetermined way,
May compensate the natures wrung thereby ?
Who proves it error ? Does the bird whose nest
Is scorch'd about her in a burning wood,
Yet who'll not leave the five white eggs within,
Win nothing from endurance ? No new sense
From that new, terrible and splendid scene
Unfolding round her ? The bird's soul (believe it !)
Goes forth inform'd from those singed plumes of hers,
With some new sense indelibly endow'd
And greaten'd by it. The drown'd insect too,
Did that win nothing from the shining waste

The Invocation

Of waves about it? Lord of life, thereon
The sun-born creature faced immensity ;
One aspect of the vast and awful truth
Of solemn life intense this wind's light toy
Faced once and perish'd. From the sea-drench'd shell
The quicken'd essence issues forth enlarged.

I thank thee, Lord, Who hast the soul brought forth
From everlasting roots of perfect life,
That no life dies, howe'er minute or mean,
But multiplies its nature in the flesh
And individual strength by death renews ;
That every crevice of the earth is fill'd
With plenitude of being, which indeed
May strive and suffer, but it grows through all.
Beyond each turn of life springs life again :
Face death then calmly, be it thine or mine ;
Look onward, upward, both for beast and man—
Aye, even this sea-drifted butterfly !

THE INVOCATION

By the woodland deep and green,
By the starlight's silver sheen,
By the Moon-Queen's mystic light,
By this hush of holy night,
By the zephyr's twice-weaved spell,
Ho ! ye powers invisible,
Leet of Elfin, Iris Throng,
Unto whom these groves belong
And by laws of ancient date,
Found in scrolls of Faërie Fate,
Stream and font are dedicate ;
Wheresoe'er your wings may gleam—
Vistas on the verge of dream,

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

Haunts beyond the rainbow set
Under walks of violet—
Hearts and hearths of human kind
Better suit the elfin mind.
We adjure you, keep no more
Homeless state on splendid shore,
But with spells of magic birth
Once again make glad the earth !

Here in glade and dingle sweet
Ye may find a close retreat :
Can ye wish for softer bed
Than the moss that here is spread ?
Here the mavis' voice is heard,
Every late and early bird ;
Here the tendril's slender string
Deftly hangs, a faërie swing ;
Purling brooks and founts that play
Make sweet music night and day ;
And in lakes which stedfast lie
Under Heaven's eternal eye,
The blown lilies waiting float,
Each to serve as elfin boat.
Never do the evening dews
Nectar to the flowers refuse ;
Like the blackbird's liquid note
The wind breathes in the wind's throat :
Who shall find a fairer spot ?
Linger, fairies, linger not !

Still the woods are dark and lonely !
There the throstle calleth only—
There alone the throstle calleth
As the silent twilight falleth.
All the old mage-spells are broken,
All the ancient charms unspoken :

The Invocation

Who to human tongues shall teach
That forgotten sylphid speech
By whose aid the weirds of old
Did with Nature commune hold ?

'Tis the darken'd human heart
Whence the Elfin Lords depart !
Ye who now this loss deplore,
All who would their reign restore,
Seek from mystic gifts of sight
Hallows for the heart of night ;
Seek for depths of thoughts serene
Soften'd through the deeps of green,
For the open eye which looks
Further than the life of books,
And in any stone discerns
What a heart of wonder burns,
Finding all about it lie
Brimming wells of sorcery.
Virgin thoughts are brightest chrisms
In the mystical baptism,
Which, to those elected duly,
Lifts all veils, revealing truly
Elfin worlds in rapt clairvoyance,
Elfin marvels, Elfin joyance,
Elfin vistas, Elfin vision,
Elfin voices, dreams elysian,
Fay-built isles and seas that be
Glamour all and gramarye.
Where shall point the Elfin wing ?
Worlds of pure imagining ;
Then where wonder rules the heart
Thence shall fairies ne'er depart !

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

AZALEA

OUR sleep is over now : what morning dawns ?
The beautiful and visionary night,
Moon-haunted all its length, by winds inform'd,
A worshipful and spiritual night,
Has in this daylight disillusion grey
Been sadly merged. The prose of life on earth
Begins to speak. And here I stand alone—
One billow broke upon the bay far out
This moment pass'd ; it flash'd a seething crest,
Then fell. What space for inspiration now ?
What magic left ? What message in the sea ?
The once bright-shining moon is bleak and white
And burnt to cinders. When the trees were draped
By solemn darkness, in their mien was awe,
Their aspect majesty, their rustling leaves
Dodonian prophecy—they were mighty thoughts.
Now their spell shatters ; as a part once more
Of vegetative nature, they stand stripp'd
Of poetry and meaning. The lark's song
Is some mere singing of a morning lark ;
That engine's drawn out, melancholy shriek
Fills all its silver pauses far prolong'd,
And drowns with dismal wail its golden close.

O bitterness ! There is no human word
Which gives expression to the craving depth
Of desolation foss'd in human hearts ;
All futile methods of our mortal speech
Choke sympathy by commonizing grief.
I made by magic in a winter month
An Eden-garden full of holy bloom :
The blessed lotus in its lakes abode

Azalea

With stately swans, and all its paths were lined
By lustrous lilies. Thine azaleas filled
The consecrated air with grateful light,
From myriad blooms. Thou hadst no care therein ;
I spent the strength of spirit on thy dreams—
To crowd the sacred hush of mystic sleep
With all high-speaking images. I search'd
The world of mind to build thy maiden bed,
In amaranthine bowers, with purple blooms
Of dim, inviolable violets :
Their scented heads received thy psychic limbs
And soften'd moss beneath. . . . But morning broke—
Then was a latch upon the garden gate
Uplifted by thy voluntary hand
And from the aureate place of our dream-light
Thou didst go forth ; thy beauty's human grace
Has chosen earth. . . .

A blush of morning bursts
Above the dim and wavering line of downs
Far flashing sanguine glory up the sky ;
That lofty and immeasurable arch
Transforms from grey to lavender, and fills
With sudden ecstasy of morning birds

The charm arrested leaves thee clay once more :
Thou art not wholly false nor wholly true ;
The world, God knows, may leaven thee. But me
The dream shall hearten ; the earth's part dissolves,
God's part remains, whilst thou hast fallen short
Of immortality and beatitude.
There was no height beyond the power of soul
To scale for thee. There was no height beyond
Those heights to which my spirit should itself
Have lifted thee. . . .

I see thee deck'd with pearls
And turquoise rings ; the splendours brought from East

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

And West invest thy body. Thou art clothed
With earthly wealth instead of phantasy.
O sole and only truth of deathless mind,
And dreadful lapse from starry heaven of thought
To lower riches! Can I wish thee bless'd
In these, or mated unto man of earth,
Ascribe thee true beatitude therein?
Thou wast a spirit in these arms' embrace,
And I transfigured in thine own had dwelt
As god beside thee, deified thereby.
How art thou fallen, O Lucifera!
But ecstasy of ardour never quench'd
Suffers a golden change on heights of soul.
So upward ever! To the endless height,
Which meets the bottomless, abysmal depth
In the infinite circle of Eternity!
Light for thee still—O somewhere, somewhere Light—
If I eclipse thee in my angelhood,
O thou too pure e'er to be wholly false,
I'll clothe thee in the mantle of my soul,
And on my shoulders raise thee past myself
To heights beyond me!

DISTRACTION

SHALL a poet whose office is high
For the heights, say, a moment unapt,
Descend some distraction to try
And adapt?

The thought in itself gives a touch
Of the trivial to help his descent:
Will decline be more steep overmuch
Than he meant?

Distraction

'Tis assumed he must cleave to his part
But may seek with conventions to toy,
See if flowers of the field will his heart
Offer joy :

If the pastoral landscapes can please,
And Phyllis well-favour'd may seem
When the pipes of a Colin give ease
In his dream.

There's not much in this, as we know :
Shall he turn with an amorous gaze,
Of a courtlier mistress or so
Singing praise ?

Shall he find in his country a theme,
Or the party he follows advance ?
Shall he give some benevolent scheme
A rhyme's chance ?

We may doubt if distraction in these
Can be won from his call overlong,
Or that ways which are beaten will please
For his song.

For the things which are done may be done,
It is true, in a different way ;
But the woof which is spun has been spun,
Well-a-day !

And the ends which are far out of reach,
Green earth and the sky that is blue
Exceeding, please most for our speech
Me and you.

Leave, therefore, the lambs to their fold
And the sheep to the shepherds who tend,
Since the themes which are old will be old
To the end.

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

But above one and all are the peak's
Revelations, for song that can dare,
In pursuit of the high things it seeks,
To go there.

IMMANENCE

THE wind without is wild on down and cliff,
But here is perfect shelter. Pause with me,
By this rude stile ; and, through those mellow browns
Of autumn bushes on the broken slopes,
Behold the sea below, the vault above,
The mist's thin draperies, the ghost—scarce seen—
Of yon young moon suspended, white and thin !
I count it good to stand, as now we stand,
This resonant September afternoon,
And, past the twisted shapes of elm and beech,
To see the low, slow, sounding waves far down—
Churn'd on the rocks and stain'd by yellow sand—
Advance incessantly. The air is cool :
Now wanes the day ! From this glen's marshy slope
Comes subtle fragrance ; and that shelving bank,
Where oaks still hold against the stir and stress
Their sering leaves, alone from sight shuts out
A blazing autumn sunset's scene sublime.

The coastguard's cottage windows, facing West,
Are flaming strangely. Now the night descends—
At once the turf looks cold, forlorn and grey !
Our steps retrace ! Once more the hill we climb—
Green, orange, crimson—is the world ablaze ?
The churn'd sea burning ? Are those loose black
clouds,
Which, with the wind, pass off from North to East,
The smoke thereof ? It is the sunset—see !
Confess the Presence—watch, but speak no more !

Suspirium

THE SOUL'S LINEAGE

ACCORDING to our measure and extent,
Despite long exile in these regions dim,
We must from God compute our soul's descent,
Seeing the soul on Him alone is bent,
And must in that degree partake of Him.

SUSPIRIUM

WHERE art thou?—Where?—Speak to me once—divide
This dreadful hush of death! Cold grave and dark,
Did that hold anything of her I love
Soul-adjunction and heart-agony
Should vitalise the remnants into life—
So should I hear of thee! Thou dost not sleep;
In the wide measures of eternity
Thou art awake, abroad: but where art thou?
Give me a sign upon the sky to know—
Or let thy tears fall, light as softest down
From dreaming swan upon a pool's still breast,
O'er mine uplifted face, if tears be thine.

Oh lady, thou didst once, a moon at night
Shine burnish'd with a pale and psychic grace,
An argent beauty, toned and soften'd down—
From all hard outlines of reality—
Into a face of dream, which melted all
And the waste world about thee fill'd with love,
As thy soul's magic fill'd the sphere of life!

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

But after, stricken in a woeful time—
As sometimes night, star-panoplied, supreme
And saturate with artemisian light,
Grows wan before a vague and dreary day,
And earth's moon, dying in the mist distraught,
Turns to a pallid shadow—thou didst wane
And hence the mercy of all-patient God
Was written in agony through my grey youth,
But thou wast martyr'd more who now art crown'd.
So for thy sufferings' sake, my love, my loss
And the long dereliction of my days,
I swore to wear thenceforth a life unstain'd,
That none should suffer who environ'd me :
So did a heart of pity and pure love
With leaping pulses fill the chords of life
And there is none that I have wrong'd—not one.

Therefore, I pray thee, let this exile end :
In thy clean hands the spirit I have kept
Pure for thy sake, I place. Let the still air
Give up the soft light of thine eyes ; and come—
Come in thy mildness ; or, that boon denied,
Strong in my yearning, bid me go to thee !

THE BETTER WAY

OUR hearts, disdainful in these days, repent
That poor ambition and unwise content,
Which, in the midst of veil and semblance, left
The soul of true realities bereft
And those prerogatives of human mind
Whereby the soul at last leaves veils behind.

Fragmentum

FRAGMENTUM

I LOOK behind on all my former life,
The masque of strange succession in events,
The weirds unfinish'd, the impending dooms,
Whereon, with even mind, with chosen speech,
I muse this day; while, sunk in deepest thought,
Thou standest by me, patient, unperturb'd.
Leaf-blinds are drawn; the late sun shines without
On wide green meadows; all this bower is fill'd
With things familiar. Thou, reserved and cold,
Dost hear my tale; setting and atmosphere—
How formal, friend, and yet what secret things!
What thoughts! What dark thoughts, haunting ever-
more!

A sudden flash, before the eyes of mind
Passing at times, takes all our heart away,
As rapture caught Elias: we are lost
To earth and time, far in some place of dream.
As sees the warden of the castle walls,
How stretch the pastures wide and darkling woods,
How the vales dimple, how the light streams wind,
What silver shining speaks of sea beyond—
So in light richer than our landscapes know,
Yon ocean splendour, past all fair romance,
Interprets its bright pictures to the heart
By words no more, but living images.
Once, from the realms thereof, we drew that light,
Exalting Nature; but the thoughts, my friend—
The dark, dread thoughts—the deeps behind the gleam,
And in those depths abysses, gloom unpierced!

Now that this avenue of trees is pass'd,

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

Take breath. The road slopes after ; its descent
Is steep to reach the streamlet, and with stones
Made rough—to save the horses. Do you mark
That little bridge which spans the burn? Our path
Goes over it. Before us to the left
An old church looms ; a growth of ivy there
Shews in the evening light its splendid green
On tower and nave. A dial all the day
Tells time in silence on the southern side.
Here swirls the shallow water ; did you catch
That flashing fin? See, in this hole curl'd round,
A speckled eel is sleeping. So we reach
The long white-fronted house. Who dwells therein?
Patience! The water on a single side
Washes the ample lawn ; at brink thereof,
Wide spreads the walnut-tree, a stately growth,
Its broad, rich leaves above the waters drooping.
Peace, brother soul! here is the trysting-place.

Perchance things lesser in the end shall save
Things greater, and the least is also first.

WITNESSES OF SILENCE

MAN'S heart is for himself a volume writ
In cipher, having no true key to it ;
And other hearts discourse on every side
Language, to which no lips have e'er replied.

A Hard Saying

A HARD SAYING

UNSELFISH love, which would true aims fulfil,
Must be what men call mean, must make unask'd
The first advances, and a cold response,
Rebuffs and misconceptions overlook,
To prosecute its end, which is to give,
For love's best reasons, unrequited, all
Love's heart and life's devotion.

This confess'd,

Some brief indulgence let the heart enjoy—
From thought set free, from all the weary weight
Of those great ends whereto, since early days
Elected, souls must strive and, striving, see
New fields of labour opening far beyond
Into the infinite. Then, Love, awhile,
Such heights forsaking, unto some green place,
Like this, in vernal hours or in the soft
Luxuriant summer prime, from high degrees
Exemption find—or take the grade of peace,
Renouncing not. With all our doom foreseen,
Such respite gives the greater strength to bear,
Puts by the sense of whole unworthiness,
Or lifts it up into our aid unask'd
Who cannot choose but deem our souls unmeet,
O Love of all, for love of thine and thee!
Yet only love us, and in love like thine,
Our soul's love-flaming shall be meet to hold,
O love beyond all love, the love of thee!

A Garden of Spiritual Flowers

ONE REFUGE

WHEN old convention's sad calamity
Shall, after weary days, our path permit
 To issue—undeterr'd and free :
 What then remains?
Forest and woodland world, the green,
 Far-sparkling plains?
Or fair Romance to lead the lines of it
 O'er azure seas serene ?

O well for these, if they can take us where
The soul alone would be! Of old we trod,
With shackled limbs, a thousand ways of care ;
What profits freedom till it ends in God ?

OTHER MANHOODS

BE sure that, ever from the birth thereof,
Both earth and sea are sentiently alive
And in the cosmic harmony perform
A willing part, to holy law conform'd,
Sounding at times an individual note—
Conceived within them—through the starry hymn
Which—*Ave, ave!*—high creation chants.
The leaf which shrivels in the hand can feel,
Though it be feebly, and the bud which lifts
Its head to catch the sunlight or the dew—
Here something in us prompts and forces faith—
Discerns, though dimly, moisture, light and heat
As life and health and happiness. Through all
That lives some form of consciousness pulsates

The Poet Speaks

And not all blindly struggles towards the good,
Sharing some part of our humanity,
Seeking increase thereof. That joyous bird
Which in the glare of this light-clouded sun
Pours forth a fountain-music from his soul,
Is surely conscious of the power of song,
And in a measurable way perceives
The beauty of it—in his own degree
Is therefore poet, since the gift is his,
The conscious use and simple love thereof.
In some translation of a later day,
Some evolution now on earth undream'd,
Are any heights forbidden him?—Who knows?
This only—from the deeps within ourselves,
Above the common interests of sense,
Strange pasts at times well up, of leaf and bud,
And we who know not truly what we are
Know also not, yet guess, what once we were.

THE POET SPEAKS

WITH silent steps thou movest, Moon, on high,
For ever keeping thine appointed course!
What hope of rest is thine? What native source
Dost thou for peace seek out? The days go by—
There comes no end in sight, no haven nigh:
What impulse prompts thee on thy starry road?
Ah, shine! Thy splendours bless this dark abode;
With mild effulgence fill the spacious sky.
O Solitary Lady, we have grown—
Our eyes so long on thy long journey fix'd—
Almost content to be, like thee, alone,
In steadfast thought, with other thought unmix'd:
Our paths, like thine, go upward and descend;
Aside we cannot swerve, or see the end.

PATHS OF ZION

“Amor ipse notitia est . . . Amor oculus est
. . . Amare videre est.”—CONFESS. SANCTI
AUGUSTINI, Lib. vii. cap. 10.

Paths of Zion

MINISTRIES OF GRACE

GATES of the grace of God—a thousand gates—
Lie open round us ; neither bar nor lock
Prevails ; and there is nothing in the world
Which asks to keep its secrets in the heart :
All are set forth for worship. Nature's scrolls
Lie written and over-written everywhere—
Without, within ; the hidden meanings sing,
Great symbols shout, till knowledge fills the soul.
Not into gold and gems are common things
Changed suddenly ; the precious metal shines,
The jewel, native to the heart of each.

Bear witness, Sons of Song, that not in vain
Shall any man—with God's true gift of eyes—
Explore the windings of a bosky road,
Hedge-bound by spring-time green or summer's wealth ;
Through elms and oaks behold in holt or chase
A quiet homestead ; watch in welkin light
While rooks round windy nests in circles wheel
And by the symmetry of motion shame
Their own discordant notes ; or contemplate
The gracious fusion of a beechen grove
With ancient, sombre, solitary firs.
From grass to star, whatever lives lays bare
Its virtues and an infinite behind.
The eye shall not be satisfied indeed
For evermore with seeing—till an eye
Turns inward, looking for the God within.

Paths of Zion

Yet each and all of these, or kindred boons,
Reward our sight ; and thanks are therefore due—
Alike for object and for instrument—
Till God's transcendence swallows up in fine
God's immanence.

My praise is render'd now
For that white mare on pasture grazing yonder,
Her one white foal beside, with one white star
Seal'd on its forehead ; for the scent inhaled
This evening early in the month of June,
From hawthorn hedge-fence and from new-mown hay,
Just after rain, ascending. . . . Here I cross
A country-stile and suddenly take note—
Above that stretch of level sward and bush—
How lifting mist leaves bare the downs beyond ;
Once and again, while twilight closes round,
How—in the shadow of this old church-porch,
Old tombs beside me—I can hear, far off,
The solemn washing of an open sea,
As if the voice of everness spoke out
In time, news giving of a home for souls.

Voice and the Word for ever ; timeless sense
Past all this sense of time ; an issue found—
Through things that are—into the great and good !
How end then therefore, save in man himself—
That gate which ever, in the least and most,
Swings open Godward ? Listen, Sons of Song :
Whoever on the grace of youth or maid
Dwells with pure eyes, heart-fill'd and moved to prayer,
Has kiss'd with worship a responding mouth,
Lays treasures for the heart up . . . Give me still
The end heroic and the term sublime !
All these may lead thereto ; love most is path
And makes most also of the mountain-ways.
End, and an end in God—His end and ours !
O crown us at that last for evermore !

PART I

FACES TOWARDS JERUSALEM

He sits exalted in his crown's pure light,
Amongst his kindred seraphs, hid from men—
Withdrawn in burning nimbus. What remains?
This weeping world we love for love of him
To lift by love of him to him we love.

Faces towards Jerusalem

I

IN CIVITATE DEI MAGNA

*The city is dusty, the streets are long,
And the sky overhead looks dim ;
But, ah ! it is fill'd with a thought of thee,
As the church with the chanted hymn.
It is fill'd with the memories bright of thee,
As the spirit with grace divine ;
If a sunbeam fall upon path or wall
I know 'tis a smile of thine.*

*Comes there a pause in the whirl around,
Thy heartstrings there I hear ;
Sounds there a voice that is sweet and low,
I know thy voice is near ;
Gleams there a face that is fair to see,
Wherever thy form may dwell,
I know it is thou by the white, white brow,
Thou spirit of Israfel !*

*O, I shall stand in a moment more
Where oft thy feet have trod,
Which now go over the steep incline
That leads to the Mount of God !
As ever they press on their forward way
There falls on the pilgrim's face
A beam more bright of the wond'rous light
That shines in the Holy Place.*

Paths of Zion

II

EIDOLON

No eye but mine is on the shifting waste,
As poised upon this steep cliff's utmost rim
I watch the world of waters. Many times
Have I thank'd God for that most perfect line
Wherewith the still sky rings the restless deep—
For passing ships; for tides which come and go;
For cultivated fields—with ample curves
Sloping and sweeping shoreward; for the glare
Day long on rough white chalk; for silent caves;
For shelter'd coves and shallows known to few;
For waste and lonely places unenclosed,
Which ocean peoples with a thousand voices.
But now my soul is moved by deeper thoughts:
One face transmuted in a light of mind
Is o'er the shadow'd prospects of my life
Exalted sacredly, like Dian's horn,
When—out of mists, from mead and marsh escaping—
She soars and finds the zenith.

Israfel,

That face is thine. I stand and think of thee,
Till thought evokes thine image: it is poised
In glory above these waters. To the sky
Thy face is turn'd, thy holy hands are clasp'd,
The light wind gently lifts and floats thy hair.
White vestures also by the wind are trail'd
A yard behind thee; subtle haze of light
Surrounds thy body; and its waist is girdled
With white and fragrant lilies . . . I have clothed
A human form in dreams with angel-hood,
And evermore a spirit in my heart
It dwells. Transfigur'd, thou hast pass'd from earth

Faces towards Jerusalem

Into a world of emblems, and therein
The stature of immortal life is thine.
Exempt from passion, weakness, pain and change,
Dost thou live ever a reserved, remote,
Translated life. And having lifted thee
Above this world's modalities, meseems
That this most blessed vision—beyond all thought
By my dream fashion'd—is most truly thou.
It was thy human nature prompted it:
The meekness, modesty and grace thereof
Have nourish'd and enhanced it. Thou alone
Didst prompt the vision, and all light thereof
Is shrined in thee. That manifested life,
Before earth-eyes presented, has reveal'd
An inner self which more than fleshly form
Is thine, is thou.

Thou art not yet perchance
In full fruition of that nobler part,
For in these daily ways the man divine
Holds chiefly from the lesser self aloof;
Some beams shine o'er it and in warmth does love
Descend thereon, to link the flesh therewith;
But perfect union of the twain on earth
Is compass'd rarely. When the heart is cleansed,
The heart draws toward it; when mere life of sense
Sinks down subdued and unimpeded mind
In conquest towers, then mind and vesture both
Abide transfigured in the light thereof,
For flesh when order'd well can also shine.
Thou in such light art dwelling, and thy face
Has—like a mirror—to my inward eyes
Reveal'd the nobler self: I see thy god.
I see thee stately, stedfast, pure of heart,
While earth-born natures—with the meaner man
And mundane things contented—have so far
From true self lapsed that no ray enters in
To beautify the temple's outer courts,

Paths of Zion

Which never therefore to pellucid sight
Reveal the brilliant spectrum of that high,
Undying part.

I stand beside the sea :
Waves swell, wind rises, falls an autumn night ;
And as that moon doth, when the darkness deepens,
Her own face brighten more, thy face grows fairer
Amidst the inward darkness of the world.
Thy nature alters, towards the self supreme
Ascending daily ; and mine own shines also—
With thy great love suffused, by a most strong,
Immortal love of thee suffused, transform'd.
I look to see thee, in the world beyond,
With God made one for ever in thy soul :
May I with God be one by love for thee ;
May this wide sea denote what fills with strength,
The orb'd moon witness that which cheers and leads,
Descending night portray the veils that hide
All paths henceforth but those which lead to heights
Untravell'd ! May it hide all tarnish'd love,
To perfect state exalting love for thee !
May that my spirit sanctify and seal,
And—for thy love—may I the world itself
By mine own labours seal and sanctify,
Then make the guerdon of that sacred task
One new star shining in thy crown of life—
My saint, my light, my symbol, Israfel !

III

TOWARDS PERFECT DAY

I SAW thy forehead touch'd with lunar beams :
Pax tecum, Sponsa Christi, Christ and God
Encompass, Bright One, and abide in thee ;

Faces towards Jerusalem

In outward life God's Temple be thy wall
And priestly vigils keep thee free from fall!

God knows, my saint, I might have held with thee
The human intercourse of friend and friend;
Speech might have pass'd between us, our warm hands
Have clasp'd at greeting and at parting time.
Seas roll their tides between us: dost thou watch
Heaven's fair queen rising? Are thine eyes and mine
Both fix'd thereon? Does thy heart also swell?
Soars all thy nature upward, gazing there—
Pure soul, high soul? O gracious communings,
Strong love of friend and friend, by me renounced,
That in a mirror of the mind preserved
Thy sacred semblance should be free from stain!
My true reward is with me here and now,
For, like a spirit from the sea's white spume
At eve ascending, lo, thy Symbol rose
And draws me on for ever, Moon of Faith,
Vision of Christ unseen! The potent sign—
Such spells evoked—pours down its light on thee:
This is no dream; it draws thy human self;
It takes thee starward. Thou art daily raised,
Till, like a cold and shifting sea, far down
Thine eyes behold the flux of mortal things—
A restless waste below thee—toss perturb'd.
Still on the sacred height thy glorious moon
Of spirit—manifest in lambent flame—
Shall glow for ever before the veil of God.

Poise, happy moon, for ever; in the cold
And starry spaces poise thy shining shield!
Behold, as shadows on the road, are cast
Our meaner selves behind us. Earth and sea
Are in thy light transfigured; vistas bright
And paths that end not tempt us sweetly forth;
A thousand lofty hopes inspire the heart

Paths of Zion

Which from a lonely zenith of the soul
Thou pourest downward, as the moon her beams,
O Mystic Moon, enthroned in heaven of mind!

IV

TO OTHER ENDS

HE glides before us with the torch of Christ,
Lux Christi crying in this night of time :
On his God-haunted face the grace of God
Dwells visibly ; so, chaste and passionless,
His beauty utters its apocalypse,
Or lifts its glass of vision. In such depths
I read man's life anew ; a soul-born glow
Has fallen on its pages ; all the words
Of that close-written volume take a fresh,
Unlook'd for meaning. Evermore betwixt
The lines of its enigmas shall I read
His gracious message and the peace thereof,
His creed of hope.

I hear it even now,
Though this be dream. The opal twilight falls,
And in the silentness of mere and mead
A church-bell summons to the vesper-hymn.
Is that thy voice which bids me also forth ?
Is that the music of thy heart most pure
Which in the pauses of the whirl of thought
Sends forth its summons like a bell to me ?
I will not stay to take up staff and scrip,
To count the things I leave or bid farewells.
Behold, I come ! Mine empty hands can bear
Whatever burdens may seem well to thee.

Faces towards Jerusalem

And now my soul uplifted views afar
The heights of life, desired and sought so long ;
But faintly limn'd against the furthest sky
Are altitudes beyond them. Thence thy voice
Is calling, nothing I behold of thee—
A voice alone upon the mountain-tops
Which calls and calls. The road is steep and wild ?
I come no less : I will not faint nor pause.
Ascend, bright spirit, with the speech of God :
My heart is strong to follow and achieve ;
But when those vision'd peaks of life I win,
Return into some greater height above
And lead me thus for ever—still remote,
A voice alone on the eternal hills
Which calls and calls.

V

AND SO FORWARD

O WONDROUS lustre of the mountain snow,
By sacred morning's light of gold inform'd,
By golden morning's blessed light illumed,
By magian light on all the airless crests—
Whatever storms may vex the world below,
Whatever clouds may darken earth and sea—
On those proud peaks, through all and all illumed !

O saffron light of morning, on such hills
The weeping angels watch with straining eyes,
While Christ still tarries in the House of Death !
Break, Rose of Morning, break in bright array :
Thy fragrance fills the spaces of the air,
Thy blush uplifts the future ! And, meseems,

Paths of Zion

It floods my house of life for evermore—
A glory of holy soul !

The start is made :
Light, beauty, lead ; and lead, thou hand of God ;
Call earth and sky ; calls mystic sea profound ;
Life calls and death. The shining Crown of Life
And thine uplifted nature's secret heights
My strengthen'd spirit to achieve sets out,
Saint Israfel !

VI

HOW NATURE HELPS

I SEE this eve—o'er these familiar fields—
The sky grow blue : thy transient opal shines :
I see thine amethyst and opal deep,
Thou sky of God, and all thy West aflame !
Ensanguined clouds across that gleaming vault
Sail in the wind of sunset. Splendours bright,
Your tinctures perish while I watch, but one
Shines in achievement, in lone beauty shines.

The world unfolds in front, now cloud-involved :
Is that the early moon within the mist
Which I see southward, like a phantom light,
Hang in a rainy sky ? Chirps one weak bird :
From wold and woodland, as in dream, the day—
A pallid death withdraws. The bleak wind stirs
Complaining trees. Far winds the path I take :
It is one voice invites, one star which leads,
One hope which shines through all . . .

The wide meads stretch :
Lo, all the West behind me suddenly

Faces towards Jerusalem

Glowes newly : how the blue sky clears o'erhead !
It is not night, nor seems it evening yet ;
A spring sun shines, and like a tocsin beats
The heart of youth through all the smiling land.
Sing on, thou lark ! O'er all these open fields
The long grass glitters in the light and wind.
Thou wind, sing on ; thou clear, discoursing stream,
Make gladsome music ! Neither storm nor gloom
Are round me now. Fair winds the path I take ;
Spring buds of bushes upon both its banks
Are bursting forth . . .

And I shall see thy face—
Because the dream supports me, I shall see
Thy face once more. Thou wilt not fail me, nay,
The quest shall finish as it starts perchance :
This sun descending—now with vapours veil'd—
Spreads light on miles of mead and marsh, immersed
In April floods. The hedges and the trees—
Which out of waters rise—cast lengthening shades
Along the gleaming surface ; all around
I hear the gentle lapse of little brooks,
While not more cool than fragrant turns awhile
The South's soft air.

VII

MASTER-BUILDING

GREEN earth is round thee and blue-gleaming sea
Spreads far before—so full, so bright, so fair
Its silver surface : on the beach it lies,
As a child breathing on the breast asleep.
There is no limit to the golden hopes
Which light, like lamps, the future's floral paths.
There is no path too long, no goal too far,

Paths of Zion

No height beyond thee : thou art strong for all
And all in turn renoucest—land and sea,
Youth's kingship, youth's inheritance therein,
And towards the perfect, hidden life in God
Directest only thy desiring eyes :
May thy high soul be throned o'er space and time ;
Be thine the Secret Name, the Morning Star !

Like Michael soaring from celestial strife,
I watch thee rise ; through surging mists of sense
Thy strong right arm put forth, thy shapely head—
With striving face upturn'd and streaming hair—
All light itself, into the light ascends.
The rainbow-splendour of unspotted mind
Invests thee now ; so sinks the flesh subdued :
Thine earnest lips the grace of soul invoke,
The secret eye which sees and searches all,
The word of spirit in the soul itself
Declared. . . .

But now, with modest eyelids droop'd,
With even pulse, with cool and indrawn mien,
I see thee stand, still in thy white array'd.
Thou speakest not : this is thy victory,
Who hast, triumphant by the strength of will,
Compass'd thine end. Henceforth the voice of God
Teaches within, the spirit of Christ inspires.

So dost thou issue from thy house of thought,
With hands uplifted : thou art priest and king.
What dost thou seek among thy weaker kind ?
The priestly sacredness of thine own self
For man to offer in the name of God—
A cause divine. . . . What angel dwells on earth ?
Nay, ask what earnest man of mien erect,
In whose eyes shines the troth of other worlds,
Reveals a perfect law, the Food Divine

Faces towards Jerusalem

Administers, and spans the breathless height
'Twixt man and God, the mystic bridge makes known—
No longer narrow as a sword's sharp edge,
For all can walk thereon.

My lord, all hail!

Thy call is coming out of realms unseen ;
The work is done. Put off thy garments now,
The lapse and wash of an eternal sea
Stirs in the twilight hush. So pass therein ;
The waters once above thy form will close,
But when thy head divides their surface calm
Comes light, comes warmth of the eternal day.
I ask no inspiration now from earth,
Or ocean's voice, to paint in human terms
A soul transfigured by immortal being.
I see thy former nature magnified,
While other missions lead, in worlds unknown,
Most saintly missions, of thy progress born—
Of God's deep counsels born—for evermore.

And now to Him Who gives us space to dream in
Be praise for ever from our dreams and us ;
May noble acts be food for dreams still nobler ;
May these, ascending in a scale divine,
The scope of action and of life enlarge,
Till life with Him be one !

VIII

THE END CROWNS

O SECRET SYMBOL, seen by bad and good,
Unfold for ever ! May we know thee more,
And more expanding, may thy meaning high
Reveal the perfect measures of the law !

Paths of Zion

Pass all things dark before it, pass and die ;
But on the pure, regenerated, free
Ascending mind of man, on life's new age,
Shine, mellow moon unwaning ; shed thy beams
Of mildness, mercy and intelligence !
Symbolic Moon, may God light man in thee !
All earthly loves have perish'd ; that remains
Wherewith we love thee and are led by thee,
And that—imperishable, peerless, strong—
By which thy spirit is to God led up,
O human nature of our emblem pure,
With whom may God remain in light and love,
In life immortal and the Crown of Life !

I set my Symbol, fill'd with meanings deep,
To shine before thee—in thy face, O man,
To shine in beauty ! Take it, gentle world :
Be worthy thou ; fulfil what wants in me !
So as the moon, new-born in month of May,
Shall wax each night, this lamp of thine and mine
Will amplify its purport. Should it prove
That in far years the lustrous beams matured
Shall offer light beyond the light of mind,
Remember him who set a beacon-torch
On his own heights to burn, and greatness more.
Peace fill thy heart, while I go faring forth,
My part to act. May all things great be thine :
If from an apex past all dream I cry,
Believe the news I send of realms unknown—
My friends, my lovers, and judge me worthy you !

Faces towards Jerusalem

IX

WITH HARP AND CROWN

SONS of the Morning and Eternity,
Children of Benediction and of Light,
Daughters of angels' kisses: I have wrought
A little book of melody and love—
A book against the resurrection-day—
Song mystic of humanity divine,
Achieved in one regenerated heart—
Our bright sidereal beacon, Israfel.
I swear, my brethren, by the Orphic faith,
And by the faithful prophecies inscribed
Deep in discerning souls, that starry hosts
Lead on that spirit, and his reign is nigh.
He stands erect among frankincense clouds,
A pillar of melody; his saffron hair
Is a cloud of harpstrings; as he moves in grace
And ministers, the ground beneath his feet
Quivers in music, like a sounding-board;
The parted air about him slowly streams
Into faint flute-notes. In God's Holy Place
He wears himself the aspect of a god:
Has eyes and sees celestial hierarchies,
With companies of martyrs and of saints;
Has lips which shape man's language to divine
And voice it past the common range of sound,
To traverse God's infinity as prayer;
Has ears wherein celestial harmonies
Find passage through wide galleries of soul,
Wherein they circulate and amplify,
As in white sea-shells tinged with coral pink
All ocean's vastness hollowly resounds;

Paths of Zion

Has hands to sanctify by service meet
Among the vessels and the mysteries ;
Has feet ascending to the throne of God ;
And—with a clamorous music in his throat—
Utters the watchwords of eternity.

PART II
FLOWERS OF PARADISE

“Amor transformat amantem in amatum, facit
amantem intrare ad interiora amati et e contra,
ut nihil amati remanet non unitum.”—DOCTOR
ANGELICUS.

Flowers of Paradise

I

PROEMIUM

GATES OF LOVE

Is that thy voice which, deep in haunted glades,
Expounds the passion of the nightingale?
Is that thy smile which on these Kentish cliffs
Pours mellow warmth o'er miles of waving wheat?
Is that thine eyes' light on the gleaming sea?
Is that the flower-sweet fragrance of thy breath
In hyacinthine dingles, deeply sunk,
Possess'd by spells and incense? Is it thou
Whose beauty's morn, in amaranthine blue
And glory draped, looks down on joyful earth
And royal majesty of open main
From such unmeasured distance? Hast thou won
Thy dimpled whiteness from the sea-gull's wings,
Thy splendour ravish'd from a raptur'd sky,
Thy freedom's grace from fountains, from the depths
Of brooding ocean such unsearchable
Profundity of spirit-speaking eyes?
Or dost thou lend thy nature's secret wealth
To garnish and intinct the world without?

Sons of the Voice and Everlasting Peers,
Who look to see the Bridegroom and the Bride,
I bring you once again a little book
Of transformation on the psychic plane;
And may Lucasta's love-born litanies
Be counted as a prophecy or pledge
Of more resplendent exploits still to come—
The metamorphoses of Orphic art.

Paths of Zion

I look to see most mighty things of God
Accomplish'd in the land of living men.
The unprepared but pure hypostasis
Is one fair-shining maid's simplicity—
A sacramental type of hidden truth,
Reality and beauty which transcend
Expression. We are born with faces veil'd
As Moses' was, to hide the god within :
May one translucid veil by Horeb's light
Be here transfigured, earth and heaven be join'd
In high Hermetic Marriage, which transmutes
The world to gold.

Discriminate between
The letter and the spirit that indwells :
Be then all lustre yours, all magian gifts,
Peace, inspiration, pure imagining,
Laurel and sacred palm and crown of life.

II

DIVINE MISSION

IMAGINATION, vesting mortal form
With shadows cast by Deity, be thou
My minister ! Immortal Mind, proclaim
Thy true intent ! Magician of the Will,
Directing both, and thou, uplifted soul
Of inspiration and of poesy,
A holy task is yours : with power descend !
A life is put into your priestly hands
To lead by lone and consecrated paths
From realm to realm of ideality.

The panorama of this outward world,
Before mine eyes transfigured in a breath,
Is supernaturally glorified.

Flowers of Paradise

A high entrancement dwells on earth and sky,
On that far-gleaming pageantry—that flash
Of crumbling crests—proclaiming open sea—
My other self-ness or my heritage.
So one thing more to beautify and bless—
One human soul to deify—one maid
To fill with immortality—one deep,
Illuminating, infinite dream of love !

I thank Thee for this bracing mountain-air
Which rectifies all faculties of soul,
Thou mighty God ! I yearn, I yearn, to Thee.
My heart ascends in aspiration pure
To meet Thy majesty, Thy tranquil light :
Another being in these arms I bear.
Baptize her beauty in benignant beams,
Invest her with the freedom's perfect gift
Of Thine illuminated and elect.

III

WORLDS OF MINISTRY

THERE is no peace, no beauty in the glare
About life's low, relaxing meadow lands :
But trustfully resign thy gentle self,
And I will bear thee hence to secret hills—
From all things common, limited and base
To all uplifted, liberated, rare,
To unexplored, intelligible realms
Invested with the majesty of dream.

Across the threshold of thy glorious eyes
I gaze and see thy soul.

Exclude me not,
Nor—Mother Nature—blame a chosen priest !

Paths of Zion

Send forth innumerable voices high
From thy four quarters, multiply above
Thy solar pageants! Worshipful, I take
And minister thy worshipful sacraments.

Speak to me, world of waters! Thy fair breast—
All light, all beauty, like the face I love—
Exhales an efflorescence of thyself,
Thy grandeur, depth and mastery. Her height,
Thy deeps, thy vastness, seem as phases three
Of one unfathom'd wonder. Her I see
Who, distant in a city of darkling ways,
Will tarry, prayers upholding, till I come.
Here—in the vigour of this morning wind—
I stand, self-poised, upon a peak of rock,
While all thy glistening and gladsome pomp
Of hasty tide about me swirls and swells;
While every shallow on the shingled shore
Is like a boy's voice, meeting careful life
With blithesome laughter; but the distant tracks
Speak as with tidings of a mission'd man,
Who—from the heart and centre of all things—
Ascends with revelation. Thou art nigh
When in the haunted city of darkling ways
I stand, absorb'd in speculation deep
Before my vestal's shrine.

Absorb'd I stand.

Grey eyes—Madonna—sacramental world—
Immeasurable main of mighty soul!
There is no sea, no sky, no fruitful earth;
That is no lark which sings, no summer breeze
That laves and censes: it is thou in each—
Thou variously, inscrutably reveal'd;
And plunged for ever in a trance of love,
I lose myself, I melt, I merge in thee.
'Tis not the moon, with spiritual beams
Some night-sea soothing: thou art moon and sun,

Flowers of Paradise

While in illimitable ocean thou
Assumest other majesty and form.
Thy grace is in acacia and in beech ;
And when thy lover in a lane at noon,
Beneath some maple lays his languid limbs,
And the broad, rumour-full, benignant leaves
Give shadow-shelter in a torrid time,
And drooping low—with lissome whispering—
Fan fever'd forehead, or in ears adream
Recite dryadic rhymes and roundelays ;
It is the providence of thy pure love
Which closes round him. On thy lap he lies—
Thy heart the moss which pillows and thy breath
The zephyrs, all leaf-messages thy voice,
And those dryadic roundelays and rhymes
A rhythmic efflorescence of thy soul,
Whose vaults are resonant with organ-odes
And stately epics of eternity.

IV

GREAT SACRAMENTS

ONE dainty, soft and fruitful shower of rain
Has purged and clarified the fragrant air
On this God-favour'd evening, late in spring.
It shines as lucent as thy virgin brow,
O thou most worshipful ! To every stir
Its cool, translucent particles respond
By tremulous emotions far prolong'd.
The seething murmurs of the shifting sea
Melt in the pleasance of a mood of dreams ;
The temper'd merriment and melody
Of church-bells ringing in the distance seem
A benediction of thy beautiful voice
Which lifts my soul into eternity.

Paths of Zion

There falls a gleam upon the open main :
Nor blue, nor grey—it shines with thine eyes' light.
God bless the wonder of those waters deep ;
God bless thine eyes—their beauty fills my life ;
God bless that lark—his frenzy haunts the sky ;
God bless thy voice—its modulated tones
Have spell'd full often many a waste of waves
And oft Astarte bound through formless nights—
When tempests scream'd—to pour her peaceful rays
On riven landscapes of the inner world.
God bless the ripples of thy music, all
My nature lifting to love's mantic heights,
High spiritual quests of life and thought :
God bless thee ever and in all thy ways !

I stand this night upon a lofty down ;
The dreaming city by a dreaming sea
Beneath me spreads, bewitch'd in dreaming air :
Round me are solitude and wilderness.
I call God's rain of benediction down
To water all the Paradise of thy soul :
Descend, celestial and deific dew ;
Rise, Eden-incense, and thy virtue sweet
Diffuse around thee, as the clover fills
These fields uplifted with its teeming scent.

And, lo, the darkness—like a loving mouth—
Parts in the utterance of a bell-sweet name !
The stars stand close around, the trees incline ;
From every quarter of the open world
One mystic word—*MADONNA*—softly breathes,
With meanings foreign to the land or sea.
May the strong influence of wind-swept downs,
Of aromatic odours brought from far—
Descending—fill the shining veils of her,
So made a porcelain vessel for the night's
All-sacred myrrh and essences of nard !

Flowers of Paradise

V

CHOIRS MADE VISIBLE

THE luminiferous and azurine,
Immeasurable vault of holy sky
Its living tincture softens slowly down—
Through hyacinthus and through heliotrope—
To opal's pallid and elusive charm.
Here too in twilight-hush my Lady's eyes,
Dilating gently—as a soul expands
By noble thought—diffuse the tender light
Of hallow'd human love. Descending dew—
So long desired—distil thy purest drops ;
These scatter'd tresses cool, irradiate.
My nature quickens in a pool of love
Which spreads toward all mankind ; great Nature drinks
The sacred, deifying soma-draught
Of dews and moonlight, then in every leaf,
In each light breath that stirs her magic sleep,
Vaticinates about us, pouring forth
Pontifical consecrations. These in turn
Enthroned my spirit, as its pulses beat
By thee, most blessed ; while a virtue falls
In broad vibrations, from the trembling beams,
Diffused, of this orb'd moon aureoline.

An unimaginable splendour fills
My spirit with prophecy, and sight therein :
So in the floral future of the world
I stand translated—in that sanctity
After the pattern of a poet's mind
Created. On the summit far in soul
The four-square city of a Salem new
Stands high-erected, stands the House of God,

Paths of Zion

Most perfect Temple of Humanity.
This is the bright and everlasting day
Our Lord hath made ; it is the day of Christ.

Strike, harps of angels, harps of God, the Scald ;
Strike, harps of kings ; strike, Io ΕΒΟΗΕ :
With choral chants proclaim the coming age !

VI

TO ISLES OF LIGHT

BLEST be this undergrowth ! May rain and dew
Increase it still ! And blest the tranquil breeze
Which—after cooling showers—has crept across
From dark, rich downs that ring the country round !
Blest too this sky of June, like April's seen :
Glory of sapphire blue, glory of cloud !

The quiet spirit into trance ascends :
I reach that world where all things dream'd may be—
If by sublimity and virtue they
Can urge a claim on life. I seek therein
That process, hidden in the psychic plane,
Whereby the beauty of a maid elect
May with the glory of essential light
Be inwardly emblazon'd . . . I have found
A secret path ; I know the perfect way
Through which the stream of spiritual life
Flows down to re-create the hearts of men.

I take thee hence ; I lead and lead thee on ;
The aspiration, the desire, the will
Uplift us both. Thou art no more of earth ;

Flowers of Paradise

The troubled cosmos of created things
Remotely gleams and glimmers. O the wings
Which bear us now, that other dawn which breaks!
Sword-guarded Eden and those gardens bright,
Those shadow-palaces, those haunted mosques—
Irêm, the wandering city—are in thee
Henceforth the high possession of my soul.

VII

AN IMAGE OF THE WORLD

BESIDE the lone coast's utter solitude,
I fill thy spirit with the ocean's voice,
As lone sea-caves are fill'd; or haunt thy brain
With singing winds and clamour of joyful birds
In heaven afloat. Thine eyes of trust and love
Transfigure with an ardent violet
From the bright zenith's royal altitude.
Now sunset's bloom of rose has tinged thy cheeks;
The lanes and gardens, full of floral scents,
Make thy white robes magnolian. Now thy speech
To day-long melody of summer-months
Is modulated; life's harp-harmonies
Have mellow'd all the movements of thy limbs.
Behold, I face thee—with thy hair unbound—
To meet the magic of a moon at full;
High praise of Dian, the beloved, the crown'd,
The plenteous queen, has drawn her tawny light
To make thy nimbus. Now the choir of stars
Has tranquillised the waters of thy soul,
Till thou art hush'd and hallow'd and subdued.
Behind the veils of matter and of time,
The secret beauty shines, and that within
Thy gracious sacrament of outward form

Paths of Zion

Makes answer, leaping toward the actual
With parabolic bursts of melody.

So shine that age when every maid and youth
Shall equal glories wear, such crowns assume,
And in the mystic city of the blest
No sun shall set, nor moon shall need to rise,
But there the Christ-light of the human soul
In house and street abide !

VIII

FOR THY MARRIAGE

AND when for us sounds nuptial hour of souls
A mystic bridal shall be held therein ;
Red morn shall lend her banners, eve her star
And night her dews and moonbeams. There shall rise
A choric grandeur of unbonded sea—
The holy, holy sea ; splendour of lights
Shall gather round us and shall clothe us then.

Such splendour bursts e'en now : O sky of grey,
Which veils ineffable dyes and sundown gold,
O lonely lanes and vistas in the wood,
Which twilight fills with mystery ! Wan star,
White star, first star, pure font of trembling light !
O deep, adorable, ecstatic hush,
Which fills my soul with longing for the far,
The unattainable, the sky-bound verge,
Profounder hush and higher mystery !

Flowers of Paradise

IX

TALISMANIC MAGIC

HEART'S truth, the moon above a hidden sea—
Above those silent waters, merged in mist—
Uplifts the splendour of her perfect disc,
With hay-time halo ring'd, and fills the sky
With golden glamour . . . Turn thy speaking eyes . . .
When on some lofty ridge, which faces North,
The wind-tide beats about us—cool and fresh,
New life infusing—there some psychic grace
Expands my faculties: the length and breadth,
The glory and resources of this world,
I realise. But when with patient, fond,
Discerning thoughts I gaze—dream-spell'd—on thee,
Thy nature's possibilities unfold,
As with resplendent blossoms all adorn'd
In everlasting May-time of the mind.

So God be praised, Who made thy gentle soul,
And under sacramental veils abides
Within thy nature's inmost sanctuary;
Bless'd all the stars that shape thy future ways;
Bless'd all who love thee and are loved by thee!
Be thy true lover in thy beauty bless'd—
His heart's ideal taking shape in thee,
In thee attain'd.

The Daughter of the Voice—
BATH-KOL, the mystic Daughter of the Voice—
Makes answer through the infinite: Amen.

THE POOR BROTHER'S
MASS-BOOK

When so much fails the soul; when lights in flashes
Dazzle, then die; and when the paths we trod
Shew all green life about them burnt to ashes—
What then remains? A new appeal to God.
Beyond the Orders and the Churches rise
The great and secret heights. The soul descends,
Despite immeasurable distance, how
Ascent is possible at will for all
Who do no proffer'd graces disavow.
And seeing that the nearest door perchance
Is that intended for her first advance,
Less as a home at first than house of call,
She to the Church appeals for ministries.
Haply it follows that the soul, who there
Enters on inward offices of prayer—
Despite the letter and its grievous chain—
Shall find the Church has all and there remain.

The Poor Brother's Mass-Book

OR A DEVOUT METHOD OF ASSISTING AT THE HOLY SACRIFICE FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE NOT OF THIS WORLD. ITEM: AN IMPLIED MANNER OF SERVING, FOR CLERKS OF THE HOLY ASSEMBLIES.

I

WHEN PASSING THE THRESHOLD OF THE TEMPLE

The postulant enters the outward Church, to partake of its ministry, as one who accepts for the moment a second best, while desiring those things which are supernal.

GREATER DISILLUSION

BEHOLD we stand from all deceit apart !
Nothing misleads us, nothing can betray :
We have reckon'd up all vanities and seek
True life alone, asking for God through all,
Having outgrown some sacraments and types
But yet deferring to their ministry,
As to the service of green leaves at noon
And all the votive offerings Nature brings—
Odours of sweetness, myrrh, frankincense, gold.

*While men are seeking for truth with many clamours,
it may happen that God opens the door of the heart and
comes in.*

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II

WHEN TAKING SEAT

The Postulant assumes his appointed place with perfect conformity, under obedience to the instituted signs, invoking the Voice and the Word.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

THAT which we heard of old, and long to hear,
Speak in the floods once more, or, far and near,
Amidst the rushing winds reverberate ;
In the sea's music, mother of thought profound
And deepest feeling, let the tidings sound ;
Most in thought's silent ways, early and late !

The Second Temple was not less the House of God because the Shekinah was withdrawn. So is the Presence with us, whether It is realised or not.

III

THE FIRST RECOLLECTION

The soul exhorts herself, because paths of advance in the several grades of the Lesser and Greater Mysteries are in a certain sense narrow, and few enter the Gate which opens towards the Higher Palace.

LE MOYEN DE PARVENIR

STRAIGHT as the path which leads in distant days
To the large issues of the narrow gate,
Be our life shaped in all its ways and aims,
And let all high intent the heart upraise ;
But do not bide till we can meet all claims,
Or, with the chance of service, stand and wait !

A Prefatory Meditation

It is with the great matters of religion as it is with the business of life ; if we looked for time and opportunity, we should do but little in the latter, and if we tarried in the other to increase worthiness, we should never go back to God. It might be written that we shall be worthy when we enter into the Divine Union.

IV

A PREFATORY MEDITATION

The sun rises in the East to restore the blessing of daylight, and another sun, rising in the soul of man, brings peace as well as justice.

AND SO ONWARD

THROUGH earth's long day, the spirit and the flesh
Maintain their strife within ; but our life's star
Illumines still the intellectual air,
Strength, beauty, brilliance gathering as it moves,
Till slowly upward soars man's nobler self
Towards calmer zones, to zeniths of the mind
Aspiring. Necessary helps vouchsafed
Our weakness strengthen—most, O mighty sea,
Thy vastness and thy voices, strength with strength
Enduing ! And ye too, ye lonely roads,
Ye thickets only by the fox and bird
Frequented, and ye populous human haunts—
One whole gigantic heart, throbbing with life—
Ye also help in your own high degree !
But when these fail us, as our last resource,
The House of God remains to take us in ;
And if to hearts inhibited at times

The Poor Brother's Mass-Book

The ministrations in the Holy Place
Seem voided, know, the Master of the House,
With signs of presence, shall at need invest
Both inward chancel and external nave.

We cannot suppose that the man is approaching God who has obviously no desire thereof; but we must hope that deep in his heart there may still be a latent capacity of that desire.

V

THE CEREMONY OF COMMENCING THE OFFICE

The Great Mysteries of Religion, as represented by their Liturgical Rites, begin invariably with invocation of the Divine Names, by the way of that substitution which signifies, in a summary, the whole mission of the Church, being the reverent and orderly communication of great auguries and tokens which stand for things not manifest: e.g. the In Nomine which opens the Mass.

THE SECRET NAME

THE letters of the Name we long to learn
Are found in sacred books at every turn,
Yet we in vain those characters may trace,
And with our eyes their outward sense discern;
For the Great Name itself, our saving grace,
Is utter'd only in the Holy Place.

The atmosphere of the Divine Secret abides in a great disinterest, and yet that secret is nearest of all things.

Judica Me, Deus

VI

INTROIBO AD ALTARE DEI

It is good to enter the Path which takes the Seeker to the Altar, for Heaven comes down to the soul which cannot ascend thereto.

THE CAUSE PLEADED

WE have confess'd Thee since our days began,
Thy law discern'd in all creation's plan,
And yet unprofitable servants still
Remain, so distant from Thy holy hill,
Conscious of nothing like the dreadful want
And void within us—full of rumours dark—
Waiting Thy manifested covenant,
The refuge of Thine Altar and Thine Ark.

The youth of the soul is the King's Presence, and the joy which cometh thereof is morning's joy and the Mass-time.

VII

JUDICA ME, DEUS

He who prays to be delivered from the evil man asks to be saved from himself.

THE OTHER WAY

WE prove all paths, nor find a road in one;
Seek many things beneath the wintry sun
Which shines alone on this dim earth of ours;
But when the barren strife at length is done
May grace, free-handed, come with blessed dowers
And shew the true way strewn with deathless flowers.

The Poor Brother's Mass-Book

Judge Thou between our part of life, which yearns
To reach Thee, and that burden of our dole—
The part of death which into death returns :
Proclaim Thy high salvation in the soul,
Fill with Thy light and in Thy love make whole !

The soul is sad and disturbed because of the great distance ; but this is a part of her illusion.

VIII

THE CONFESSION

The Sanctum Sanctorum is the place of purification, and wretched is he who waits to strive with his sins before he has recourse to God.

FOUNDATIONS OF VICTORY

A LITTLE while in the ways unknown—
One little life—have I sought—
Or possibly many lives—to find
That truth of truth which can fill the mind ;
Nor have I fear'd to stand alone
In the lonely ways of thought.

The false lights came and the false lights went ;
I did not tarry for these ;
The dreadful sense of a heart unfit—
Through its native earth—how I fought with it,
And the knowledge of days mis-spent
In face of the mysteries !

If once, but once, I have sunk and said :
“ Yield, soul ! ” or, “ The dream is done,
Because alone the untainted heart
Wins crowns I work for ! ” Then, Hope, depart !
But 'twas up with the stricken head,
Still looking to meet the sun !

The Indulgence

Therefore I trust that a soul on fire
For weal has the wine-press trod,
And though my sins upon either hand,
In witness rising, against me stand,
They shall waste not my heart's desire,
Which out of them leaps to God.

As time goes on, we desire more and more the white walls of Salem; but it should be remembered that the Eternal City is within.

IX

THE INDULGENCE

There are greater benedictions, and like these the greater evils are within, but notwithstanding that forgiveness can be always presupposed in virtue of that supernatural love which casts out fear, there is still the mal-ease of the soul in the peopled darkness and the purlieus, where the commerce of wickedness drives its several trades.

FOR THE CROWN AND THE KINGDOM

OUR hopes are Thine; to Thee our ends converge;
And all of will within us, long transferr'd,
Waits on the fiat of Thine utter'd word.
Speak in the silence; speak in the storm of sound
From which, to reach Thy silence, we emerge
Here on this holy ground;
Speak in the Rites that bless Thee; on the verge
Of all things manifest; in things unseen—
Speak. In our longing we shall find no rest
Until we know what all Thy portents mean.
O when Thy high intention stands express'd,
Speak in the heart, and we shall hear Thee best!

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With aching souls, we grieve the life of wrong
Which has from Thy life sever'd us so long :
 Take us, do with us as Thou wilt ;
The sad mischances of our days forgive ;
 From those dark paths wherein we mate with guilt
Redeem us, Saviour : teach us how to live.

It is in the suspension of earthly things that the first secret consists.

X

WHEN THE PRIEST ASCENDS TO THE ALTAR

The search after God is not the quest of joy, which itself is a counsel of the search, but the satisfaction of a craving impelled by the spur of necessity.

THE LAST END

WHEN after all the strife and wearying
We come in contact with the great true thing,
 Which points the term of all—will that be such
 As shall make compensation overmuch
For the long disillusion and sharp sting ?
 But yes—God save us—its most distant touch
Thrills our heart's instrument in every string.

It is not impossible to aspire to the similitude of God, and this is the implicit of union.

The Introit

XI

AUFER A NOBIS

Man is a time-piece which never stops.

PURGATION

A LITTLE space of daylight and of gloom,
Of pain and dim delight, and then the tomb,
Whereat the whole is over and is gone—
Those scenes forget us where of old we toil'd :
Sad is it surely ; but the soul assoil'd
Its path appointed takes, and still goes on.
Now, therefore, where Thy Holy Place begins,
Bid us, we pray Thee, pause, and purge our sins !

*Let us seek to enter with pure minds, but remember that
enter we must.*

XII

THE INTROIT

*It is the concealment of God in humanity which causes
the sleep of this life.*

AN OPENING OF THE GATES

OPEN Thy gates ; behold we open ours !
We have destroy'd our earthworks, broken down
All roofs and battlements ; our Babel towers
Are rent to fragments. Give us entrance now
Within the holy precincts of Thy town !

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We have been far enough from Thee apart,
Long exiled from Thy palace and Thy throne ;
Let us behold Thy face, and teach us how
The wondrous secret of the world is known
By the ineffable glory of Thy crown
And in the life eternal of Thy heart.

Believe in the great things, practise mansuetude and sweetness.

XIII

THE KYRIE ELEISON

We do not enter the Path because it is pleasant, but because it is the only track.

THE GATE AND THE WAY

A NARROW gate, a straight, unbending road,
Bleak hill-tops, sudden gorges, and a load
Of sadness through the solitary track :
One comfort only—to our own abode
The one way back !
And since we needs must reach Thee, why and how
Esteeming little, shew us mercy, Thou !

It is not becoming that those who were born in the palace should build cabins in the desert.

The Collect

XIV

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

The places of peace are also those of exaltation.

THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

PEACE in high places ; on the peaks supreme,
Far over passion's mists, deep peace of love ;
Light of true light, the glory and the gleam ;
Far over troubled sleep, what worlds of dream
Give space for souls—yes, there is room above !

Sleep naturally passes into dream, but there is a certain repose in which dream is exalted into vision ; and this at its induction is initiation, but at the end, adeptship.

XV

THE COLLECT

The consolation which carries us along is that, seeing there is but one true road no one can err therein.

CONSUMMATION

FEAR not frustration of our good intent,
But fear the feeble working of our wills ;
Fail'd never yet the soul which, seeking, went,
Far as soul could, upon the great ascent :
What by the Word Divine—say, God—is meant ?
He that fulfils !

Do not despise the trifles, but do not let them deceive us !

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XVI

THE SUBSTITUTED EPISTLE

The way of compassion is also the way of sorrow.

ASCETIC LIFE

THE end of self-denial
Is not to rack the flesh,
Of needless pain in heart and brain
Adding yet burdens fresh.

It is to school the spirit
Till this reveals to sense
How patience meek through all must seek,
And yet through all dispense ;

Must look for love the perfect,
For truth the perfect end ;
Not for the prize before the eyes
But that unseen contend.

Yet must we strive, provided
To fail on earth of each ;
Must nurse no doubt but still hold out
To reach what's out of reach.

The lesser purpose round us
Shall gain the lesser meed,
And take its fill ; the greater, still
Go empty and in need.

The Substituted Epistle

The world unfolds her treasures ;
It sighs but does not stay ;
O'er secret parts of human hearts
It yearns, but moves away.

Perchance its goal awaits it :
We dream but do not see ;
If we but knew, our pains were few—
Ah, light our task would be !

Task, do I say? What spirit
Would pause on things of earth,
Did bright and clear that star appear
Whence all our stars draw birth?

To act as if with knowledge
Is here meanwhile our lot,
And to forego but not to know—
Asking, but answer'd not.

One thing is certain only—
That which we burn to find
Earth cannot give ; for this to live
Dares not the man of mind.

And so by self-denial
His great shall school his less,
'Twixt soul and star to lift no bar—
Because the end may bless.

O well for those who labour
Their daily bread to eat,
And God at last bless those who fast,
Desiring ghostly meat !

*The Path of the Cross is the Path of the Mystical Rose,
though Rose and Cross are joined. That which they form
together ceases to be a path of sorrow.*

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XVII

THE GRADUAL

Great are the heights and great also are the deeps ; the cohorts of witnesses are numberless ; but beyond all is the place of benediction, and to this we look for the power and the glory also.

BENISON

THOU Who dost bless us, Whom we bless, hereby
Before all men, I rise and testify

That by Thy grace alone I look to live ;
That Thy dear gifts above the crowns of earth
Are precious and are mine by right of birth,
So here I freely take, as Thou dost give.

There is a certain confusion of thought concerning the Divine complacency in the dedication of our human love. Even in the spheres that we seek for, it is not entirely a question of complacency, but of the natural conjunction of things which from the beginning were meant for one another.

XVIII

MUNDA COR MEUM

Though it is impossible to recall the past, the future can at least be moulded newly in respect of our plans concerning it.

THE ENKINDLING STONE

COME, let us pledge the heart to purer life,
Thrusting the past behind, with all it holds

The First Gospel

Of fair and dark ! Come, take with stalwart front
The future ! Thither—to the mountain heights !—
We yet shall meet the messenger divine,
Standing serene in some uplifted place,
On which the stars shed influence, whereon
Do moon and sun concur. His hands shall hold
The shining stone inscribed with secret words,
Which hallow lips for prophecy and give
Not only tidings true but sense thereof.

Man is native to the heights, and the burden of his normal life is a difficulty of respiration in the deeps to which he does not belong by his origin.

XIX

THE FIRST GOSPEL

It is therefore only on the mountains that the feet of the messenger are beautiful when he brings glad tidings near.

ON THE WAY TO JERUSALEM

O IF the splendours of the life above
This turbid life of earth might dawn on us,
With shafts of sacred light and two-edged beams
Refracted up and down from rocks and peaks
Of spiritual precipice, to rend
This temple's veil, this temple built by flesh
To flesh for the soul's bondage and dark night ;
And might the soul, among the dateless hills,
Some path discern, that—follow'd till it ends—
Should lead to Zion, the eternal town,
The endless rest ! Receive thine exiled son,
High city, set upon the hills ; from far,

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How far, across life's turbid, unanneal'd
And questing waters—from the murk and waste,
Where upas vapours breathe—we hail thee now,
Suspiring towards thee. And thy gospel bells
Proclaim new heights, where souls, redeem'd by God,
Shall gaze abroad, commanding life and time,
And calm in conscious strength the crown await.

Salem is on the mountain top because it is a spiritual city.

XX

THE CREDO

Those truths which most call for expression are those also which exceed it.

INEXPRESSIBLE

Now, let us here in secret, as if drawn
Together in some holy place apart
To welcome in the day-star ere it dawn,
Declare the hidden matter—heart to heart :
Nay, it eludes the thought, however high,
And words still fail him who would testify.

Master, we came from Thee—Thou knowest when—
And unto Thee return ; the time and mode
Are in Thy hands. There is a reason why,
And this we feel. Keep clear, we pray, the road ;
Apart from Thee nothing can satisfy :
Lead, and still lead the trembling hearts of men.
This is our faith in Thee, our strong defence :
Do Thou fulfil it in experience !

The Offertory

The fact that there is one issue for everything and one test by which alone it can be judged does not interfere with the other fact that there is more than one answer to most questions, or that the gifts of interpretation are various. We continue, therefore, to say: Credo in unum Deum—and all that follows thereafter—with a heart of holy aspiration.

XXI

THE OFFERTORY

It is a little thing to renounce extrinsic goods, having renounced ourselves already, the better to attain ourselves.

TRUE POSSESSIONS

MUCH does he gain who much dispenses; want
Shall reach him not; a constant stream of wealth
Is round him drawn. From him who meanly hoards
His own, is true wealth taken. What in one
Centres alone is lost, and every gift—
Not in the man inherent—whether brought
From God directly or from Nature—shared,
Returns to the dispenser; we attain
All things in giving and conceding them.

With the things which are of real value we have never been asked to part, but only with those tokens which are of temporal convenience, some of which become encumbrances and even burdens.

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XXII

THE OBLATION

There is a reason why silence envelopes us within, notwithstanding the clamours that are without; yet the expression of the higher soul is the only clean offering, and this is imposed upon us.

EXPRESSION

ALL that once we meant to say,
Deep within the heart of each,
Rests unutter'd. Tell me, pray,
When shall man have leave for speech?

Ah, the long unspoken soul,
Thus with message overcharged,
Underneath its bonds' control
Is, in spite of bonds, enlarged!

Deeper sinks the depth within,
All horizons melt from sight,
Till life's mighty waters win
Union with the infinite.

Deep to deep and sea to sea,
Wondrous union, wondrous rest;
Still possession—so shall be
The long pent-up soul express'd.

The need of expression arises from the law of concealment, but this law is essential and inheres, rather than is prescribed. For the same reason the burden of sin is assumed, but the yoke of grace is native and so also is light.

In Spiritu Humilitatis

XXIII

THE MINGLING OF WINE AND WATER

From the circumference to the centre may be far, but the way is direct to the end. The union of elements is in motion, and therefore man goes on.

THOU ONLY

ETERNAL Priest of Mysteries Divine,
When Thou hast purified our human part
And quicken'd that which lieth cold and dead,
Place on Thine Altar—like this mystic bread—
Our hearts, to Thy most healthful service given;
And pour Thy spirit, as supernal wine,
On the inconstant waters of our soul!
Make us partakers of Thy substance thus
And in such mode shalt Thou partake of us,
Our heart united to Thy sacred heart;
And by Thy saving virtue so made whole,
Our life shall ever be withdrawn in Thine,
Thy life make heaven in us, O Lord of Heaven!

Watchman, what of the end?

XXIV

IN SPIRITU HUMILITATIS

The power of arbitration in man is between the heights and the deeps, but the place of peace is not in the middle way.

VESSELS OF ELECTION

THE heart is Thine, the will is turn'd to Thee:
Thou didst require them at our hands; Thou hast
Received them. At the steps of Thy White Throne

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We placed them, with a just and holy awe
That they could serve Thy purpose. Kings below,
To Thee, the King of all, that which we are
Is offer'd. O the glorious pride in free
And uncondition'd giving! Of his end
Thou hast made each the arbiter; it lies
Between his hands, that he may make it Thine,
And so all purpose of his world fulfil.
The keys of death and immortality,
With every dole and crown to these attach'd,
We hold, and yield them to Thy mastership.
Count therefore this the spirit and the term
Of our condign humility, who come
With contrite souls to be made worthy Thee,
Yet in Thy need for us are masters still,
Nor into misery and abjectness
Can ever lapse, but great in Thee through all
Must issue forth triumphant in the end!

*It is not a matter of importance that the victory should
be ultimately with ourselves, but the great ends must pre-
vail, and they can prevail only in us.*

XXV

IN THE BLESSING OF BREAD AND WINE

It is possible to receive God in many elements.

VENITE

WEARY of walking in the night alone,
Come, we beseech Thee, come unto Thine own!
Vapid are our pursuits and vain our lot
But not so foolish we as to desire Thee not.

*Communication is in many kinds, but the true act of
reception is only in the inmost heart.*

The Incensing of the Altar

XXVI

THE INCENSING OF THE BREAD AND WINE

The soul is naturally fastidious and even the manna in the wilderness calls for express consecration.

PROBATION

OF many elements combined, we plead
For Thy great blessing to assuage our need
In this wide world of dreams!
God grant that, issuing at last from these,
We shall unlock, with certain secret keys,
Life's inmost and far curving galleries,
Where very singers find the very themes!

The opening of the Closed Palace is a great work of inspiration.

XXVII

THE INCENSING OF THE ALTAR

Seasons of inhibition are promises of seasons of fulness.

INTERDICTION

THE time of blessing comes and goes;
Then dry days follow for a space,
That learners may their souls dispose
To walk at need apart from grace.

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Say therefore not that grace is dead,
Say not that inspiration's fount,
Henceforth to flow inhibited,
Is seal'd up in the sacred mount !
Say rather : silence full and rich
In its still depths prepares the ground
For other wells of mercy, which
In later torrents shall abound !

The soundings of the deep are beyond the plummets of the senses.

XXVIII

ACCENDAT IN NOBIS

It does not signify whether joy comes in the morning, but it is vital that the King should come.

THE UNITIES

DIVERSE our passions, yet but one desire ;
Much smoke, much smouldering, one cleansing
fire ;
Concerns unnumber'd which are little blest,
Only one rest,
One travail that is worthy of the hire :
This labour, that heart's burning and the dumb,
Unspoken longing for the King to come
And His great kingdom to be manifest !

Most of us perhaps can do little to promote its advent in the world, but we can cherish it secretly in the heart.

Suscipe, Sancta Trinitas

XXIX

BEFORE THE LAVABO

It is well to wash with the innocent, but it is a greater thing to go through the cleansing fires which purge the guilty from their sins.

MISFITS

'Tis scarcely true that souls come naked down
To take abode up in this earthly town,
Or naked pass—all that they wear denied :
We enter slipshod and with clothes awry,
And we take with us much that by and by
May prove no easy task to put aside.

Cleanse therefore that which round about us clings,
We pray Thee, Master ; ere Thy sacred halls
We enter, strip from us redundant things
And meetly clothe us in pontificals !

The House of God is the House of many Lustrations.

XXX

SUSCIPE, SANCTA TRINITAS

The first consummations are only the first draughts of the everlasting cup ; but the secret is to drink deeply.

JOURNEYS IN THE BLUE DISTANCE

A LITTLE space to move in, and a little space for sleep,
And then a space more narrow for repose that is more
deep ;

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Then all the vistas open'd, and the strange high
paths untrod,
With room for men to walk in who go forth to
find their God.

We offer up ourselves and Thine are made;
All other bonds our wills at least evade:
But do Thou give us of Thyself, and thus
A clean oblation shall be made by us!
Thou dost not need our offerings, but we
Transmuting need, to make us gold for Thee.

*The greatest quests are not those which are followed in
time or space.*

XXXI

SECRETA

*So long as we are exiled from God, we can scarcely
escape sin.*

RESTORATION

I CAME into the world for love of Thee,
I left Thee at Thy bidding;
I put off my white robes and shining crown
And came into this world for love of Thee.

I have lived in the grey light for love of Thee,
In mean and darken'd houses:
The scarlet fruits of knowledge and of sin
Have stain'd me with their juice for love of Thee.

I could not choose but sin for love of Thee,
From Thee so sadly parted;
I could not choose but put away my sin
And purge and scourge those stains for love of Thee.

Sursum Corda

My soul is sick with life for love of Thee,
Nothing can ease or fill me :
Restore me, past the frozen baths of death,
My crown and robes, desired for love of Thee :

And take me to Thyself for love of Thee ;
My loss or gain counts little,
But Thou must need me since I need Thee so,
Crying through day and night for love of Thee !

The wings of the dove would not carry us into rest, for a bird's flight bears the same relation to progress that a sand-castle bears to Mont Salvatch in the Pyrenees.

XXXII

SURSUM CORDA

The exaltation of the heart takes place after many purgations.

SECRET SONG

O SAD voice, singing close at hand,
Thy words we may not understand !
But strangely full and sweet art thou ;
And thou dost soothe, we know not how.
Perchance thy low refrain reveals,
In sorrow's deeps, the well which heals.

A great pity must surge for ever in the soul of the illuminated man towards all motions and yearnings of Nature, so full of impassioned endeavour, so full of the sense of loss and inability.

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XXXIII

THE PREFACE

Nature itself is made in our own likeness.

MIRRORS OF MANHOOD

MAN's soul itself beholds in every glass
And its own speech discerns in every tone ;
All Nature voices what he is and was
And will be—equally in star or stone.

Man gives its parable to every stream ;
If "running brooks" are books, he writes, he reads ;
If stones are sermons, he provides their theme,
And with himself in these he speaks, he pleads.

No living tongue but his was ever heard ;
Still Nature stood till he, an exile, came,
Bringing dim echoes of an older word
And fragments of a now unutter'd name.

For though he speaks and speech imparts to all,
That which he would he cannot hear or say,
And pale reflections of his own long call
Tortures, to draw their inward sense to day.

His outward tumult fills his ears in vain
And down his own vast depths in vain he cries :
Perchance the still profundities explain
That which exceeds all words, however wise.

The Canon

Perchance his speech withdrawn from things outside,
And all resounding caverns hush'd within,
That which the clamours from his soul divide
May to draw nigh and to commune begin.

It is a long watch to the morning, but it is also a sure one. The powers and the glories are with us in the great vigil, and the darkness of the night intervening is no ground for doubt in the heart.

XXXIV

THE CANON

All the greater laws are made in the course of our advancement.

FACILIS ASCENSUS

WHAT is the canon of the King's true law,
By which we know it is indeed the King's?
Ah, could we find it—faithful, free from flaw—
Clear would be all which once we dimly saw
And simple the ascent to noble things!

The official interpretations of laws are like sonorous but confused voices of great winds surging about a secret sanctuary.

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XXXV

COMMEMORATION OF THE LIVING

There is a great past behind us, and the future as great is in front.

NUNC DIMITTIS

How perfect is the peace of him
Whose work in life is done,
And space remains to count the gains
Of some high course outrun ;
Who looking back on his past track
Can proudly lift his head
And truly claim for every aim—
This is consummated.

In spite of our dreaming and our seeming, we have begun to touch the reality in this life, because the sacramental body of man is the sum of all physical perfection which it is possible for us here to conceive.

XXXVI

THE CONSECRATION AND ELEVATION

The man who denies the sacraments is less guilty than he who dismembers them.

OF BREAD AND WINE

FROM the first dawn of things Thou hast me fed
With many substances of wine and bread,
Beyond those daily charities which bless
All men with manna in the wilderness ;

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The Consecration and Elevation

Yea, in that time when I was lifted up
Refreshment from an everlasting cup
To take with spiritual lips, Thou didst
My soul sustain, its angel-peers amidst.
Then at Thy board I sat, all sane and whole,
Clothed in the proper garment of my soul ;
Then in the liturgies and rites which make
A rapture in Thy presence, did I take
A part allotted, and their calls fulfil
With a most clear conception of Thy will.

But after, for some purpose undeclared,
From Thy great temple's service I was spared ;
From Thy high palace-gates and halls sent down
And precincts fair of Thine eternal town—
I know not why, who had not tired of Thee
And scarce could falter in Thy ministry,
Under Thine eyes' light, with such graces lent,
Sufficing, efficacious. But I went,
And since that time, which is earth's time outside,
Far as my paths might from Thy throne divide,
Deep as the gulfs might be which I plunged in—
Conduits and cesspools of the House of Sin—
In the strange tavern and the stranger's bed,
I do remember still Thy wine and bread.

Thus having pass'd into this low estate,
So that I cannot look up to Thy gate ;
Having withal too dim and sad an eye
To see the splendour of that chancelry,
Where, unto those who serve and those who err,
Justice or love Thou dost administer ;
I have been long content Thy hands to bless
For any manna in the wilderness :
But, though all gifts within Thy hands are good,
My soul now turns and loathes the lighter food ;

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Such froth upon the surface cannot feed
The man whose want demands strong meat and mead.
Therefore as one who has been raised from base
And scullion errands to a page's place,
My need has bade me from the broken meat
And brings me, crying, at Thy board to eat ;
But, since all bridal garments here I lack,
I call on Thee to give those vestments back
Wherein I served in such uplifted state
Ere I was put forth from Thy palace-gate :
Still through all straits I keep my claim on them
And the bright shining of my diadem.

Perchance I fell from Thee through mine own fault ;
Yet am I native to Thy temple-vault :
Perhaps, for Thine own purpose, Thou hast seen
Fit to reduce me from my primal mien ;
But be my guilt in Thine eyes less or more
Now matters not : I pray—Restore, restore !
And having given, as Thou needs must give,
To one who naked can no longer live,
The proper garments of the soul, I know
That to Thy banquet hall I then shall go,
Saying : “ High Master, I have fasted long ;
Give me man's meat and wine of vintage strong.”
Whereat, with fitting benison and grace,
They shall set down true bread before my place
And to my lips Thy pages shall lift up—
For deep, free drinking—an eternal cup.

Therefore, by all who hear these high words said
In the King's sense be they interpreted.

We can always be sure of our commentaries, short as they fall of perfection, by uniting their intention with God.

The Commemoration of the Dead

XXXVII

THE COMMEMORATION OF THE DEAD

*The life of earth is an experience of things unfamiliar :
the after life is a renewal of the old familiarity.*

RESTORATION

As by his own fireside, in his own chair,
A man slips gently into sleep, and there
Starts up awake once more in his own room,
Recalling all things in the glow and gloom :
So when the draught of death in sleep he takes,
Perchance all suddenly the man awakes
To find him in the old familiar place—
That primal home, left for life's little space.

That which is not known is that which we have forgotten.

IBID.

*We are so much on the verge of the Union that it seems
almost impossible we should escape it.*

IN THE ELEGIAC MANNER

Now Autumn crisps and dries the yellow'd leaf,
Long since sad reapers brought the harvest in ;
All which dejects us or exalts is brief—
Death in life's mask, shall life in death's begin ?

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Say, one is gone—perchance a kindly face,
A voice perchance which could some hearts encheer :
Haunt not, vain elegy, his former place
And, vacant heart, forbid the falling tear !

Trite epitaphs—“Too good on earth to stay”—
Let fools inscribe. Did peace make sweet his end ?
Who knows?—*Implora pace!* Turn away
From hackney'd thoughts of father and of friend.

Convention tolls its bell with mournful sound,
Convention plumes the hearse which bears the clay,
Convention cries that hearts in hallow'd ground
Embalm remembrances that ne'er decay.

Go to! the heart forgets, the heart shall die,
Go to, who cares that dust to dust returns ?
Or that in chapels of mortality
Some little space the lamp of memory burns !

Leave these old follies! Down the silent halls
And the long avenues that soul has pass'd ;
If you have strength, refrain from useless calls
To other meetings—what if this were last ?

That matters nothing, so he reach his goal :
Call, therefore, in the great Augustan mood,
Once and for all such end to crown his soul,
Content, so he bear that, to bear your rood.

We have been cautious through many initiations, but a great reservation must be taken into the grade ne plus ultra of death.

The Commemoration of the Dead

IBID.

Those who have gone before us are so much the nearer to the Union.

TO OTHER ENDS

LOOK forth no more where bindweeds creep
About thy lattice bars,
And move no more where waters sweep
Entranced by musing stars!
Thy peace be full, thy rest be deep,
New light enrich thine eyes;
While night is dark on ours who weep,
Sweet Life, fill other skies:
That which God join'd to make thy wonder,
For Heaven's gain, thus He puts asunder.

The great secrets of all are not spoken, but signified.

IBID.

We look at the end of things for Hades to return its spoils.

DIES VENIT

Now heralds, passing through desponding Hades,
Proclaim: "Salvete, O my Lords and Ladies!
Here ends the penance, here unbars the prison:
Into the light ascend, for He is risen!"

The Hades into which Christ descended was an inward world, which keeps many spirits in prison besides those

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that are ostensibly sharing our exile. The Mystery of the Passion and of that Lamb which has been slain from the foundation of things is one of the mysteries of the unseen. We do not doubt that Christ died and rose, but the material Jerusalem and the conventional holy fields have no heritage therein. The true Golgotha and Calvary are not seen with eyes of flesh, nor yet is the rock-hewn Sepulchre or the Mountain of Ascension.

XXXVIII

NOBIS QUOQUE PECCATORIBUS

The greatest work in the world is that of building bridges.

DE PROFUNDIS

THOUGH oft I have fallen by the way, Mother mine,
Yet I have not turn'd my face aside from Thee ;
And Father, loving Father, in the world that is Thine
Thy great white light of glory I have look'd to see.
Take me then, for I am weary, I beseech Thee,
And I do not dread the gulfs or wastes between ;
Lift me upward, being merciful, to reach Thee,
If I cannot cross the seas that intervene.

But even the intervening seas are the emanations of mercy.

Pater Noster

XXXIX

PATER NOSTER

*The invocation of the Kingdom is also the invocation of
rapture.*

THE KINGDOM

O SALEM, City on the mountain-top!
O promised land of honey and of milk!
O Aden, Eden, land of holy dream!
O House of God! With all its gardens girt,
Far shines the mystic City of the Soul,
City of Dream, City of our Desire,
And all who look thereon do evermore
Carry strange longings in their haunted eyes.
O Temples, palaces for chosen souls!
O floral emblems! O prophetic trees!
O visionary voices—the long days
And nights enchanting—of thy streams, thy birds!
O purple dreamland, infinite ecstasy!

The food of the visible frame is also the body of God.

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XL

LIBERA NOS, QUAESUMUS

When man enters into the Holy Place, the Kingdom comes.

FELLOWSHIP

WHEN darkness falls upon the life of mind ;
When utter sickness to the heart assign'd
 Makes morbid thoughts on all our days intrude ;
When uncompanion'd in our need we stand,
One is still with us in the shrouded land—
 Our own soul with us in the solitude.
Set therefore free the soul and let her cease
 From evil, knowing what is right and wrong ;
 And seeing that her days in Thine are long
Grant that her endless days be also peace !

He who has found his soul is never alone.

XLI

AGNUS DEI

Both the emissary and the imputation are in one sense the symbolical embroideries of pontifical vestments.

PRESAGES

ON common auguries and omens long
Has man in legend dwelt, in tale and song,

Domine Jesu Christe

And under thin disguise they hold him still ;
But to the body and its varied need
His signs and presages alone give heed,
Leaving those deeper symbols all unread
Which say : The soul is sick, the soul is dead,
The soul is menaced by surpassing ill.
Fear not malignant stars which may control
The outward fortunes ; fear those stars within
Which on the wide horizon of the soul
With baleful rays illumine the night of sin.
But that dread most which lets our evil plight
Restrain the clamour after all God's light ;
Whate'er I am, whatever yet may be,
Master of all, I keep the quest of Thee.
Save me from these old stains I care not how ;
Then one thing more I need—but that is Thou !

The purpose of life is that of emancipating stars. It is we who condone substitutes and accept approximations for realities.

XLII

DOMINE JESU CHRISTE

In things above, as in things below, when the King is thought to be dead, our cry should be : Long live the King !

EUCCHARISTICA

Poor, foolish penitent, whose streaming eyes
See Christus dead in agony, He lives ;
Take comfort ; He comes down into thy heart :
Thou hast received Him in thy sacrament.

Beyond the symbol of the old beliefs stretch the great fields of faith.

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XLIII

DOMINE, NON SUM DIGNUS

But the prince in banishment is not less the royal prince.

MISDIRECTION

WE have falter'd in the way that they directed
Who set us first to walk in the true way ;
We have palter'd with the truth which they expected
We should set so high before us,
And the banners that are o'er us
Are the ensigns of a nation gone astray.

This notwithstanding, all roads may lead to the spiritual Rome, for all converge, at one point or another, in the true and only path.

XLIV

ITE, MISSA EST

It does not really signify that the way is long, if it is that which leads home.

STARS OF EMPIRE

FROM East to West the soul her journey takes,
At many bitter founts her fever slakes,
Halts at strange taverns by the way to feast,
Resumes her load and painful progress makes
Back to the East.

Many travels and many metamorphoses may still remain, both within and without the long chronicles of vanity. It is only by a title of limitation that the Mass is said to be finished.

The Second Gospel

XLV

THE SECOND GOSPEL

UNDECLARED

WISDOM with its trumpet word
In a myriad volumes heard ;
All which unto love belongs
Chanted in uncounted songs,
Up and down the endless ages ;
Things divine in sacred pages—
As the sands of the seashore—
Taught with tongues of gold of yore :
When to-morrow is to-day,
What can still remain to say ?
One thing look'd for—one unheard ;
Only that unutter'd word,
Echoes of the sense of which
All our spoken words enrich,
And shall yet, with clarion call,
Alter and transmute them all.

*It is for this reason that literature is itself a mystery,
operated by the convention of instituted rites.*

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XLVI

DEO GRATIAS

*There is drought and there is weariness ; but so long as
we go forward, it is well.*

GRATIAS AGIMUS

THE place of Thy peace is the place of a perfect light.
We have thank'd Thee, O Lord, in the night
For the night and the splendid day :
It is meet in the depth of the darkness and meet on the
shining height.
But oh for that place of Thy peace,
For the glory which does not cease
And the star which fades not away.
Grant, at the end of all, we may give Thee our thanks
as we enter
The palace of perfect union which shines in Thy light
at the centre.

Et nox sicut dies illuminabitur.

A Valedictory Aspiration

XLVII

A VALEDICTORY ASPIRATION

Let us pray, in fine, for those truly sacred offices which are not in reality conferred by any right of succession, but do at times impose themselves.

OF PRIESTCRAFT

COULD God have given me my desire,
Or if God would grant it now and here,
One boon, I wot,
Should wreathe my lot
As the star is wreathed by a fire—
Fair aim, high purpose, but far, I fear!

I would put my making of songs aside—
Vain strife to utter what can't be said;
And it should be mine
The bread and wine,
By mighty mass-words deified,
To change in substance from wine and bread.

And then in some lonely fane apart,
Or—little matters—in crowded street,
With a soul contrite,
From altar's height
I would nourish the empty heart
With hidden manna and angels' meat.

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That which has hinder'd me hinders yet,
Though the higher part of faith is mine;
'Tis the gift to know
That here below,
Fair as the blazon'd signs are set
They shadow only the things divine.

Holy and grand though the Church may be,
The types it mixes with things foreshewn,
And a place denies
To the too keen eyes
Which past the mundane types can see,
And, symbols past, to the truth unknown.

Yet may I hope, is it over bold?—
Somehow, somewhere—it shall come to pass,
While I still live,
That my King shall give
To me, like Lancelot, Knight of old,
Grace, and a twelvemonth to sing my Mass.

END OF VOL. I

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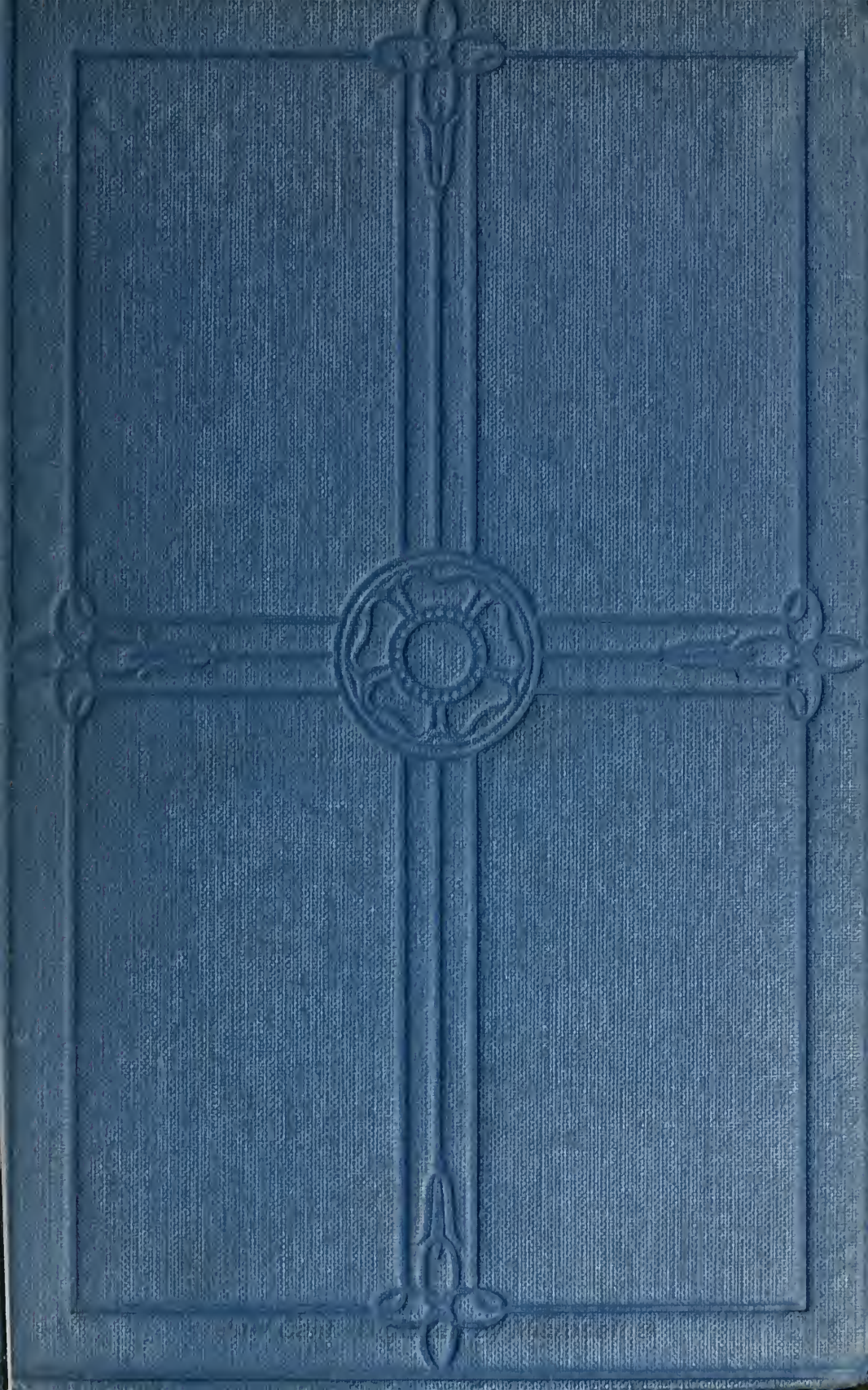
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THE COLLECTED POEMS OF
ARTHUR EDWARD WAITE

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF
ARTHUR EDWARD WAITE

IN TWO VOLUMES



VOLUME II

The Lord is my Hierophant.—CLEMENT
OF ALEXANDRIA.

*Lumen vultus Tui est lumen oculi mei et
illuminatio mea, in medio animæ meæ.*—DE
TABERNACULO MYSTICO LIBELLUS.

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VOL. II

OF THE MORALITY OF THE LOST WORD

In respect of the surface sense, it will be obvious and possibly intelligible that the poem pictures, in its form of dramatic mystery, the declension of a Great Church, or Ecclesiastical System, from which the Divine Gift and Leading have been taken; and, decaying gradually through a cycle of human thought, its doom is sealed at last by confession to a false deliverer and the sacrifice of spiritual aspiration, the intuition and the vision, symbolised as a Daughter of the House. Such symbolism may wear an aspect of anachronism, as these gifts and faculties can perhaps be regarded more truly as the origin of religious forms, and the Daughter is in this case older than the House itself or the imputed Mother and Widow. Yet, from another standpoint, it is out of particular religious forms and instituted Houses of Faith that the characteristic aspirations, vision and intuition of each age are born, therein are nourished and maintained. So only are official Churches and Temples the schools of saints at their periods. It is, I suppose, in this manner that most people will be content to understand the poem.

But those who know that apart from operations of the rational mind, there is another gift of knowledge, communicated through one simple and eternal convention sacramentally to the soul of man, may infer that there is at least one alternative meaning. They may conjecture, in

Of the Morality of the Lost Word

part or fully, what complexities of convention are shadowed forth by the House of Long Sorrow, and that the immolation of the Daughter of the House has been enacted through the ages. Notwithstanding some inferences which might seem irresistible from the poem itself, they will rest assured that the Soror Stellifera passed as Virgo intacta, it being impossible that she should do otherwise. She would bear, however, the imputation of sin, and hence the imputation in the poem. Hence also the lacuna noticeable between the second and third acts, when something appears to intervene, but it is rest rather than activity.

By some among these persons it may be understood that the failure of the logical understanding in face of the great problems is symbolised in the poem as the decay of a Church of time immemorial foundation. The Church is the world of conventions created by that understanding, which itself is typified by the Widow. I tend to think that Frater Pontificus might answer to the authority of material experience, Frater Pacificus to imagination under certain aspects, Frater Symphonicus to the gift of expression in the arts, while other personalities, scarcely bodied forth, would answer to different fields and faculties of normal consciousness—edification, research, mathematical and experimental powers. The religious procession in the Second Act would symbolise ordered thought on any subject, but here on the great problems. The procession in disorder at the end would be thought in confusion and stultified, following the failure of the quest. Soror Stellifera is the soul part, or desire and psychic part, as distinguished from pure spirit, but retaining memories of the past which are not of this physical life. Count Phœnix is the architect of materialism in its widest sense, to which reason has for ages sought to marry the soul. These nuptials would be of necessity morганatic, but there is assuredly no union possible. On such a construction of the poem, it is significant that the false deliverer is taken away at the end, because in the completion of intellectual catastrophe materialism also fails. But what

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in this case is the "little child upon a great white horse," the "ante-natal Watcher of the House"? He is a guide more than a hope; now what guide and whither does he take the voided parable and the wrecks thereof? But indeed this interpretation is only a second aspect of a central meaning which I am not pretending to disclose.

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THE FURTHER SIDE OF THE PORTAL

PART I

THE HOLD OF GOD

The Legends of Death, its sacramental veils and all which lies behind its symbolical pretence are not less numerous than the Legends of Life and its continuity; and it does not appear, except in the Great Mysteries, after what manner, life having been exchanged for death, there is in fine a high restitution, so that once and for ever death and its several counterparts are merged in life. Herein now is an Interlude after Lesser Mysteries, a story without an end, where the Veil is in part lifted but in part declared only. It is to be received rather as one who witnesses a play-scene. I would invite reflection on the fact that whereas in The Hold of God Peregrinus is still manifest at what may be called the final fall of the curtain, the Epopt of the poem which follows is withdrawn before the end.

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The Further Side of the Portal

PART II

THE BOOK OF THE KING'S DOLE AND CHANTRY FOR PLAIN SONG: A GREATER INITIATION

Having been oft born in many initiations, man takes the Exalting Veil and is received into the Heart of the Quest. This is a Hierophant and more than a Hierophant, for many Great Masters cannot witness his assumption. In this manner there comes to pass the desired awakening from dream, and the Wardens of the Watch-Towers of the World shall not tell after what manner the great sea shall in fine give up the secret.

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OF THE MORALITY OF THE
LOST WORD

VOL. II.

A

Adverte, carissime, quod quæ sequuntur verissima sunt
intelligentibus.—ROSARIUM PHILOSOPHORUM.

Διάγνωσις

WITH a measure of light and a measure of shade,
The world of old by the Word was made ;
By the shade and light was the Word conceal'd,
And the Word in flesh to the world reveal'd
Is by outward sense and its forms obscured ;
The spirit within is the long lost Word,
Besought by the world of the soul in pain
Through a world of words which are void and vain.
O never while shadow and light are blended
Shall the world's Word-Quest or its woe be ended,
And never the world of its wounds made whole
Till the Word made flesh be the Word made soul !

THE CHILDREN OF THE MYSTERY

SOROR FIDES RECTA	<i>The Widow</i>
THE SONS OF THE WIDOW—	
FRATER SAPIENS DOMINABITUR	
ASTRIS	<i>Astrologer (Astrologus)</i>
FRATER EST IN MERCURIO	<i>Spagyrite (Spagyricus)</i>
FRATER BETH ELOHIM	<i>Intendant of the Building (Procurator)</i>
FRATER SECUNDUM ORDINEM	<i>Grand Pontiff (Pontificus)</i>
SOROR STELLIFERA	<i>Child of the Second Birth, or Daughter of the House</i>
FRATER PACIFICUS	
FRATER SYMPHONIACUS	
COUNT PHENIX	

*Chief Huntsman, Warden of the House, Lesser Brethren, Servants
and Pages, Chorus of Suppliants.*

*The Scene is the House of Long Sorrow; the Place, in the Land of
the Living; the Time, yesterday, to-day, and—for ever?*

Of the Morality of the Lost Word

ACT I

SCENE.—*A vaulted hall in the House of Long Sorrow. The walls are damp and peeling; patches of old pictures shew beneath the crumbling plaster. The proportions and design are noble, but the plinths and pilasters are mouldering, and the old carvings are defaced. In places the roof has fallen and gnarled ivy hangs through, waving in the wind. The hall is hung with tattered banners and standards, bearing faded emblazonments and many royal arms and devices. Below these are other banners and pennons, but new, common and gaudy, with tawdry designs and high colourings. On the eastern side a great Gothic window is draped with blackened cloth of gold, so that all light is excluded.*

The WIDOW, old and furrowed, wearing a gown of rusty black with long train, is discovered on a high dais under the eastern window, with the Sons of the WIDOW grouped round her, as if for ritual. She is counting the beads of a rosary and intoning between the decades after the manner of plain-chant.

THE WIDOW.

Except the Lord His House shall build
But foolish pains take those who labour;
Except the Lord to guard have will'd
Deflects the shaft and turns the sabre;

Of the Morality of

Pale watchmen, pacing to and fro,
And sad-eyed hodders, worn and slow,
Have but their barren labour's woe.

And when the House, which His decree
So firmly built and strongly warded,
Is left to storms of land and sea,
Of His eyes' light and power defrauded—
O more than woe of toil in vain!
O waiting which is worse than pain
Till He come to His own again!

[The chimes ring in the belfry.]

THE WIDOW.

What hour strikes now?

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

The hour of saffron wings.

New morning breaks.

THE WIDOW.

What morning?

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

Of the stars
Which sing together, of the promised light
Which shall not pass, of sorrow fled away,
Of weeping lifted into stedfast joy—
King's morrow and the Word restored in full.

THE WIDOW.

What day is this?

The Lost Word

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

The day of need which ends
In God's great chance embraced. It is Thy day,
O God, the tide of harvest and ripe fruit,
And all the leaves are green in all the world :
The old hopes throng the heart !

THE WIDOW.

Do the dead wait ?

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

With still white faces to the East.

THE WIDOW.

And they

That live ?

FRATER SYMPHONIACUS.

They wait : the hush'd, expectant call
Beats in their hearts, like a bird's wings before
The bird bursts skyward, voicing melody.

THE WIDOW.

And is the Old House ready ? Is it swept
And garnish'd ? Are the banners on the walls ?
Do all the ancient watchwords from the gates,
The four-square towers, the battlements, the roofs
Ring proudly to the corners of the earth—
A thousand voices as a single voice,
Proclaiming to the City and the World
One faith, one hope and one expectant joy
Prolong'd throughout the ages ?

Of the Morality of

FRATER PROCURATOR.

The House waits.

THE WIDOW.

Unbar the western windows, open wide
The doors and gates, proclaim upon the steps :
The House is ready and the heirs thereof.
O dead, who fell asleep in the faith of Him
And live therein ! O living, stay'd about
With hope of Him, now dead of His desire !
O falling House, by love of Him held up !
Cry at the doors : We wait ! Cry at the gates :
Our faith is burning still—the dead alive
Because of it, the living cannot die
Because of it, and the old house is strong,
Master of all our hearts, because of it !
Cry, Come ! Cry, Come !

FRATER VIATORIUS.

We have cried it in our hearts,
Have cried it with our voices through the woods
And forests ; the earth rings with it, the earth
Is warm and rich and lush because of it :
Its echoes move for ever with the winds
About the rolling sea.

THE WIDOW.

What sign is there ?

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

The sign of morning in the eastern sky ;
The sign of fire and light on forest-trees,

The Lost Word

Through all the landscape to the water's edge;
The sign of sanguine mist upon the sea,
Sparkle and dancing wave.

THE WIDOW.

No sign in these!
Days break as hearts break, through the eyes' vain watch;
Hearts break as bread breaks at the dreadful board
Where his high seat stands vacant, where his hand
Dispenses not.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Come, let us seek the Word!

CUSTOS INVISIBILIS.

The Word is lost.

THE WIDOW.

Who crieth in our hearts
Till vaulted roofs repeat, and corridors—
In muffled echoes—and whispering galleries—
With mournful murmurs—far reverberate:
“Lost,” “the great Word is lost,” and so return
Back to the heart that message of all woe
Which sinks lead-molten in the depths thereof,
Till once again upwelling from the depths
The sense of loss wails horridly throughout
The heart and house.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Chain up those gates beyond,
And bar the doors within; be windows closed

Of the Morality of

And all the draperies drawn across the ways
Of light and sound, lest echoes should go forth
And in the towns and villages proclaim :
The Word is lost.

FRATER VIATORIVS.

We hush our hearts in vain,
For the heart shouts, and all the world divined,
Long ere it spoke within us, that the Word
Is lost : we hide it from ourselves alone.

FRATER PONTIFICVS.

We know at least its legend lives in faith :
I will consult the sacred oracles.

[He goes out, with lights and incense before him.]

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Enters with her train of virgins.

Seek not the living amidst the dead : the Word
Has risen—years ago. It is not here ;
In the free world it dwells and in the Soul.
This house of clay and perish'd memories
Shall know the voice no more. Come forth, all ye
That truly seek it, from these walls come forth !
Here is no longer an abiding-place.

THE WIDOW.

Peace, dreaming daughter of a later day !
This is the Holy Palace of the King,
Whence His Word only from the first of things

The Lost Word

Has sounded down creation's echoing aisles ;
But if beneath the chancel and behind
The altar, tabernacle or mercy-seat,
A little while slumbers the voice withdrawn,
And there is silence through the galleries
Of universal worship, O again
A little while and forth its music peals,
With all the worlds restored in all their joy !

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Once in the glorious past the Word was ours,
And the King tarried in our courts and halls.
We had no need to speak it when the King
Was with us in the morning of the world.
But the King left us when the sun was high
In the house of beauty ; yea, in the noon of time,
And bade us keep the Word, His Word of Life,
Till His sure coming at some good hour ere night.
Then did we treasure it a little space,
A little hour, a little age of time.
Ah, sadness ! Shortly the Word slipp'd away
Out of our hearts, but tarried on our lips—
How long ! A silver moment ! Then it died,
As a dewdrop on the petals of the rose,
And when we found our lips were crack'd and dry,
We sought to speak it, but the Word was lost.

FRATER PROCURATOR.

Ill has it fared in the old House since then !

THE WIDOW.

O, all the world was ours ! We ruled it all
By one Word's might.

Of the Morality of

SOROR STELLIFERA.

But this has pass'd from us.
In vain we kept the secret of our loss,
And put forth sounds to imitate the Word,
And all the while waited and call'd on Him
Who could restore our treasure.

THE WIDOW.

And our reign.
But now our need becomes a woeful want ;
The naked waste is richer, the green burn
Has brighter depths ; all worship lost to us,
We are bywords only in the place of life.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

The age has left us, as the restless sea
Leaves arid sand-hills dry and white at ebb—
All place, all ministry, all meaning gone.

THE WIDOW.

As spins the desolated, lifeless moon,
All sharp with lights and shadows, and devoid
Of atmosphere, our nimbus slipp'd from us ;
Veils rent, our sacraments as things of scorn,
Naked we stand, and laidly and ashamed . . .
See ye no signs ?

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

The sign of Nature's light,
Strong, splendid, lightly leaping—the great sun
Comes forth. All stars have ceased to prophesy.

The Lost Word

THE WIDOW.

I seem to stand upon an open door's
Dark threshold; nothing shews to me beyond,
And yet a sense of expectation fills
My shrivell'd heart, at once with hope and dread.
If skies are silent, in the heaven of mind
I hear strange sounds and ominous reports.
A mystic whisper hisses through the house.
Hearken, Beth Elohim, my son, my son!
What dost thou hear?

FRATER PROCURATOR.

The swing of closing doors
Down distant corridors, the creak of rusty gates
Which, startled, move on unaccustom'd hinges,
And—spread through all—the throbbing of the tense,
Distemper'd silence of great galleries,
Of rooms untrodden and long cathedral aisles.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

The measure and the number of the law
Which built the house—of meaning, virtue now
Long voided.

THE WIDOW.

Are there tidings of the night?
Have any watch'd, have any work'd therein?
Does thine arch-secret quiver on the verge
Of knowledge, by thy furnace-doors, my son,
Spagyricus?

Of the Morality of

FRATER SPAGYRICUS.

As dying tapers dart
And quiver and are quench'd, till now I see
My secret is the secret of the King,
Whence it is hidden in a mystery.

THE WIDOW.

Our woe is with us and the want thereof.

FRATER SPAGYRICUS.

We put red gold into the crucible.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

And here is lead.

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

Gnomon and astrolabe—
We calculate the shadow of our loss.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Divining ever and discerning nought.

THE WIDOW.

*As FRATER SECUNDEM ORDINEM returns with lights
and incense borne before him :*

Call on the Master in the morning ; chant
Thy masses ; consecrate the wine and bread.
Perchance He stands without the door, perchance
Will knock between the pauses of the bell,
At elevation or at Agnus-time.

The Lost Word

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

By Apostolic virtue vested in
This servant of the servants of the Lord
Set in the Master's seat, I do proclaim—
The Word is found; commit it to your hearts;
Proclaim it through the city and the world.
As o'er the Sacred Host, with bended head,
Cry, "INRI," the most holy Word long sought!

SOROR STELLIFERA.

The House of God is empty and to let.

AN ACOLYTE.

There is no wine to mingle.

THE WIDOW.

O tears of Christ!
Uplift the chalice, let the air distil
Blood-drops therein; our sorrow's cruel sweat
Shall thicken it. Extremity ere now
Has wrung a miracle: one sign, one sign!

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

The world is full of cyphers and of signs.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

But all the keys we wrought to loose their gates
Have broken in the locks; the master-key
Is missing.

THE WIDOW.

Fortitude and patience! Hope
May perish; but, erect and swerving not,

Of the Morality of

I call upon the King with burning heart,
And that cry, prevalent o'er time and space,
Goes searching up and down the boundless world,
Stedfast to find Him out. O soon or late,
Touch'd with the woe thereof, the King will come—
Heart, beyond deepest heart—is nigh perchance!

THE WARDEN OF THE HOUSE.

Our messengers are scouring all the ways.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

But ah! what tidings?

A MESSENGER (*entering*).

There is fire and sword,
Fell pest is ravaging the place of life.

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

Strange fingers trace strange words on every wall.

THE WIDOW.

Mine eyes are dim; I cannot see them. Read!

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

They flicker, like the firelight in the dark;
They come and go. I cannot read them. See:
The ancient ensigns wave in the wind's fresh gust;
Perchance it is the shadows which they cast.

THE WIDOW.

Fails e'en thy faith, rooted in earth of stars!
Perchance the wind is writing the Lost Word.

The Lost Word

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

Strange characters of tongue conceal'd too long—
How long!

THE WIDOW.

Pronounce the watchword of our strength.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

The King comes.

THE WIDOW.

How it echoes from the past!
We went to meet Him out of Egypt, call'd
By prophets forth and urged by dreadful signs.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Our tribes were scatter'd in the wilderness.

THE WIDOW.

We sought Him; Calvary and Golgotha
Loom'd on us in the night of our distress.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

But when the clouds were rifted by a light
Red as the wrath of God, scarlet as shame,
We saw Him crown'd with thorns and cross-enthroned.

THE WIDOW.

They noised Him far abroad, who died and rose:
He left us with the Word upon His lips.

Of the Morality of

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Too lightly graven in our hearts, too light.

THE WIDOW.

We went again into the wilderness
And heard the holy echoes of that Word
In Thebaïd caves, on breathless Carmel tops.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

They call'd us forth to worship: "He is there:
He sits in Rome." And we received our King
In poison'd hosts and Borgia chalices.
They snatch'd his chalice from our lips, they gave
A mutilated Christ; they rent the House
Of God with fell dissensions on the Word,
And with the letter and dead symbols made
An empty war-cry, for the Word was lost.

FRATER PROCURATOR.

But now the stays are taken from the House;
All men pass over on the further side,
Lest they be buried in the fall thereof.

THE WIDOW.

Yet we remain under the sinking roof,
Nursing the watchword in our hearts: The King
Cometh! We cry the watchword with our lips:
He comes. O surely in this need extreme
At length He comes.

THE WARDEN.

The House is falling.

The Lost Word

THE WIDOW.

Let

The King come to His ruins.

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

Were it well

To question now? Perchance the King will come.
Did stars, prophetic of the fate of man
Or fate dispensing, ever heed or spare?
Man working only with some law of grace
Believed he ruled them to a milder end,
But in the last resource the rule is theirs.
And man has hedged himself about and made
A magic ring of prayer, has dress'd himself
To subtle combat, has set star to star,
Check'd destiny by God's will and his own,
And said: I conquer. But the stars, serene
And sure, still spun the threads of fate together,
And when the mesh was drawn he strove in vain.
So also we, who put the Holy Word
To auction in the past; who bought and sold
And traffick'd in it, till the sacred gift
Became a byword; who gave out false words;
Who utter'd counterfeit and worthless coin
As true mint under warrant of the King;
Have check'd and countercheck'd the wrath of Him
With prayers and watches and humilities,
Saying: The King will come, the King forgives!
Perchance the King will come in wrath alone,
Perchance a strong delusion comes instead,
Perchance 'twere better did we abrogate
The rite of old which memorised our loss,
Crying no more: Come, let us seek the Word!
But saying rather: Since the Word is lost,
Come forth from this old House!

Of the Morality of

FRATER PROCURATOR.

A fissure yawns
From base to roof upon the southern side.
The very rats in corridors and lofts
Make sudden leaps for safety; the blind hound
Slinks howling down the stairway; underneath
His feet, which falter, all the winding steps
Tremble and creak.

THE WARDEN.

We cannot save the House;
We yet may save ourselves. Come forth!

FRATER PACIFICUS.

The King

Shall find us camp'd amidst the meadow-sweet
In this fair spring-time under fairest sky.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Non nobis, Domine: non nobis. We
Have loved the Lord's House and the place where once
His glory minister'd. For this last time
Flectamus genua. The House hath swerved.
Levate. We have kept His doctrines sure
Till now the House of Doctrine—overthrown—
Expels us. Therefore, Lord, impute it not
For sin to us if, with reluctant steps,
We quit Thy Holy Place and fix our ark
Of refuge where foundations cannot split,
Or roof-tree fall, or vaulted roofs give way,
Till Thy Lost Word at end of all return
And wreck Thy world of Nature, as this House
Of Grace is wreck'd.

The Lost Word

THE WARDEN.

O ye who would be saved,
Come out of her!

THE WIDOW.

Nay, rather, seek the Word!

THE WARDEN.

The House is in its agony. Come forth!

FRATER PACIFICUS.

The Word has pass'd into the world without;
It fondles green leaves in the sunlight, sighs
Among the floral wonders of the fields,
Lifts up the light voice of the brooks and birds
To rushing music. Hark, and far away
Resounds it in the organ of the sea!

THE WIDOW.

Come, let us seek the Word!

CHIEF HUNTSMAN (*enters*).

There is no corn
In stall or stable left: all creatures starve.

THE WIDOW.

Our need increases from a narrow track
Now to a bridle path, and now again
It opens out into a broad high road,
Down which the steeds and coaches of the King
Roll smoothly. The King cometh.

Of the Morality of

THE WARDEN.

We have watch'd
With trimm'd lamps through the night : the oil is spent :
We have no money.

THE WIDOW.

I besought a sign :
Here is the sign of our necessity.
He comes ere night.
[*There is a noise of many voices in the
four quarters of heaven.*]

FIRST VOICE.

The King is on the sea.

SECOND VOICE.

The King is in the hills.

SHEPHERDS (*entering*).

We have seen His star
Shine like a beacon in the East.

THIRD VOICE.

The King !

A STRANGER (*enters*).

The Word is found.

A PAGE OF THE GATE.

It is May-morning now.

The Lost Word

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Meseems, the world is one great incense-pot
Which swings about the altar of the sun.

FRATER DIACONUS (*enters with aspergillus*).

The plain-chant throbs through the cathedral aisles ;
A hand unseen is on the organ keys :
Unearthly notes stream from string'd instruments.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Reflorent omnia : we knew thy day
Would come.

THE WIDOW (*rising*).

Our enemies confounded stand ;
But Thou hast kept Thy servants and Thy sons
From shame.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Our foot is on the world's neck now :
Our heels shall grind the serpents of the world.

FRATER PACIFICUS.

Lord, we have kept Thy presence in our hearts !

A HERALD (*enters*).

The King, the King, the true Legitimate !

THE WIDOW.

O Lord, O Lord, that we desirèd so !

Of the Morality of

AN ACOLYTE (*enters*).

A voice behind the altar has cried :
The King !

SEXTON (*enters*).

There are strange lights among the crypts.

THE WIDOW.

The dead
Light tapers for the tripods and the shrines.

ANOTHER ACOLYTE (*enters*).

A great white hand has kindled from the roof
The great pasch candle.

THE WIDOW.

It is Easter-Tide.
Bid the bells ring ; bid beacon fires, on all
The hills about, blaze high to tell the ships
At sea, and signal to all villages ;
Bid all the villages and lonely ships
Far out respond with beacons and with lights :
The stars shall know the coming of the King.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Who cries the King, sweet mother ? To the soul
He only comes. When voices on the hills
Proclaim His presence, whether East or West,
He bids us heed them not. The soul alone,
From all the quarters of her wide domain,
Shall know His coming when the King returns.

The Lost Word

THE WIDOW.

Void not His presence when He knocks without!
O not in shadow, type or sign He comes!
No subtle essence in the sap of life,
No change of order working in the heart:
He comes, a man like us.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Comes woe, comes loss!

A MAID (*enters*).

We have clean sheets of flax to dight his bed.

THE WIDOW.

Make it white samite: He will make—the King!

A SCULLION (*enters*).

There is black bread upon the board.

THE WIDOW.

His word
Will make black bread white meat. O Golden Dawn,
When all the order of the world renews!

CELLARER (*enters*).

There is spring water in the wine-pails.

THE WIDOW.

He
Makes richer wine than ran in Galilee.

Of the Morality of

A VOICE (*without*).

The Word is found.

THE WIDOW.

Ah God, the King has come !

AN USHER.

The Count Phœnix.

The Lost Word

ACT II

SCENE.—*A certain garden attached to the House of Long Sorrow. At the farther end there is a Grotto, and within this is a Shrine where there are many candles lighted. A procession passes through in the following order, and goes about to the Grotto: a CROSS-BEARER with ACOLYTES; two surpliced children with incense, and behind them veiled maidens strewing flowers; PRIESTS with golden copes, preceded by one bearing a sanctuary bell. It is the afternoon of a brilliant day in the summer. The WIDOW is seated under trees at some distance from the Shrine, on a high-backed chair with faded canopy overhead. The Sons of the WIDOW pass to and fro near her, speaking earnestly and with animated gestures. A spectator would observe that no heed is paid by any one to the religious rite which is beginning, and the chants of which mingle confusedly with the dialogue throughout all its length.*

HYMN.

*A voice came out of the South and fell,
With a pleasant rain, O Israel!
And a second spring there came to thee,
A sowing-time, and the goodly sheaves,
Before the fall of the autumn leaves,
We have looked to see.*

*A wind rose up in the North and blew
Meadows and mournful marshes through,
Till the air was cleansed and the sky was clear,
When a time of joy after mourning fell,
For they wiped thy tears, O Israel!
And the Crown came near.*

Of the Morality of

*A light rose up in the East and gilded
The House of Life which the Lord had builded ;
And a Building-Word from the Lord there came,
As over the roof His glory fell ;
By this it was raised, O Israel !
By the Word and Name.*

*Dark clouds went into the West, and lo !
Henceforward only the light we know,
For here in place of the frozen clime,
And in place of the sorrowful House which fell,
Is a House for ever, O Israel !
And a harvest-time.*

THE WIDOW.

The Keepers of the outward Word proclaim
The outward meaning ; we have need thereof
No more. The Word is at our gates, and now
The Word has pass'd the threshold. It awakes
Strange echoes, not in galleries alone
But in the heart, yea, in the heart of hearts :
It quivers almost on the lips of all ;
The recollections, shaping in the mind,
Stir ; I could speak it now—I dream, I dream—
Waiting alone upon the Master's lips.

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

Why keeps the Master from the sons He loves ?

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Perchance His ruin'd chancel fills no more
With common daylight, through the fractured roof
Pouring ; His presence with diviner light
Possessing our poor place of earnest prayer,
Our mournful shrine of patience and of hope.

The Lost Word

HYMN.

*Blessed hope! From day to day
We have watch'd, we have pray'd; in our watching,
O Master, we pray:
Surprise us ere sleep on our eyes seal up lips, ere the hearts
in us dumb,
Which like children would scream Thee a welcome, can
crave Thee to come!
We have look'd for Thee more than one hour; ah, tarry no
longer, but come!*

FRATER VIATORIUS.

I saw His garments gleaming in the woods,
And all fair creatures follow'd from afar.

FRATER PROCURATOR.

He pass'd like one that hath the feet of ghosts,
How lightly gliding over broken stairs,
And in high turrets have I seen His eyes
Turn mildly on the wreckage of the House:
How meet that He surveys Whose word rebuilds!

FRATER SYMPHONIACUS.

Anon He spake with acolytes, and grave,
Sweet words exchanged with sweet-voiced singing boys,
Or kiss'd, I think, those lips which praise of Him
So oft has parted.

THE WIDOW.

Doing all things well.

Of the Morality of

HYMN.

*How well, O Lord, how sweet in Thee,
That Thou didst hide so long from me !
For when I sought Thee long and far
Thy voice was in the Evening Star,
Thy face was o'er the dark'ning sea ;
And hence I could not reach to Thee !
How sweeter still if Thou from far
Wouldst pass to me, wouldst leave Thy star,
Or walk across the darkening sea,
And—night or morning—come to me,
Because I cannot reach to Thee !*

THE WIDOW.

My heart is troubled at His absence ; seek
The King ; fall prostrate at His feet and say
That those who worshipp'd Him of old, who long
Did wait His coming, whom His presence fill'd
With life, and joy of life, expectant seek
His presence ; that His rites without the walls
Are practised here under the open sky :
May He be with us to infuse His light,
And make them other than a show which shews
No more, since He came back, the end of all ;
Make meanings new to fill them, and our hearts
With joy in them, as He is all our joy.

FRATER PACIFICUS.

My heart is troubled, but the dread therein
Is not His absence whom we hail as King.

The Lost Word

HYMN.

*My feet were on the mountain in the morning, and they said
that He was here ;
Then I cried : O Lord ! Where art Thou ? and the sea
where it was seething answer'd : Near.
But I saw the sun move forward, from the peaks and morn-
ing spaces, to a torrid house high over in the noon,
And I think it was the heart within me whisper'd : Get
thee down out of the mountains, for be certain, He is
coming very soon :
Hence they found me in my white robes in the meadows,
when the darkness was enlighten'd by the moon.*

FRATER PACIFICUS.

High stars, me visit for my doubt alone
If He be King ! And Thou Who from of old
Hast chosen the unlikely instrument
To manifest at times Thy power, at times
Thy love, Thy mercy, pardon if it prove
That this is Thine anointed, and on me,
Sparing this falling house, turn, if Thou wilt,
Thy wrath alone, Whose messenger has brought
No word of all by which a yearning heart
Might dare confess him to itself as Thine !

THE WIDOW.

It is His pleasure to conceal the Word.

HYMN.

*Our sins alone to such confusion
And unto these last woes have brought us ;
But spare, O Lord, that strong delusion,
The fear of which Thy Word has taught us !
O, if Thy promise fair we fail to see,
We seek at least to die adoring only Thee !*

Of the Morality of

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

He will declare Himself anon—anon.
Our hopes are all in Him ; did He deceive—
O, we most wretched, and lost most of men !

FRATER PACIFICUS.

One sign alone to pacify the heart !
To make Faith's cry less abject, and Faith's gift
Less void, or in the face of evidence.

THE WIDOW.

What need has He of signs? And yet one sign !
Ask and receive at will ; knock and all gates
Fly open—it is here, the sign of Faith :
I do believe that we have seen the King !

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

And when our foot is on the nation's neck,
And when we tread them in the press of wrath—
His wrath, and glory in His victory—
We to our triumph, and the world its cost
Shall know the King. *Flectamus genua . . .*
Levate. By the faith at heart of doubt,
Thou, Who art King, forgive us !

FRATER PROCURATOR.

How the House,
Like to some tree torn up, leans over, poised
Towards frightful fall. Bid all our craftsmen come
To shore its gaping sides.

The Lost Word

THE WIDOW.

What need has He
Of craftsmen, when the Building Word is His?

FRATER PACIFICUS.

He hath not utter'd it.

THE WIDOW.

He tries our faith.

HYMN.

*My wings are broken with my flight,
Mine eyes are dim through Thy great light,
My heart is dead with hope and fear ;
Though Thou art near, though Thou art near,
I cannot reach Thee, fallen here.*

*If Thou wilt raise me, I am blest—
O let me die upon Thy breast !
Ah, better, if Thy mercy deign,
In holy sleep I will remain
And wake beneath Thine eyes again !*

THE WIDOW.

O we have hoped and waited and held on
So long ! But He is here, and now our hearts,
Too tensely strain'd, must hurry Him or burst.
Let the old House dissolve : I wait on Him.
In His good time, which never is too late,
This House and all things shall the King make new.

Of the Morality of

HYMN.

*Thine is the world, and Thou through all
Dost utter forth Thy far-resounding call !
Grant us, at early morn or sombre close of day,
Who hear Thy call, to take up staff and scrip and come away ;
But if we fail to find Thy place in ways so wide and worlds
so far,
O when we stand and call on Thee, turn Thou aside and
hasten where we are !*

FRATER PACIFICUS.

Meanwhile He tarries in waste places ; He
Too waits, but whether on the master-word,
Or this great need of ours, too narrow yet
To shew His power who is so strong to save,
Or some accepted time—who knows ? Meseems
His eyes are on the daughter of the house.

THE WIDOW.

What if our daughter were the Queen to come !

FRATER PACIFICUS.

She shrinks from Him : He hath said words to her.
What words ! O Lord, our faith is sorely tried !
How doth Thy day-star visit us ? What light
Comes lurid with Thine orient from on high ?
The serpent's glitter lies behind his eyes.

HYMN.

*The serpent wreck'd Thy garden, Lord,
Of all glad things the Giver ;
But Thou at need, with arm and sword,
From snake and snare deliver !*

The Lost Word

FRATER PACIFICUS.

As snakes charm birds, He charms her : she grows lean,
She withers, and her garments, trailing light,
Have faded ; all the music of her eyes
Is silent now, and void of all its light
Her radiant voice.

THE WIDOW.

Our daughter wrecks the house.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

He asks for her : she flies into the woods.
He watches on her coming, as God waits
The wandering soul to lead it back to Him :
She tarries in waste places of the world ;
The stars turn dark at her who turns from light.
If we be weigh'd in her and if in her
Found wanting, what is there will save the House ?
Rejected is the King, our corner-stone,
So then the King will leave us, and unroof'd
We shall go forth, while all our foes succeed
Against us. Haste into the woods and wilds !
We must prevail upon her and at need
Compel.

THAT STRANGER.

The King is in His gardens now.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Make acts of faith : display our faith in Him.
Lord, we have look'd for Thee : we are glad, O Lord !

Of the Morality of

HYMN.

Come quickly, we cried, O Lord! Perchance it was
morning's prime
And the world was young in the morning; fair over our
faces fell
The golden locks and the dark locks: a moment only of
time,
But it seem'd that an age toil'd past and a world went by.
The locks are white on those heads so bright, and the hearts
have burnt to a shell;
But a rumour, a whisper, a word, a trumpet-voice drew
nigh:
It answer'd: Behold, I come! Then age upon age ran by,
As it seem'd but a moment leaping from then to now,
And this is Thy light on our brow.
Sun-down glory of all, we know not when nor how,
Whether space and time have drifted,
But we know that our eyes are lifted
And that this is the light of Thine eye:
World over world we have doubtless travell'd and far through
the starry spaces,
Till sweetly, softly we find Thee here, Thy face shining over
our faces.

THE WIDOW.

I am the oldest in the House: I know
He is the King. *Flectamus genua.*

GRAND ANTIPHON.

O Wisdom, from the mouth of the Most High
Forth issued, and from end to end extending,
In strength disposing all and tenderly,
Thy way of prudence teach, to us descending!

The Lost Word

PAGE OF THE GATE.

I am the youngest in the House : I know
He is the King. *Flectamus genua.*

GRAND ANTIPHON.

*O Lord of Hosts and Duke of Israel,
Who didst, on Sinai's Mount, Thy Law revealing,
By burning bush and prophet's brows dispel
Misrule and night, put forth thine arm of healing !*

A BONDSMAN.

I am the oldest servant in the House :
He is the King. *Flectamus genua.*

GRAND ANTIPHON.

*O root of Jesse, as a sign erected
To quell the kings of earth through Kingship stronger,
Though oft by nations of the earth rejected,
Come down and set us free : delay no longer !*

BONDSWOMAN.

I am the youngest of the serving-maids :
He is the King : *flectamus genua.*

GRAND ANTIPHON.

*O Key of David, every door and gate
Loosing and locking, from this House of anguish
Lead forth Thy bound ones, yea, from dungeons strait
And shadows deep of death wherein they languish !*

FRATER QUÆSTORIUS.

I am the treasurer : He has fill'd the purse :
He is the King. *Flectamus genua.*

Of the Morality of

GRAND ANTIPHON.

O Day-Star, Splendour of Eternal Light,
O Sun of Justice, come, Thy beams maintaining,
And through the mists and darkness of the night
Give light to those too long in night remaining !

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

I am the priest, and the Shekinah fills
The Holy Place ; incense and altar-lights,
Fire and the smoke of fire shew forth His name :
He is the King : *flectamus genua.*

GRAND ANTIPHON.

O King of nations and the Corner-Stone,
Conjoining all in one divine communion
Of saving faith and rest in Thee alone,
Those whom Thou madest lift into Thine union !

FRATER VENATICUS.

I am chief huntsman : In the woods at morn
I pass'd Him ; all that lives obeys the King.

GRAND ANTIPHON.

O Lawgiver, Emmanuel and King,
Saviour of nations and their expectation,
Our Lord, our God, when adverse hosts enring,
Strong to redeem us, haste to our salvation !

FRATER SYMPHONIACUS.

The world has turn'd into a psaltery.

The Lost Word

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

All computations shew that He is due :
He bears all marks and signs.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

The King demands
A sacrifice.

THE WIDOW.

Not sacrifice but glory.

CUSTOS INVISIBILIS.

Hereof is Antichrist and Lucifer.

THE WIDOW.

The spirit of the House, which from of old
Took voice, cries sadly in the heart of us ;
But who is strong to save? Not he, not he !

HYMN.

*Thy voice across the waters of the sea,
Thy voice far off in Thine eternity,
As here we stand and wait !
But whether time be early or be late,
Stars in their rising or their setting,
We know not—in this trance unbroken—
All time, all space, and all forgetting,
Except that thou art there and Thou hast spoken.*

[SOROR STELLIFERA passes ghost-white over the
grass with the COUNT PHENIX.

THE WIDOW.

Thou can'st save only ; we are Thine alone.
Dark stars have haunted us through all our days,

Of the Morality of

Dark stars have ruled our destiny, and dark
Our House is, long its sorrow, while perturb'd
And shrouded are our hearts, since Thou didst go :
Now art Thou with us ; now the brightest stars
Rule ; night and stars thereof in glory flower.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

*Credo videre bona Domini
In terra viventium.*

COUNT PHŒNIX.

*With upraised hand, as if in blessing, but extending three
fingers.*

A little while
And I go forth, but I requite you first :
Ye shall remember me.

THE WIDOW.

Our doom is Thine !

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Non nobis, Domine, non nobis.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

*Passing on with the daughter of the House, and
speaking to her apart.*

I
Come forth from the eternal, and I take
Thee forth from time : out of the great quick joy
I come to lead thee back into My joy.

The Lost Word

SOROR STELLIFERA.

If Thou be King, set up this sinking House.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

What part have I herein, except in thee ?

SOROR STELLIFERA.

If Thou art King, place in the day-star now
Thy royal sign.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

What is thy day-star's light ?

My darkness : I will place my sign on thee :
My seal upon thee shall outflame all stars,
And from thy brow such fire thy House shall save.

[They pass on.]

CHORUS OF SUPPLIANTS.

*Thy hands are white,
Thy heart is pure,
We saw Thy face in dreams of light ;
Thou wast our moon in that old night,
Which cannot in this day endure,
That his sun makes and thou reflectest—
A mirror's shining ecstasy.
Ah, move not, happy moon, away !
More chaste than any moon in sky,
More soft than gentlest human eye.
Ah, close not, eye of holy light
And all felicitous augury !
Ah, look not from this sun away,
Lest thou should'st cloud our borrow'd day,
Which in his absence thou directest,
O loving face, to light our way !*

Of the Morality of

*The birds in the green of the woodland cry to thee,
Leaves in the woods beseech thee,
Soft sea-murmurs and voices sigh to thee,
All the low breezes which faint as they reach thee
And pibroch winds from the hills beseech thee.
Patient, humanly, mourning faces
Of cattle in meadows are turn'd to pray thee ;
With passionate, tender and superhuman yearning,
The heart of the human world to thy heart, dear heart, is
turning.
And turn not away thy heart,
With the springs of its love, which never in vain we
turn'd to,
Who turn as the spikenard sunward to thee wheresoever
thou art,
And forever thy light have yearn'd to.*

The Lost Word

ACT III

SCENE.—*Without the gates. Rock and precipice, and above these a sheer height. It is night, and there is the rumour of many voices crying in the night. The moon breaks forth fitfully through black plumes and ragged masses of cloud surging above the peak. At these moments the House of Long Sorrow is seen riven from cope to base, far away to the left, with a confused crowd gathered at the gate, bearers of banners and canopies, incense-bearers, and the carriers of sacred vessels. In a narrow pathway winding upward among the rocks the COUNT PHENIX ascends, followed by SOROR STELLIFERA. There is a great heat in the air, with falling of rain at intervals and the rumbling of thunder far away.*

COUNT PHENIX.

The storm is on the mountains: I am call'd.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Is this thy promise to redeem the House?

COUNT PHENIX.

I have many mansions.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

If a mercy-seat—
Though hidden somewhere from the sight of all—
Be set within thy heart, I pray thee, pause,
Being outworn and perishing.

Of the Morality of

COUNT PHENIX.

Look up:

There is keen air upon the height, live flame
Streaming above the height, and I am call'd :
Thou shalt learn all before I leave thee, yea,
The Word in secret and the power thereof,
Which fills all life.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Dark Master, darker woe!

They bound me truly in my love for them ;
They led me shackled in the bonds of love ;
They offer'd up the saddest sacrifice
Which e'er was smitten since the world began.
Still the envenom'd knife is in my side ;
It cuts past heart and flesh into the quick
And inmost core of a death-wailing soul,
Which bleeds for ever.

[*They pass on.*]

FRATER PACIFICUS (*enters*).

Our sweet soul is lost :

They stole our soul away ; they have put out
Her gentle light : she cannot fly to us ;
Her wings are broken now ; and in this dark
We cannot see her. O most piteous quest !

[*He ascends.*]

*Smoke and red light issue from the House of Long Sorrow.
The crowd, still massing at the gates, begins to form
into a disorderly procession, and, amidst strident cries
and the uproar of many voices, a chant is heard at
intervals.*

The Lost Word

CHORUS VIATORIUS.

*O Blessed City, Inmost Shrine,
Still let thy light, from far away,
Soft over all our paths incline !
Yet we may reach thee, yet thy day,
Light as the leaves fall—thus and thus—
Shine on us holy and glorious.*

*O Blessed City, the heart is dim
With the tearful mist of a white desire,
And words of longing the lips o'erbrim,
But songs are feeble to voice our fire ;
The music falters, the thought is cold
Which springs in the soul for thy roofs of gold.*

*O Blessed City, O magnet-walls,
Out of the weary and darkling time
Lift us into thy timeless halls !
Far have we stray'd from thy healthful clime,
Through poison'd wastes and a hemlock sea ;
Still we are townsmen and sons of thee.*

On the Peak. Fire and Storm.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

Look back !

SOROR STELLIFERA.

The House is flaming.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

Dost thou see
Those crested riders in the path beneath ?

Of the Morality of

SOROR STELLIFERA.

I see the plumes of hearses.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

Dost thou mark
The smoke and flame of torches in the gorge
Below us !

SOROR STELLIFERA.

I see demon-eyes ascend,
And muffled faces in the darkness grow :
They move about us now on every side.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

Dost thou behold the life which fills the world
Burst suddenly up from path and gorge far down,
And deeper still from misty mountain-pools,
From forest-coverts and turbid water-ways ?

SOROR STELLIFERA.

I see consuming fire.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

Thou hast the Word :
Ignē Natura renovatur integra !
Thou lookest on the glory of the world.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

I see thy lurid hell.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

The Word is thine.

The Lost Word

SOROR STELLIFERA.

An all-embracing pity from the heart
Within me wells up suddenly and flows
Towards all that lives and suffers or is lost,
Engulph'd in this great woe.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

Beyond thee now
Opens an endless void, within the light
And splendour of the coruscating flame—
A dead black peace of uttermost abyss :
Into such peace I take thee : be thou still'd !

SOROR STELLIFERA.

I call upon the peace of Christ and God :
Thou hast no power in me ; no part hast thou.
Thou who art nothing, to the empty void
Thine utter nothing take.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

My people call.
[*He disappears.*]

FRATER PACIFICUS (*from below*).

O arms upflung under the violet light !

The Burning Gates.

THE WIDOW.

Our daughter does not come.

Of the Morality of

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

And he is gone.

THE WIDOW.

And the Lost Word is with him.

FRATER PROCURATOR.

The House sinks.

Let us go forth.

THE WIDOW.

The Word !

FRATER PACIFICUS

She dies thereof.

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

All things have fail'd us. The stars lie ; the sun
Betrays us ; signs upon the earth and sea
Have mock'd us. End it now !

THE WIDOW.

I do believe

That the King cometh.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Yet shall the Word be found.

THE WARDEN OF THE HOUSE.

Bring forth the starving horses through the smoke :
There is grass somewhere in the world beyond.

The Lost Word

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Come forth to seek the Word!

THE WIDOW.

Perchance to greet

The King.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Who cometh in the morning.

FRATER SYMPHONIACUS.

Dawn!

[The light breaks.

On the Peak. The smoke of the Burning House rolls up from below, and over the human voices there is heard from time to time the scream of frightened horses, with the bellowing of kine. There is also, ever and anon, a sudden crash of cymbals, with beating of tabours, and occasionally the winding of a solitary horn. A fitful chanting ascends at intervals.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

The gorges in the mountains, and the wind
Among the mountains, and the lights on snow;
But the steep's prospect is the gulf's great depth!

THE CHANT FROM BELOW.

*In the day of the wrath of the Lord expell'd,
Out of the gates we have loved, we go,
With the signs of pity and grace withheld,
Nor what shall befall us know.*

Of the Morality of

SOROR STELLIFERA.

To totter only where of old we stood,
To find the stars quench suddenly, to feel
A sudden sinking of the rifted earth,
And here the very end, the dirge of all!

THE CHANT FROM BELOW.

*Sad perforce is our slow retreat,
Turn we often with lingering feet,
Follow we forward with bended head,
Humble enough to be comforted,
Wretched enough to be heard, who pray
For a cup so bitter to pass away.*

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Past every point of being have I gazed :
What lies beyond ?

THAT VOICE.

Thy path, which lifts above ;
Thy star, which draws.

THE CHANT FROM BELOW.

*O if a visible hand had driven
Forth to the waste, like our sires of eld !
Yea, if the lightning our house had riven,
Over us only our foes prevail'd ;
If forth we went in the storm and stress,
Surely the woe of the heart were less !*

The Lost Word

SOROR STELLIFERA.

A very simple thing
And easy, to be full up to the brim
With sorrow ; to look back with wistful mind—
When there was not one sorrow in the world
Without some healing balm, which seem'd as sweet
As joy unended !

THAT VOICE.

To look forth and hear,
O Soul, the Spirit's voice, the Spouse—who speaks !

THE CHANT FROM BELOW.

*But stone by stone has the house sunk down
And left us homeless, to camp without,
Lodge, if we will, in the distant town,
Or quarter in villages round and about,
Nothing ordain'd us, nothing denied—
Whether to part where the ways divide,
Whether to wander or pause and rest,
Who in this doubt shall declare the best ?*

SOROR STELLIFERA.

They gave me sacraments and means of grace
In childhood, and they bade me love my house,
As they had loved me who abode therein,
And thus have brought me past all thought to woe.
They gave me sacraments and means of grace,
Pour'd consecrated water on my head,
And the cleansed spirit soar'd past Nature's range :
Now past the range of Nature have I gazed
On voids beyond.

Of the Morality of

THE SPIRIT'S VOICE.

*It falls from the furthest height
Through midnight's lonely halls,
Falls with a darting light—
The Voice of the Spirit falls.
Splendour of morning gold
Scatters the dark of old ;
Splendours of dawn unfold ;
Glory is everywhere—
Infinite light and air.*

THE CHANT FROM BELOW.

*Foes that turn'd in the past to rend us,
So helpless finding, might now befriend us ;
Those who betray'd, of the hearts we cherish'd,
Could half rekindle the love that perish'd.*

SOROR STELLIFERA.

There comes before mine eye
The light on leaves in gardens blithely gleaming—
So sweetly brooding on the velvet lips
Of full-blown roses ; apples to the sun
Their shining faces turning ; over all
The paths and beds, a busy work of winds,
So full of pleasant purpose unconcern'd ;
And at the heart a mystery, within
The mystery a hint of such a crown,
Of undiscover'd kingdoms full of life,
And all in reach and all a little part—
So small a part—of such a joy to come.

The Lost Word

THE SPIRIT'S VOICE.

*Out of the world of bright,
Fix'd and enduring thought,
Listen—it calls, it calls—
Thou who hast bravely fought,
In thine unaided might.
Henceforth of spirit taught
Never henceforth shalt stray,
Never defeat thine end,
Drift and be drawn away,
Nor force in vain expend.*

THE CHANT FROM BELOW.

*If we had strength or the steel to arm us,
Nothing is left with the will to harm us ;
So utterly broken and bow'd are we
That the very branch of the woodland tree,
Which sways in the breeze and the dawn-light near us,
Has a gentle thought at the heart to cheer us.*

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Long and so long I have awaited Thee,
O Thou from Whom I come, to Whom I go ;
That I have taken to my heart of hearts
A great resolve to finish from henceforth
With any waiting. Here and now I stand—
No longer praying and pleading, seeking not,
Demanding scarcely longer. Thee I claim :
Give me no reasons to excuse delay ;
Weave me no veils ; take back Thy sacraments ;
Roll up Thy pageants and Thy panoplies !
Such ministries have help'd me in the past
A little space of time, a measured length

Of the Morality of

Of distance; now they hinder. I will brook
No other channels and no substitutes.
Give me Thyself in utter nakedness,
From all devices free, and strip me too :
I will not see Thee till myself am bare.
Centre of my deep heart, longing for Thee,
Give me Thy very self.

THE SPIRIT'S VOICE.

*Thou shalt be guided, led—
Lo, it descends on Thee !
Come, with uplifted head,
Drawn out of self to me.
My voice, which quickens the dead,
Calls to thee, calls to thee ;
My glory is round thy head
Unto eternity.*

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Do with me as Thou wilt, but take me straight :
This is the end of all ; I end in Thee.

[Ascendit Stella.]

*There is utter silence, as it might be said, for a few moments
and then, through the invisible light, her voice—
ringing clearly and sweeter than all sweet sacraments.*

SOROR STELLIFERA.

The soul alone
Shall know His coming when the King returns.

*The defiles and gorges of the mountains through which the
procession is pouring in full sunlight, bearing the
scorched and tattered banners, sacred vessels and broken*

The Lost Word

emblems rescued from the ruins of the House of Long Sorrow. Some of the cohort are mounted on lean horses or mules, and the Children of the Exile are in wains, drawn by oxen. Others are walking. The priests, deacons and acolytes preserve something of the aspect of a religious procession. The rest are still in disorder, and some fall by the way. The WIDOW is seated in a gilded chariot decorated with artificial flowers, being encircled by the Sons of the WIDOW.

THE CHANT CONCLUDED.

*And not with evil intent to flout us
Flaunts the great glory of light about us ;
But rather a pity misplaced possesses
The fond old heart of the world without us,
A vacant craving conceives to cheer us
With vapid kindness of crude caresses,
And, more to parade benign intentions,
Spreads gewgaw tinsel and outward gleam,
Her old, expended and crass conventions,
To cover the acrid truth of things
With shallow pleasaunce of hackney'd dream,
And loss which never the heart expresses
With irritant pipe of the voice which sings.*

FRATER SYMPHONIACUS.

Who goes before us in the rock-hewn way ?

FRATER PACIFICUS.

A little child upon a great white horse,
Who gives the sunlight back from golden hair
And the lithe wonder of his naked limbs
Thrice glorified. Whence comes he ! The old House
Has known him not, whom now we mark alone.

Of the Morality of the Lost Word

FRATER SYMPHONIACUS.

The oldest and the youngest of the House
He seems ; direct along the lineal way
He leads us : surely, in this need extreme,
Not utterly cast out, the sign long sought,
Forbearing violence and void of haste,
All silently the flower-sweet natural air
Gives up, as thuribles their incense-smoke.
We see the shoulders and the hinder parts
Of that which never is by face reveal'd—
The ante-natal watcher of the House.

FRATER PACIFICUS.

Forth from this vista o'er the world we gaze
And the great undeclared, inscrutable time
To come far stretches, as a strenuous wind
Tears through some fissure in the wall and thence
Fills chambers vast and resonant vestibules.

FRATER SYMPHONIACUS.

So take we forth our parable made void ;
At least before us there are fields unknown,
And past the sorrow of the ages lies,
May be, the still immensity of God.

THE FURTHER SIDE OF
THE PORTAL

PART I

THE HOLD OF GOD

N. B.—The initial design of this Mystery Play is referable to a friend and fellow-worker in the mysteries, who has contributed also a few lines, there and here.

The Hold of God

SCENE.—*A clearing in a certain forest. The back-cloth represents the closed doors of a mediæval chapel, amidst trees and undergrowth. There is enough light for the audience to distinguish features, and no more. Through small lancet windows in the walls, on either side of the doors, there is a faint, reddish glow, as of a Sanctuary Lamp. Enter MASTER, with seven SCHOLARS.*

THE MASTER.

And pausing briefly in this place of stay,
Ere further travail fills the toilsome way—
What time the moon shall o'er these trees ascend—
I pray you, good my sons, in order shew
This valiant journey's cause and seemly end.

FIRST SCHOLAR.

Methinks, like life itself, the path goes on,
In dark or light, and weary still we tread
The wild and rugged track, nor rightly know
If inn of refuge we shall light upon,
Or ever more find hope of mead and bread.

THE MASTER.

Nor end nor cause is here: if ways be far
The hope within us shines, a faithful star.
Poor is the heart which cannot keep in view,
'Midst transitory pangs, a purpose true!

The Further Side of the Portal

SECOND SCHOLAR.

I too am footsore ; I am empty too.

THE MASTER.

Be comforted, fair sons, a little space
Of pilgrim days—then, through a shining gate,
We pass within the City of High Debate,
Where all shall gaze with joy on Wisdom's face.

THIRD SCHOLAR.

I look to greet her with my latest breath,
Her place the grave, her other title Death.

FOURTH SCHOLAR.

Some meat, some wine ! I follow as I can.

FIFTH SCHOLAR.

Prithee, restore the fainting inward man !

SIXTH SCHOLAR.

Give me a bed for sleep !

THE MASTER.

Alas, poor fools !
I say, the City of a Thousand Schools
Awaits our coming, and three days, as thus,
Shall end our sorrows ; but when these are done
High Wisdom's self shall feed each toiling son.

The Hold of God

I say, the City is rich and fair; to us
It shall give food and, being generous,
Refresh both body and mind. With strength restored
By all the plenitude of bed and board—
God save us—we shall enter in the lists
Of learning and therein maintain our parts
With all the zeal of subtleties and arts,
Compete for highest prizes, who resists
Shatter with mighty arms of argument;
But if a while one finds his forces spent,
Lo, I am with you all days, fill'd with fire,
For new contention till the foes retire!
We will increase the schools or make them one,
Shining upon it as their ruling sun.
Less than the least of you I drink and eat,
Yet still go forward with unyielding feet;
And when you sleep, in stable or on sward,
I find repose in theses and reward
For watches in the tortuous ways of thought.

FIRST SCHOLAR.

But we will follow, Master, till we die.

THE MASTER.

God keep you, fairest sons, our bourne is nigh!

SECOND SCHOLAR.

The term of all, in thirst and hunger sought.

THIRD SCHOLAR.

I see the Halls of Learning, hear the clash
The onset and the parry and the flash
Of keen mind-weapons, met in high mind-strife.

The Further Side of the Portal

FOURTH SCHOLAR.

Glory and crown for those our Master taught !

FIFTH SCHOLAR.

Knowledge is life and Wisdom life of life.

SIXTH SCHOLAR.

Behold the sorrows of my proper need !
What boots it now to hear the sounding brass,
The clashing steel in knightly warfare bent,
Or in high metaphor of argument ?
Perish the Halls of Learning ! Who shall heed ?
I see the flicker of poor souls that pass.
Surely of all things baneful this is worst,
That one should go, by hunger and by thirst,
Through all his mortal days, companionéd.
He fares, to wrack and wrath of storm exposed,
Is least with these to strive by shields disposed,
In sorry rags by day apparelléd,
While straw provides at night a cheerless bed.
Nor does, for this, his life in idlesse pass,
Since toil that in green youth his guerdon was,
Fills up the measure of futurity,
And little gain has he of all his days.
So at his passing wins he poorer praise,
For in contempt sinking him down to die,
He finds in death more deep obscurity ;
Nor in such sorry life is better taught
To meet his end ; nor goes he less to naught ;
Nor can more firmly look than other some
Towards holy bliss, which may hereafter come.
Hence if I follow in the path you take,
One hope impels alone—my thirst to slake,
To fill the belly, in a bed to rest :
Let Truth and Wisdom hang, for ease is best !

The Hold of God

SEVENTH SCHOLAR,
id est, Frater Peregrinus.

Methinks, mere wants which harry on the road
Are less than little, if the goal be blest.
Wisdom and Truth of all in their abode
Seek I, my brothers, and that holy quest
Will follow, whether I find daily bread
Or fail, so only—in the term of rest—
At the King's Table I be comforted
And find my joy within the Mystic Town,
My rich delight, my treasure without end,
My healing salve which can all hearts amend—
Beneath the sunshine of the Great White Crown.

THE MASTER.

Ex ore infantum was said of old :
Herein the very truth is haply told ;
And he who lights upon this secret store
Shall know that all his days were loss before.
No less, I doubt if in this lower ground
Has purblind man the place of wonder found,
However much his halting steps bestir . . .
'Tis true some tell us of enchanted Ur,
Built out of sight, deep in the morning land ;
And some there are—that none can understand—
Which, as they say, have visited in dream
The moving palace that they call Irêm ;
While other some, with fever in their blood,
Do rave of marvels they have seen in Hud.
To make an end, the healing salve—I say—
Shall bless the heart which finds it on a day.

SIXTH SCHOLAR.

A vainer quest than that we now pursue !
Prythee, fare on ! From foolish words desist.

The Further Side of the Portal

FIRST SCHOLAR.

Anon, we perish in this murderous mist !

SECOND SCHOLAR.

Who cries King's Table? Sirs, 'twixt me and you,
Give me the nearest tavern's blessed chance !

THIRD SCHOLAR.

Aye, any hostel ere the night advance ;
Then seek who wills beyond for Mystic Town,
Treasure and healing salve and Great White Crown !

FOURTH SCHOLAR.

But softly, friends, perchance with failing breath
He raves of joys beyond the gate of death !

FIFTH SCHOLAR.

His face is white ; I would the moon might rise
And save us from that madness in his eyes.

THE MASTER.

You are misguided all, by Holy Rood,
And have not this high matter understood !
Myself in other days did joys conceive
Of quests like this, and in my heart believe
That, for his spirit's and his life's defence,
A man might haply find the quintessence,

The Hold of God

Since very surely, as the sages shew,
Thesaurus latet in Mercurio.

Yea, if a man could see them with his eyes,
Sulphur and Salt withhold great mysteries ;
While he which can extract the seed of gold
Shall wealth of all this world most truly hold.
The quest, moreover, and its end premised
Do seem our own, yet subtly symbolised :
That Mystic Town our City of Words at war,
Well arm'd and marshall'd duly and maintain'd
For ever ; but the Table of the King
Is mind's refreshment, which from more to more
Swells mighty annals ; and the healing thing—
Laurel and wreath of fame, true crown attain'd.

But haste we now to reach our journey's end,
And may good angels on our path attend.
Thus shall we gain, if not all term of quest,
At least a little of the mind its rest,
With ease of body and no greater blame
Than souls may bear which shall escape the flame
That cleanses sin in purgatory's well,
Having been ransom'd first from fiends of hell.
From magic's art, meanwhile, and witchcraft may
St. Mary shield our paths—both night and day !
So God shall save us and bring judgment quick
Less on the outlaw than the heretic.
May Plato's method ne'er prevail with us ;
To all such whimsies—*phi, Diabolus !*
And may our steps keep straight within the schools
Confessing only Aristotle's rules ! . . .
This way the forest thins, faint light appears,
As of a moon white in her mist of tears.

*[The darkness lifts very slightly, beyond the
trees on the left.]*

The Further Side of the Portal

PEREGRINUS.

Life and the food of life, the heart-sweet fruit
Of grace therein, good Master ; these I seek !
Thereto your colleges of vain dispute
Can bring me not, and so by ways more meek,
To halls more sacred, must my steps repair :
Give me God's speed therein, to Whose good care—
Whatever sorrows by the way befall—
With trusting heart, I now commit you all !

FIFTH SCHOLAR.

The madness grows ; he shakes in limb and speech.
[Exit.]

SIXTH SCHOLAR.

Leave him : Salt, Sulphur, Mercury may teach
His path of peace.
[Exit.]

FOURTH SCHOLAR.

Or prove his Devil's Bread.
[Exit.]

THIRD SCHOLAR.

Perchance the Great White Crown shall give him light.
[Exit.]

SECOND SCHOLAR.

And shew King's Table with King's meat bedight.
I wish him all good luck of board and bed,
Midst dews and darkness strangely comforted.
[Exit.]

FIRST SCHOLAR.

In Belial's realm, midst witchcraft's Sabbath's spells,
Go seek the city of a thousand hells.
[Exit.]

The Hold of God

THE MASTER.

God grant we see you at the shining gate
Which opens on the City of High Debate!

[He hastens after the SCHOLARS, and the stage darkens. A chant sounds within the Chapel.]

THE HIDDEN CHORUS.

From arrow flying in the light,
From demon wiles which lurk at noon
And things unclean that move at night
In stealthy mist beneath the moon,
God save, and hold us—waiting, sleeping—
Ex hoc nunc, in His holy keeping!

[The WANDERING SCHOLAR is left alone, standing in the centre, with bowed head, while the laughter of the SIX COMPANION SCHOLARS dies away in the distance. He then gazes about him with something of dismay in his aspect.]

PEREGRINUS.

Here in this shadow'd place I stand alone,
Old sense of end in sight and guidance gone :
Gone too the secret words which, passing thought,
Were in strange hours of trance and vision taught
Sweetly, to one forlorn, by him who came—
Withholding his great ancestry and name—
But things so high announcing that, meseems,
This life henceforth is thinnest woof of dreams.
Yet in my thought a gate at times I find
Through which a man may leave such dreams behind
And in a little while all true things reach.
Ah, my true Master, now thy faithful speech

The Further Side of the Portal

I lack indeed, from beaten ways aside,
Here standing sadly where the tracks divide
And knowing nothing of the road I take !
O thou who didst my soul from darkness wake
And to be mindful of my want
Didst kindly covenant,
Be with me here, I plead,
In this my great disquietude and need !

[There is here a certain pause.]

Poor heart, so ready but of will so weak ;
Vain mind, so swift in barren thought to seek—
But slow to render one small thought in act !
Thou picture-teeming fancy, every tract
Of quest encompassing and calling down
All stars each venture in advance to crown,
But holding nothing save its dream at end !
And O the toils which strength of limbs expend
In unproductive passing to and fro,
As if from East to West the search should grow,
'Twi'xt points of space towards ends which lie beyond
All space, all time ! Yet thus, from bond to bond,
The soul writhes, swopping trammels to get free,
At each new yoke making vain bids to be
Once and for all unshackled from the whole.
Weary of toils and full of earthly want,
Still undeterr'd, I sought the living font,
Seek even yet, but famish'd now in soul.

[There is another pause, and the Moon shines through the forest-trees, with a growing light, from the far end of the stage, on the left hand. PEREGRINUS has now the aspect of one who is in a waking sleep. A shadowy motley of figures begins to pass and repass up stage, on the right, like shapes in a dream which is his.]

The Hold of God

Alas, no help is mine in this strange land,
Where doubtful shapes do lurk on every hand!
Ah, woe is me! And whither shall I go?
How pass unscathed through such a world of woe?
Yet well I deem that—closer unto me
Than lips to lips which meet—in all we see
Lies heal'd the tincture, lies that mastery
Which can the whole world change to angel-gold
And bring to man beatitude untold.
But now my body faints with weariness
Of this long journey and the dire distress
That falls on footsore men which find no meat.
I fail in truth: no strength is in my feet,
And this cold heart seems chill'd within my breast:
Here yawns my grave: is this the body's rest?
*[He sinks fainting on the ground. The Chant
sounds from the Chapel.]*

THE HIDDEN CHORUS.

Perchance from distant haven, further star,
Beyond—perchance—where any systems are,
Cometh a man's soul on this earthly ground—
With whose high offices the ways resound
A little while, till he is taken far,
Leaving the rumours of his body and mind
To echo briefly in the ways behind.
Meanwhile, from other star or shining sun
Comes here a second, to replace that one;
But having gather'd up his own he goes
And unescorted must in turn ascend:
So from its source unseen the pageant flows,
For ever passing to the unseen end.

[From the shadowy crowd of figures in the right-hand corner, up stage, comes one who is crowned with vine-leaves, in the guise of a reveller. He approaches PEREGRINUS, bearing a brimming cup. He bends over him.]

The Further Side of the Portal

REVELLER.

Behold, in happy time I come !
The heart is chill, the lips are dumb,
The ichor of sweet life is sped,
And heavy lie both limbs and head :
But what of this, when I can give
The pure and perfect sanative ?

[*He raises* PEREGRINUS.

PEREGRINUS (*murmuring*).

A dream upon the edge of death,
The shadow'd shape of failing breath,
A thought of healing in the dream,
To lengthen an expended theme
With words as empty in the ear
As ghostly forms to eyes appear.
O ichor of the light to be,
O shapes of dying phantasy !

REVELLER.

Partake of this, the great redress,
The help, the cure, the antidote,
Nepenthe for all evil stress ;
For all life's wormwood, pest and bane
A counter-poison in the throat.

PEREGRINUS (*drinking*).

Well is it in the lips of pain,
Sweet fire which courses in the breast,
A Mænad-dance in nerve and brain,
A rose-bed in the sense of rest,
Yet in deep chambers of the brain
Some strange beatitude of zest !

[*He starts up.*

The Hold of God

If this be earthly wine you bring,
'Tis shadow of a sacred thing,
Whose light—on dream and waking shed—
My soul through many a path has sought
In long protracted wayfaring,
In fasts and watches and much want.
There is a Palace of the King
And there a Royal Table spread ;
The food is purest benison,
The cup a mighty orison,
Of life the very spring and font.
And there the King, with holy hands,
Serves meat and wine to seekers—brought
From out of all the earthly lands :
While in me still your juices stir,
I deem you are His messenger.

REVELLER.

Receive again the cup of bliss :
Drink and drink deeply.
[PEREGRINUS *finishes the draught.*

You say well :
I come from halls divine, and this
The mystic nostrum truly is ;
More than a medicine, more than balm ;
Elixir vitæ, mythridate ;
The opener of every gate
Which leads to palace, crown and palm !
So follow me, for this I tell—
You shall no longer faint nor die :
No messenger, but king am I !
[*The YOUNG SCHOLAR falls back,*
with averting arms.

The Further Side of the Portal

PEREGRINUS

Not thou the King who crown'd with light,
In purple vested and in white,
Sits throned beside the sacred board,
By angels and by saints adored.
Him have I seen in dreams of night
And him in rapture of desire,
When far above myself upraised,
I knelt behind the holy quire,
While in the minster fair and high,
Amidst all manner of psaltery,
The Altar in strange glory blazed.
Yea, I have seen the red wine pour'd
By hands most sacred, hands most clean
And souls to grace in life restored.
So also in the waking ways
One vision came—true joy for praise :
A jasper cup which hands unseen
Exalted heaven's high gates between,
Until—beyond the pole's clear star—
It shone with ruddy light afar.
Thereafter, loosed from mortal things,
As one abruptly finding wings,
Within that cup I dwelt and knew
All heaven's keen rapture through and through.
Is this your cup? That King are you?
Methinks in your true light I see
A wanton king of revelry.
Take hence your cup's foul incantation ;
And grant me, Lord, when fiends intrude,
To keep in heart for my salvation,
Thy mystery of celsitude !

[The REVELLER thereupon reverses his vessel.]

The Hold of God

REVELLER.

Deep shadows 'twixt pale moonbeams lengthen,
The follies grow from end to end ;
No wine is left my heart to strengthen,
And thither whence I came returning
I carry the parch'd lips' endless yearning.

Strange spectres on my path attend,
And trembling hands do offer mutely up
The hollow semblance of an empty cup.

*[He returns as he came, but now with failing
gait. There is a moment's pause, and
the Chant sounds from the Chapel.]*

THE HIDDEN CHORUS.

Sufficient to the night was sleep, and late
We enter slowly on the waking state,
Uncertain yet if all the dreams be past ;
But having drunk of poppies, we collect—
A little band—to watch, with heads erect,
If anywise the day should break at last.

*[PEREGRINUS kneels on the sward with clasped
hands, while the moon brightens above
him.]*

PEREGRINUS.

I do believe that all I seek is here ;
That Zion's peace within this place abides ;
That wheresoe'er the steps of man have trod
There is an open path which leads to God ;
That all the veil that God from man divides
Would thinnest woof of fondest dream appear,

The Further Side of the Portal

Could we but clearly see with our mind's eyes.
It boots us not to seek in journeys long
What is more close than singer to his song,
But neither more nor less at the world's edge.
So take I here my stand and counsel wise
Do offer to myself, to heaven this pledge—
That here I rest, whatever yet betides.
Do Thou, dear Lord, Who art both part and whole,
Now with Thine All fulfil my part of soul!

*[In the speaking of these words there has
passed from among the shadows PUELLA
PELLACIA, intoning as she comes.]*

PUELLA.

Fair chantries, meetly for petitions wrought,
And castles in their building come to nought
If love's strong god do not abide in each,
And all the secret things of sweetness teach :
Yea, without love learning is foolishness,
And all sinks down to pasture with distress.

*[She takes PEREGRINUS by the hands, and so
is he raised. The moon has brightened
in heaven. It is like a fair evening
in summer.]*

PEREGRINUS.

Art thou more wise than doctors in the schools?
Thou hast not studied Aristotle's rules,
Still less at sovereign Plato's hidden spring
Demanded deeper wisdom's treasured thing.

PUELLA.

But I will bring you where that treasure lies.

The Hold of God

PEREGRINUS.

The purest learning fills the Courts of Love,
And Wisdom's day-star shines undimm'd above.
Learning is Love's true path, and Wisdom's prize
Is Love indeed, so all is summ'd in these
Of God and Love's most highest mysteries.

PUELLA.

Know then, fair sir, that in such paths as this
I also learn'd, and I am also wise,
A license hold to teach the lore of bliss,
All secret things in love's world lieffly done.

PEREGRINUS.

Declare, I charge you, how such joys are won,
For hither came I from a far-off land
The secret work of bliss to understand
And all my soul with good to satiate !

PUELLA.

Hid in my eyes and body passing sweet
The treasure lies. I am the open gate,
The life, the way, the love, the light and fire,
The end attain'd of all the heart's desire.
Whate'er your soul conceives freely I give,
That you in rapture may henceforward live
And that my rapture with your own may meet.
Come, love, and follow in my paths awhile
And visions false shall fade before my smile !
So fetously bedight, so close at hand,
Within these woodland-walks my arbours stand,
And in no tract is found retreat more fair
Or rigidly enclosed from all rude air.

The Further Side of the Portal

King in his palace shall not feast so well ;
Heal'd we shall be therein from all dark spell,
For potent herbs have I, and those who taste
Above all pain and sorrow shall be placed.
On moly beds, in meads that few men know,
Those herbs, *pardie*, were gather'd long ago.

PEREGRINUS.

I know, through secret halse and housel move
The saving prodigies of holy love
And that ineffable service there is done.
The Cup of Life, 'midst rites in secret heard,
Is by unspotted maidens minister'd,
In light which shines not from an earthly sun.
If you, like them, be privileged and clean,
Perchance the end of this my quest is seen ;
Address'd to follow where your hands may lead,
Right bless'd I count our meeting in my need.
But if with secret guile to tempt you strive,
Then other ways shall save my soul alive.

*[She throws up her arms, with a white face
in the moonlight, so falling back towards
her place.]*

PUELLA.

How dark, how arid wind the ways of sense ;
Desire is dead and all sweet dalliance :
There is no magic left in hand or glance ;
The couch is lonely and the limbs are cold.
Dark, phantom-haunted, void of dear defence—
Kissing is over now : poor love is old !

*[She returns as she came, with wailing and
wringing of hands.]*

The Hold of God

PEREGRINUS.

Now does the need increase from more to more,
As one by one the ways about me close.
First human learning, its beloved door
Shut in my eager face, since he who held
The keys which open, who the prospect knows,
Had nothing in its treasuries of eld
To offer him who in the inward sees—
Save outward figures and their similes.
And now the sanctity of human love,
Which proves for some the path to God above,
Has at its entrance-gate for me unveil'd
A wanton likeness of lubricities. . . .
With what new clamour am I here assail'd ?

*[There enters a troop of REVELLERS, both men
and women, headed by a FOOL. They
dance round PEREGRINUS, singing.]*

CHORUS.

Folly rules in peace and strife,
Leads the husband, lights the wife,
Makes and mars the marriage-bed,
Brings the man and maid to birth,
Roughs or smooths the path they tread,
Covers up their bones with earth.
Tell me, therefore, what is he ?
What should Master Folly be ?
Pleasant Folly, life of life.

*[The circle is broken into two groups, left and
right, below PEREGRINUS, the FOOL
standing on his left side.]*

FOOL.

Life of life, and that am I :
Prithee, tell me how and why.

The Further Side of the Portal

Ruling country-side and town,
Kings bow underneath my crown :
I the peasant and his spade,
I the merchant, stock and trade ;
Sailor in his ship at sea,
He is I and I am he.
In the college and the school,
I am learning and its rule,
That which works in hand and brain,
That the toil and moil attain—
All the loss and all the gain.
Unto Wisdom's high estate
I am pathway, I am gate :
Wisdom is my secret name.

Come they early, come they late,
I the trumpet, I the fame
And the voice in loud acclaim.
I am lovers and their lips,
All love's glory, all its shame,
Eyes in shining or eclipse ;
And where e'er the soft hand slips—
That forsooth and there I am.

Break and form and break again ;
Weave the dance with might and main ;
Follow, follow on my call !
Who shall help it ? Who will strive ?
Lilt of song-tide through the years,
All the maytime, all the tears,
Whatsoever chance arrive—
I am that and I am all.

[The dance recommences more wildly, gathering about PEREGRINUS. He is approached by the FOOL in his antics, who shakes his bells violently as the ring breaks up at length.]

The Hold of God

FOOL.

Young Master, prithee, of your grace,
Why wear such sad and sober face
When all kind folly loudly pleads
For modes and manners debonair?
Why also wear outlandish weeds,
As one but late from school escaped?
Mark these wild glades, in moonlight draped;
Our motley mark and tousell'd hair!
Your heavy eyes, your careworn look
Do smack too much of judgment's book.
I counsel you, let sense go hang
And join in time this clownish gang,
Which never learn'd to speak or spell
Aught save words delectable
In perfect praise of Folly's King;
And these with might and main they sing,
Nor care for sober rule a fig,
But dance about and whirligig!

PEREGRINUS.

I pray you, sir, since now the hour is late
And on a pilgrimage from far I come,
Chide not the habit of my mean estate;
Perchance 'tis not more mean than other some!
I am a scholar and I seek as such
Some vestures of the mysteries to touch;
If Folly's themes and joys you folk prefer
I will not offer an affront to her,
Or counsel force on you her praise to cease:
Do you the same, and let us part in peace!

FOOL.

His anxious face, outlandish vogue
And sorry accent well proclaim

The Further Side of the Portal

This youth at best a cheerless rogue,
Unmeet to breathe kind Folly's name.
But, merry men, it matters not :
Come, leave him to his luckless lot ;
And pipes and bells, with jangling sound
Shall lead us to congenial ground—
Round and round, and merry go round !

*[The troop of REVELLERS make off, with
shrill noises.]*

PEREGRINUS.

The night is long which now is scarce begun ;
Full sorely here the comfortable sun
I miss, who am so lowly and bewray'd :
Will no one come to offer me true aid ?
Ah, Master good, thy prudent counsel left,
I am well visited, midst snares bereft !

*The stage lightens, and the QUEEN OF FAËRIE enters,
habited in green samite, like a fair lady.*

QUEEN.

Alas, poor youth, what sad mischance hath brought
Thy hapless steps to this sad place of thought,
Where verges of all worlds do mix and meet
And men are weariful of heart and feet ?
In haste I pass along, with clouded face,
Returning to my own auspicious place ;
But all my powers have waned, my light is dim ;
The haunting terror of a dubious hymn,
Which Nature never breathed through woodland trees,
Sounds in the cold air like the scourge of seas,

The Hold of God

And restless things are moving to and fro,
To poison all the joy they cannot know.
In sooth the place with peril is beset ;
But follow quickly, while the time is yet,
Where thou canst save at least thy flesh alive !

PEREGRINUS.

Ah, Lady fair, I would, I trow, derive,
Before my scanty days are overpast,
Some joy, long tides of sorrow to outlast,
And know the truth of things from all which
seems

The sorry semblance of my aching dreams !
If thou canst lead me thither, I would reach
The pleasant havens thy mellifluous speech
Declares thine own, and on thy path attend,
However far—yea, unto the world's end.
If thou hast powers and gifts with power to give,
Let it be life, I pray, for I would live
And reach what lies beyond our mortal breath,
Wherein we eat not bread of life but death !

QUEEN.

Poor youth, I pity thee ; I take thy hand,
Thou hast no need to question or to fear ;
I am the youngest queen in Faërie Land,
And but to crown thy days has brought me here !

PEREGRINUS.

Oh lady, listen to that voice without
My ear, so softly breathing, and such doubt
Within my soul inspiring !

The Further Side of the Portal

QUEEN.

Heed it not!

The Halls of Faërie bless the human lot,
And years as days shall pass when thou hast seen
The unveil'd beauty of an elfin queen.

PEREGRINUS.

Per signum Tau, per signum Tau,
Keep me, Great Lord, in Thy true law!

[*Crossing himself.*]

QUEEN.

Ah, woe is me! What malison
Falls on me from this gracious sign?
Ah, Light that is of all divine
And grace of grace I shall not know!
What evil has the elfin done?
My beauty and my power are mine:
Halls of Faërie, shine and shine;
Save me, save me from this woe!

[*Exit.*]

PEREGRINUS.

Right well it shall appear that mortal life
Is all engirded with incessant strife
And doubled with unending heaviness,
One knowledge lacking which alone can bless.
All woe is in the world, all want of love,
Because none thinks within his heart thereof,
Nor takes he heed of the great mysteries.
Surely there lie conceal'd in all man sees
High sacraments, holy and full of grace,
Meet to transform this world's laborious place
To hill of joy, which now is vale of tears,
If we could see with eyes, and our own ears

The Hold of God

Could open surely to the secret things.
A voice unknown continually sings
Of sacred Presences to earth denied
But seen in secret chapels at mass-tide,
And of the powerful words that there are said,
Which never enter in the learner's head,
Which no man knows, save God his soul has taught,
Though all our pain is by their absence wrought.
So speaks the voice unknown, but though I hear,
It is with clouded mind and torpid ear.
Nathless, if knowledge be our souls denied,
Full surely peace may come at altar-side
And sweet humility shall bless his lot
Which kneels in worship, understanding not.
Will it not also on a tide befall
That he who follows on this poor man's call
Shall find such meaning in the mystic chaunt
As all good Latin scholars may not vaunt,
Since well 'tis said that he who seeks shall find
And to receive when ask'd good givers are inclined?

I pray Thee, therefore, fair sweet Lord of all,
That some more lowly good may me befall,
If one so worthless, even in his need,
Must for Thy lofty mercies vainly plead!
So if those heights and deeps of Cup and Host,
Seen in the faith of dream, should prove the most
My aspiration to demand can dare,
May I at least their vision passing fair
Keep clean within me through my days unborn,
Thus hallowing a lot perchance forlorn
With sense of the high things exceeding ken!

[PEREGRINUS turns to the Chapel and kneels reverently towards it, but without moving nearer. The moon is obscured, but the light increases within the sacred building, streaming through the windows.

The Further Side of the Portal

PEREGRINUS.

And, for the rest, in common ways of men
I pray at least that I may never lack
One blessing of the seeker's daily track :
In quiet hold or hermitage to find
A priest with penances my heart to shrive,
Some space of prayer to purge the wandering mind,
And those true offices which save alive
The souls of common men in every place.
Then let me pass in Thee, with so much grace
As one may have who would have trod the road
To Kings-Town and the spiritual abode,
If call had come, yet on a rush-strewn floor
Has been content to dwell with open door
Beneath a humble thatch,
Knowing that somewhere there is Mont Salvatch !
Give me my proper eyes, the soul's true wit,
That—past these clumsy vehicles of sense,
As through those portals—I may pierce and find
That which shall open to illumined mind :
Beyond the sacrament, high grace of it,
And Thou in all reveal'd for my defence ;
Behind the poorest bread, what godly feast ;
Behind the Mass-words of the meanest priest,
The tincture's secret and its mastery ;
But, most of all, within this body of me,
Teach me to see my Soul, and That in Thee.

[PEREGRINUS rises. *The stage lightens and* DOCTOR SERAPHICUS *enters, in the sorry weeds of a pilgrim, as one that is sore beset. There is now a light in the eyes of PEREGRINUS, as if a time of dream had passed over.*

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

So, therefore, seeking still to gain our rest,
Henceforth we follow on a further quest ;

The Hold of God

No star of all the stars contains our prize—
Conceal'd in the Unearthly Paradise.

[PEREGRINUS *approaches, with head bent and
arms crossed upon his breast.*

PEREGRINUS.

May God for ever in His keeping have
Your heart and soul! This comfortable word
In sooth is other than my ears have heard
Since first my fortune to this fastness drave ;
So for the secret grace which you have brought
Suffer the gift of thanks and grateful thought !
I pray you, gentle sir, all else before,
'To hold me as your servant evermore,
And if the path to Paradise, above
All nightly stars that here can manifest,
May by your grace be in clean words express'd,
I humbly say that there is set my love
And there is fix'd my only hope of rest ;
Whence I would place my portion in your hands,
Obedient for such end to all commands.

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

If that the way of Paradise engage
Your mind in this green youth, it is most well,
And haply to attain it in your age
You shall not fail, good friend, but, sooth to tell,
Whatever words from lips untrain'd may fall,
Most sad distress has still a louder call,
And for this present, my great need is such,
As one that has been hurtled overmuch,
I would the rather with my failing force
Have to your charitable mood recourse.
Perchance you can me succour, and anon,
When on my pilgrim-journey I have gone,

The Further Side of the Portal

God will remember, for your kindness true,
Your fair ambition and take thought on you.

PEREGRINUS.

Sir, I have little of the world its boon ;
A scholar poor am I, who, from the rule
Full deeply laid in Aristotle's school
All recently come forth, my steps have turn'd
In quest of higher grounds than there discern'd ;
And having heard that in most holy ways
High hands a cup of benediction raise
For better hallowing and healing man,
With anxious thought, a certain private plan
I have sometime within my mind devised
To do my worship at that sacred shrine ;
And if my worthless state be not despised
By the high comforters and dukes divine,
It is my hope the burdens of my life
To lay therein and cease henceforth from strife.
But I have tarried till the rising moon
Should shortly o'er these arches of green leaf
To quaking darkness bring her full relief,
And in no wise from any ban exempt,
All hordes of mischief me have come to tempt.
Whence I have taken that resource which stands
Wide open to poor men in all the lands,
And—being sorely, like the winepress, trod—
Have cast my need upon the faith of God,
And so keep here, watching with empty hands.
It may be for my help that other some
Than thou, O true, sweet friend, to me shall come ;
But since thou art the first whom I have heard
To utter in this place a peaceful word,
I could not choose but think, from halls unseen
Sent for my soul's true solace thou hast been.

The Hold of God

Yet if I err therein and thou alone
A stranger comest to a man unknown,
For aught that I can proffer in thine aid—
It is thine own already, not as lent
But freely given by one sore afraid
That pauper gifts can bring to none content.
[The night has clouded about them.]

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

These are high words, fair sir, but as you spoke
The night, which waxes late, grew passing cold ;
If, 'midst your weeds, you had perchance a cloak
Wherewith I might these shrivell'd limbs enfold,
Much would I bless such gift ; and you perchance
Would on your path to Paradise advance,
If lightly clothed, more rapidly than now.
For many saintly histories relate
What rare rewards on charity await,
So that all heaven doth this mean earth endow.
I leave my humble matter in your hands,
Not knowing rightly how your humour stands.

PEREGRINUS.

The night in truth is chill and much I fear
The hap of tempest, if we linger here.
Full bitterly the wind about us wails
Vague snatches of sad, antiquated tales
I well remember having heard of yore,
As sadly and more fully by the folk
In my poor village whisper'd, long before
I learn'd that there were great and wondrous things
Of which no wind or water ever sings.
It may be, sir, their immemorial loss
Doth make all Nature seem to wear a cross,

The Further Side of the Portal

And hence she cannot comfort her dark self
Or her dejected children, but a gulf
For ever widens in the hearts of both.
I dare to think that could we each attain
Those certain places in a fair domain,
Where the high, holy secrets undeclared
Are treasured out of sight, then, by my troth,
One moment of their vision, if we dared
Indeed to look, would make all cold and heat
Which scourges this our temporal retreat
For ever more to us indifferent.
But till the night's keen arrows shall be spent,
Since this my wallet holds not cloak or weeds,
But some few things which spring from Plato's seeds
And one torn mass-book which I wont to use,
Do not the little I can give refuse,
And, coming close beside me, let me shield
Your age with warmth from youth which yet is mine !
Perchance beyond the forest and the field
Some better shelter, till the sun shall shine,
A little quest may find ; and I will guide
My pace by yours and any hold espied
Will search to see if it can take you in.

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

Since every path should warily be trod,
And those the most which lead at length to God ;
Before this pious journey we begin—
Where loving kindness leads upon the road,
Hearing the rumours of some bless'd abode—
I would make sure, in case we part at length,
Of fit provision to sustain my strength.
Some silver coins for this is all I need :
Give them, I pray, and may your quest succeed !
I do remember, now I think, of one,
Who having such a quest as this begun,

The Hold of God

By ghostly counsel left all goods behind ;
But this would tax perchance your youthful mind.

PEREGRINUS.

Master, no purse have I, which, by your leave,
Has never made me sorry, since I heard
Far off the tidings of a distant Word
Which could true life impart. But now I grieve
That in this matter of your need, again,
My anxious heart must yearn to help in vain.
Yet stay, perchance some scholar of the waste
Beyond these woods, in worldly goods well placed,
Might buy these books which I have prized full long ;
Plato, like Aristotle, may be wrong ;
But in this mass-book such shall find anon
The sounding grace of many an antiphon ;
And I will keep them as I can in mind
Till it is granted me once more to find
A priest to shrive me from my former sins
And give me leave to serve when Mass begins. . . .
Prepared our journey in the night to take,
Pray, by your blessing, fair that journey make !

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

*Ex hoc nunc usque ad æternum sit pax vobiscum,
Et divinum auxilium maneat semper nobiscum.*
Because from flowers of earth at need arise
The shining blossoms which are stars in skies,
I pray thy virgin lilies so transferr'd
May soon the chalice of thy dreams engird !
May wine of life therefrom, vouchsafed to few,
Sustain them sweetly with supernal dew !
May streams of life in thee be so reveal'd
That thou at length shalt be in life conceal'd !

The Further Side of the Portal

Come great abstractions which at times befall
When that which once was outward and apart,
Submerged completely in the All in All,
Knows God no longer by the yearning heart,
But as the One which doth with one abide!
Taste thou the sleep which turns all worlds aside,
From age-long motions in the great abyss,
To the inbreathing rest; and that is this!
Worlds beyond worlds—on thee such peace descend,
And bring the quiet night and perfect end!

PEREGRINUS.

I know thee now; in days I ne'er forget,
For my most high instruction, we have met
In lonely places—yea, by toiling seas,
Where thou didst give me the first mysteries.
I pray thee, being weary and oppress'd,
To take me hence into thine utter rest.

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

A little while, herein, we come to each,
Exchanging symbols in the guise of speech;
A little while from one another go,
And at the end the greater blessings know.
Thou askest rest, and that is wisely said:
If I can give thee sleep, give thou me bread!

PEREGRINUS.

I do repent indeed my dearth of thought
Who no refreshment in my scrip have brought.
On other ends than food my heart was bent;
And, seeking hidden manna, felt content,
Until the great horizons are unfurl'd,
To fast through all rogations of the world. . . .

[PEREGRINUS falls upon his knees in an
attitude of supplication.

The Hold of God

Master, to whom I think that angels sing,
The poor oblation of myself I bring
And at thy feet do place for good or ill,
For thee to work thereon thy holy will.

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

O fair, sweet Lord, with what great power dost Thou
Thy blessing to the poor of heart allow,
Who, being ask'd for things full soon made void,
Are to the uttermost unfurnish'd found,
But yet full oft have brothers overjoy'd
By treasures incorruptible, and, crown'd
In all the light of givers, the whole land
Replenish royally, with open hand,
Yet are themselves by bounty evermore
Garnish'd with precious and increasing store! . . .
Therefore, dear scion of the elect, hereby,
Before all worlds, truly I testify
That thy free gift above vain things of earth
Is precious first by love and next by worth,
Whence I accept it from clean hands which give.
And howsoe'er blind instinct prompts to live—
In things the highest as the meanest, most
In those whose youth as yet has spent no fires—
Here comes the utmost term of thy desires
And all ambition's lightly vested host.
Thou hast thyself surrender'd and I take
Both hermitage and hold, mine own to make,
Since verily thy life, and nothing less,
I needed when I ask'd for simple bread.
That lasts no longer than an hour's distress,
As gold, however gotten, on his head
Who taketh thought thereof, returns like lead;
As care of raiment and with cold to strive
Will hinder those who would at ends arrive,

The Further Side of the Portal

And something seek to finish ere they move
From courts of passion to high halls of love.
Now therefore, to make end of all that means
Prolong'd dejection in these mournful scenes,
And leaves the soul unfit to travel back ;
I do invite thee here to choose a track
Which, far from foolish things of birth and breath,
May pass indeed through torrents of cold death,
But instantly thereafter wider schemes
Shall part the dream of stars from star of dreams.
Now, since the tide is late and none can tell
What follows on hereafter, let us call
Softly for help from Him Which helpeth all,
And so pronounce in patience our farewell,
With *mea culpa* on the humbled breast ;
The mass is over, *ite missa est*.

PEREGRINUS (*having risen*).

Master, acquit it that my heart is cold
And that, as one to whom it hath been given
With foes full long and sadly to have striven,
I do thus suddenly grow worn and old !
Herein it seems as if my days had past
With many veils of darkness overcast
And now their pallid span they here expend
With bitter rivings at this ghostly end.
Yet through the shrouded gulches of the gloom,
And past your prophet-voice, thus preaching doom,
Persuasive tokens of a light long miss'd
Find entrance and with late appeals persist
That in the common ways of Nature dwelt
Great joys, for ever by those hearts unfelt
Which do the cryptic paths alone applaud.
So also suddenly the frosts have thaw'd,
All turgid night from the empyrean rolls
And earthly spaces fill with happy souls.

The Hold of God

Now, high as lark in heaven or deep as bowers
Wherein the sea heals immemorial flowers,
The world's great organ sounds through spacious halls
And all the faithful fauna sweetly calls
To hear how priestly Nature, ere they pass,
Pontifically chants her twelvemonth mass,
And at each noon triumphantly lifts up
The measure overbrimm'd of the sun's cup.
Meseems immeasurable gain is loss
Perchance not less unmeasured, and the cross,
Which through the place of suffering spreads wide,
In heaven itself no less counts crucified.
But, making end of this, to die or not
For all things good in thy horizon's lot,
I do hereby, with so much of freewill
As heritors of woe reserve them still,
Make over, to accord my faithful pledge,
The life I call my own to thy sword's edge.
God grant me not with the last pang to strive
And after death's dark sting me keep alive,
That past the rubicon of this world's rim,
By paths unmanifest, I may reach Him! . . .
Let us go forth, kind sir, lest all of bliss
I, who have lost so much, at end should miss! . . .
Peccavi cogitatione, Lord—
Verbo et opere—I seek the sword!

MASTER.

From substitutes of joy which pall and cease,
To spiritual place, come thou in peace!
To cities shining in the morning land
Thee takes, by paths of peace, this guiding hand.
So shalt thou reach at length and touch the latch
Which keeps the secret door in Mont Salvatch,
And when thou tirstest trembling at the pin
The keepers of the courts shall let thee in.

The Further Side of the Portal

PEREGRINUS.

I have been offer'd Wine, but he which brought
Was sorry and constrain'd beyond all thought ;
And his poor vanity's pretence was seen.
I have been offer'd Love, and this has been—
From everlasting—the chief stay of man ;
But in the heart thereof a hidden plan
Was cherish'd to delude me and undo.
Next Folly came in weeds of motley hue,
With hair unkempt, who wildly spoke anon
Of the waste years that have in wisdom gone
And counsell'd pleasant ways, the which dispense
His fond disciples from all sober sense.
But I had learn'd some elements in books
Whereat the Masters cast disdainful looks,
And thus, although imperfectly equipp'd,
Our bales to ports asunder straight were shipp'd.
In fine, it fell that being left alone,
With less than little I could call my own,
There gleam'd, with clouded grace and helping hand,
A queen emerging out of Faërie Land—
Who, past the woful gate of human tears,
Did offer anodynes for misspent years.
So in my heart such strong desire was bred
That spells to save from self seem'd needed then
For me so strongly tried by maids and men.
But at one orison that fair dame fled,
For whom I pray no less the cross may come
At length in healing, as to other some.
Thus in great dark once more alone I dwelt,
Until the magic of thy voice was felt
Conversing, as from other years than these,
Of life for life and such deep mysteries.
And though it sounds to me a mournful word,
Thus on the early verge of manhood heard,

The Hold of God

I do believe, dear master, being thine,
That it is medicine more than anodyne.
Yet ere my sacrifice, completed, strips
My one possession, let thy patient lips
Declare, I pray thee, since they are so wise—
Beyond most wit—in these high mysteries :
What is that secret lore which may expound
Wherefore man is so sorry on this round
Of earthly things, why nought of joyance is
Which at the end falls not to him amiss ?

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

Surely the answer doth most plain appear—
It is the secret of man being here.

PEREGRINUS.

What then, amidst his stress and its sharp pain,
Shall be the greatest thing that he can gain ?

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

Who runs shall read herein : great gain they find
Who to be here no more apply their mind.

PEREGRINUS.

But how and whither shall the mind be bent
Which being here no more, is then content ?

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

Thus it is with him who, by God His grace,
Gains that which makes all ways the Holy Place.

PEREGRINUS.

How shall this greatest treasure under heaven
To man of poor desert be truly given ?

The Further Side of the Portal

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

If having sought in vain through things without,
To find its gate within he turns about.

PEREGRINUS.

I pray thee take me on to thy far goal!
My flesh is weary of itself and drags
A chain which sorely past all longing lags.
Receive my life and let me see my soul!
Too long have we been parted in the ways
Which lead so far from any peace or praise.

[DOCTOR SERAPHICUS *takes PEREGRINUS by the arm and leads him up stage, as if moving eastward. They approach the door of the Chapel.*

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

Line upon line, and there is none left out,
When earthly shades in fine are put to rout.

PEREGRINUS.

In manus tuas; fair, sweet Lord of all:
Thy Thorns shall crown me and Thy Cross enthrall!

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

Thus through the night, as through those wells most cold
Which must each passing soul receive and fold,
I take thee by a path that from the West
Leads forth—*mysterium consummatum est*—

The Hold of God

The mystery of mortal life—and thus
In depths beyond all deeps of perfect peace
Perchance the East on high shall visit us,
Which in such light expect the heart's increase.

[The doors of the Chapel open from within and—albeit there is a great light—it appears simple and unadorned. As they move forward :

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

Beyond the vision and that grace we see,
All deeper measures of the mystery !

[Solemn music is heard, and the light increases. The Sanctuary now appears to be circular in shape, having a vaulted roof, painted sapphire colour, and emblazoned with the Sun, Moon and Stars. In the centre is an Altar-Shrine, having in the midst thereof a great cup, in appearance of emerald-coloured jasper, glowing red within, and enriched with a stand after the manner of chased gold. The back-cloth represents mountains and clear sky.

Three KEEPERS OF THE MYSTERY are discovered before the Shrine. He in the centre is an ancient man, whose vestments are like those of a Bishop. Of the others, the one on the right hand is of middle life, but the third, on the left, is a beardless youth. These are in priestly vestments. They are surrounded, in addition to the torchbearers, by Seven Deacons, who are clothed as EQUITES CLERICI—that is, with a cassock descending to the feet, a surplice of white linen, a knightly mantle broidered with violet, a ruby pectoral cross, a girdle of violet silk, knotted in front. The Chief Deacon stands behind the BISHOP, and

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has the six other Deacons, three on each side. The BISHOP offers incense in a thurible. The BISHOP returns the thurible to its bearer. He faces westward.

BISHOP.

VENI AD ME, FRATRES CARISSIMI, ACCIPITE OSCULUM
SANCTÆ FRATERNITATIS ET VERBUM PACIS ET TRANSEANT
A ME INTER VOS OMNES.

[He gives the Kiss of Peace and the Secret Word to the Second Keeper, from whom they pass to the Third, thence to the Chief Deacon and the rest of the Brethren.

Two young men in white and gold draperies of the Second Order of the Mystery come forward and clothe PEREGRINUS in the marriage-robe of the Sanctuary. This is done in silence, and they return as they came. The DOCTOR SERAPHICUS takes PEREGRINUS to the threshold, between the doors, saying :

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

*Domine, non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum,
sed tantum dic verbo et sanabitur anima mea.*

[PEREGRINUS kneels at the Shrine.

*The HIDDEN CHORUS of Clean Offerings breathes out very
softly and solemnly behind the Holy Place of the Shrine.*

CHORUS.

From day to day, because of human sins,
O'er all the world the blessed Mass begins.

From day to day, ere that oblation ends,
A certain far-off peace on earth descends.

The Hold of God

The secret centre offers mutely up
The Inward Mystery of the Outward Cup.

That which on earth is validly begun
In many places, here conjoins in one.

Thereby, in the good pleasure of the Lord,
All toiling worlds shall be to rest restored.

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS (*addressing the Most Blessed
Company*).

Seeing, high brethren and adepts exempt,
That outward vestures for a time may tempt
The children of desire; but in the end
Their tribulation's strong appeals ascend
And mercy cometh from the mercy seat;
I, even I, the Herald of the Call,
Was with full powers commission'd to estreat
Some certain wiles encompassing the feet
Of this our son and brother, lest he fall.
Now, having the allotted tests applied,
With those purgations to his need allied,
I bring him hither, by your holy leave,
Some token of your favour to receive,
That his translation may, by saving grace,
From seeming death to very life take place.

*The HIDDEN CHORUS of Clean Offerings chants solemnly
behind the Holy Place of the Shrine.*

CHORUS.

Once on the threshold of this life's distress
The Steward of the Mysteries, to keep
Intact a certain narrow space of sleep,
Proffer'd the chalice of forgetfulness.

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Then man's departing soul, amidst its fears,
Stoop'd and thereof drank deep,
Forecasting toil of unfelicitous years
And the long aching past the gate of tears.
Hence it befalls that in the show which seems
There is but dreaming and a dreamer's schemes,
For no true waking can to man befall
Whose hold has loosed upon the life of all
And the great treasures which do perish not.
It doth behove us therefore, sadly placed
Like this, if it may be, to mend our lot
And seek one high light shining in the waste :
Such beacon, lifted through the dark, can bring
Alone our soul to its awakening.
So past the gate of tears at length it sees
That chasten'd Steward of the Mysteries
Lift, on the threshold of the things which be,
A consecrated cup of memory.

[*The BISHOP turns with extended arms pronouncing the Dominus Vobiscum. At the raising of the cup PEREGRINUS falls upon his face ; the Deacons gather about him in a semicircle. The HIDDEN CHORUS of Clean Offerings again breathes out, but this time triumphantly.*

CHORUS.

*Hac die laetus meruit beatas
Scandere sedes.*

[*The doors of the Chapel are closed. There is complete silence. The doors are then opened for a second time. PEREGRINUS stands alone in the Sanctuary, on the uppermost step of the Shrine, holding the Sacred Cup.*

The doors of the Chapel are closed. There is complete silence. The doors are then opened for

The Hold of God

a third time. There is now neither Shrine nor Cup. PEREGRINUS stands alone in the Sanctuary, with uplifted arms.

PEREGRINUS.

ECCE REGNUM DEI INTRINSECUS, ET DEUS, ET CHRISTUS
DOMINUS NOSTER.

THE FURTHER SIDE OF THE
PORTAL

PART II

*THE BOOK OF THE KING'S DOLE AND
CHANTRY FOR PLAIN SONG*

Desiderabile desiderium, impretabile pretium, à cunctis
philosophis positum.—ROSARIUM PHILOSOPHORUM.

The Proem to the King's Dole

THE blessed legends tell that God made man
After the fashion of the cosmic plan ;
And hence, in miniature and outline, he
Holds all its vastness sacramentally,
Being its mirror and its synthesis.
Nature's great elements are therefore his,
To high perfection in his frame refined
And in pure motions of the natural mind.
Thereto was added, far exceeding sense,
A certain rare and secret quintessence—
By those well known which seek the Holy Place
And light far-shining from the Father's face.
Thereby man's natural and human part—
With all the fire of mind and fire of heart—
Did suffer transmutation and receive
The gifts from God of those who well believe.
Hence such high pathways of the soul he trod
As are reserved to those who walk with God
And joyful in one mystic city dwell :
All this at least the sacred legends tell.
But in some way which passes mortal thought
Man's royal nature unto shame was brought ;
Whence that which once was elemental fire,
But held thereafter the divine desire ;
And that which being stainless earth of old
Was quintessentially transform'd to gold ;

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Such strange corrosion underwent and loss
That angel-gold was turn'd to dragon's dross,
While the immaculate and virgin earth
Was turn'd to common clay, of meanest worth.
O image of the One! What evil spell
Could thus prevail, the sacred legends tell.
Behold him now, from early place and state
Sent into exile; there, disconsolate;
There, lame and halt and blind; there, inly maim'd,
Within a desert Nature unreclaim'd
Set, as he could, amidst all toil and pain,
His unprotected body to sustain
And his poor wounded soul to soothe and heal!
O voice of ages, raised in wild appeal!
Must man for ever in such colour dwell?
Ah, list again what sacred legends tell!

For on sore straits and sorrows of the soul
There came the balm and mercy of the Dole.
Yes, the King's Dole from the King's Place was sent
To soothe and strengthen in our languishment;
And thus were some through many ages fed
With wine transmuted and an alter'd bread,
By faithful ministers distributed,
And in the blessed Chantry of the King
Set up for service high. The censers swing
There, while for ever the great altar rays
Burn in this darkness of our mortal days;
And 'midst the sick humanities, do there
The white-alb'd ministers, with tender care,
Pass and repass, repeating words of peace—
O'er cups that fail not in their fair increase
And the unfailing host's white miracle,
Strong to sustain, to save—as legends tell.

And so the soul of man, amidst the waste,
Of its first nourishment can dimly taste,

The Book of the King's Dole

Whereof the saving virtue works within
Against the venom of the life of sin ;
The age-long hurts within the soul are cured,
The blind eyes open'd, the old heights assured,
And though without the Chantry, through the waste,
Of death in place of life still exiles taste,
The Blessed Shrine abides for those who seek.

With loving aspect, mortified and meek,
Still in the reverence of the rites concur
Each solemn-voiced, slow-moving minister ;
The bread is broken and the wine is pour'd ;
Each wounded spirit is to health restored ;
And, wash'd from stain, the travel-weary feet
Are fairly rested by the Mercy-Seat.
Then, through the open door which stands behind
The altar, passing, they go forth and find
That Hidden House whereof the legends tell
In words of rumour, words of oracle.

THE PEOPLE OF THE MYSTERY

SOROR JANUA CÆLI	<i>High Priestess of the Sanctuary</i>
PATER OMNIPOTENS	<i>Pontifex Maximus</i>
FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR	<i>Priest of the Order of Melchisedec</i>
PATER SERVUS SERVORUM	<i>The Great Abbot of the Chantry</i>
SOROR BEATA PULCHRA	<i>A Stained Virgin</i>
THE LOVING FATHER CHRISTIAN ROSY CROSS	<i>Doorkeeper</i>
THE LITTLE SOROR PUELLA	<i>A Child of the Mystery</i>
FRATER E MILLIBUS VIX UNUM	<i>Most Wise Sovereign and Epopht</i>

The Familiars of the Holy Office: the Commemorating Chorus of the Faithful, ID EST, Hierophants.

The Scene of this Greater Initiation is the assumed Sanctuary of the Holy Assembly, with the Veil of the Holy of Holies behind the Altar.

THE CEREMONY OF OPENING THE CHANTRY

The Convention of the Holy Assembly takes place mystically in the Sanctuary of the outward Church, and there is no Temple, having a Locus Sanctorum and an abiding Presence, in which the Rite of the King's Dole cannot be appropriately worked. The particular arrangement of the Holy Place is shewn in the Faithful Words of the Mystery, and it is so simple that any cathedral, and at need any hermitage, with the necessary issue behind, can be appropriated as a hold for the pageant. It should be observed, or at least in most cases, that the Sanctuary is not oriented according to the cardinal points, because the East follows the Master. The entrance at the imputed West of the Chancel is guarded by two Great Pillars, inscribed, in the tongue of men and angels, with the respective words MERCY and SEVERITY. The broad intervening space is taken up by the five steps of the Chancel, but ingress is not attained, except at need by the Epopets, through the Rood-Screen betwixt the Pillars, as the column inscribed SEVERITY is the Place of Indulgence by which admission is given from without.

At the imputed East, behind the Altar, there is a heavy curtain embroidered with figures of palm-trees. A certain natural light filters through the Chantry, but it is tinged and transmuted by intermediaries of coloured glass and by emblazonments in the great windows North and South, belonging to the body of the Church. An enormous TAU Cross lies upon the Chancel steps, but there is no figure of man extended thereon. The Lamp of the Sanctuary, which burns at the opening with exceeding brightness, and the major lights of the Altar illuminate the place moderately.

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The Most High SOROR JANUA CÆLI, *the Most Merciful* PATER OMNIPOTENS *and the Released* FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR *enter the Sanctuary from the curtain behind the Altar. They are followed by the Chorus of Hierophants, which pours in through a secret door opened on the eastern side from within the Pillar of Mercy. These are types of a great multitude which no man can number. Lastly, the FAMILIARS or SERVANTS OF THE HOLY OFFICE enter through a similar door opened in the Pillar of Severity. There is a crowd of worshippers in the body of the Church; these are Postulants, external Servitors and Probationers of the Lesser Grades, who follow the Stations of the Cross, tell the beads of the Rosary, or recite orisons at the side chapels in aisles and transepts, where the ordinary services and public offices are conducted, seemingly with no one understanding or even seeing what takes place in the Sanctuary. The Loving Father* CHRISTIAN ROSY CROSS *is seated within the door of the Rood-Screen looking down the great nave.*

The General Assembly in the Chancel having repaired to their proper places, the SOROR JANUA CÆLI, officiating as Celebrant-in-chief, commences the Ritual of the Mass with the Introibo ad Altare Dei, as in the Ordinary of the Missal, the two Pontifices Maximi assuming the functions of Deacons. The Liturgy is in general outward respects identical with the authorised form, but there are certain changes in the Epistle and Gospel parts, while the Preface, the Canon and the Secreta seem entirely different. The words of Consecration are unknown, but it is supposed that these also are the formulæ of a more secret Rite. After the Panem cœlestem accipiam, the office for the time being is suspended altogether. The Celebrants turn towards the body of the Chancel, the SOROR JANUA CÆLI having her back to the Tabernacle, the PATER OMNIPOTENS, as First Deacon, being on the Gospel side of the second Altar-step, and the FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR at the Epistle horn on the third or lowest step.

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SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

With recollection, in the Name and Cause
Of all which stands behind the written laws
And is the last intention of the Word
That even here is by no Epopt heard,
I witness to the city and the world
How Grace abounding has all flags unfurl'd,
Prompting me here and now to exercise
That gift of ministry which in me lies
And to decree forthwith a sacred thing :
This venerable chancel's opening,
So to dispense the King's most Royal Dole
And to enrich thereby a chosen soul.
But heedful first that all be duly done,
With Sacred Names is this true Rite begun ;
Some ye shall utter in your hearts, but most
Praise clearly Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

We know, High Sister, these are One in Three,
Saving the Hallows and the Mystery.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

What sacred usage to the Rite is brought ?

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

A reservation of illumined thought.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

And what does reverence of reserve impart
To this high formula of secret art ?

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PATER OMNIPOTENS.

That sacramental numbers can infold
The truth which never is by numbers told.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

The sense hereof expound with loving word.

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

They that have ears to hear long since have heard.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

The power within me your reluctance presses.

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

The truth I hold to all high truth confesses,
But let the lesser issues cease to vex :
De minimis non curat sacra lex.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Does truth more dimly shine in less than great?

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

It is the measure of all high estate,
Yet does the ample mode the less contain ;
And hence the wise commend us first to gain
All that which signifies and leave the rest.
What is the end by which a man is blest ?
What exile fell upon him far behind,
Suspending faculties, beclouding mind,

The Book of the King's Dole

Replacing royal heritage by want
And sealing memory's all-holding font?
How shall man now into his rights return?
Shall he the witness of his senses spurn,
The needs of flesh deny, and thus work back?
Or is there haply some more holy track,
Some gospel fitted to the words of joy,
Commission'd to fulfil and not destroy,
Telling that paths of rapture can be trod
And that beatitude leads best to God?

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Who, faithful and holy Father, answers these
Recurring questions of the soul's misease?

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

They who possess and can apply the keys.
Therefore this hallow'd chantry, from the first
Of things, to quench the hunger and the thirst
Which spur all seekers on, both quick and dead,
Was founded that the chosen might be led;
And into truth—as great evolved from less,
As archetype declared in semblances—
Through many ages has it brought the race
First to the Blazon'd Veil and then the Face.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Ah, highest substitute of long-lost Word!
When moving spheres first sang together heard
And since not utter'd under any sky,
We in these precincts keep thy memory
And do, with licence full, dispense at need
Doctrine which is not life, yet holds life's seed.

The Further Side of the Portal

We have a charter, out of storms and wreck
To pilot home from havens false afar :
Declare by what keen light of lambent star,
Priest of the order of Melchisedec !

FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR.

One star, one truth, one passage and one term ;
One grace of life which does each heart confirm ;
One sanative for worn and weary eyes ;
One final and effective sacrifice !

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

To offer this and so dispense the Dole,
Accomplishing the raising of a soul,
Is here our great intent ; for that we come
From places more withdrawn, where other some,
Call'd forth in turn upon a perfect track,
Our offices fulfil till we go back.

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

And since the time is short, while needs increase,
With decent haste confer the Dole of Peace !

FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR.

The grapes are heavy on the vines we tend,
The craftsmen few to make our harvest's end ;
For lack thereof perchance we yet must go
And seek by public ways and green hedge-row.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Assist me, Brothers of the secret hidden !

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

We should be with thee in the task unbidden.

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SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

And in accordance with the ancient rule,
Let us confess the purpose of our school!

THE SYMBOL.

We do by knowledge testify and hold
One sainted plan, high-wrought in days of old,
Set in these precincts forth and duly kept.
Here, while humanity at large has slept,
The Dole has gather'd from all peopled tracts
Cleansed hearts adjusted to exalted acts,
And takes them softly to this place apart
For one great work of science and of art,
Whereof we here divine the whole intent
As deeply fix'd in spheres of sacrament.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

So, therefore, Brothers, in the Light's great Name
And in the heart of heart remembering,
Beyond all spheres which do their place proclaim,
That one asylum which the rays enring
But cannot enter, let us freely ask
The virtue needful for so great a task!

FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR.

High light, as ever, on our labour falls;
Beyond its manifested beams there calls
The still small voice, which unexpounded is,
From formless, hidden and obscure abyss.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

What first behoves the Keepers of the Dole?

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FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR.

To watch over the safety of the soul,
Lest out of time and mind the work should pass
And where the reverence of recipients was,
For dearth of penitents prepared and those
Who seek the altar bread, some deep repose,
Should fall at length upon the ministers
By portal side, which knocking never stirs.

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

Mistress and queen, the soul is guarded well ;
Even in pools of sense still works our spell,
As on the heights where comes awakening
And those which stand for stars together sing.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

What time is reckon'd in the world without ?

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

Dawn, and the watchers of the morning shout !

FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR.

All times are ours who do the call obey,
Prepared with sacraments both night and day.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Prayer as of old, or act of prayer, beseems,
At least in memory of former dreams,
What time by rites the heart in sleep was stirr'd
And life in tokens was administer'd.

The Book of the King's Dole

PRAYER AT OPENING.

The dawn of high rites comes like morning's dawn :
Be therefore with us from Thy seat withdrawn !
No homage hither unto Thee we bring,
Nor blessing ask, who live beneath Thy wing
And do Thy substituted lights reflect.
Thou wilt not fail to lead and to direct,
While fair reward shall crown our holy zeal
Who neither seek arcana to reveal,
Except with licence in salvation's pale,
Nor to withhold what can in quest avail
The dedicated heart of chosen man.
Success still follow on the age-long plan,
Which, after deep, condition'd, long research,
Gives entrance firstly to the inward church
And doth, unailing at the times of need,
The outward church unseen but surely lead
By ways of exile, far as woes attend,
Through inhibitions which by turns suspend,
That all who at the Temple's porch begin
From step to step may climb and enter in !

Those powers benign which here are strong to save,
Lead Thou from lustral font, up sounding nave,
First at the chantry steps to kneel in prayer
And then the sanctuary's secret dare,
That by the highest altar's holy shroud
They may find egress from the field of cloud,
Nor wholly fail who have in fine recourse
Sole unto Thee, Which art their primal source ;
But through the fire of cloud to light of fire
And past all fires of light find their desire ;
Wherefore the praise is Thine and surely given :
May all high crowns be theirs ; crown Thou in Heaven !
[A pause.]

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SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

All power within the outward Church I lift
Beyond these vested regions of the mind,
Beyond the rays which pierce through gulf and rift,
The veils beyond, into the Church behind ;
That so when term is more with source allied
And lesser issues are construed aside,
The weaker vessels, visible to eye,
May serve the office of our mystery.
Brothers, we here complete a sacred thing,
Which is the function of our opening !
In the great Name and in that Name beyond
Such greatness, whereunto all stars respond,
And by the power within me vested here,
I open widely these great gates : Draw near !
The treasures of the Dole are offer'd free :
Let all thereto entitled come and see !

[Here ends the Ceremony of Opening the Chantry.]

THE RITUAL OF THE LIFTING OF THE VEIL

THE FIRST OBSERVANCE, OR TWILIGHT OF THE GODS.

The Celebrants face the Altar. The two Deacons form a half-circle with the High Priestess, who takes the Chalice from the Altar and lifts it on high. It is covered by the paten containing the Holy Hosts.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Exalted Fratres, justified, aneal'd—
Behold the Treasure of the Dole unseal'd!
[*She replaces the Sacred Vessels.*]

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

Here is the food of man, from every eye
Conceal'd by veils until the man shall die.

FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR.

I see the children's bread transform'd to meat,
Whereof the Masters in the Presence eat.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

That Place beyond the Holy Place has sent
Its messengers—on what high purpose bent?
The outward chancel in the outward gloom—
Say for what end we here and now assume
Into the place apart since time began,
And yet assuredly the house of man?

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FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR.

One further step to take the great command
Decreed since epochs immemorial,
Beyond all offices of heart and hand,
And, since the chosen follow on the call,
That life's glad end may be with joy fulfill'd,
Thirst quench'd and longing in attainment still'd.

The Most High SOROR JANUA CÆLI *faces westward
and gives the pontifical blessing with two fingers uplifted.
Again she turns to the Altar.*

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

The earthly elements are taken up
From sacrificial paten and from cup,
That things which here are visible, made clean,
May be exalted by the things unseen.
We therefore recognise the type and sign,
With all true terms and veils of things divine,
And whatsoever in its order known
Has the great mystery signified, has shewn
Forth before man the hidden essences
Which to extract he toils with weary stress.
But with much worship, for the rest, herein
We do remove them also and begin
To cleave alone unto the second sense,
Then to confess the third, with all which thence
Takes forward souls, from earthly bonds set free
And temporal measures of eternity.
To such an end, by operative art
Presenting pictures from the world's deep heart,
We will forthwith this grade administer :
Rites beyond rites arise : who hold, confer.
These grave reflections warn, for our behoof,
Not from old modes and rites to stand aloof :

The Book of the King's Dole

Now let us therefore here of bread partake
And here with wine our thirst symbolic slake.

At this point the Ordinary of the Mass is resumed, subject to the Proper of the Chantry, for the communication of the High Priestess and Deacons in accordance with the Secret Liturgy. The Ordinary is again suspended subsequently, and what then follows in the Rite takes place between the Communion and the First Oblation.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

We are not worthy in Thy House, O Lord,
To enter : cleanse us by Thy Holy word !

At the hands of the Celebrant-in-chief the PATER OMNIPOTENS communicates in both kinds, with bowed head and crossed arms, kneeling at the Gospel side of the highest Altar step.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

We are not worthy here Thy gifts to set :
Do Thou in clemency our faults forget !

The FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR communicates, at the hands of the Celebrant, in both kinds, with uplifted face and widely extended arms, kneeling on the Epistle side at the second Altar step. The High SOROR JANUA CÆLI replaces the chalice and paten containing the Hosts on the Altar, at the southern side of which she then kneels in adoration. The Little SOROR PUELLA, who is ROSA MYSTICA, a Novice of the Order, comes forward in white robes from the side of the Pillar of Severity and ascends the steps of the Altar, with the forms and genuflections prescribed in the Rubric. She lifts up the paten, turning towards the Celebrant-in-chief.

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SOROR PUELLA.

The body of God defend me !

*The High SOROR communicates in the element of bread.
The SOROR PUELLA replaces the paten, exalts the chalice
and again turns towards the Celebrant.*

SOROR PUELLA.

The blood of God expend me !

*The High SOROR communicates in the element of wine.
The SOROR PUELLA replaces the chalice on the Altar, and
turns with extended arms towards the body of the chancel.*

SOROR PUELLA.

The life of life in our Sustainer end me !

*She returns as she came. The High SOROR remains
kneeling and prays in a subdued voice as follows :—*

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

O not because we hope in Thee, our Goal,
Do Thou from formless centre draw us on,
Nor only since upon Thy help the soul
Hangs utterly, whose course, so long begun,
Draws in the chancel of the King's High Dole
Some distance towards a semblance of its end !
But since both term and origin art Thou
And we came forth from Thee long since, extend
Thine efficacious help to those who now
Feel, while they near Thee, as the days succeed,
An infinite extension of their need !

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PATER OMNIPOTENS.

There is no grace in charity, no love
Of man and man which of itself can reach,
By any ways, the height of things above,
Till that descends which us alone can teach
With silent eloquence and golden speech.

FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR.

Ah, uncreated glory, ah, infinite
White world of the irradiate still light !
Worlds to the Crown, but still a world above :
All founts and springs and wells are those of love !

*The Deacons rise ; they descend the steps of the Altar
and face it on the Epistle and Gospel sides. SOROR JANUA
CÆLI also rises and turns towards them.*

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

If any novice, who has watch'd his arms
And overstay'd the night with its alarms,
Stands at the postern and is meet to see
What lies beyond all common chivalry,
Let now the open'd postern take him through !
If any Master past his chair of state
Discerns the splendour of a further gate,
Impearl'd beyond the still void and the blue,
That gate may open when he stands outside.
If any consecrated priest appointed
To humble ministries of public cure,
Seeks other oils than those which first anointed,
For him the chrismal treasures of the Dole
Are open'd, like the arms of mercy, wide
To work the ordination of his soul.

The Further Side of the Portal

The aperture, though straiten'd, shall be sure,
And still at end thereof new rites allure.

A silvery bell rings softly within the Pillar of Mercy ; the door of ingress opens ; a neophyte bearing the bells enters within the Chancel ; he is succeeded by the partisans of the Sanctuary, some of whom carry seven-branched candlesticks, and by one who swings a lighted thurible. The Candidate for advancement, who is termed FRATER E MILLIBUS VIX UNUM, follows in the vestment of a white friar, having the tonsure of the order on his head, which is also encircled by a faint nimbus. Scarlet crosses are embroidered before and behind on his habit, and he wears a large ring of profession on his right hand, with which he makes the sign of concealed doctrine in front of him. The Loving Father CHRISTIAN ROSY CROSS, as the Warden of the Gate, joins him on the left side, carrying a great white stone, in the form of a cube, on a cushion. The air also gives up the SOROR BEATA PULCHRA at the right of the Candidate, bearing a basket of cut flowers for strewing. The Familiars of the Holy Office place the seats of the Celebrants before the Altar, over against the lowermost step thereof. As the procession passes up the Chancel, the officiating Pontiffs take their seats, with the High SOROR JANUA CÆLI forming the centre of the triad. At the same moment a large Host appears above the chalice on the Altar and shines with transforming light. The High Abbot of the Chantry comes forward with jewelled mitre and golden crook. The acolytes and servers part on either side as FRATER E MILLIBUS VIX UNUM approaches the Abbot, before whom he stops with crossed arms. The Sponsors of the Candidate pause behind him.

PATER SERVUS SERVORUM.

Whom lead you hither ?

The Book of the King's Dole

THE LOVING FATHER.

One who not in vain
Is Epop't call'd and Most Wise Sovereign.
He, having first as Postulant been brought,
Was seal'd with sacraments and after taught
Effectively and well, till, in good time,
He graduated for the mundane clime
And sweetly enter'd into perfect sleep.
There, haunted long by imagery deep,
Wild wings he beat against the ivory gate
And striving ever towards the waking state,
Some secret doctrines in the twilight dim
Of life's strange houses were proclaim'd to him,
As unto one who half, ere morning, sees
High semblances of lesser mysteries
And takes refreshment of false wine and bread.
Thereat, illumin'd and discomforted,
As many seekers have before him found,
He learn'd that those aspiring to be crown'd
Already taste the death of earthly joys
And find life's treasures are as children's toys.
So thence it came to pass that, human love
Taught to renounce because such heights above
Offer'd their summits through the mist, he knew,
At least by legends high, of unions true
And took therein a further secret grade.
Thus time and circumstance the groundwork laid,
'Midst lights which in succession fade and fail,
Of some fantastic broideries of the veil,
And Nature sanctified was set aside.
Far reaching ministries, which deep and wide
Forth spread their missions, at the first were tried
And full of delectation in their place
Allow'd, but wanting the exalted grace;
Wherefore the Candidate was thus made free
Of the high service of a fourth degree.

The Further Side of the Portal

So was he left, as one would think, alone—
Say, with the dreams which haunted him, unknown
Suggestions of the something which subtends
All that is here discern'd and somewhere ends
In the great term of God, yet does not give
Meanwhile sufficient food for souls to live.
Therefore the Epop't who has since attain'd,
By certain secret magnets still constrain'd,
Did more consistently aspire, and trod
The paths which by convention lead to God.
These towards the very centre and its core
May lead in very truth, for many roads,
Straight or circuitous, in fine restore
True hearts inflamed to high desire's abodes ;
At least in ways which Epop'ts understand
They are like temporal centres close at hand
And great preparing grades, till circumstance
Shew forth the true path for the soul's advance.
Thus was the Candidate supremely taught
And through external channels safely brought,
With certain tintured glasses of the mind,
To gather something of the light behind
And yet another mystery to pass,
Touching the most high sacring of the Mass.
In moving pageants first the Rite appeal'd,
Some quests, some meanings of the work reveal'd ;
And then unfolded to his earnest search
In part the office of the outward Church.
That Church did therefore to his heart disclose
The many petals of the secret rose
And underneath the vastness of their screening
A tintured heart of the more hidden meaning.
Thereon the restless soul, to gain its end,
Does the high treasures of its force expend.
Out of the dim allusions and mere hints
It strikes, in mystic night, the saving glints,
So that beyond the dark it dimly sees

The Book of the King's Dole

Penumbral gleams and hallowing mysteries.
The signs and portents of the light which lifts
Its beacons past the variable rifts,
By work of secret winds, were thus laid bare,
O'er pathways giving on the clearer air.
So taught the soul itself and so was taught ;
Thus on the matter of the work it wrought,
Through all purgations, the refiner's art,
Transform'd and perfected from grade to grade.
The substituted maxims which depart
From all convention's ways, the lines new laid,
Unto high semblances of doctrine led.
Hence it is meet and right and just that such,
Being perchance exalted overmuch
By great subsidiary names, should now
Take higher pledges and adventure how
From mystic death are raised, in fine, the dead.
As sponsor of the Epopts, upon whom
Devolves such task, about their whole estate
I certify, before they pass the gate,
Having once made unto myself a tomb,
Within the auspice of another sun,
As analogue and compend of the One.
Therefore—by all that has been proved, by loss
And gain, advancement, carriage of the Cross—
I do proclaim this Sovereign Prince has shewn
His title-deeds for entrance to his own
And call on those who here the Dole dispense
To grant him quittance for departure hence.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Most loving Father, your commands, disguised
As meek petition, shall in order due
Our notice gain who, otherwise appraised,
Hold in remembrance the memorial true

The Further Side of the Portal

Of this beloved Epopt and most wise
Prince of the Royal Secret, held from eyes
Profane among the Archives of the Gate.
And when the final values here we gauge
Most fitly may he reach the final stage
Of his protracted visionary course,
Scaling some further height to reach his source.
Unto this end, with adjuration fair,
Prithee, commend him to the Abbot's care ;
Then, crossing once again the chancel's floor,
Resume your place behind the secret door,
Since other candidates perchance await
Admission, seeing that the hour is late
And that the ends of all the age are near.

THE LOVING FATHER.

Into the holy hands of Mother Church
I place the issues of my time-long search
And all the Postulants of grace far brought,
So to be judged and pardon'd, raised and taught.

The Loving Father CHRISTIAN ROSY CROSS gives the sign-in-chief of the Chantry and returns to the South-West, where he stands in the angle of the Rood-Screen, between the door thereof and the door in the Pillar of Mercy. The SOROR BEATA PULCHRA mingles with the Familiars of the Holy Office in the Northern part of the Hall and passes for the time being out of sight.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

FRATER E MILLIBUS VIX UNUM, long
Straining your ears to catch the marriage song,
Come forward ; set apart all human fear :
Place in the Abbot's hand your own !

The PATER SERVUS SERVORUM, or Great Abbot of the Chantry, leads the Candidate towards the East.

The Book of the King's Dole

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

In mine
The ancient guardians of the Bread and Wine
Receive you :

*The right hand of the Candidate is placed by the Great
Abbot in that of the Chief Celebrant.*

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

And do welcome and make free.
Your pledges and disownments, sworn of old
At each symbolic grade and high degree
Of your advancement, in our rolls we hold :
Do you renew them freely here and now,
With mind prepared to take a final vow ?

THE CANDIDATE.

Prove me, O Steward of the things of type
Which here begin to fall, like fruit o'er ripe !
My pledges have been kept, but higher lead
I follow now and, as it seems, proceed
Thither whence first I came, long ages since—
Beyond the offices of priest and prince.
Such obligations from the soul dissolve
When other orders greater bonds evolve ;
Whence I look rather that my faithful pledges
Should, in the final ordeal, by the edges
Of my precipitous path stand round to-day,
Keep me equilibrated in the way
And save me at this last from the abyss.
For now, meseems, I come where great death is,
And seeing that so long, through bad and good,
I have sustain'd my cross as best I could,

The Further Side of the Portal

Full time it grows my cross should carry me.
No less, if other vows than these must be,
Or ever bitterness of death can pass,
I hold myself to consecrate once more
This militant church which veils what once I was
Before I seek in faith the further shore.

The Celebrants rise and form a circle about the Candidate and the Great Abbot of the Chantry, who stands a little to the left behind him.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

The great asylums none shall need seek out,
For they descend and him are built about,
And so the further shore is closer far
Than any hands which we can stretch forth are ;
But that firm faith to which your heart responds
Declare, and comfort us, in place of bonds.

THE CANDIDATE.

(With bowed head.) I do recite my fix'd adhesion
first
To all those signs which illustrate the thirst
Of human nature, vehement to reach
Things that exceed the limit of our speech.
I call on God to witness I receive
Their import full and do in them believe,
Saving the solemn canons of the art
Conceal'd, by which the greater truths impart
And do at need interpret lesser things.
Wherefore, before the Unity made known
In mortal ways by Trinity alone,
One God in Persons Three, I claim to make
Confession, and the Chantry pledges take ;
Unto which task my soul the title brings

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That, howsoe'er in ways of sense I slept,
All ancient secrets of the Dole were kept
From common knowledge ever in my heart.
Whether reveal'd at secret shrines apart,
Where the great rites are work'd, or half divined
By inward ways untaught, the same were shrined
In depths of thought which speech has never stirr'd,
Lest I should lose the hope of the True Word.

Further, I do confess that Nature's voice
Did first in saving ways my soul rejoice ;
But when the hour arrived to reach her term,
At the dividing ways, I can affirm
That I put by her ministries, with mind
To great elections call'd, and so resign'd.
I do acknowledge with express intent
How far the outward Church my soul's ascent
Prepared and did exhibit ; if at last
Beyond such ministry's sweet yoke I pass'd,
I have not ceased at need to own her claim,
But have extoll'd her Holy Place and Name,
And also—in the night of dream's eclipse—
Maintain'd her truth and mission with my lips.
Hence if I go this day through death to wide
Horizons, let it be as fortified,
At least in thought, with her last rites, that so
The plain believer shall not come to know
Aught for his strength unmeet—that other way
Some souls tread, *mortis in examine*.

Lastly, with full conviction and complete
Assurance that the Angels' mystic meat
Is more than broken bread, derived to man
By hallows of the sacramental plan,
I do affirm that he who entrance wins
Into the Church's conscious life, begins

The Further Side of the Portal

Clearly to see that through the wider gate
No tittle of the work is abrogate,
And that, however far proceeds the search,
All high assemblies still remain the Church.
That apex where the seraphs' songs are sung
Is but the mystic ladder's furthest rung,
And at the base thereof, where children stand,
The hand that guides is still the self-same hand :
To all which subject, here I set aside
The outward sign for what is signified.

While the Confession is recited the High Priestess and Deacons stand up, and the Familiars of the Holy Office remove the seats of the Celebrants to the South side of the Chantry. When the Candidate has made an end, the circle is broken up ; the High Priestess and Deacons turn towards the Altar and the procession passes to the steps, at the first of which the High Priestess again faces the Candidate, from whom, by the direction of the Great Abbot, she receives homage on his knees and communicates in return her benediction, which is given with open hand, to indicate that between her and him the veils are withdrawn by his reception.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

We do maintain the signs with steadfastness
Because their shadows in some part express,
Some part convey, the grace from hidden wells,
Being conventions and yet vehicles.
We also know that in the soul's release,
And happy entrance to the paths of peace,
Far must she pass along the secret roads
Before she leaves all sacramental modes ;
Yet in the end set free, she goeth thence
And so attains direct experience,

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Even fruition of a perfect joy—
Which to promote, these rites all powers deploy.

THE GREAT ABBOT.

Not as a pledge of faith but as a sign
That well and worthily the Law Divine
Which calls on those with knowledge to conceal
Until the law for each shall break the seal,
And in due turn each come to understand ;
You will upon the consecrated hand
Of this High Priestess print the sealing kiss
And so in peace depart where deep peace is.

The Great Abbot bends slightly the head of the Candidate, who is still on his knees, and the latter kisses reverently the hand of the SOROR JANUA CÆLI, who at the same moment stoops forward and gives him the Osculum Fraternitatis on his forehead, saying :—

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

The service of my hands I take, and give
Lip service, that in death you yet may live.

The High Priestess and Deacons ascend the steps of the Altar. The Great Abbot raises the Candidate and places him with his back to the Altar, facing the concourse of witnesses.

THE GREAT ABBOT.

FRATER E MILLIBUS VIX UNUM, Prince
Of the most Royal Secret, Sovereign
Most Wise, by these and other titles—since
Those who in mysteries their advance attain
Must put aside both titles and degrees—
Fulfil your final duties unto these

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Who here their lesson in the prudent path
Put well to heart and whom the silence hath
In holy keeping !

The Candidate still faces westward and certain insignia, not otherwise specified in the Rubrics, are removed from beneath his Vestments.

THE CANDIDATE.

Brothers of the Veil,
The honourable tokens of the road
By which my soul has travell'd, thus I set
Before you, knowing that you need them not,
To count among the hallows of this spot,
Or work perchance some further service yet—
Among the places where the great lights fail.
Let other postulants in order wear
These high insignia, turn'd as light as air
To us on threshold of the true abode,
And as before the presence of the King !
Here at this last pause made upon the wing,
In native poverty, my leave I take
Of whatsoever, for the mystery's sake,
Has been held precious in the outward ways.
May God his faithful of the nave and aisle
Raise to the chancel in a little while
And on the hidden secrets let them gaze ;
May those who stand without the sacred fold,
Versed in the ways of folly and of sin,
Receive the call before their right is sold
And knock and find it open and come in !

The acolytes extinguish their torches. The three Pontiffs ascend the steps of the Altar. The SOROR JANUA CÆLI raises the chalice from the Altar and, with the exalted Deacons on either side, turns round, displaying the

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sacred vessel with the Host shining above it. At the same moment the Great Abbot of the Chantry turns the Candidate, so that the light of the Elements falls upon his face. He then directs him to kneel upon the lowermost Altar step. The procession approaches with extinguished torches and smoking censer. The only light of the Chancel is now that of the Sacred Elements. There is a great hush of silence, in which the still air suddenly becomes very cold. The SOROR BEATA PULCHRA moves a little distance towards the centre of the Chancel, and the flowers die in her basket. The Loving Father CHRISTIAN ROSY CROSS takes his place in the due South, carrying the Cubic Stone, which he opens without speaking. The cube unfolds as a Cross, which he exalts, and about the four branches the words MORS JANUA VITÆ flicker like writing on a wall. The bells of the Chantry begin to toll slowly and with a muffled sound. The procession disperses. The SOROR JANUA CÆLI descends the steps of the Altar, with the Elements exalted before her. On the Host there can be discovered very faintly the imprint of a Slain Lamb, in place of the canonical Sigillum.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

The sting is sharp ; its victory is brought
To nothing ; common faculties of thought
Through dissolution pass and are not found.
Here is inflicted the odyllic wound
Which does not fall on tissues and on nerves—
Unerring work of hand which never swerves,
Striking within, beyond the place of sleep,
To open ways through which a soul may sweep,
Past all earth's surging waters unanneal'd,
And the old war-cries past, where peace is seal'd.

O Lord, too long upon the exile's leave
Sent forth, we are not worthy to receive

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Thee in our house, nor stand in Thine, but Thou
Hast come among us to instruct us how
Some need divine impels Thee to fulfil
In our respect Thy high, most holy will!
By many names we did of old invoke
And seek Thine aid, but there was one unknown,
Through which at length we come into our own,
In truth, as sleepers from their swoon awoke:
By that great title undeclared we do
In fine receive Thee, and with homage true.

The High SOROR JANUA CÆLI lifts the Host, from which no splendour now emanates, over the bowed head of the Candidate.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Behold the Lamb of God, in sign again,
As from the ages and foundation, slain!

The High Priestess breaks the Element of bread over the chalice. The Communicant raises his head, about which the nimbus radiates more brightly, and receives the sacrament after the ordinary manner of a layman. When he has communicated in the one kind, the chalice is also administered, with the words:—

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

By this most holy unction and the great
Divine Compassion, at the open gate
To postulants exhibited, may those
Who are the wardens and that gate unclose,
Shew forth the path which out of Mercy leads
To Understanding, as a broad, still sea,
And thence in Wisdom's further deep recedes;
So may its issue at the end for thee
Not in the Kingdom but the Diadem be!

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THE CANDIDATE.

In Thy strong hands I do, my God, commend
My spirit, utterly attain'd this end.

[*The CANDIDATE falls back dead.*]

THE FAMILIARS OF THE HOLY OFFICE.

May this man's soul, and all whose souls with his
Are join'd by faith, attain that rest which is
Reserved unmanifest in worlds to come!

THE HIEROPHANTS.

Strong men in chariots and in horses some,
But we in the Lord's name invoke and bring,
To ease our needs, a votive offering.
Hear us, O Lord, invoking: Save the King!

THE GREAT ABBOT.

The wounded bird is saved upon the wing,
With those whom death has spared: Long live the
King!

THE SECOND OBSERVANCE

The Obscure Night of the Gods.

A veil is thrown over the Candidate and he is laid upon a funeral litter. The Chancel is now entirely in darkness, except for the flame of incense fuming in the thurible of the acolyte. The Familiars of the Holy Office move silently over the floor and place the candles of the dead about the catafalque. The Familiars light the candles, but they give only uncertain and flickering rays, making the darkness visible. The High SOROR JANUA CÆLI has ascended the Altar steps and replaced the Sacred Elements. The Deacons minister about her, and the ablutions are performed as usual. Certain propers of the faithful departed are added subsequently in a low voice, but their purport is not distinguishable. Subsequently, the High SOROR turns with extended arms, saying:—

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

The Lord be with you, Fratres: it is well;
The grace long ask'd for falls on Israel!

THE HIEROPHANTS (*with muffled voices*).

And on thy spirit, as of old it fell.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Peace also, spiritual sleep, bereft
Of sounds; all secrets in the Kingdom heard
Are utter'd; nothing is for mystæ left
Except the word behind the spoken word.

She descends from the Altar, which she faces with the Deacons on either side.

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SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

My fault, my fault and my most grievous fault !
So long as savour rests in earthly salt,
I do repent this drag-net for the skies
Brings so few offerings for the service wise.

The High Priestess and Deacons prostrate themselves on the steps of the Altar, as at the opening of the Mass of the Presanctified. They move, on rising, in silence to their chairs in the South, and sit with hands laid palms downward on their knees. They remain in this attitude during the whole ceremony of the Candidate's raising, except for the share which they take in the burial service.

The SOROR BEATA PULCHRA moves forward from the northern side of the Chancel, scattering her dead leaves and withered blossoms.

SOROR BEATA PULCHRA.

Friends, who have known me and whom still I know,
Through each vicissitude of voided ends
And passage forth from show to greater show,
With all the calls that friends can make on friends—
Look at me, say what woe is like my woe !
Does not my legend's true memorial
Bear better witness than the purple pall
Can ever bear that those who lie beneath
Are folded closely in the arms of death ?
And as the shroud about a maiden's head
Is mournful evidence that one is dead
Who was most fair and little stain'd, we trust ;
So do all legends which my loss recount
Praise that which issued from the primal fount
And was so free and beautiful and pure
That virgin earth had little kin with dust.
But the woe came and woe must still endure,

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Though not indeed was mine the conscious fault,
Fierce war's most bitter fortune, in the vault
Now peopled by the planetary ghosts,
As by mute substitutes of former hosts.
Thus on me uninvoked there fell the curse
Which work'd the shipwreck of the universe;
Angels and men were both involved therein,
As by æonian strife where none could win.
So that which first came forth inviolate
Through bright creation's newly open'd gate,
Suffer'd a ruthless sacrifice and fell
Within the circle of the dreary spell
Which time served solely further to confirm,
Starving all knowledge of its final term.

*She approaches the head of the bier and scatters withered
blooms upon the veil which covers the Candidate.*

SOROR BEATA PULCHRA.

As one who leaves another in his need
Farthest and most extreme, thy soul indeed
Has issued, the last act of life which pass'd
'Neath other spells than I have ever cast,
For life itself divided thee from me
Than common stroke of death more utterly.
Thou wast not mine therein, and here it seems
That, coming out from all the power of dreams
And all my range exceeding, thou hast brought
Thy daring course from crowded realms of thought,
By ways unknown, to tenebræ of gloom,
And dost in death itself o'erreach the tomb.
In doubt I gaze where thou art here intern'd,
Lest intervening portents undiscern'd
Should manifest more dubious semblances
Than are the obvious limits of life's stress,
Strangely to counterfeit the mortal breath.
Truly thou are not mine in life or death.

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I give thee back to those of whom thou art,
Since in this place I have no power nor part,
Though here my sacramental doom must bring
Me, for some mystic work of witnessing.
Such witness faithful, full of vows, I bear
That all my claims on thee who liest there,
If not fulfilled, at least extinguish'd are :
The cup has pass'd from me ; I raise no bar.
I, the great spirit of the world, to this
World's prince unwillingly awhile allied,
Since that must hold which here my hindrance is
From restitution, who was sanctified,
Do thee renounce and thee therein give back.
Tempests remain and tarries tardy peace,
Nor tidings come from ends where labours cease ;
But thou returnest on thy starry track.

The SOROR BEATA PULCHRA, having emptied her floral basket about the catafalque, is escorted by the procession, carrying extinguished torches and an unswung censer, on her departure from the Chancel through the door in the Pillar of Severity. She pauses in her exit, turns to the East by South, and in place of the secret and invariable signs of the Chantry, she gives the Sign of the Cross extended, with uplifted arms. The High SOROR rises from her chair and says aloud :—

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Where is the light which on the path is shed ?

PUELLA.

(From the western end of the Chancel.)

The light is quench'd, Most High, the man is dead.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Are his accusers present ?

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FOREMAN OF THE HOLY OFFICE.

He has earn'd
His quittance, and the charges are return'd,
To those who did the schedule first prefer,
Mark'd : No advice—wherein all grades concur.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Then, recollected, we in short proceed
To the high office in such case decreed.

The Thurifer approaches with censer, which he presents on his knees. The High SOROR receives it ; the Deacons rise and take the ends of her cope. She passes to the East of the catafalque, which she circumambulates, following the sun, and the incense fumes over the veil with aromatic fragrance. The circumambulation being completed, the Pontiffs pause in a semicircle at some distance from the bier—thereunto facing—in the East. The Great Abbot of the Chantry comes before them with an extinguisher, circumambulates, following the sun, and puts out the lights successively, the one light in the East being excepted, using the following formulæ :—

PATER SERVUS SERVORUM.

At the First Light—

The Light of Life, the light of outward things,
The semblance of the Kingdom and its Kings.

At the Second Light—

The basis of the first fantastic gleam
Which falls on Israel in the tide of dream.

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At the Third Light—

The shadow of the ray reflected down
Which lifts the earthly towards the heavenly town.

At the Fourth Light—

The flush of conquest when the gloom reveals
The first libation of the cup which heals.

At the Fifth Light—

The middle splendour of the light derived
To all four points upon the man arrived
From the great deeps, carrying certain keys
Which are his title to the high degrees.

At the Sixth Light—

The Light of rigour where the glooms begin
To manifest a path which works within,
By far devolving ways and heights upending,
For those who keep the virtue of ascending
As others keep well-ruled an inward fire.

At the Seventh Light—

The Light which fashions first the great desire
To see the temples, palaces and halls
Which those attain who follow the great calls,
To build the house that is not made with hands,
Giving on certain solitary lands
And shores, for ever to a silent sea
Confessing an unsearchable mystery.

*He approaches the Eighth Light, which is slightly
outside the rectangular lines formed in the oblong square
by the other funereal candles.*

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At the Eighth Light—

The Light which shews the gates of the great deep,
That lifts its voices in the dark and sings
Of correspondence in the higher things:
The gates which prophet and strong leader saw
But could not promulgate their secret law,
Whereby the hidden matters, and the rest
Behind the faculties of reason, keep
Some larger issues past the reach of sleep
And in all common vision unexpress'd.

The Bells of the Chantry again toll with a muffled sound. The Great Abbot of the Chantry raises the Eighth Candlestick and carries it, slightly exalted, by the South-East, behind the Altar.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

And blessed are the dead whose souls go forth
Beyond the darkness of the mystic North
To reach the source wherein all light increased
Resumes its higher splendours in the East:
Henceforth exempted from their labours, these
Share in the Centre's still activities.

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

Beneath the realm of internecine strife,
The length of days and endless years of life.

FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR.

The Resurrection and the Life am I:
He that in me believeth, though on earth
He may be dead, shall live and cannot die,
And I will raise him to the second birth.

The tenebræ alarm is heard behind the Altar, and the Eighth Light is exalted at the same moment in the high shrine placed over the Tabernacle.

The Book of the King's Dole

CHORUS OF HIEROPHANTS.

Ye who are laden, come : the Master saith ;
I hold the keys of Hades and of Death !

THE FAMILIARS OF THE HOLY OFFICE.

O grave ! where is thy victory ; and where,
O death ! thy sting ?

[*A long pause.*]

SOROR PUELLA.

(*Speaking from the western end of the Chancel.*)

The man enshrouded there
Has lain three mystic days.

THE LOVING FATHER.

(*Speaking from the angle of the Rood-Screen.*)

The worms are swarth ;
The cerements close.

PATER SERVUS SERVORUM.

And still he is not dead.

FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR.

He has slept long and dreams have visited.

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

Time grows to waken.

THE THIRD OBSERVANCE

The Raising in Darkness.

SOROR JANUA CŒLI.

LAZARUS, COME FORTH !

The Candlestick in the Altar-Shrine is removed from its place. An unknown hand is raised over it, as it is drawn down slowly, and extinguishes the light, after which it is placed behind the Altar. The Chancel is thus in complete darkness, the thurible being also closed down, though it continues to give forth smoke at intervals. The Great Abbot approaches the catafalque and puts back the veil from the face of the Candidate, who sits up and begins to speak.

THE CANDIDATE.

He who through frozen deeps alone has been,
And where the great gods are their glories seen,
Aspires no longer after length of days,
Seats of the mighty, or the choric praise
Which up and down the mystic chancel pants
In fires and salvoes of the hierophants.
But grasping what abysses intervene
And what suspensions of the vital law
Obtain, from Aleph in the heights to Tau,
One great experiment of him lays hold—
Who once, he knows not how, his birthright sold—
The secret ways to follow, where they trend
From Tau to Aleph, and attain his end.

The Book of the King's Dole

These having found and being fain to start,
But knowing also that the goal is far,
I rise at call, preparing to depart
And take all thrones, ascending towards my star.
Assist me, Brethren, who so far am led :
Lo, I am he that liveth and was dead !

[The Candidate rises in shadow.]

PRAYER OF THE HIEROPHANTS.

The road is open and if ways are long,
The Guide who inly operates is strong,
And thine own soul, which takes thee, shall not fail
Once and for all the Crown, in fine, to hail.
Thou dost not call on angels, nor hast need
Of outward mentors to assume the lead,
While every step upon the forward track
Shall render it the harder to go back.
And yet the workings of the ancient curse,
More secret than the serpent's wiles, reverse
All human judgments ; so there lives not one
Beneath the common splendours of the sun,
Or in the hidden lights of those whose course
Is lifted high to reach their primal source,
That ever heard of office or of grade
Wherein the subtle virus is, in fine,
Expended utterly. Thou hast therefore said
Farewell to sleep, and dreams for thee are quench'd ;
An age-long vigil is hereafter thine,
By frozen zones of dreadful glory blench'd
And destitute of all but one resource.
Know this exhibited, through inward force,
Most patiently to that not less within
Conjoin'd, a torrent inexhaustible
Which, when the floodgates of the soul begin
To open, in the soul's abysmal well

The Further Side of the Portal

Pours, till the soul is vivified and fed
And the last rite is so consummated.

We pray thee, therefore, coming thus from trance,
Be vigilant, be wary in advance ;
And to the great conferring Powers, which do
All the rough edges of the sleep-worlds hew,
That whom God calls may unto God be led,
We also pray incessantly ; may true
Help be derived at need—and now to you !

PATER SERVUS SERVORUM.

Within the bosom of the mystery
Raised in the darkness, ere the Rite of High
Observance raises into limpid light,
He who has come thus far, with one last veil
Behind the hallows of all holy things—
The bells, pomegranates and tall palms—in sight,
By semblance here is taught ere semblance fail ;
And for the last time call'd by mystic names ;
While the great egypt circle him enrings
Once and for all, and then the past is past.

Shall there be need to say, with such degrees
Received, that all the common smoke and flames
Of outward life are shadow'd and o'ercast
With portent lights? In spite of narrow grooves,
The deeper meaning round the sligher moves ;
Wherefore the child upon his mother's knees
Is by the hauntings of the Holy Word
Pursued, has sacraments administer'd.
Thou too in paths of novices hast trod
And long been offer'd bread and wine for God,
But shalt henceforth, by this advance of thine,
Receive Eternal God for bread and wine.

The Book of the King's Dole

God's body then was taken to thine own,
Now must thy soul unto His Soul pass on ;
Wherefore thy part in earth its term attains
And former things are left for greater gains.

THE CANDIDATE.

As one far-travell'd, and withal outworn,
Or one in a new planet newly born,
The higher ministries of health I need :
Give me to eat and drink—strong meat indeed !
*[He leaves the bier and advances slowly
towards the Altar.]*

THE FOURTH OBSERVANCE

The Candidate is instituted in Light.

A great light begins to glow through the embroidered veil behind the Altar. The Loving Father CHRISTIAN ROSY CROSS advances to the centre of the Chancel. The Familiars of the Holy Office marshal at the Northern side and file out. The Hierophants at the Southern end follow. The Acolytes with thurible and extinguished torches go last, led by the SOROR PUELLA. The illumination of the Chancel continues. It becomes in this manner a Chamber of the Presence. The Candidate, who has knelt on the lowest step of the Altar, is raised in solemn form by the High SOROR JANUA CÆLI, and this raising in the Light is performed without words. The Great Abbot of the Chantry, assisted by the two Deacons, escorts the High Priestess to her throne in the South, and the Candidate is then taken by the Deacons only to the Vestibulum-in-ordinary of the Chancel, where he removes his monastic habit and is clothed in pontifical vestments, as if for the celebration of High Mass. When all is ready the bell of the Vestibulum is rung, and the three Priests come into the Chancel, ascending the Altar steps, as at the point after the Communication of the Faithful. But in place of the Post-Communion the High Priestess rises and, still standing in the South, says :—

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

The Lord is with us and with thy spirit too,
The which henceforth by ministration true

The Book of the King's Dole

Shall be pour'd out from its unfailing fount,
Directing others still in gloom of dream
To their awaking and the further scheme
Which gathers man into the Holy Mount.
This is thy Compline service, to the night
Farewell, and institution in the light,
Which, that the city and world may know thy fame,
By power within me vested, I proclaim.

The High SOROR resumes her throne. The two Deacons descend the Altar steps, make the Ritual Genuflection, and resume their seats on either side of the Celebrant-in-Chief. The Candidate is thus left standing alone, with his back to the Tabernacle. There is a nimbus about his head.

THE CANDIDATE.

Most faithful witnesses were heard of old
Who in the Kingdom took their stand and told
How the withdrawn, invisible King abode
Beyond all gates of knowledge ; and the road
By which his secret palace must be sought,
In sacramental speech, they also taught.
Dark is the Kingdom, though cloud-breaking rifts
Open at times, what welkins and what lifts
Exhibiting, as if through ivory gates,
And dreams thereof, reality awaits !

Yet closing spells and semblances collect
Full soon, to dim the paths and misdirect
The seeker, since the Kingdom, on a day
Far and how far, put from the Crown away,
Has sat in exile and the folds of sense.
But many Powers, successively upraised,
Have intervened because of man's defence ;
So he from certain altitudes has gazed

The Further Side of the Portal

On many secrets of the world's advance ;
But still there rests conceal'd the countenance
And royal beauty of the King, from sight
Shrouded in glory of the limitless light.
The world's whole hope is in the paths which rise
Through spheres successive, by which first the Crown
Transmits benignant influences down,
As sacred wine is pour'd from sacred cup,
To heal the Kingdom ; and whereby the wise
Do from the Kingdom to the Crown go up.
Those paths are steep ; therein the weary halt—
Fail, as it seems, and, utterly at fault,
Do find in darken'd houses doubtful rest.
Yet are those paths left open and the quest,
By him who has been worthily prepared,
Not for rejection in the end is dared.
He, after length of labour and of stress,
Shall pass from tumult into silentness,
From which no voice on peak uplifted high
Has ever come but once to testify.
Now therefore in the road from star to star,
By great election having come so far
And being pledged to follow on the call,
Through power within me vested, once for all
I do my Chantry office here begin,
And by these presents have myself read in.
I know what Virtues from what veils behind
My ways have watch'd and have my path assign'd,
Who also on the reverence of high search
Wait to make known, beyond the outward Church,
The Great Assembly's work which leads unseen.
But having so been taught and thus made clean,
The soul, once guided, with the guiding hand
Is here made one, and that enlighten'd band
Has join'd which doth from stage to further stage
Assume the Church, and every closing age
Seal with a certain sign of progress won.

The Book of the King's Dole

Dear friends, when Rites and Liturgies are done
And the anointed celebrants have gone,
Signs in the heart remain to lead men on.
So, ere I go, I pray you, join with me
For one point more in this our Mystery ;
Then shall the Chancel be restored with peace
Unto the Church External, to increase,
We trust, the graces and the favours kept
For those who long the faithful sleep have slept,
Yet have preserved their sanctity in dreams
And certain hauntings of diviner schemes,
Through all the witnesses of sense, have own'd :
May they too wake and be in light enthroned !

If aught is left unfinish'd, I beseech
That my deficiency, atoned in each
Of you, my peers, may be so well fulfill'd
That more of good shall follow than we will'd.
If one of those to whom I once belong'd,
Rightly or not, regard himself as wrong'd
By me, his free forgiveness here I crave,
And may he have good issue from his grave !
If, when the earthly things aside I put,
One creditor unwittingly I shut
Out of his honourable share, I trust
To have his quittance now, and all star-dust
I will exchange for stars and so atone
When he and I shall come into our own.

My mystic titles having placed aside,
That less no longer may from great divide,
At times perchance their memories shall stir
Faint odours of sweet spikenard and of myrrh,
And in the outward worshippers' suspense
Increase the savour of strong frankincense.

*The Candidate descends the steps of the Altar, and the
Celebrants rise as he passes by the South-East side.*

The Further Side of the Portal

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

We are but signs which faintly here express
Some accents of remote, uplifted things
Beyond all speech: do thou at parting bless!

The Candidate gives the benediction with a triple Tau traced by his pastoral crook.

THE CANDIDATE.

Be healing ever in thy holy wings!
The sign evoked from the great sea art thou;
Deep Understanding in the Chancel now
For ever dwells with thee. And those who take
The great diaconate and semblance make
Of lesser office, are the tokens here
Of emanations to the Crown most near,
Three, by intention one, and one in three:
Last sign dissolving towards reality.
In veils like this we almost see the dawn—
Bear witness still: I am the sign withdrawn!

The Celebrants resume their seats and the Candidate, with a new light in his nimbus, passes behind the Altar, opens the veil of the Mysteries and enters within. The veil closes behind him and through it a radiance, as of the First Resurrection, pours with power and glory. There is a brief space of silence, and after this the Candidate speaks very softly and slowly from behind the veil, that is to say, in the Chantry which is over against the Sanctuary of the Militant Church, being of it but not in it.

THE CANDIDATE.

The root of roots and basis of foundations,
The place of prudence which the wise alone
Approach, and ever in their labours own!
This—after Orders, Choirs and Dominations—

The Book of the King's Dole

Leads, and can only lead, to the most high
Knowledge of the Divine Priority.
The Bride and Mother this is named as well ;
The advocate whose potent sweetness stands
Twixt God and man with high uplifted hands ;
The Sabbath and the rest of those that dwell
Within the higher peace of Israel.
From outward zones, hereof the influx falls,
From star to star, through palaces and halls,
And he that knows—or in at least such part
As ever enters the created heart—
These deeps, discerns the well of generations
And how the soul, unclothed and lightly shod,
Through human sonship leaps to that of God.
So is it, standing by this limpid sea,
What orient from on high to seek I know,
When to the realm of unvoiced mystery—
Deep beyond deep of wisdom—forth I go.
[A pause.]

I do proclaim that there are many heights,
Whereof the first alone the Fathers trod ;
I see beyond the still depths other lights,
And entrance to the Mystery of God.
The soul, not utterly from symbols freed,
E'en in these holy places, knows indeed
At once the grace behind the sacrament
Fair overshadowing the outward sign,
And something more beyond it, which has lent
The dim allusion of its high intent,
Like after savour of imperial wine ;
As if within illuminating blaze
Of visible, superinceding rays,
The soul were inwardly advised to mark
Some greater wonder centred in the dark.

*The High SOROR JANUA CÆLI, assisted by the Deacons
of the Rite, proceeds to the High Altar. The Acolytes with*

The Further Side of the Portal

kindled thurible and lighted torches enter, followed by the Familiars of the Holy Office and the cohort of Hierophants. The Rite is resumed in the Office of the Ordinary of the Mass. The Ablutions are performed, and after the Dominus vobiscum, the Placeat tibi, proper to Masses for the Dead, is recited in secret, with the variations peculiar to the Chancel. The usual Benediction is followed by the Second Gospel, which is given rapidly, so that the text is not readily distinguishable. After the Deo Gratias, the closing of the KING'S DOLE is taken in solemn form.

THE HIGH OFFICE OF CLOSING THE KING'S CHANTRY

The SOROR JANUA CÆLI faces the Western end of the Chancel from the Altar. The Deacons do likewise from the Epistle and Gospel sides, standing respectively on the third and second steps. The Secret Signs of the Holy Assembly are given with the particular variations attributed to each office of the Celebrants, and are followed by the collective sign common to all members, and now repeated by all.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Brethren, we know the mortal life of man
By one incredible divorce began
Which did the bridegroom from the destined bride
For all the calculable times divide ;
But restitution shall be made at last—
Old rights restored and all suspensions past.
Turn'd hereunto, while loyal hearts attend,
This holy grade we bring to hallow'd end.

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

Take these last words at parting from a soul
Drēnch'd with all light conceived : The greater goal
Lies infinitely far, and farther still—
Beyond the dream that we can shape—is He,
Past all distinctions born of thee and me :
He can alone us satisfy and fill.
O primal last and immemorial first,
We have put on perfection and our shame
Have set aside, yet issue as we came,
A-hunger'd and unquenchably athirst !

The Further Side of the Portal

What is thy union but delighted pain?
We rest not even in Thee while we remain:
Give us that greater marriage that will leave
Neither the soul which toils nor hands that weave
To compass Thy true end, nor Thy will work—
The signs of self in such abysses lurk:
Take back Thy plenitude and us take back,
Leaving of all we were nor sound nor rack!

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

If any brother, by the Altar's call,
To serve entitled and assume his stall,
Is of his rights unwittingly bereft,
And hence is still amidst the semblance left;
We here proclaim our undivided will
To abrogate all ruling laws until
Such Son of Doctrine in his class shall gain
The end design'd, till none without remain
Whose strife is firstly to be purged from sin
And then exalted to the heights within;
While, for the rest, so far as work unseen
Can out of lesser goods lead man at large,
We stand behind them with oblations clean,
Nor length of ages shall outwear our charge.
We with our eyes have seen, our lips have known,
The soul has enter'd where the soul alone
Participates; and patience never sleeps.
We, who have reach'd the heights, do know the deeps
And out of many regions of the curse
Have risen to possess the universe;
So on the deeps we call, the lost therein,
Houses of profanation and of sin;
We stand with open hands, with bleeding hearts
By many sorrows pierced, and all our arts
Do exercise to rescue and redeem.
Thus out of nightmare and of torpid dream

The Book of the King's Dole

Do we all orders of the world uplift,
Till all shall know the chancel and the gift ;
For we have felt the chastening and the rod,
And through great sorrows have gone up to God,
To find that hell is God more deeply heal'd
And that beatitude is union seal'd.

FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR.

The creeds and dogmas into silence fall ;
They gave us many nothings who need the All.
So therefore solemnly, with reverent lips,
Out of our hands the sacred vessel slips ;
The hosts are broken on the patens ; Christ,
Who for all needs that we could voice sufficed,
As manifested God we worship low.
Beyond these outward ministries, we know
An inward passion and necessitous
Craving, which cannot be assuaged in us
Till we, who have been saved by Christ, shall fall
Beyond all rescue in the All of All.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

In the High Name which is not spoken here,
Where ministries of Names no more appear,
I close this Chapter of the Epopts brought,
By many doctrines in the Churches taught,
Unto the sacramental world's first verge,
Whence secret paths on other spheres emerge.
By these the soul must issue forth alone,
If ever it would truly reach its own.
Now are all rites completed ; rites no more
Dispense the qualifying grace or give
The consecrations which prevail'd of yore :
The soul exalted learns alone to live,

The Further Side of the Portal

Whence every pledge of him who gave I here
Without reserve into his hands restore,
That he who in the light of light is wise
May offer as he please his sacrifice
And those about him to their end bring near ;
That souls which follow on the call of grace
Where signs and letters can no longer kill,
And look to stand at length as face to face,
May freely work the Dole's most holy will.
So therefore is the Order closed and all
Fulfill'd at present in this sacred Hall
In his regard who came, through fire and cloud,
To share those gifts herein to hearts allow'd.
Now it is finish'd—work of peace and sword—
And for the last time therefore: Praise the Lord !

The High SOROR JANUA CÆLI *is led behind the Altar,*
and so into the divided veil, by the Eminent PATER OMNI-
POTENS *and the Exempt* FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR.

PATER SERVUS SERVORUM.

(Speaking from the centre of the Chancel.)

The Chantry back into the shade devolves ;
The Dole, expended, fails ; the Rite dissolves.

THE SPOKESMAN OF THE HIEROPHANTS.

And with the surging backward of the things
External, let us to the King of Kings,
Once and again, accord official praise ;
As saving help on the inferior ways,
Acknowledging the Lord of every Host—
The Triune, Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

The Book of the King's Dole

THE FOREMAN OF THE HOLY OFFICE.

Most meet it is that priests of every clime
Sing ALLELUIA in the Paschal time!

THE SPOKESMAN OF THE HIEROPHANTS.

Well done, thou faithful servant: enter in
Those nuptial joys which in the Lord begin!

THE FOREMAN OF THE HOLY OFFICE.

We hold the Rosary, since beads began,
Most helpful to salvation of the man;
We do commend to all by faith's rule led
The system of paid Masses for the dead;
And we desire to see with one accord
The temporal power of the Pope restored.

THE SPOKESMAN OF THE HIEROPHANTS.

While for the Stations of the Cross we wait,
Let Christian Rosy Cross still keep the gate.

PATER SERVUS SERVORUM.

So doth abysmal night on all descend:
This is the Chantry Mass-Book's very end.

The Acolytes lead the Procession. The Epopets file out through the Pillar of Mercy and the Familiars of the Holy Office through that of Severity. The Loving Father CHRISTIAN ROSY CROSS, in his capacity as Gate-Keeper, assumes the cloak and hood of a serving-friar. The Faithful crowd up and he sells to them scapulas and Agnus Dei tokens. The women of the crowd light votive tapers at tripods. Father Athanasius in the pulpit closes the Sermon of the day.

The Further Side of the Portal

FATHER ATHANASIUS.

Therefore, my brethren, let not wiles delude ;
So with this wholesome maxim I conclude :
Poor heretics may still be saved perchance,
But only by invincible ignorance ;
And even so the camel, I testify,
Shall pass more easily through the needle's eye.

The Sacristans make the collection, and the organ opens the hymn : " GOD BLESS OUR POPE, THE GREAT, THE GOOD "—which is sung by the children with shrill voices.

A SOUL'S COMEDY

PERSONS OF THE COMEDY

HENRY CARTWRIGHT.

JASPER	<i>His Son</i>
HUBERT MORVEN	<i>Jasper's Guardian</i>
FATHER PAUL	<i>Priest of the Most Holy Roman Church</i>
GABRIEL	<i>An Acolyte</i>
STEPHEN GILP	<i>A Schoolmaster</i>
JOHN JOHNSON	<i>A Friend of Morven</i>
WILLIAM MORVEN	<i>Brother of Hubert</i>
MARY BLAKE.	
MATTHEW, BASIL, ERNEST JOHNSON, MILES	<i>Friends of Jasper</i>
JOHN NORTH	<i>Jasper's Uncle</i>
GERTRUDE	<i>His Daughter</i>
AUSTIN BLAKE	<i>A Poet</i>
OTWAY, WILLIAM ARTHUR, ARNOLD	<i>Friends of Austin</i>

A SOUL'S COMEDY

PART I

THE SOUL'S DEVELOPMENT

“Faxit sancta Dei voluntas quod sibi placuerit,
indignum me fateor, per quem talia efficiantur.”—
INTROITUS APERTUS AD OCCLUSUM REGIS PALATIUM.

A Soul's Comedy

BOOK I

SCENE—*A darkened room.*—HENRY CARTWRIGHT,
HUBERT MORVEN.

CARTWRIGHT.

Evening by evening did the burning West
Some splendid pageantry and pomp of flame
Display before us ; and the daily scene
Impress'd insensibly the youthful heart,
Pervaded thought, gave light to faithful eyes
That watch'd unfailing. In a waste forlorn
The schoolhouse stood, an old, disorder'd pile,
Wild grounds and orchards round it. As a dream
With life is blent, to us some part of life
That sight became, no less with dream involved ;
And as the world is rounded with the sky,
Those sunsets rounded all our daily life.
God's self no farther than the farthest verge,
Where silent fen was merged in silent sky,
Seem'd parted from us, Whose creative smile
From floating clouds and cold, exhaling mist
Lit up that glory's wonder, so it seem'd,
For us alone. The Sunset and the School,
God and the boys, across the mournful marsh
Faced one another. Wonted Nature there
Could play least part, her aspect scarcely known,
In God's absorb'd, and something felt at night,
Not God, yet dread, the Spirit of the House—
Abiding Presence ! Solitary, gaunt,
That mansion, magnified in mist and gloom,

A Soul's Comedy

Loom'd through the darkness imminent, immense,
With wide, blank eyes through space a stony stare
Directing. Which into the world went forth
Of all those boys, and did not bear through life
Those sunset shards, that homestall's ghostly guise
Imprinted on him? They have ruled in me :
If all were summon'd in the soul or flesh
To stand before us, do you think one boy
Would bring some plain-way, unenchanted tale?
I see you standing, mutely musing here,
With thoughts turn'd inward, your abstracted gaze
Remarking nothing—own their potent force!
How have you fared? When last we parted, you
And I were young together; now that hair
Is grizzled, now that face with lines of thought
And age is furrow'd. Was it well with you
Those years?

MORVEN.

With him who has outlived his hopes,
All things are well because indifferent.

CARTWRIGHT.

In your sad face and in its languid air
I read the soul's divorce from peace and joy.
We started both with brave and high resolves;
No doubts had we; bright hopes fulfill'd we thought
To wear as crowns. What bears your wrinkled brow?
The contrast, or the parallel, make plain
'Twixt yours and mine.

MORVEN.

There was, my friend, a boy
Seized with the quester's fever—that divine
Disease which opens secret, stored delights

The Soul's Development

Of this illimitable universe !
But friends too fond, a parent's selfish love
Denied the nomad's longing. As the boy
Grew up, such passion in his growth matured,
But fallen fortune bent the father's head ;
So duty bound, so held the man mature.
The fire which first inform'd now prey'd upon
The life within him. Thus the days dragg'd on,
Till when the tale of five and forty years
Was writ in wrinkles on his patient brow
This man was free—free, but with forces spent.
The sunshine came, yet with averted gaze
Backward he turn'd—the soul was sick within.
Now, God forbid that by one hour alone
His wish should shorten for a selfish end
The life whence his drew being ! . . . I recount
My story here.

CARTWRIGHT.

Sad tale, in brief reveal'd !
Did you then never, never in all your days,
That first vocation follow ?

MORVEN.

The bright dream
I cherish'd grew more sacred in my sight
The longer its achievement was deferr'd ;
I would not desecrate in that late time
Its beauty by a commonplace and dull
Fulfilment, for the vision and romance
Were over.

CARTWRIGHT.

Your shy, earnest face and eyes
In youth come back before me ; I have caught
Their light upon the sea since many times :
A pale, sun-freckled face that almost seem'd

A Soul's Comedy

A fair one, which an animating glow
Could kindle into beauty; a broad brow
And chest which met the wind that blew from sea
How oft in fancy; the round head thrown back,
Like some bold swimmer—when he takes the waves
With adverse chin. Your spirit was in thought,
Abroad for ever on the land or sea. . . .
I mark before me one subdued and sad,
Restrain'd in all his actions. How your day
From summer dawn has deepen'd into cold
And melancholy twilight! Now this hand
Grasps weakly; that last sunbeam on your face
Has dazzled you, grown old before the time,
And all hopes dead within you.

MORVEN.

In deep thought,
Dark thought, monotony and weariness,
The years have passed.

CARTWRIGHT.

That house deserted stands
Where we were school'd together in the past.
Winds blow through broken windows; it is cold
And sad and desolate and dark therein;
It hears no voice, it holds no human heart,
Ghosts haunt it now. The spirit of the place
Sees day by day the sun departing there,
Sees night by night all starry heaven revolve,
Sees moons descending; it is dreadful still—
That silent spirit—and in state supreme
It reigns 'mid ruins, over crumbling walls,
Alone it reigns. Recall who taught us there—
The pale, lean man, of melancholy guise,
Who, when the class was over, merged in thought,

The Soul's Development

Stalk'd like a phantom through the house alone
And would not mark our presence, though he cast
His sad, deep-sunken, introspective eyes
At intervals upon us. We at night,
Who shared one room, would hear his distant step
Pacing some lonely corridor, wherein,
Through casements crusted with the dust of time,
The yellow moonbeams shone. Recall her face—
The sainted vision of his orphan niece.

MORVEN.

To whom your troth in that so early youth
Was fondly plighted.

CARTWRIGHT.

To whose soul I vow'd
All life, all love thereafter.

MORVEN.

Foolish pledge !

CARTWRIGHT.

My face in boyhood from your mind perchance
Has long departed ; but her grey, winsome eyes
Could never leave you, all her maiden mien,
When clad with simple raiment—white and blue—
She walk'd beside me over meads at eve
When school was ended. Out of all she chose me,
And I forsook, my friend, for love of her,
Both mate and play.

MORVEN.

Your head was turn'd in truth
When in that ancient mansion on the marsh
She came to dwell.

A Soul's Comedy

CARTWRIGHT.

Beyond the strength of youth
I loved her, all my dreams came true in her !

MORVEN.

It is too far from out the past evoked
Now to affect us, though the tale be sad.
An Autumn storm came on you once at eve,
Two miles or more from home, where both had
watch'd,
Behind a dark copse over misty fields,
Cold evening quench the fire that fill'd the West
With lurid dyes. A rainbow rose and spann'd
The earth and sky ; then deadly mists exhaled,
They folded round you, soon the path was lost,
And both were drench'd and terrified and cold,
While one was fragile as a frost in spring :
Exposure wrought on her ; consumption seized
That gentle girl, the dreadful end drew nigh—
She sent for you ; I think all wits awhile
Forsook you then, for as with gentle voice
She counsell'd you, betwixt the tears and sobs
A vow was rashly made through all your days
To love no maid in flesh, if she would love you,
In spirit still, translated to the sky.
She then, who sought with dying strength at first,
Your after-weal to compass, whether touch'd
At all that youthful agony of grief,
Or by such love constrain'd, or weak herself
Through love, unwittingly did injure you.
She took that pledge, and bound herself to be
Your spirit-bride (perchance to keep you pure
'Midst youth's temptations, or a childish heart
To soothe and please, accounting rightly nought

The Soul's Development

The bond itself), if you through all your days
Kept boyhood's trust inviolate with her.

CARTWRIGHT.

How long the pledge endured is known to you,
For we were friends throughout our Oxford days,
Though time had somewhat changed us.

MORVEN.

Yes, my heart
Was far away, abroad on sea and land :
One place alone where soul and flesh were free—
Wide earth—my home !

CARTWRIGHT.

It moves you even now !
Your eyes have kindled, on the chair erect
There sitting, and the blood warms in your cheek.
Me never did the rover's fever seize ;
I prized my books, to lead a student's life,
By love made sunshine, was the dream I cherish'd.
Why was a hope like this through all denied ?
God knows, not I !

MORVEN.

Does that perplex you still—
The foolish part in boyhood play'd by you ? . . .
What weeping stripling on the staircase stood
To let me pass ? The light, subdued and tinged
By the long painted window facing West,
His rich brown curls a moment glorified.
The comely visage in a faint, strange way,
Seems to suggest your childhood.

A Soul's Comedy

CARTWRIGHT.

I have reach'd
My latest day ; before him life expands
For whom I begg'd your presence, and make known
A woe that else were buried with myself.

MORVEN.

I half divine your purpose towards the lad.
Well, if the pledge was broken, he remains.
Who'd chide you? The wild vow was void as air!

CARTWRIGHT.

I held it binding, and I broke it, Morven ;
And like a goblet shatter'd in the hand,
The splinters spear'd my spirit. . . . Had I made
Some bond with you and then repented it,
You would not hold me chain'd through life thereby :
Would she judge harsher who to-day sits crown'd ?

MORVEN.

I think such scruples must, by reason's lance
In flight dispersed, have left your conscience free,
But all hope vanish'd when your father died—
That lone recluse, held widower by all,
Whose lips made never mention of his wife,
Had wife no less, though dead indeed to him.
The man whose life by treason thus became
Embitter'd and divided from itself,
Reveal'd at last his wrong, and all of grief
The same had wrought him ; then with earnest words,
In failing tones, he begg'd his boy to bear
Such tale in mind, to take in time therefrom

The Soul's Development

A wholesome warning for his weal and peace,
And not to wed, but all his days devote
To kindly deeds, making the orphan's love,
The love of widows in their wants relieved,
Sufficient, and to fix his heart on God. . . .
A moment pause, the method and the aim
To analyse—whether a thought in spleen
Conceived, or whether a paternal wish
The boy by his experience dearly bought
Should cheaply profit.

CARTWRIGHT.

In the speech he died
My heart was wrung within me, by that form,
Whose face shone ghostlike through the gloom of night,
In silence kneeling. How the kindly man
Had, uncomplaining, borne his wrong through life
In secret, till it wore his life away!
And then my spirit, to its maiden vow
Recurring, started with a ghostly thrill;
I saw the sacred nature of the pledge
Proclaim'd before me in my father's words,
Pointing one path in life. . . . O wayward heart,
Which set alone upon a certain course—
Whate'er may rise to threaten or dissuade—
Grows stronger in rebellion! Every voice
In earth and heaven may plead in vain therewith,
The soul itself may plead, all sense cry out;
From each opposing force its purpose gains
More stubborn strength. O blindness passing all,
O miserable folly, evermore
To fate transform'd!

MORVEN.

False conscience stings you still!

A Soul's Comedy

CARTWRIGHT.

If I had married as a man mature
From no mean motive of desire or gain,
But purest love; if where my heart was set
The Queen of Virtue dwelt with flowers around
Of gentlest feeling, bloom'd the Rose of Love,
You dare not think a grievous weight of woe
For this would crush me to my life's last day,
And on my child devolve in burning shame? . . .
That scornful gesture answers—Hear me then!
My friend, spurr'd on by misery within,
Some refuge vainly seeking from myself,
I wander'd wide and far. If I had stay'd
In college—had I pass'd my life at home,
And kept to books, by effort of the mind
Controll'd the restless spirit, not myself,
Within me enter'd—had I sought relief
From bitterness in hard, in manual toil,
Gone forth to serve my country, all were well
This day with me, but I assumed your part
And went wayfaring.

MORVEN.

That ill-chosen course
Has wrought perchance your ruin, and my own
Makes night within the spirit. I, who sought
A refuge from the misery of hope
Deferr'd, turn'd student in my call's despite:
Have fates misplaced become a curse to each?

CARTWRIGHT.

Weak hearts are wilful, and I never yet
Had loved a woman—since that maiden died
In my first youth. It was the curb I chafed at,

The Soul's Development

The pledge which tortured, drove me on to meet }
Misfortune else impossible, and spann'd
A separating gulf of earth and sea.
The ocean cross'd, I reach'd the Western World,
And, faring far, one place remote and wild
Where over loom'd my baleful star of life
In ominous ascension. There were rocks
And wilted meadows, near the lonely sea—
One mile of stubble, then the shore's thin strip,
Of yellow surf-strewn sand. The hamlet dream'd ;
Fair stood the white-wood cottage, long and low,
With bright green lattices and orchard ground ;
Ripe peaches dropp'd unvalued : there she dwelt.

MORVEN.

What boots it to describe her? Spare yourself!

CARTWRIGHT.

The maid indeed was beautiful. . . . My friend,
Is that the night descending? . . . Still my soul
Stands like a phantom in the porch alone
Of that far distant cottage, and can count,
Each waning leaf on yonder mangrove tree!
I roam with Mary there : comes evening, falls
The twilight round us, on the heath we pause ;
The moonbeams striving with the Autumn clouds
Cast light on her pale, spiritual face ;
On grey eyes shining softly as a ghost's ;
On her tall, graceful figure, by the mist
Dilated ; on the simple robe of white,
Like samite shining, and the grey, wide shawl
About her shoulders folded. Now the mist
Clears as we walk, and far before I see
The shallow tide upon the level shore,
In little bays shine in the early moonlight. . . .

A Soul's Comedy

The maid indeed was beautiful ; it seem'd,
Despite my vow, a good and lawful thing
That I should win her, as a man my part
Fulfilling, she a girl so pure and fair :
And so we loved. . . . Bear with me, friend, is that
The night descending ?

MORVEN.

Be this curtain drawn—
The western clouds in horizontal lines
Of livid purple, stratified and still,
Behind the foreground of that line of elms,
Do brood and dream and brood. A moment more—
The evanescent sorcery of light
It's broken spell withdraws ; through one wide mouth—
With livid lips, far-parted, jagg'd and loose—
The tide of fire flows back. It closes now,
The livid purple into black resolves,
The spent lark drops.

CARTWRIGHT.

And having loved, my friend,
I set my heart against an inner voice,
And wedded Mary North. A child was born ;
We moved from Lyme to Newport on the sea,
And there we dwelt. I may not say with truth
That I was happy in the inmost heart,
For one thorn rankled ; yet my end was reach'd—
A student's life, love-brighten'd, leading there.
When on the lonely coast at eve or night
I issued, when I roam'd with Mary there,
When from my study to the lawn I pass'd—
(Thou striving sun, before thy bourne be reach'd,
Shoot one long beam of light through broken clouds
Along thy yearning world!)—and so stood long,

The Soul's Development

While sea-winds cool'd my head, while all my thoughts
Like crystals settled, then indeed it seem'd
That God in mercy bless'd my broken vow,
That no light thing should stand 'twixt man and bliss,
And least of all that trifle light as air
Whose phantom haunted still my weaker moods.
Such musing sooth'd me on a morn in March,
As round me sea-birds wheel'd with flashing wings,
While the sea's azure by its starry crests
Was varied ever, and ever the rising tide
Broke in crisp ripples, above the sea-breeze lifting
Light voices distant, murmurous and prolong'd.
I said :—My spirit with Thy peace, O God,
Is fill'd this day : Thy comforts smooth my life,
And not less bright than on this open main
The spring sun shines, Thy blessing falls on me.
I trust that ways as yet by lust unstain'd,
Though great in nought, atone my broken vow,
If aught displeas'd Thee there. I cast henceforth
My care away, this weight of false remorse ;
Thy grace and favour visibly impress'd
On all things round me here my choice confirm ;
It shall not trouble me, nor grieve me more :
I thank Thee, Lord !

Again the house I sought—
There waited dole and doom !

MORVEN.

Bright evening star,
Now clouds dissolve, direct one beam of light—
One silver beam—to cheer this darken'd heart !

CARTWRIGHT.

When I met Mary first in parson's house,
She dwelt, companion to the parson's wife,

A Soul's Comedy

And spoke but little of the past at best,
Or early friends. An orphan girl was she,
And though refined in manners as in mien—
A cultured mind—her youth, I know, was hard.
She dwelt with pain thereon—I trusted her—
I loved her well, and all my soul within
Bore loyal witness to her virgin worth.
If she were beautiful and bright and pure,
You would not count it as a grave neglect
I did not sift the miserable past,
The dry dead past to learn her mother's name ;
If she had strutted in the London streets,
For that was Mary less the Child of God ?
My friend, a name—one name—the meanest thing,
But, as the acorn holds the oak within,
It held a world of ruin. Hear me still.
An elder brother who had gone to sea—
Unheard of long—my Mary mourn'd as lost ;
But scarce the prayer upon my lips had died
When he was standing, clasp'd in Mary's arms,
Who, though rejoicing in his safe return,
Still seem'd in secret trouble. For her sake,
And for the hardships of a sailor wreck'd,
With honest warmth I welcomed and refresh'd
And rested him. He told his strange sea-tale,
Ask'd next of us, and how we came to wed ;
Then as the day went by to long past times,
And Mary's youth, reverted ; once or more
To some disgrace or tragedy which both
Recall'd unwillingly. In pure amaze
I ask'd his meaning ; starting then he cast
One glance upon his sister. She was pale
With agony, and shrank ; he answer'd me
No word, his manner changed to moodiness.
I left them thus together, till I heard
The sounds of weeping ; with a thousand doubts
Distracted I return'd ; all pale and stern

The Soul's Development

He stood before me ; Mary pass'd me by
With tearful face averted ; then John North,
In his blunt fashion and deep, earnest tone,
Said, fear or love had prompted some deceit
In his poor sister towards me ; had he known
He might have kept the secret for her sake,
But having spoken in unguarded mood,
Both thought it better on his doubtful words
To place a plain construction. Love for me
And fear to lose my love, then lately gain'd,
If she confess'd there was a stain in birth
Upon her, had impell'd her to conceal.
So, with no further preface, in plain words
He told how one, herself a lawful wife,
Had fled from England with her husband's friend,
And in this distant country borne a girl
And boy to him ; how these were Mary North
And he, John North ; that till their father died
She shared his fortunes—then with want unhinged,
One summer evening sent the children out,
And ended life with poison.

MORVEN.

A sad tale,
But these fictitious and imputed stains
At birth contracted—

CARTWRIGHT.

Can you think my love,
Whose force had broken through a vow's restraint,
Could long be troubled at a secret kept
To save me pain, or else insure a heart,
By woman's modesty and grace and worth
Insured already, had the maid but known? . . .
Pass all the rapture by her pardon caused,

A Soul's Comedy

Pass my confession, pass my vow reveal'd—
My vow kept secret long for Mary's sake ;
Then, later still, to bind us more and more,
My father's tale, my mother's flight from home.
North started then ; I saw his face grow white,
Before me, as he sat in silence there,
With one foot resting on the hearth and one
Set on the ample rug—those shoulders broad
A little bent, bent too the massive head
With its dark hair ; a full beard swept his chest.
An awful doubt had seized that keen-ey'd man,
Making him muse and ponder—starting now
And then, aghast, I doubt not, at the dread,
Half-guess'd calamity those darksome tales
Had flash'd upon him by their parallels.
“Cartwright!” he said at length, “Cartwright—that
name!”

And rising suddenly he strode with firm
Step once—it may be, twice—across the room,
And so sat down, and then again was lost
In silent thought, while over Mary's chair,
Speaking, I lean'd, and to the things just told
Referring, unplann'd questions ask'd anew.
Thereto, all confident, her heart relieved
Of secret load, with undivided truth
She answered me.

I will not now repeat
The facts—fortuitously glean'd—whereby
There dawn'd on me, as upon North had dawn'd,
A dread suspicion. The blunt seaman fix'd
His deep eyes on me ; with convulsive start
He rose at times ; I felt my blood grow cold,
My cheeks, like ashes on a winter hearth,
Turn'd deadly white. Her mother's Christian name
Was that which mine had borne ; she left one child—
A boy—behind her, as when mine proved false,
Myself—a child—she left. “What chanced to him?”

The Soul's Development

I cried. "The father bred him, I suppose ;
She never heard," said Mary. "And the name—
And the true name—your mother as a bride
Received?" I shriek'd in tones so wild and hoarse
They startled her. "I know it not!" she cried,
"I never heard it! . . . Do not fix your eyes
So wildly on me!" added, with a wail,
The frighten'd woman. "But I know too well,"
Said John North, rising with his arm outstretch'd ;
"I heard it once—once only—and the name,
Most wretched and unfortunate of men,
Was yours ; while she, the mother of your child,
Your wife—O course incredible of Fate!"—
Groaning he paused. . . .

In that most awful hour,
What power preserved us, not alive alone,
But still retaining reason, still through all
Some hold retaining on my former life?
In retrospection I could see my heart
Was blithe in boyhood—how I play'd, and sang,
And shouted—how in all the genial months
We rose at early morning and swarm'd down,
Half-dress'd, to bathe—how through the winter nights,
In that long schoolroom, round the blazing hearth,
We met to weave romances—how we lean'd
Over each other, reading ancient books,
Of noble knights, of battles hardly fought,
Of lonely, long-enduring, perilous quests.
Who singled me in that mine early day
For boldness, or for beauty, from the rest?
Did aught foretell the fate for which my life
Was fashion'd, or the path apart from all?

MORVEN.

I counsell'd you—perchance my voice prevail'd !
Had that first quarrel by the roadside hedge,

A Soul's Comedy

Over the starling's nest, been left unheal'd ;
If when the angry heat of envy died
I had not hover'd in the twilight round,
Where, with your head upon the desk bow'd down,
And "Lancelot" lying with its dog's-ear'd leaves
Dropp'd on the floor at random, you lay still ;
And when the early moon began to sink
And look'd in on us, with entwining arms
We had not sat, the breach of friendship fill'd
With foolish tears ; perchance this pain were spared.

CARTWRIGHT.

No voice without, the fierce unrest within,
That only wrought on me. My broken vow
Was punish'd in the breaking. . . . Let me tell
In simplest words, the best, how Mary died.
She lay some days in lethargy, and then—
Twilight had fallen, and a fitful, cold,
Uneasy wind moan'd on the main without.
Black clouds across the naked, early moon
Were flying, and the rain in sudden gusts
Drove hard against the window—I say, then
She rose, sat up, and with both hands she drew
Her tangled, raven tresses from her face ;
Like two grey stars, I saw her awful eyes
In the dead twilight shining, as the flash
Of sudden thought kindled the soul within.
"I die," she said, "but darkness leaves my mind ;
Your vow was little, and my secret, yes,
That too was little, but immense the woe
Which comes upon us. Do not count it then
As punishment—calamity alone,
Which must be borne with patience, sent indeed
By God some end beyond our thought to compass.
And, therefore, though it has outworn our strength,
And with the burden one heart breaks at least,

The Soul's Development

I hold Him just," she cried, "and hope in Him!
And I who made you, as I trust, a true
And faithful wife, who would have also been,
Had God permitted it, I think, a true
And loving sister, do not die devoid
Of hope, not only for myself but you,
Like me resign'd. A sacred charge I leave—
That child whom God for purpose great and high
Has let me bear you. Do not shrink from him,
In whose regard God will Himself fulfil,
And see you hide from him his shame through all."
When the end came, we parted—North and I—
After long thought; he to his old sea-life
The burden of a bitter and wounded heart
Took back; I shipp'd to England, and in this
My father's house I dwelt, a broken man,
Who saw beside me here the boy grow up,
Clothed in the scarlet of a tell-tale beauty,
Whose blush betray'd. Our life like fever-dreams
At times went by—at times with even pace,
As down some mountain's bare and burning side,
The molten lava flows, a silent stream.
One Autumn night—some comet in the sky
Had hush'd the winds with terror, and the moon
Shone blurr'd and bloody, not a star but Mars—
While pacing lonely corridors, remote
From Jasper's room, across my mind there flash'd
The dread conviction that Avenging Fate
Had not yet finish'd with my work and me;
That out of Nature's violated laws
A life inimical to peace and law
Alone could issue. . . . These unholy thoughts,
With life departing leave me clear and cool;
His future fills my mind. Why did I yield
To morbid dreams? If from this haunted house
To some far school I had sent him long ago—
Had he been hardly used and grown up rough,

A Soul's Comedy

With something even of the vice of boys,
It may be, tainted, better had it been.
He has not sinn'd, he cannot mate with men ;
He is too beautiful for girl or boy ;
For years his eyes in every star look'd on me ;
I've seen the damask of his tawny cheeks
In every sunset rose ; it has fill'd the world
With its strange, spiritual redness. What
Will come to him ? . . . But like a ghost evoked,
You stand beside me. . . . Will you take the lad—
It is not charity I seek but love ;
My will provides—and act in his regard
A kindly part, more natural, more just,
Though not less tender than the man who seeks
This boon in death, and thus for your assent
Expected, blesses you in tears beforehand ?

MORVEN.

Learn further, friend, how matters fared with me—
Those years of bondage. Refuge sought in books
From hope deferr'd, a fever in the brain,
I sought the basis of our human faith
In things unseen. Through ten long years my soul
This search pursued, again through ten prolong'd ;
And in the end—recall once more that time
When we were boys, and in distasteful tasks
You help'd me ! Was I one that cared for books,
Or one, you'd say, to ripen into man
Of order'd thought?—I, seeking truth, lost God,
And go through life, and move from place to place,
With frozen heart. I speak in cheerless mood ;
I have not truly lost, the worst is known ;
I take my place amidst the course of things,
A portion of the Cosmos. I am ruled
By its great laws ; the debt from all things due
I pay and murmur not ; with stars and suns

The Soul's Development

I stand united in the common bond
That all things die. But I have also dream'd
In Arcady; if I am wiser now! . . .
Yet, like a wintry mist upon the wide
And mournful sea, grey age involves my vain
And aimless course. If you have faith in dreams,
Pause before giving into hands like mine
A boy's young life.

CARTWRIGHT.

Did Furies, ere his birth,
Combine against him? Or does Perfect Love,
In darkness shape its ends, yet wisely and most well? . . .
Thou hast not spared me Whom I trust, O God,
Whom she too trusted, nor in death wilt grant
That peace she died in, fail'd this final hope!
Dost Thou still try me? Ah, my faith is full!
Take him, O Lord, and multiply for him
Disaster, disadvantage, if Thou wilt!
When evil most combines to work him harm,
And when his soul's destruction most seems sure
And imminent, Thy providence I'll hold
As then most vigilant, his final weal
Most certain. In Thy hands this passing soul
I now commend, as in your own, O friend,
His will I place; God raises only you:
My soul accepts the ruling and is dumb.

BOOK II

SCENE I.—*A Library in a house at Highgate.*—MORVEN,
STEPHEN GILP, *schoolmaster.*

TEACHER.

I take it, sir, your plan to rear this boy
Is first to make him free to choose and act,
And after that, by loving-kindness lead
The manumitted nature up the straight
And rugged path of virtue. You forget—
A boy's place is with boys. At school he finds
His level; discipline prepares him there,
And emulation, for the battle of life,
But isolated from his sex and age,
Immured at home, you will produce at best
A scholar, not a boy.

MORVEN.

Nay, he shall mix
With boys; he shall have friends of his own choice,
Whose sports shall Jasper share: I will not make
A girl of him, nor eremite.

TEACHER.

Then best
Send him to school and make a man of him!

The Soul's Development

MORVEN.

After the fashion of the school and world !
I have a plan, sir, and must follow it—
You have your own too doubtless.

TEACHER.

Sir, I have !

My scheme insures success by discipline,
And firmness discipline in turn maintains.
I've sent out many boys into the world
Rear'd on this method ; they are thriving well
In business—some are married, some have turn'd
To politics, but all, or nearly all,
Are in the fair way to a place in life.
They are not dreamers, no Quixotic hopes
They cherish ; they are honest but acute,
And few will over-reach them. Some will be
Persons of mark in the commercial world ;
Some will be city magnates ; one will live,
I think, to be a bishop : I myself
Heard his first sermon—there was no nonsense there—
If you would be successful, were his words,
Use discipline. I had taught him as a boy
That useful maxim. But the plan you name
Is not to rear a lad to strive in life,
But to do some high service, Heaven knows what,
For those, who—to make use of metaphor—
Will cut his throat in the mere struggle for bread.
Such is your aim ; the method you pursue
Is in my judgment radically wrong,
And will be of no service to a boy.
Placed in my charge, correcting with due care
The faults of early training, I engage
To fit him for the world, to run the race
On which we all are enter'd from our birth,

A Soul's Comedy

And to win in it, I will not say the first
Place, but a good one—not to be despised.
Come, will you try me?

MORVEN.

You mistake me, sir!

I do not mean the boy to walk in hard
Commercial paths, for subtlety, deceit
And politics, nor the Church even. He
Need never on the struggle for mere bread
Be enter'd. Therefore, on this score alone
I seek to set before his youthful mind
Some high ambition which may rule his days,
Lest he grow selfish, lest an easy life
Should down the slope of self-indulgence lead
The lad to sin. I look, my friend, to make
His life all sunshine, poetry and peace;
But when such happy influence has work'd
Its full effect, to all things pure and high
Attuning him, I purpose next to set
The suffering world before his favour'd soul,
And with the pure, unselfish love thereof
Inflame it. So the pity of his heart
Shall prompt him ever for its weal to work—
With no reward in view, save that the soul
Must ever find in noble ends achieved—
Because his brothers on the earth toil hard
And suffer much, while all his days are his;
And he is gifted, keen and clear of sight,
And he can help them.

TEACHER.

We may not live to see—
Nor you, nor I—the issue of your plan,
But never failure on the face of things

The Soul's Development

Was written plainer. Trust a thinker versed
In practical philosophy alone,
Who claims no higher wisdom, but therein
Finds all sufficient for the needs of life :
I have known boys spoil'd by kindness but not led.
This for your method : for the end in view,
Your strange Utopian tactics bear the same
Relation to true life and the world's way
As dreams to daylight. On a course so vague
All reason's lost, yet hear a warning voice !
Don't seek a nature to restrain by love,
When freedom makes it to itself a law,
Nor by a regimen of roses train
To grasp at any object, great or small,
Which thorns encompass.

MORVEN.

I can see, my friend,
You have my boy's true interest at heart,
And for your well-intentioned argument
I thank you, sir ; it shall not pass unheeded.

TEACHER.

Good night, sir ! If your scheme be immature—
It bears the mark of it—my own is tried.
I shall be happy to receive the youth,
Should your plan fail you, as it must and will.

MORVEN (*going out into the balcony*).

The night has fallen, yet the genial warmth
Of this bright day still lingers, like the long
And lovely lines of light which fade how slowly
Amid the western clouds ! And now the moon,
Above the mists of London large and red,

A Soul's Comedy

Begins to rise ; but not till midnight chimes
From yonder church her zenith will she reach,
With all the busy multitudes of men—
Beneath that dim light shining far away—
Hush'd into sleep. . . . Is it the evening wind's
Low murmur, or the city's distant hum? . . .
How awful is the sleep of a great town !
The overwatching stars observe above
More solemn vigil. On the windy waste,
And the reposing hamlets, the sea's self—
That even—the stars seem dreaming, but above
The solemn sleep of cities an intent
And steadfast watch for ever they maintain.

SCENE II.—*The Garden of the same house.*—MORVEN,
JASPER.

MORVEN.

My dearest boy,
How pass'd my three hours' absence? There's some tale
In that flush'd face and in those glist'ning eyes.

JASPER.

O, sir, I am so happy ! I have heard
The grandest music—the sea spoke through all,
As I first heard it on that glorious day,
One month ago.

MORVEN.

Your tears fell then, my Jasper !

JASPER.

It told such solemn secrets, every wave
Speaking great things ; but I was brave to-night,

The Soul's Development

Though my heart swell'd. All brightest things on
earth,
That I love best, the sundawn and the night,
The Queen-Moon and the stars, with all my thoughts,
Seem'd—in such music—to have found a voice.

MORVEN.

Where did you hear it?

JASPER.

In a church at hand.

MORVEN.

And has your memory lost its hold so soon
On that first visit, when a solemn chant
Charm'd us to enter: I was with you then.
The bare walls chill'd, the high, unsightly pews
Repell'd us, and the preacher's chiding words.

JASPER.

It was a better and a fairer place
By far than that! Such music led me in,
Of solemn organ-breathings and choir that sang!
The walls were hung with pictures; far in front,
I saw the wonder of a thousand lights
From long white tapers shining. All around
Were men, like kings, for glory of golden robes,
And boys in white who held long torches up,
While two were swinging censers full of smoke
And flame and fragrance. One was like a saint,
His hair all gold. About the church they came
In long procession: there his eyes met mine.
And since I love him, may I choose him now
To be my faithful friend?

A Soul's Comedy

MORVEN.

My boy must think !
I need not doubt the lad deserves your love,
Our grief is not to know him.

JASPER.

That was half
My story ! When the choristers had pass'd,
There came a canopy of gold brocade,
Bells tinkled round it : in the midst there walk'd—
It seem'd—a sultan, robed in white and gold,
Who in both hands held something like a sun,
With small white centre. All the people bow'd
Before it, but not I, though something said
Within me : Bend thy head ! And that boy saw
How I look'd up and watch'd the Thing they bore
And worshipp'd like a god. He fix'd his eyes
In wonder on me. Then their god was placed
High on the altar, throned among the lights.
They knelt below and offer'd, as they knelt,
Incense and hymns. The smoke in clouds rose up,
The lights grew dim ; I fell to thinking then,
But found myself in darkness and alone
When I roused up. His light hand touch'd my arm,
For there the pale face of the censer-boy
Gleam'd in the gloom beside me. " It is past,"
He said, " the hour for closing. I have stay'd
Behind the others to give you time to pray.
Now, if you've ended, as the aisle is dark,
Give me your hand—you shall not stumble then."
And so he led me to a porch which look'd
Out on the silent night. Still there he kept
My hand, and said : " You are a stranger here—
Do come again ! This is the One True Church,
And all who join it will be happy on earth,

The Soul's Development

And Heaven's great gate unbar."—"Will you be here?"
I ask'd. "O, always," he replied, "I serve
Before the altar!" "Will you be my friend?"
Said I. He answer'd, "I will love you always,
If you will only come." So then we kiss'd
And parted. I came home, and here I am,
One great boon praying—to be friends with him;
Then let us both belong to God's True Church.

MORVEN.

So has my Jasper found besides a friend
The One True Church?

JASPER.

Indeed, the censer-boy
Declared it so!

MORVEN.

Convincing proof indeed!
Amazing logic!

JASPER.

But I love this boy;
There is no logic needed to know that.

MORVEN.

Did no veil'd maiden in the train attract
Your glances? Did this choir-boy draw them all,
Quite all the admiration and the love?

JASPER.

There were some flower-crown'd maids in purest white.

A Soul's Comedy

MORVEN.

I cannot promise you my leave to join
The Romish Church, because you have found a friend
Who sets the sunbeam trap of his fair aspect ;
And snares unwitting ; on his welcome here
Count still, my boy. But now the moon is high,
And in this garden will I think awhile.
So to bed with you ! May your dreams be fill'd
With visions of this mass-boy ! Peace ! Good night !

SCENE III.—*The same.*—MORVEN, JOHNSON.

MORVEN.

We settled here at Highgate. Like a map
The city lies beneath us and absorbs
His thoughts full oft. Then we go down at times
By coach, not train, and merge into the crowd.
We take long walks and visit distant towns ;
We roam by woods and waters ; we buy books
Of strange adventure ; by the hearth at night
We sit to read them. The ruddy fire-light glows
On his bright eyes, that forehead by the rich
Brown, waving hair—cut crisply—shaded over ;
And like the flames will his bright soul leap up
Full oft to animate the face, and eyes
Speaking like lips, for diffident reserve
Has pass'd as mists at morn from running streams ;
And so the sparkling current of the boy's
Precocious mind flows brightly, while my words,
Like winds, weave music in it, or make dance
A thousand playful wavelets of pure wit
And boy-like fancy free.

The Soul's Development

JOHNSON.

Your picture shines :
No less your plan to school him will not work.
You have no faith, and on this score alone
I look for future trouble. You must choose
Between two courses, and from both, I know,
Your nature shrinks—to cheat, of purpose set,
A youthful heart by teaching what your mind
Rejects as fable, or with your reason's creed
That faith dispel without which saving aid
Mere virtue wavers in a time of need.
I sent you Gilp, that you might shift the choice
From off your shoulders, yet fulfil your duty.

MORVEN.

I dare not thus my task to stranger's hands
Transfer ; the question of his Christian training
I've now weigh'd well, and from a mind so young
Why should I take the pleasant faith in God—
Though that's all dream? There is a use in dreams ;
They are the nebulous and shining clouds
From which the stars of noble deeds evolve.
What other hands have planted—not my own—
Shall wait the sunshine of some kindly chance.

JOHNSON.

That hope is vague ! A necessary choice—
Mark well my words—is here evaded only.
There are two courses open, both have dangers—
Which will you take? You hesitate and doubt,
And then—“Eureka ! I decline the choice :
What seed is planted now may thrive or die ;
I'm saved the onus, yet my secret wish”—

A Soul's Comedy

Since in your heart you hate your creed as I do—
“Its life would favour; therefore I invoke
Kind chance, blind chance, to rain its dew and sun-
shine!”

This is not manly, Morven; to the boy
Himself scant justice.

MORVEN.

At my weakest point
You strive to strike me. I have dream'd indeed;
I too have hoped: now hope and dream are over!
But I can never in my life forget
How it was with me in my boyhood once
Before I took to books; how all things wore,
Without that ghostly school, the seal of God.
I had the Great Companion by my side;
He was above and round me; He fill'd the world.
At times God smil'd and there was Heaven reveal'd,
At times He chid, but still His voice was sweet;
He was a father, yet a friend as well—
A guardian, yet a brother. My good friend,
You have not gauged me with that insight keen!
I would my childhood's dream were truth indeed,
Or some good warrant in the world of thought,
Which does not fail us in analysis,
Could countenance and strengthen faith in God,
For Jasper's sake. I would that gentle life
Were not the brief, fortuitous result
Of certain elements combined in due
Though mystic measures. Could I lead him forth
And say that all things round may pass away—
The sun which sets, as fades its western splendours,
That pale blue sky, like its swift-moving clouds,
Trees, as the leaves upon them, seed and fruit,
The wind that moves among the pines and poplars,
The earth itself beneath—yet life is his—
True life—for ever, and the joy thereof

The Soul's Development

Increasing in him ! But if this be dream,
I may regret the base is laid in air,
Yet none can help it. For the rest my plans
Are plain enough, this point at least resolved :
To rear a boy with every natural grace
And virtue, who'll devote his future life
To serve his kind with no reward in view.
I do not hold myself in duty bound
To take from him the pleasant faith in God.
I'll keep his motives from his faith apart—
His motive, man—religion, but his dream,
Shall bear the same relation to his life
As poetry may bear and pure romance.
But since you wish me from your heart to shift
The burden off, a path has open'd now :
Come, let me have your candid views thereon !
"Kind chance" already has declared herself !
Look down this garden walk ! What meets your eye ?

JOHNSON.

Why, I see Jasper with a friend at play !

MORVEN.

Approach and listen !

JOHNSON.

Will they notice us ?

JASPER.

Thou art my saint, and I will pray to thee,
Kneeling before thee ! Give me thy hands to kiss !

GABRIEL.

What will you ask for, suppliant ? All is yours.
I would I were in Heaven, for your sake !

A Soul's Comedy

For I'd come down to you in dreams, and set
Stars round your head; and then you'd build a shrine
In some bright, sunlit corner of your room,
And put my image up, where night and day
A little lamp would burn, and sweet flowers die—
A votive offering. Then my festival
You'd keep each year. I think in Heaven itself
I'd count the days to that sweet incense-time,
When I should stoop to smell the fragrant clouds,
And see bright tapers circling all my shrine,
Where you would kneel, and I so bright with joy
That all the saints in Heaven would envy me!
I'd work such miracles to shew you still
I loved you well; my throne in Heaven would oft
Be empty, by its side the harp would stand
Unstrung, but I should keep you pure from sin.
That would please God, Who else might miss my voice
Out of Heaven's choir; with what bright face each
time

I should return, and tell Him all my love
Had done to shield you! So, if you love me, come
Again to church, come often! Father Paul
Will reconcile you; and all your sins will die—
Mine too, because I make you Mary's child!
So shall you wear a purple cassock and white
Cotta, lace-trimm'd as mine is; we will bear,
By turns, the thurible and incense-boat,
And be so happy serving both before
The altar. Then because I brought you thus
To the true Church, and am myself from birth
A child of Mary, I will ask of her
That when we die with all our sins wash'd out,
We may go up to Heaven, but not sit there
On shining thrones, and be like kings so high
And solemn; but since in Heaven there is
An altar, may we both be servers there,
And never part, but love through all our days!

The Soul's Development

MORVEN.

Step back! They've noticed; let us walk this way!

JOHNSON.

What does this mean? Who is that fair-hair'd lad
That talks so strangely?

MORVEN.

Some young altar-boy
Who once found Jasper in the Roman Church
Which stands on Highgate Hill, and all his store
Of speech and love spends now to draw his friend
To that true Church, the Shepherd's only fold.

JOHNSON.

A faint, sarcastic smile about your mouth,
Is playing—now it fades. What means this farce?

MORVEN.

It means that Jasper has a most great love
For Gabriel, that Gabriel loves him well,
And holding precious his benighted soul,
He seeks to cleanse it from the dreadful taint
Of heresy, and in the one true Church
Would house it safely.

JOHNSON.

Will you suffer this?
Some wily Jesuit prompts the foolish boy!

MORVEN.

How now! You'll never in the world dislike
So brave a plan!

The Soul's Development

But I gaze down on with profound contempt
The petty quarrels which divide each day
That Christ you worship. I was testing you,
And find the canker of sectarian spite
Has sapp'd your charity! I paused, I own,
When Jasper ask'd to join the Roman Church,
Till that which ruled within him rose at length
A star to light me. What effect on him
Would the creed have, that merest form of words?
While if I check'd him now, the seed once sown
Might blossom after when I least should wish.
My scruple vanish'd, and the point became
Of all objective stripp'd. . . . O anxious friend,
If children play at proselyte and priest,
Why should we tear our hair? They'll change their
game:

To-day its prisoners' base—to-morrow, kites. . . .
And then, my friend, I have my weaker side,
Some tender feeling for his dream of faith;
So why prevent it if he tricks that dream
In silks and satin, not in Quaker's grey?
Then when the lad kneels down, at morn or night,
And prays in words which others taught, not I,
There's something pleasant, something strikes a chord
Deep in the heart, where seldom Reason's reign
Is quite establish'd. Soon the course of thought
Shall loose such bands and leave his reason free
To fix its purest hopes on earth, not air.

JOHNSON.

You will not let the boy be placed beneath
A wholesome rule, let honest Christian men
Bring up the boy in honest Christian paths,
And yet a mischievous and pagan faith,
With scheming monks, may set their snares for him!

A Soul's Comedy

MORVEN.

To please two children to their dream's content
My plan proposes only : I am pain'd
To find it cross a crony, whom I count
More child than either in his prejudice.

JOHNSON.

Well, Morven, time will shew ! I grieve for Jasper,
Who thus has fallen in disastrous hands—
All utterly unfit to train a lad.
I've sent my son this day to school at Gilp's—
We'll watch what comes.

MORVEN.

Jasper is good by nature ;
I seek to make him happy, then more good,
I know, will follow—that is all. Good day !

SCENE IV.—*The Grounds of a Monastery.*—FATHER
PAUL, GABRIEL.

FATHER PAUL.

High will our Lady count her Gabriel's zeal,
A crown in Heaven be yours ; for those who bring
Poor souls to God will save their own from death
And cover up a multitude of sins.

GABRIEL.

He came again to church, I've passed my word
To be true friends with Jasper. We shall grow
Like brothers ; he has ask'd me to his house.

The Soul's Development

FATHER PAUL.

But in your friendship and your love, my child,
Forget not still the solemn aim in view—
The boy's immortal soul—and teach him all
I tell you.

GABRIEL.

But be sure I will not fail!
And I shall go to him again this day;
I saw his father, and have spoken with him,
He ask'd me many questions on my faith;
I did my best to answer well and clearly.
He bade me come as often as I pleased.
Suppose we win them both! But he looks cold—
There's something scornful in that smile of his,
When I make Jasper kiss the Cross I wear,
Or sign himself. He call'd it play one night,
And then we argued, but he laughs at me,
And pats my cheek, and says I shall be pope
When I grow big—I do not mind his jests!
I had a dream last night which Mary sent,
As good as vision. I saw Jasper there
With light all round him and a crown of stars,
But he look'd nobler and a man full grown—
What did that mean?

FATHER PAUL.

I hope, my child, it means
That Jasper some day, by a grace from God,
Will reach the perfect measure of the true
And glorious stature of a man in Christ!

A Soul's Comedy

SCENE V.—*An evening walk.*—MORVEN, JOHNSON.

JOHNSON.

You are a weak man, Morven. We are friends,
But knowing Cartwright from his early youth,
His orphan also has a claim on me—
A word may help: I bid you search yourself.
Why did you let your father's selfish whim
Your best days darken?—That was weak in you!
He had no right to keep you bound at home
When all your mind and heart were bent abroad.
You were no hair-brain'd boy, mad for the sea;
A useless, idle, melancholy life—
With open eyes—that's what he doom'd you to;
And you submitted, for the harm of both.
Since then your weakness in the life of thought
Is proved by entrance into ways where none—
Not strongest men—can through the shifting sand
Reach solid ground. Now lastly, this mad course
You take with Jasper lays your nature bare,
And proves it weak—weak to the last degree!
Because you lack the needful strength of mind
One day to see him with a tearful face,
Which Nature ever in a lad like him
Will dry to-morrow, you seek to humour Jasper,
And, vex'd yourself—I read you—all the while
His fancy takes this form, you seek a refuge
In cheap-jack scorn of warring sects and creeds.

But now, farewell! We shall not meet for long.
The eyes of Jasper haunt me night and day—
The Scarlet Woman winds her flaming robe
About his body in my dreams at night,
And I wake groaning. I have gain'd myself—

The Soul's Development

Who feel through Jasper's face Thy call, O God,
To preach Thy word in those unchristian lands
Where Rome now reigns! So I go forth erelong
To spend what's left me of my mortal life
In earnest work for Thee. . . . The thought that souls
As bright as Jasper's perish day by day
Has wrought like flame within me. Though I fail
To rescue him, who is foredoom'd by you,
My spirit with a firm conviction fills
That I'm raised up to save in place of one
Some thousand souls. . . . Father in Heaven, decree
That since the goodness and the grace of Jasper
Have prompted in me—in a certain sense—
This zeal divine, that he may work in me:
I need no merit, in Thy hand I lie.
Shed down Thy grace and light, that ere too late
This dreadful error of his early ways
May dawn on him—the gulf beside him shewn.
If there be merit in his goodness now,
Which prompted me, the God that made him change
Such early virtue into saving faith,
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

MORVEN.

Forgive my jests!

You shock me truly with your earnestness!
I might have paused, but it's too late ere this,
And then you profit; another lease of life
Your zeal has brought you. I rejoice indeed
That Jasper's presence turns for good to all.
His father gain'd by him, though crazed so long,
I too am better for the boy beside me,
And his young friend, that microcosmic priest
Has lived more truly since their love began;
You now confess the happy influence:
My heart accepts the prophecy—be his

A Soul's Comedy

This part for ever, on all he meets to shed
His gentle nature's vivifying light,
Till all shall bless that presence. Had there been,
My friend, some blemish upon Jasper's birth,
Had he drawn being from some fraud on Nature,
So that his parents and myself once doubted
Why Nature brought him forth—forgive the fancy!—
This day the problem would be plain to me! . . .
So you go forth, like Matthew, turn'd from gold,
You mint on 'Change, to coining gold for God
From out the spiritual dust and dross
That lies around you, by the Tingeing Stone,
The Corner-Stone of Christian alchemy!
Speed well, my friend! Your faith as naught I hold,
But not your zeal; the world wants earnest men!

BOOK III

SCENE I.—*The Garden.*—MORVEN, JASPER.

MORVEN.

What ails you, boy, that you stand weeping there?

JASPER.

O, I shall weep for ever, in all my life
I shall not end with crying!

MORVEN.

What grief is this?

JASPER.

There is no God! Alas, there is no God!

MORVEN.

Who said that dreadful thing?

JASPER.

You, only you!

MORVEN.

No, Jasper, never in my days to you!

A Soul's Comedy

JASPER.

I heard you speaking in this garden lately
With friends apart.

MORVEN.

Indeed I now recall
That cry behind me, the retreating footsteps,
The stifled sobs.

JASPER.

And is there then no God?

MORVEN.

Nay, ask me not, but put the thought away.

JASPER.

I pray you tell me all, for you've read much
And studied. What you told them must be true,
But if not true, why did you speak it, father?

MORVEN.

I think there is no God—perchance I err,
But if not, Jasper, then the truth is awful,
And hence it comes that I have kept it back.
Now that you know, be brave, my child, and bear it.

JASPER.

I think I never shall be brave again!
If there be no God, there can be no Heaven;
Where then is Gabriel?

MORVEN.

He is dead, my boy.

The Soul's Development

JASPER.

If he live not in Heaven, he is dead indeed,
And if there be no Heaven he cannot live :
I shall not see him more. Is this not true ?

MORVEN.

I cannot tell you ; my heart bleeds for you.

JASPER.

O my dead Gabriel, if I sing to thee,
Thou wilt not hear me ; if I call thee, thou
Can'st never answer ; thou and thy bright angels
Live in my thoughts alone, and not in truth !

MORVEN.

Where would you take me ?

JASPER.

Do you see this grotto,
And that fair altar in it ?

MORVEN.

Yes, alas !

JASPER.

Let us approach it ; this is Gabriel's altar ;
His face smiles on us out of that bright frame,
He wears the white dress of an acolyte.
Before the picture of my saint this lamp
Has burn'd by night and day—a pale, small lamp,
Ring'd with red glass, as in the Sanctuary.

A Soul's Comedy

It must not burn here more, since there is now
No Gabriel—look, I have extinguish'd it! . . .
See too this censer, with its silver chains!
Three times a day I offer'd to my saint
Sweet incense in it; nevermore I'll do so—
Here is a picture only! . . . Holy water
Stands in this stoup, drawn from the deep blue pool,
Which God made like the eyes of Gabriel.
My altar—as at the *Asperges*—daily
I sprinkled with it—let earth drink it now,
See, I have pour'd it out!—My saint is dead.
Now let me, lastly, from their vases take
These fragrant roses, these late violets,
These blue-veined speedwells, St. Joseph's lovely lilies,
And the first poppies in the cornfield gather'd.
All these I scatter at the altar's foot,
And with this veil I veil the face of Gabriel.
Do you weep now like me? . . . Is God dead, father?
Shall I pick up these bruised and broken flowers?
Shall I relight this lamp? Shall I unveil
The face of Gabriel? Shall I cross myself,
And pray once more, and offer incense here?
And will you kneel beside me? Like a priest—
I'll sprinkle you, if you can say God lives.
Is there no God? . . . You will not answer me! . . .
God's dead!

MORVEN.

The uproar of a broken spell
Rings in my ears away!

JASPER.

Let us return!
Night falls, the birds are still, a busy wind
Steals whisp'ring through the grasses, the green ferns
And tree-tops. I suppose, a God lived once

The Soul's Development

Who made these things, but He is dead, like Gabriel.
Who will renew the Spring and make trees grow?
The night is cold without, and in the house
I see no lights: stretch forth your hand to me;
My limbs are trembling, father; lead me home!

SCENE II.—*By the Sea.*—MORVEN, JOHNSON.

TIME.—*Two years later.*

MORVEN.

We parted last in London; it is well
That we meet here. Rejoice, my friend, with me
To stand once more and watch the sea wash in,
All in the glare of noontide! Smooth it lies,
Blue, green and yellow, with the sky's deep light
Across its waste suffused; but here inshore
Breaks every wave with grand, majestic roll
Into a cloud of foam. . . . And so your plans
Succeed like magic; I am glad for you!
Good luck goes mostly with the strenuous man. . . .
How well you look, brown'd by the summer sun,
And hale, and stout! . . . May fortune favour still,
May you continue still converting men
From death to life by changing creeds outworn
For one your energy and faith contrive
To dower with life renew'd, as Jasper's face—
This hope awaking—to yourself gave life!
I prize such work just for the life it gives;
A saving virtue dwells indeed therein,
Whatever crotchets in a creed take form. . . .
And so you pray for Jasper night and day—
Believe me, Johnson, I have faith in prayer!
I think the energies of zeal-spurr'd minds
Produce effects, though miles may stretch between,

A Soul's Comedy

On whomsoever they fix the force of will,
For good or bad. I thank you : pray with strength—
Be sure, the boy will benefit thereby !

JOHNSON.

Has he grown strong? Is he brave, and bright, and
tall?

MORVEN.

There is no wind : what secret force uplifts
The vast green billows, rising, curling thus,
A moment poised, then crumbling breakers cast
With measured, concentrated, awful strength
On the beach vibrating under? . . . All is well :
Like young Apollo has the boy grown up ;
The little acolyte he loved is dead,
And what remains of Jasper's early faith
But dreams as I predicted? To his mind
No shred of doctrine or of dogma clings :
He throned his friend in majesty and light
'Midst saints and angels and the Queen of these,
Then offer'd incense to his memory.
That too is past—I'll tell you how and why ;
Or wiser, bury it : old ecstasies,
Old tears, rise up, like shadows from their urns
Of memory. One point emerges clearly :
What groundless fears were yours—you own it now !

JOHNSON.

If faith were poetry I'd say—all's well !
You train the lad for Nature, Art and Man,
But not for God. O let me take him, Morven !
Let him come with me to the hills of Spain,
Where I've my work cut out ; in five years hence
We'll both come back, he shall be all you wish for,

The Soul's Development

Plus faith in Christ and God. Don't shake your head—
I'll teach him honestly that love to man
Is his first duty after love to God!
He'll find good friends among the bright-eyed boys
We have in training at our Baptist school,
And work as well: we teach them all a trade.

MORVEN.

I have convictions not less strong than yours,
Though I cry No with an emphatic voice
To your most earnest Ayes. I've made my plans
For Jasper's training, and by those I'll hold—
Don't sigh like that!

JOHNSON.

I bow to God's decree;
His will be done!

MORVEN.

Let us return, my friend!
We'll talk with Jasper. You will like him well—
He is so frank, and such fine lights pass over
His face in speaking; he reads Homer too,
And you like Greek.

JOHNSON.

Yes, let me hear him read.

MORVEN.

Cast one more glance upon the gentle sea!
Perchance we never in the world shall stand
Like this together in the day's rich light,
And gaze thereon. Renew your youth with work,

A Soul's Comedy

But I feel old! Ambition's dream for me
Sank like a wounded bird into the marsh.
I have soar'd high and fallen; hope has fail'd me;
Youth passes swiftly like a pleasant morning,
And, lo, the evening of one's life is near—
Without the evening's splendour! . . . Once again
To feel the innocence of boyhood mine,
To see the first companions of my youth
Approach in boyish beauty. . . . They embrace me!
We wander by the ocean as of old,
The sea-winds breathe around us. No one comes
Intruding in such sanctified domains
But those we love, the brothers of our hearts.
We roam together in thyme-scented dells,
The sunlight is upon us, we shout in glee;
The nuts, the blooms we gather as we go,
And through the woodland, up the winding ways
Which fall and rise, or out through rustic gates,
Which open on green uplands, prospects fair,
We travel hand in hand. . . . Come in, my friend!
How goes your boy?

JOHNSON.

I think his progress fair.
He has a fund of manly confidence,
And plain, good sense, an eye to business too;
He has not skill, but enterprise and tact;
He'll fill the place my partner fills for me
When he grows up. I don't repent my trust
In Gilp; he acts up fully to his lights,
And is not worldly though he seems to be so;
I ask'd him plainly, when I call'd there last,
And feel convinced he's a converted man.

BOOK IV

SCENE I.—*A Library in Mr. Morven's House.*—FATHER
PAUL, MORVEN. TIME.—*One year later.*

FATHER PAUL.

Bright in the sunlight shines some greenwood glade,
Tall trees encircling touch with trembling tops
A violet sky, when, lo, the rack of cloud,
Collecting suddenly, of half its charm
That sweet spot robs! . . . The joy that lighted once
Young Jasper's face did not create indeed
Its beauty but transfigured; vanish'd now
The bright revelation, sadness, like a cold
And wintry mist, has veil'd it! They who once
Turn'd in the streets astonish'd at a face
So fair, will mark nobility of mien
In place of beauty. Slender, straight is he,
But then the lad's strange eyes have something mine
Can scarcely meet unmoisten'd. What is this
Your speech reveals?

MORVEN.

Good fortune once his steps
Did to your church direct, and served him well,
But now has gone against him. It is vain
To blame myself, and vainer still the chance
Which brought him thus within the narrow range
My cautious speech in secret to itself
For once allow'd, or Fate which led through paths

A Soul's Comedy

Unsought to truths unwelcome at the end,
Or love misplaced which shaped my days to sorrow.
If I blame anything, my weakness chides
One grand mistake, the choice of single life
To nurse my disappointment and my spleen.
If I had wedded in my early youth,
Sought wealth, gat children, striven to found a name
And family, done anything but turn
My mind to books, I had not then lost God,
And, well supported by the common bond
Of that divine deception, fair and false,
I had not known the horror which the heart
Feels when the end approaches, when it sinks
Down to the gulf of nothingness, when all,
All, all is over, life and thought and love :
I had not then in this so early day
Of hopes so bright deprived the child I cherish.

FATHER PAUL.

But months have pass'd since that most fatal time,
And all the while about the fatal words
The boy goes brooding—it is there you err'd.
Your course of subtle thought and wayward search
I will not blame, nor ask what evil mood
Down paths so wrong directed. You, I see,
Have suffer'd much in agony of mind,
And God, not man, can read your inmost soul,
And God alone can weigh that soul's intent—
To Him I leave it. But here, my friend, I stand,
A humble man, the servant of my God,
And in His service at the call of each,
While I have taught boys in my time, can read
Their hearts, and oft have managed them when all
Have fail'd before me. Why not send for me?
The remedy you needed in my hands
Was held unused. I would have taken him

The Soul's Development

To serve before the altar, would have placed
The cassock and the cotta of his friend
Upon him, would have put into his hands
The boat and censer held by Gabriel,
And in the benediction and the Mass
At our new Church he should by night and day
Have offer'd incense; so by slow degrees
I would have built his faith up fair and strong,
Which now seems ruin'd. He is cold and strange
And silent, walking—as we once have done—
Along the coast together. He will not speak
Of Gabriel; he said my well-meant words
Were torture to him, and a faint, pale smile
Died on his lips, when at the end of this
Our only walk, he said: "I have found at last
Another friend, and he is dear to me
And faithful, but he is not Gabriel!
If you believe that Gabriel lives indeed,
An angel bright, since you are kind and good,
Pray that these eyes may look but once on him,
To know he lives."

MORVEN.

If you have trust so strong,
Let that support you! If a God rule all,
Will he not shape to Jasper's lasting weal
This chance that you're deploring? Had I faith,
I would not grieve for Jasper—well content,
Whatever comes, within the faithful, sure,
Unfailing hands of Heaven's Almighty King
To leave him. Friend, the end is clear for you—
O faith sublime, O privilege supreme,
O priceless heritage, from sire to son,
From son grown sire to son, a perfect trust
Transmitted, I have lost thee, I have sold
My birthright, and received for a return
Less even than Esau's pottage. I have stripp'd

A Soul's Comedy

Life's tree of blossom and of fruit alike ;
Now all its green has wither'd, now the trunk
Remains alone ; the soul departed leaves
The world a corpse, dead even if infinite.

FATHER PAUL.

Your tortured soul is striving back to God,
It starves and cries for Faith. You feel its pangs :
Suppose your search was thorough and well plann'd
To find out truth, upon the face thereof
It must be failure still, from this one fact—
That it deprives your mind's imperious need
Of all supply. Your search has wanted something,
Your method somewhere has a secret fault ;
We may not hit precisely where it lies,
But there it is, by all results is proved,
For what belies our nature so stands judg'd.

MORVEN.

The country lad believes that London streets
Are paved with gold, till on some rainy day
He enters there amidst the smoke and mud :
His dream, my friend, through many a dismal week,
Perchance he'll mourn in moods as dark as mine,
But it were mad to build that dream again,
And in the midst of mean and crowded ways
Still to believe the city paved with gold.
That's just my case ! I've probed the source of faith,
And it's impossible and mad for me
To cherish its delusions ; yet their want,
At certain times, I needs must feel acutely.
What grieves me therefore most in Jasper's case
Is not the loss of faith, but that so keenly
He takes this loss to heart. I most lament
That I've allowed him to indulge in dreams

The Soul's Development

Till dreams become a part of life to him.
Now, when they've grasp'd him fairly, built him up,
They're suddenly torn upward by the roots,
And, like a net, the wither'd parasite
Clings round him still, no more his soul's support,
His chains, his tortures. It is now, perforce,
I wish those dreams were true, those falsehoods facts,
Yes, I wish anything on earth or sea—
Such is my weakness, sir!—should come to pass
Which would make Jasper happy. That's my mood
This day, perceiving your effect on him ;
But when you reason, then my strength returns,
And it seems better, as a fact, than not
That he should suffer, for he lives the more ;
And still my plans will work—I've talk'd with him
And find him ready in the cause of man
To spend his life, with no reward in view ;
He will crush down, I feel, this "child's first grief,"
And then be bolder in the strife for it.

FATHER PAUL.

Have you so spent your life? Do you feel now
Like one in heart establish'd, strong, secure?

MORVEN.

He does not mope ; he mixes much with boys,
Through all the village ; he is brave and kind,
He shares their sports, he grows and learns apace ;
You would not think he nursed a secret grief,
Unless you saw him by a chance alone,
And then—but there, my friend, he hides it well.

FATHER PAUL.

You speak of plans—recall your words to me
When once on Highgate Hill we walk'd awhile :

A Soul's Comedy

He should be happy, and in all things free ;
Now he is wretched in his inmost heart ;
He is not free, he is the slave of grief !
You've drawn the circle of the things of earth
About a spirit which is made for God,
And it is cramp'd and agonized therein !
To preach the cause of men means empty words,
For when the pulses of the blood begin
To stir within him, when the joys of sense
Unfold like roses full of dews and sweetness,
There will be nothing in the world to hold
That nature in, and sense will claim it wholly.
You've cast the reins away !

MORVEN.

They've broken, sir,
And in the hands of priests and men like you ;
I claim the test of facts ! Look outward ! Where
Your sect is dominant, does justice there,
Does honour flourish ? Do your boys keep pure ?
My friend, the strings by which you led the world
Are worn and torn and burst on every side,
And you, the leaders once, alone refuse
To see it !

FATHER PAUL.

We have somewhat lost our hold,
But now the loosen'd hand is lifted up
To grasp once more, and that with strength renew'd.

MORVEN.

Some final spasm of a force nigh spent—
But I forbear ! . . . I have not known you long,
And now indeed a long, most long farewell
Will bid you. When you visit here again

The Soul's Development

And ask for me, the servant's face will fall,
A voice constrain'd, it may be sad, will say—
Our master's dead! And I have school'd my heart
To meet with due serenity of mind
My lapse into first elements. I have
A certain faith, moreover, knowing well
The many errors of the human mind.
I may have look'd upon the world and life
Through lens perverted, and believe, if so,
That God will not reject an earnest seeker
Who fail'd to find but still has loved the truth,
And more of sorrow to himself has wrought
Than harm to man by failure. So, farewell!
I would that I might speak with you again;
I would my life could be prolong'd beyond
The space allotted; but regrets are vain
And childish. In the evening mist I stand
And wait with folded arms. Beyond me now,
Down in the valley, over the still stream,
And slowly, slowly creeping up the slope
There comes a sombre shadow shrouding all.
Past those dark folds I hear no answering voice,
No dim and muffled echo murmuring far
And wasting into silence, as I stand
And shout uncertain on the lonely road.
The stillness of nonentity is there,
The darkness of an old, unruffled night,
Or if beyond it there are plains and hills,
Heart's dreamland, living pastures of the soul,
Sweet voices calling from the border-land,
And white arms beckoning, I do not know,
And if there be the stars I cannot see them.

FATHER PAUL.

What do you mean? You are not ill nor old;
You look pale truly, and now I think of it

A Soul's Comedy

A trifle wasted, but your frame seems strong
And firmly knit : why, you'll survive us all !

MORVEN.

Here in this heart—an agony at times !

FATHER PAUL.

What then will come to Jasper if you die ?

MORVEN.

I have a brother in the house, the last
Whom I should wish to guard him, but no choice
Is left me. He returns a ruin'd man,
In distant lands from youth adventuring,
And, worse, a cripple. I had held him dead,
So left the boy my money, and this house ;
Now am I forced to change my cherish'd plans,
So on his solemn pledge to guard him well,
I've left the boy to him, and hope the best.

FATHER PAUL.

If Jasper died ?

MORVEN.

The money would revert
To William Morven.

FATHER PAUL.

If an evil will
Possess your brother, he may harm the lad.

The Soul's Development

MORVEN.

My brother is a hard and grasping man,
Yet moral; he is old too and unwed.
Watch over Jasper if you will, my friend,
But I must trust my brother!

FATHER PAUL.

Do not turn;
For God's sake give me equal right with him
To guard this orphan boy!

MORVEN.

John Johnson, sir,
Whom once you met and thought a worthy man,
Though much too blunt of speech, is named with
him:
He'll see that all goes well.

FATHER PAUL.

Leave in your will
Some plain command that they shall train the lad
In that true faith to which I brought him first!

MORVEN.

The asp already in his Eden walks,
While he goes forth, and in the world without
He weeps like Adam, though no sin be his.
You do not see that Fate on all your plans
Has written Failure; it is branded there!
How can I force consent, how twice connive
At his deception? Could you lead him, friend,
I would not take his hand to hold him back,
But none shall drive him. In my will already

A Soul's Comedy

I have set down most plainly, that himself
Shall choose which faith he'll follow ; in his choice
I wish him happiness and bliss complete,
And faith's most perfect crown, a soul at ease.

FATHER PAUL.

To leave a boy like that the choice in faith
Proves your indifference and scorn thereof.

MORVEN.

I will not weakly with my latest breath
Belie the calm decisions of the mind :
I hold all creeds but changing pictures wrought
In Faith's kaleidoscope—pure reason sees
No choice between them : it is taste rules there.
I do not argue which is brightest, best,
Of many combinations—such disputes
I leave to children. I've unscrew'd the toy,
And that which forms the element of all
Have weigh'd and tested ; it is glass, my friend—
A few small fragments of most brittle glass
Which broke in testing, and is dust this day
Beneath my feet.

SCENE II.—*The Library at Morven House.*—WILLIAM
MORVEN, JASPER. TIME.—*One year later.*

WILLIAM MORVEN.

Is that you, Jasper ? you have grown apace,
And look quite well, though somewhat pale and
slight.

The Soul's Development

You'll not go back to that north-country school
Against your will, for I'll engage instead
A tutor here to teach you.

JASPER.

From my heart
I thank you, sir! I will indeed remain
And live here always, for I love the sea.

WILLIAM MORVEN.

But not me, Jasper?

JASPER.

Sir, a month alone
I knew you ere you sent me to the North.

WILLIAM MORVEN.

And thought me doubtless somewhat hard and
cold ;
Boy, so I was! displeased, I own, to find
A stranger here, and from my youth till now
I never cared for children, least for lads,
While I had hoped to end my days in peace
With James, my brother. But he died, and then
His will displeased me, so my heart each day
Grew harder towards you, till I pack'd you off—
Far out of sight. Mayhap, the school was rough,
The season cold, and the place bleak at best ;
But as the buds unfolded and the sun
Stirr'd all life's pulse, I felt, I know not why,
My old heart soften towards you, and the more
That I grew worse, for in my bones the pains
More often vex'd me, till I scarcely leave
This "old arm-chair," but wheel'd from room to
room

A Soul's Comedy

Follow the sun to warm me. Then, I say,
It seem'd to me a good and cheerful thing
To hear a boy's blithe voice about the house
The whole day ringing, and a boy's light feet
About the stairs, and in the room at times
A boy's bright face.

JASPER.

So then you sent for me.

WILLIAM MORVEN.

Not, Jasper, then, though long the thought I
nursed,
But with the early spring a stranger came
To see you.

JASPER.

Was it Miles, sir?

WILLIAM MORVEN.

Who is he?

JASPER.

A boy from Deal, a boy with big grey eyes,
Who loves me well.

WILLIAM MORVEN.

No, Jasper.

JASPER.

Was it Jack,
The coastguard's son, for I was friends with him?
His voyage should be over.

The Soul's Development

WILLIAM MORVEN.

No, not Jack.

A tall dark man and stalwart, straight from sea,
With thick black beard. He had a full, broad face,
Burnt by the sun, dusk eyes that look'd you through,
As night itself looks through with starry eyes
The human soul and thrills it, and his voice
Was fitted for a Cæsar or a Saul;
On his strong limbs he stood, erect and tall,
As on steel pillars, while the breadth of chest
Had shamed a Trojan hero—a true son
Of the salt, open ocean, in his clothes
Its fragrance bearing. . . . Does the sketch recall
Some presence of your childhood?

JASPER.

In my brain
Floats a faint image.

WILLIAM MORVEN.

Through that window look . . .
What meets your eye beyond it?

JASPER.

The blue sky, . . .
The fair, flat fields, the sandhills and the sea.

WILLIAM MORVEN.

Did you not sail it once—that gleaming main?

JASPER.

Three weeks the magic circle spell'd us round.

A Soul's Comedy

WILLIAM MORVEN.

Recall, if possible, a man who cross'd
The threshold of your transatlantic home,
And evil fell thereon.

JASPER.

Sir, I was young ;
But I remember one dear lady well
Who died—my mother ; and the man, I think,
Him also I remember, but not well.

WILLIAM MORVEN.

It was your uncle, Jasper. Now, I see
You do not mark me, for your eyes have roved,
And through that window fix a far-off look.

JASPER.

It is the sea which takes my thoughts away.

WILLIAM MORVEN.

Attend me, sir, the length of all the day
Is yours hereafter.

JASPER.

To the beach I'll go,
And call for Alfred as I pass to bathe.

WILLIAM MORVEN.

A ship was anchor'd in the Downs last week,
Which held your uncle. . . . I attract you. . . . He—
The stalwart man I speak of—North by name,
Call'd here to see you, so it grieved me then
You were so distant, Jasper !

The Soul's Development

JASPER.

And me too,
It grieves me greatly, for to speak with him
Would please me much. Perhaps he would have made
A sailor of me, who commands himself,
I doubt not, that fine ship which anchor'd there,
And I can picture how it pass'd with wide
White sails all spread and bellied by the breeze
Swan-graceful up the channel.

WILLIAM MORVEN.

How they shine,
The boy's black eyes, and all his face has flush'd!
I think the bold blood of your uncle North
Burns in your veins.

JASPER.

Will he come here again?

WILLIAM MORVEN.

Perhaps in years to come.

JASPER.

I should have loved
To sail with him. He is my uncle, sir,
I do not doubt he would have taken me;
Perhaps he came for that.

WILLIAM MORVEN.

To learn how fared
The world with Jasper—was he tall and strong,
A bright, good boy, and happy in his heart?

A Soul's Comedy

And then to leave a gift in charge with me
Against your manhood, to be kept till then
A precious secret, since your tender years
Would fail to recognise the worth of it.
That same shall prove to you a star of fate,
And it were well if your best dreams at night
Should make you tales about it. Not for this
Alone I call'd you from your northern school,
But I must shape myself your heart and mind—
That on the boy grown man the prize in store
May have exactly the result I wish.

JASPER.

It seems my uncle is some great Sea-king,
So very often of his gift to come
Shall I think, sir, and many tales most fair
In fancy make about it, then perhaps
Compare them with the truth when I'm a man. . . .
They've taught me a hard lesson in the North,
And I am glad indeed to come back home ;
Where I can bathe with Alfred and with Jack,
And all the summer sail upon the sea !
Dear sir, farewell till evening ! Alfred, ho !
Yes, I see Alfred passing in the road
And there's Jack with him, Jack's return'd from sea—
How tall he's grown, a strong and handsome lad ! . . .
I've hailed them both ; they see me ! Alfred, ho !
Ho ! for the beach, the fresh sea-wind blows past,
The wind and sea for ever : shout it, lads !

A Soul's Comedy

And faithfully will serve through all my life
My starbright mistress.

MARY.

Rise, my courtly page
I choose you for my service. Let me know
By what bright name the angels in their prayers
Remember you!

JASPER.

If ever in their thoughts
I dwell, if ever in their prayers be space
For any name but yours, their sacred lips
For Jasper ask a blessing.

MARY.

May that name
Jewel your soul's crown through eternity!

JASPER.

Your thoughts are kind and lovely! Let me kiss
This hand, sweet lady!

MARY.

Sit you there awhile;
We'll talk anon! . . .
Good priest, your *protégé*
Has a strange face, yet handsome, and his speech
Is like a youthful Amadis! Your will,
So please you, father, in the boy's regard?

FATHER PAUL.

He leads a lonely, isolated life;
His parents both are dead, his guardian—

The Soul's Development

A strange forbidding man, with evil heart—
Nurses, I fear, some malice towards his ward ;
And help of woman's company the lad
Has scarcely known. He was first brought to me
When twelve years old ; a little altar-boy
Found him in church after the evening service,
In darkness kneeling alone and wonderstruck.
He made friends with him, by sheer force of love
Caused him to join the Church, and then, as though
His earthly mission were fulfill'd, the boy
Died suddenly. Our Jasper took to heart
That loss so much he too seem'd nigh to death.
He dwells here now and here, alas, has lost
The faith I taught him—he will tell you how.
Be friend to him ; let him walk out with you
And see you sometimes ; do your best to lead
This lost sheep back into the fold of Christ !

MARY.

I thank you, father ! You have set me here
A task I feel will please me. The boy's look,
And this brief glimpse you give me of his life,
Are full of interest. I shall like him well.
It is a solemn office you require,
But I will strive to do my duty in it.
If friendship brought him to our common faith,
I look to lead him by the same soft chains
Back to the Church's arms, and my poor sins
Shall hope to cover with the shining shield
Of his complete conversion.

FATHER PAUL.

That is good,
My daughter, a bright thought ; the very same
I told to Gabriel. I remember well :
We stood together when the wind of evening

A Soul's Comedy

Was creeping round St. Joseph's sloping grounds,
The vesper service over. He had hung
His surplice in the sacristy, but still
The cassock wore; I saw his earnest face
Shine in the twilight, lit by gentle eyes
Of golden hazel. . . . Well, my task is done,
And so friend Jasper in your charge I leave;
You'll let him lunch this morning with your aunt
And you: to-morrow I will call again
To learn how much you like him, and what love
Your kindness wins.

SCENE III.—*Mead and Woodland.*—MARY
BLAKE, JASPER.

JASPER.

You are my queen and I will give my soul
Into your keeping! I will tell you all
My starry dreams. It shall be thus with you
And me, most dearest! I am pledged to build
A mighty turret by the sea, all earth,
All waters wide commanding. I shall bear
My queen thereto; a jasper throne will be
Prepared against her coming, such a crown
As in the Master's treasure-house is stored,
With a white samite mantle, for her soul's
Eternal crowning. Then some magic art
Shall make me worthy to be peer of yours,
And so sit throned beside you, who am now
The faithful page that pines with love for you. . . .
But when that page has grown a valiant man,
All fill'd with chivalry and lofty hopes,
My sailor uncle, a most bold Sea-king,
Who knows the spells which govern all the winds,

The Soul's Development

While all the treasures of the deep are his,
Shall send his gift surpassing mortal skill,
Fit for a king, to crown me. It is kept
Against the day your bondsman comes of age,
Lest he should lose it or misuse it now.
Star-queen, moon-lady, maid of all the land,
My gentle mistress—I shall ask no leave
To kiss you then, to take this hand as now,
Nor lean on you; but I shall fold my arms
Like this, sweet lady, round you, and a head,
Love-heavy, then shall rest upon your warm
And gentle breast, to hear the flutt'ring wings
Of a dove-heart beneath it; and you too
Will softly kiss with kind and lingering lips
This hair one white hand smooths—most blessed
hair,

Which holds the fragrant coolness all the night
Of these oft-passing fingers! Such a scent
The gather'd lily to the dell's green moss
Bequeathes in parting. O, what page of old
Was ever half so favour'd! Lift me up!
How like a heap of roses in your lap
Do I lie helpless! Lift me, stoop to me!
One kiss, one kiss, to soothe this yearning
mouth! . . .

Ah! head, if I should roughen with my hand
Curls beyond price so precious, pardon me!
Pardon it, shapely head! How pale and wan
Your features grow with passion for your page,
Dead-white himself, and with unearthly light
What eyes shine resting on me! Is your heart
Fill'd up with love for Jasper, chalice-like?
Ah! warm and maiden lips, ah! love, those eyes,
These most fond arms, that heart surpassing all:
I am lost in love for you! . . . But now your face
Turns from me, your arms loosen, you indeed
Are angry.

A Soul's Comedy

MARY.

Nay, not angry but afraid,
Lest all-unconscious innocence should draw
My page to his destruction!

JASPER.

You destroy,
Whose love enravishes with life of life
The humblest plant admitted to the reach
Of its all-fertilising influence! . . .
Blue eyes and gentle mouth, crisp auburn hair,
My lips are tired with praising; warm white hands,
Whose wandering caresses never fail!
Ah, faith beyond all faith, ah, love which lives
For ever, from its own beauty life's increase
Assuring it! Your kisses fall on me,
As fall soft petals of the autumn rose
Unheard upon the grass, and your kind arms,
In the warm summer air, encircle me;
The benediction of your voice enrings me,
A golden sunbeam circling all my head,
And like a gleaming ripple on the sea
Your eyes' smile lightens round me. Their sweet
glance
Has enter'd into all things, and gives all
Surpassing beauty, while the dreams which bless
One faithful page have trick'd you in return
With bright selected beauties of the sky,
New-swept by wind and rain; all charms which
earth
Wins from the lingering sunset's amber light;
The presence and the beauty and the joy
Of the free open ocean in that mood
Which summer moons make mildest. You are life
And poetry and beauty—you destroy!

The Soul's Development

MARY.

Love blinds you !

JASPER.

Love has quicken'd !

MARY.

Love betrays !

JASPER.

But all its treasures of unfailing bliss.

MARY.

My Jasper, you were given me for the soul's
Reclaiming, but I steal your heart away,
And lose mine in you, while our love each day
Goes hurrying onward towards the gulf of sin.

JASPER.

Can love turn sin? Impossible! I miss
The meaning, Mary.

MARY.

May it still be thus !
For ever thus with you, the pure of heart,
Till God shall take you for completer guard,
A vestal, to His bosom !

JASPER.

Now your eyes
Grow dim !

A Soul's Comedy

MARY.

Indeed I cannot see you well,
For my tears hide you.

JASPER.

Does true love unseal,
Or hidden sorrow, those so crystal streams?

MARY.

O, when was sorrow from deep love divorced?

JASPER.

Ah! Morning Star, who married them—unfit
To mingle, who meet only in the night
Which falls on love forgotten or betray'd?
If you would save my tears, make haste and press
Dear kisses on my eyelids.

MARY.

Evermore
To kiss you, Jasper! If it thus could be,
If it might be!

JASPER.

We are not maid nor youth,
O maiden bright, we are two dreams that love!
Live dreams in love for ever!

MARY.

The one change
In life alone to pass these lips from off
An Eros mouth to eyelids.

The Soul's Development

JASPER.

And this, to raise
My lips up to love's eyelids and her mouth !
So all is well between us once again.

MARY.

Ah, never well between us while we love
So wildly, while I take a heart from God !

JASPER.

You will return it by all love made brighter.

MARY.

We should part, Jasper, we should part indeed ;
I am too old for you to love me thus,
And all too few your summers !

JASPER.

You indeed
Are older, and some knowledge of the world
Is yours ; but yet you tell me a hard thing !
Why should we part in life ? What evil deed
Or thought has pass'd between us ? Loving words
And kisses ! Are these sins in the world's eyes ?
Does God forbid us kisses and kind words ?

MARY.

If I should leave you, would the gentle heart
Break in that bosom ?

A Soul's Comedy

JASPER.

Have you seen, dear saint,
Beyond the melancholy marshes sink
An autumn sun, then starless night succeed,
While a cold, subtle wind through all the place
Wakes mournful sounds? What shadows haunt
the marsh!
What desolation dwells in all its waste,
Exhaling ghostly mists beneath the sky,
As if some spirit which informs the world
Went out with day therefrom! . . . It would be
thus
With this unhappy and forsaken page.

MARY.

If I should love you ever!

JASPER.

Only keep
Your arms around me, lest I die with joy—
Now speak those words, most loved one!

MARY.

Put your face
Against my cheek! How beautiful you are!
Could I do anything but love you?

JASPER.

Feel
Your page's heart, feel how it throbs for you;
Now kiss my life away!

The Soul's Development

MARY.

O late, too late !
The brief day wanes and both are far from home.

JASPER.

Why do you start so quickly ? How your steps
Outstrip my own which hasten in your track !
Wait for me, Mary, let me take your hand !

MARY.

It is dark, Jasper, I am cold.

JASPER.

Your arm
Is warm and trembling. What is dark ? We
stand
With woods behind us, and the wide fields slope
To Kingsdown village ; in the autumn sun
Its red tiles glow.

MARY.

You will not speak of this,
Nor tell to any one that I love you—none
Must know : it must be secret as the grave.

JASPER.

Whom should I tell ? Your aunt is cold and old !

A Soul's Comedy

SCENE IV.—*The Sandhills and the Sea.*—MARY,
JASPER. TIME.—*A few weeks later.*

JASPER.

What thoughts are in me, all my dreams eclipsing,
As I stand with you at this salt pool's side,
By all these sandhills shelter'd, in the fresh,
Cool autumn morning air, while ocean murmurs
Unseen, yet nigh! Upon the marge we'll sit . . .
And now mine arms are round you: thus it was
Those nights—when did we ever think to find
Such bliss? How could we ever have lived apart?
How could there ever have been soul in us,
Love's joy unknown? We never lived till then;
But now if life should grant one endless night,
If the stars ever would watch the world, the sun
Sleep ever, the moon only come and go,
A space of darkness leaving when our eyes
Dared not sweet meeting, we'd ask no more of earth
But that sea's song. . . . Whoever granted such a boon
To living love?

MARY.

My dark-eyed handsome page
(Seventeen, and yet so young in the world's ways),
How is love's passion strangely blent in you
With Eden's innocence! I repent indeed
This evil thing.

JASPER.

Ah, do not sigh like this!
I am not sighing, I am glad, look at me;

The Soul's Development

In truth I smile! If we have sinn'd, sweet lady . . .
But I remember my delight with you,
And yours so great with this poor love-sick page,
And thrust it back from me. Of all sweet things
The truly sweetest is my choice henceforth,
And that is you!

MARY.

These words are like sharp knives!
How bright a soul is blacken'd by the love
Which thus undoes you. Let me go from you!

JASPER.

You shall not go! You cannot mean it! I
Can never live without you! I shall lie
Cold through the night, and evil dreams will haunt me! . . .
All my protecting spirits abandon me!
Is that the sea's low murmur, or the rush
Of angel wings departing?

MARY.

They named me Mary well,
The bitterness and saltness of the sea
Have drench'd your heart!

JASPER.

What shall we do? The storm
Gathers.

MARY.

The sun is darken'd.

JASPER.

A cold wind
Has risen.

A Soul's Comedy

MARY.

The vex'd sea chafes

JASPER.

And the bleak hills

And all the land look grey.

MARY.

God's face is turn'd!

It was my sin, not yours.

JASPER.

O kneel and pray!

MARY.

Where were your angels when I saw your face,
Why did their wings not veil it?

JASPER.

Gabriel—

He too has left me in that lightning's flash.
But you will stay; you will not leave me; we
Shall sit for ever by the sea like this,
And if the angels turn their kindly eyes
No more on us, we still may gaze as now,
And your eyes ever will be more to me
Than saints' or seraphs'. If our thoughts are sad
The sea will soothe us, as beside it we
Roam hand in hand.

MARY.

No, we shall meet no more!
Not on the high cliffs, when the morning sun

The Soul's Development

Burns the dry grass ; not in the pleasant shade
Of broad old trees ; not in the cool dark caves ;
Not in the room at twilight, when the book
Grows dim before us ; nor at night together,
When our lips blunder, mouth seeking mouth in vain—
We shall be parted far, and nevermore
Will one house hold us ; a most weary space
Will our familiar lips make strangers utterly !

JASPER.

What high prophetic spirit speaks in you ?
But that was not your voice, too like the wind
Wailing in lone sea-caverns ! Aye, so deep,
So sad, so hopeless ! What has power on you ?
My tears fall o'er you, and those lips, which shriek
This dirge of love, seem love's indeed no more !
The eyes are blinded, trembling hands pass over
Your visage, and are damp with tears or blood ;
What thorns have torn this brow that blood should fall ? . . .
Your grasp is tight'ning on me, a strange look
Dawns in your eyes, while now a sudden cold
Has seized me. . . . A dark, ragged cloud bespreads
The sky. . . . The wind has veer'd a point or two. . . .
There is an ominous murmur in great waves,
As they fall seething, sucking down the stones !

MARY.

God save us, Jasper ! Who approaches here,
Whose mild and venerable form has scared
No sheep in passing ?

JASPER.

It is Father Paul !
His face is turn'd—his lips are moving—he

A Soul's Comedy

Recites his daily office—sit by me !
He will not see us—he will pass anon !

MARY.

You cannot face him now, alas, poor friend !

JASPER.

Don't move nor whisper ! If he found us thus,
What would he see ? That I'm contriving here,
With skilful fingers, just a paper boat
This pool to sail. So Mary, help your page
To launch his ship upon the stormy sea !
Fair winds compel it, and with gold bring back,
That I may forge your brows a gem-set crown,
When I wed you !

FATHER PAUL (*to* JASPER).

Your face is flush'd and strange,
Why do you loiter here ?

JASPER.

My ship sets forth ;
My Argo sails to seek the Golden Fleece,
To deck my lady's shoulders when we wed.
I think the merry peal of marriage-bells
Is sounding now ; I soon shall see you put
A long white surplice on to marry us.
You do not know my lady's face is pale,
And she is crying with averted head,
Because she tried through all this morning's length
To win my spirit to the Virgin's shrine,
To worship there. But I will now forget
My father's words and all my guardian's scoffs,

The Soul's Development

If we may kneel before you, hand in hand,
And you this day will wed us.

FATHER PAUL.

Mary Blake,
You are pale truly; though your face is turn'd,
I read it rightly; to your home go back
And weep therein, with penitential tears,
Weep, if you can, your sins, your life away!

JASPER.

She has gone forth with drooping, listless hands—
O Mary, Mary, stay! She will not turn,
She does not take the road that leads to home;
Along the reeking sands with trembling steps,
With head bent down, and all her hair unbound,
She passes now! You dare not hold me thus,
For you will kill her, if she drown this day!
The storm is nigh, with angry crests blown back
In spume behind, the tide's wild waves roll in;
For Jesu's sake, in whom through all my life,
By all God's saints, I swear to hold henceforth
A perfect faith, have mercy, pardon her!

FATHER PAUL.

Rise, wretched boy! Alas, I know too well
What snare has trapp'd you!

JASPER.

I can never more
Look in your face, two fierce, eternal flames
Burn in my cheeks, my shamed eyes shrink from you!

A Soul's Comedy

FATHER PAUL.

Wreck'd is the Temple of the grace of God.

JASPER.

My limbs have lost their vigour, like my heart ;
My heart to tears has melted like my eyes,
And in my head a swift and searching pain
Goes circling round and round.

FATHER PAUL.

Poor child, indeed
I will not shrink from you, I pity you ;
Give me your hand, lean on me ; you have sinn'd,
But not with wilful malice in the heart.
God knows I held her pure and faithful child
Of Holy Church, and thought by one so pure
To lead you to that mother, and to wake
New hopes and healthy feelings in the heart.
But thus it proves ; your friend a temptress turns ;
I've wrought you an irreparable harm.
God will'd perchance to let His servant act
This part towards you to chasten and subdue him. . . .
Can you forgive me, Jasper ?

JASPER.

Let me hide
Thus on your arm this flush'd and flinching face :
It was my sin, not hers. Bright, beaming Sun—
Thy clouds have scatter'd for a moment—light
The yielding sand impress'd by Mary's feet !
O Mary, Mary, stay ! We fly to you—
Our father comes to pray with, pardon both.

A SOUL'S COMEDY

PART II

THE SOUL'S RENUNCIATION

“Tu siquidem, ut es scrutator cordium, nobisti
meum propositum, cogitationes et vitæ studium,
quod nimirum mundana hæc bana et somniis
similima æstimem, meque tibi consecratum mente
exoptem, si tu modo et velle et posse, hoc est,
omnia concedas.”—MICHAELIS MAIERUS.

BOOK I

SCENE I.—*The Cliffs, with Rye Bay beyond them.*—

JASPER CARTWRIGHT, MILES. TIME.—*Four years later.*

JASPER.

So in the middle of my course a hand
Drew certain veils, which open'd paths of life
Unknown, and changed the aspects of all dreams.
Now on the threshold of a great event
I stand and wait ; some secret, kept from me
Till man's estate, will open three days hence
Before me. I was taught to look thereto
From early boyhood, as to some bright star
The rover turns, who toss'd on stormy seas
Sails hardly. Yes, it is my Star of Fate,
It rules my fortunes, rules my future mode ;
I'll order life thereby—high Heaven approve !
I raise up eyes to its unclouded vault,
And straightway now the common sense of sight
Seems melted in me ; with the soul I see :
But this is vision, this is ecstasy !

MILES.

The pictures of a strange and dire event
Are dimly limn'd before me, and I know
That grief awaits you.

A Soul's Comedy

JASPER.

Whether grief or joy
That star will rule. It lit my boyhood's dreams,
And day by day my fancy brooded on it.
I stand thereby.

MILES.

Light, fateful star of bane!
Shew the steep paths and onward, upward draw
The soul that thou hast charge of!

JASPER.

Lo, the town
Beneath!

MILES.

The night has fallen, and the wind
Blows, cold and strong, at once from shore and sea.
Shall we go forward still? or choose this steep
Descent? or hasten to the town and find
Some lonely inn, where windows on the deep
Look forth?

JASPER.

Turn back, and we shall reach in time
The town, wherein my lodging is at hand,
And a bright hearth will cheer us.

MILES.

So I take
Your arm. The rain seems over. Far in front,
Behold the lanterns of the boats at sea.

The Soul's Renunciation

SCENE II.—*A Garden.*—JASPER CARTWRIGHT,
MATTHEW, BASIL, MILES, ERNEST. *During
the scene the moon rises over the sea.*

JASPER.

We part, my friends, to-morrow; at a call,
Our paths divide; you go your plans in life—
And I—to compass. One has led you long;
Stand each henceforth alone, to lead in turn,
I do not doubt, some band of younger minds
On our old lines! I pray you, let this night,
When on the threshold of an ampler life
I pause expectant, be in minds of all
Engraved indelibly by noble thoughts,
By hopes, by projects voiced! Speak each in turn!
The wind has freshen'd, through this garden-ground,
With twilight falling, wafts from lanes without
Wild rose's and wild honeysuckle's scent
To mix with rarer fragrance. . . . See, one star
Looks down and listens!

BASIL.

Let us make a Dreamland
Each for his heart, then put the dream in words,
While, like a distant chorus, shall the deep
Sea blend its mystic voices with our own;
So does the raptured longing of a boy
Keep time for ever to the wild romance
His eyes devour.

JASPER.

For that sweet word Romance,
Kind thanks be yours! It kindles in the heart

A Soul's Comedy

A fervent bliss, some longing impulse leaps
Within us, sending fire through every vein.
We would be up and doing, we know not what ;
The eyes gleam, the desire outpaces thought,
And thoughts in tumult follow trampling thoughts,
While the mind makes bright pictures, and dreams
dreams
Too lovely for deception or too deep !

MATTHEW.

Poor is the heart which has not made already
Its dream of life ! Tell that then, which alone
Has vital import, not from Fancy-Land,
But what—in highest moments and in best—
Souls shape and out of thought's world into life
Bid magian time evolve ! Who will speak first ?

JASPER.

Well counsell'd he who bade us keep within
Some secrets told to few, some thoughts too full
For common utterance ! The divine and high
Emotions of the soul, transcending sense,
The sudden flashes of revealing light,
Free-breathing moments, as of rousing winds,
Fresh-blowing over from eternal plains,
And scented, infinite seas—could these in words
Find meet expression, would the world pay heed
More than to voices of the rain and wind,
Which too have meanings ? Hide them, dreamers,
then ;
So with the solemn music of the soul
Still let them mingle, and around us build
A lasting rampart of harmonious sound,
To isolate from disenchanting things,
And, leaving lonely, as it well may leave,

The Soul's Renunciation

Still in that loneliness which spheres the stars. . . .
Well did he speak who bade us keep within
Some secrets told to few! our life-dream one:
The true fulfilment justifies alone
Revelment. Should we empty rashly thus
Our hearts out, we might leave a void within
The dream itself perchance could fill no more.

MATTHEW.

A song were best! Yes, fittingly reprov'd
I stand; my life acknowledges the right
In those your words, who wear of all men most
An outer mask, expressionless and cold,
To hide the strife within.

*How oft we wander up and down
Performing alien parts,
And bear about from town to town
The same unresting hearts.*

*To shew our real self we shun,
Rehearse life's daily task,
Then gladly when the day is done
We doff the actor's mask.*

*Such is the sad, unvarying round
As on our course we go,
Who ne'er another's heart can sound,
And none our own can know.*

*It's weight increases day by day,
It throbs and gives no peace,
Till from ourselves we hide away—
And think to buy release.*

A Soul's Comedy

*At length our own true self is lost,
Sunk beyond gage of sense,
Though sometimes still the mind is cross'd
By inklings rising thence.*

*These prove it lives retired apart .
Where no false-seeming is,
In those deep caverns of the heart,
That unplumb'd soul-abyss.*

*The kraken at the end of time
Out of the sea shall rise :
Will our true selves in some far clime
Salute our aching eyes ?*

*Or will some novel part to play
Our nature's strength expend ?
Will new disguise our skill display,
And to the bitter end*

*Must we still nurse a baseless dream
That we shall soon stand free
Henceforth no more as now we seem,
But what we seem to be ?—*

*Ah ! may high dreams, fulfill'd in each,
Reveal immortal youth,
The nature's reach, free spirit's speech,
And rest from quest in truth.*

JASPER.

Matthew, the soul sufficiently profound
To feel that doubt should have the power within
To answer it ; and yet my own responds
To your sad verse : the reticence is wise
Which first I counsell'd, yet to lengths too great

The Soul's Renunciation

Is often carried. Did the armour forged
For strife become the hero's daily dress,
His limbs would stiffen, and the cumbrous weight
Would wear the frame within. Veil then the soul!
Bind it not round with bonds of ice or steel,
Lest, cramp'd thereby, we grow false-seeming's slaves.
And let the veil itself be light and thin,
That gentle winds may in fair moments lift,
Kind hands remove it, soul with soul to join
In mystic marriage of ecstatic lips,
Whence noble thoughts shall spring, the sons of love.
Aye, let the veil be light and bright and thin,
That if a new hope kindle in the soul,
It may shine through us, that the soul at will
May cast veils up, and all our self be free!

MATTHEW.

There are some moments when one heart will touch
Another's; a divine sensation thrills
Both in that union brief; but yet beware,
Nor seek in common moments to renew
The subtle union, for a globe of glass
Is shatter'd, by too potent music thrill'd!

ERNEST.

All vague ambition in a misty way
Finds fittingly expression. For myself
I take my stand, and in the daylight boldly—
Of good sound sense and reason—speak unflinching
My aims to all, precision in my thoughts,
And my speech clear; so none will dare reproach me
With sentiment, and poetry, and stuff!

BASIL.

What is your aim?

A Soul's Comedy

ERNEST.

My plans from boyhood nursed,
But now matured, I look to shape in life,
And make the start already. One of these
Is to grow rich by hard and honest toil
In commerce; then the girl that I love best
To wed; to have a country seat and house
In town; so having struggled and won well,
Against some odds, the wealth I seek, God willing,
To use it lawfully, in comfort live
And in some style, to keep an open house
For friends, shew bounty, and enrich myself
Still more by charitable actions done
With kindly heart . . . If I have answer'd you,
Tell yours then!

BASIL.

Much embolden'd by your free
And frank avowal, I will own my aims
Of equal worth with yours, whose idol, sir,
Is Mammon, worshipp'd since the world began,
While mine is Venus, who divides with him
The heart of man. I pleasure seek, you gold—
Which search is better? Which pursuit more noble?

JASPER (*to* MATTHEW).

Your thought has touch'd me! We should meet more
often;
Where are your evenings pass'd—at home, or where?—
With books?

MATTHEW.

Yes, mostly, since I make few friends;
I live alone; thus only can a man
Attain himself. The ocean and the stars
Are uncompanion'd, and, if not bless'd, are great.

The Soul's Renunciation

JASPER.

Basil's half-right! Though passion wears the boy,
There is no misery so sweet as love:
Forgive it! Ernest's aim seems mainly self,
Though most would praise it.

ERNEST.

I respect your mind's
High gifts, nor envy those, but I defend
My plans. Denounce me—you are wrong no less,
And I disclaim your judgment! Judge in dreams,
But leave to me the facts of waking life!
Soar up, bright spirit, and invest yourself
With rainbow treasures, but the solid gifts
Of life attempt not in such fairy scales
To weigh! Weigh gold of faërie—that is dead
Leaves in the daytime! In my hands I hold
A magic purse which multiplies the more
It's drain'd; that's commerce back'd with enterprise,
That's prudent speculation which luck backs,
Because the calculating mind controls
The vagrant dance of Fortune. Am I wrong?
One man am I, beginning in the world,
Not rich, not strong, no genius, but I grasp
And don't let go; but what I grasp is good
And solid. Give me space for my two arms
To move in, time for struggle, and, behold,
I'll top you all in practical success!
You count me little in your thoughts, I know—
Ten years, friends, then compare yourselves with me!
I look to dower the daughters of you all,
To start your sons, raise up your fallen fortunes,
While if success bring peace, and peace good health,
And health long life, I'll build your monuments.

A Soul's Comedy

(*To* JASPER.)

They should have sent you to that school of Gilp's
Where I was train'd; he turns no dreamers out.
When was home training anything for boys
But failure? They have marr'd your life for you,
Friend Jasper, to my thought. . . . But come to town
And hear the bishop—that's the boy Gilp train'd, sir!
We've backed him for the Primacy against
All England—a fine, sterling character,
Prompt, practical, good sense from head to heel,
And sound in doctrine—that's a man for me!

MATTHEW.

If gold be silence, you are wealthy, Miles!

MILES.

Where all are speaking, it is well to think:
He learns who listens. May a hearer speak?
All honest aims are good ones, all good aims
Lead on the soul; sufficient to the man
His lights, sufficient to the nature's strength
The hopes it holds. Who judges and condemns,
Who sifts and weighs, chides Nature, not the man.

MATTHEW (*to* BASIL).

Who seeks, like Ernest, to improve in life,
Who longs like me for light, good aim and true one
Follows—God help him, lead him, sometime crown him!
But after selfish, sensual content
To seek alone! . . . I know the soul within
That dusky, earnest face, whose every line
Has force and meaning, to a noble height
Could reach—why thus degrade it? Why waste thus
Life's golden chances? Might I shame you deeply,

The Soul's Renunciation

I'd risk your anger, Basil—you who wear
Your follies and your vices with no blush
On that brow broad enough to throne some thought
Whose lustre lighting bravely all your life
Shall lead you to achievement.

BASIL.

You have said
You live alone, to emulate the stars
And sea—that thought befits you! Like the stars,
You will move always in a formal line,
And lead like those a bonded, formal life,
And your life ever some cold and distant hope
Will follow, as the ocean does the moon.
Yet the stars burn, their hearts are fed with fire,
While yours is ice; and if the sea be cold,
It is a passionate thing with stormy strength
Instinct! You may become perhaps a dark
Star, or a stagnant lake, or a dead sea—
Not more! So cover up your soul with calm,
Dear, great Unmoved; so be that breast of yours
Cold as the snows are, barren as the sea,
And like the stars remote from human feelings!
To live, to feel, to prove the generous scope
Of human bliss, give leave in grace to me;
From out that mental pride, that thin disdain,
No great thing, and no good thing, and no kind
Can issue; love's excesses work at times
Their own redemption, vouching Nature's strength.

MILES.

Will no one sing to end this vain dispute?
You dream, my Jasper! Use your sacred gift—
A harp shall fill the pauses of the verse
With errant chords of melody. . . . Be still!
The inspiration fills our leader's soul.

A Soul's Comedy

JASPER.

*On the cliffs three hours to-day,
Where the burnet roses blow,
Did I watch the sunbeams play
On the buoyant waves below ;
Roving voices, faint and sweet,
Whisper'd through the noon-tide heat,
Whisper'd from across the sea—
As I sat and thought of thee.*

*Into thine eternal home
Do the old-world echoes come ?
Or does silence mystic, deep,
All thy sense in languor steep ?
Is it always noon-tide high,
Never doth the day go by ?
Or is it sunset there with thee—
Sunset over a crystal sea,
God's soft wind for evermore
Wafted from the heavenly shore ?
Does the red light flush thy brow,
Weaving round thee many a spell ?
Whisper to me, tell me how
Is it with thee, Gabriel ?*

*On thy throne's exalted height
Thou art seated, day and night ;
Thy most bright soul's bright array
Never waneth, night nor day.
Thy raised eyes grow soft or glisten
As the splendours pale or brighten,
And thy whole face seems to listen
And to lighten
When the shrill, sweet voices heighten ;
But the very life within thee dies away like a breeze
In the pause of the silver silences.*

The Soul's Renunciation

*The stars and the sea have met together
And mingled in thine eyes,
With the azure of far skies
In autumn weather.*

*Ah! what have the angels done
To make thee look so fair?
As if thy bliss but yesternight begun,
And it seem'd still so strange to breathe in heaven's air.*

*About thy golden hair
The clouds of incense make a dim
And ever moving aureole ;
Smooth is thy broad white brow,
And in thy samite robed art thou ;
Through thine eyes looks the spirit of thy soul.
Thy lips move sometimes, joining in the hymn,
But silent oft and statue-seeming—
While thy white hands on thy lap lie straight—
Dost thou sit dreaming
In unearthly state.*

*God looks on thee from above thee,
The white-robed martyrs love thee ;
The confessors one and all
See the sunlight on thee fall ;
Sunbeams kiss thy vesture's hem
And thy flower-bright diadem.
Thee the holy Mary blesses,
Oft a word divine will speak ;
Once she smooth'd thy gleaming tresses,
Once she kiss'd thy virgin cheek.*

*Is thy heavenly bliss complete?
Hast thou now no more desire
For the love we thought so sweet—
Ere thy soul ascended higher?*

A Soul's Comedy

*Thy blue eyes are deep, and deep
Their expression lies therein ;
They their inward counsel keep,
All their secrets shut within.*

*Thou sittest in light alone ;
Is there space anywhere by thy throne—
Space upon either hand
For another to kneel or stand ?
Since none thy throne may share,
Is there space by thy feet anywhere ?*

*Who sprinkles the lilies that bind thy brow
With the dews that keep them cool and bright ?
Who folds thy garments white ?
What hand caresses and tends thy tresses,
And clasps thy golden girdle now ?
Who washes thy feet that are white and fair,
“ And dries them with his hair ? ”*

*All earthly needs for thee are o'er,
So dost thou love and live no more
As on this sad, sublunar shore.*

*My erring fancy only sought—
With types from mundane glory brought—
Thy state to picture passing thought.*

*Thy spirit pure is crown'd alone
By its own beauty, thy high throne
Is thought, thy vesture is thine own*

*Immortal nature's sanctity ;
Thy home is neither earth nor sky,
Thou dwellest in eternity.*

The Soul's Renunciation

*For ever are thy thoughts intense
From change of feeling thy defence,
And therefore o'er the void immense*

*A silver voice is audible,
Which softly whispers all is well
With the high soul of Gabriel.*

BASIL.

Did you love Gabriel most for lips or eyes?
And were the eyes that charm'd you brown or blue,
Or golden-hazel, or that mild grey-green
Most deep of all, or that red-brown intense
Which makes you sigh to look on? Did your lips
Meet still in slumber, over and over kissing?
Did you love much and for that love lose much,
Loss counting lightly which could purchase love,
Whom gain ne'er bought? Tell me the whole kind tale
Of all you dream'd of, long'd for, sought and found,
When lost in love's delirium, like to die!

JASPER.

Ah, speak not lightly, these are holy things!
Let no adulterous and evil thought
Possess the sacred temple of that heart
Where love has enter'd and its glory reigns,
Where love abides and lights from day to day,
Or where the hallows of its former presence
Still consecrate a shrine deserted now,
But yet a singular and haunted place!

ERNEST.

What is the end for which you labour, Miles?

A Soul's Comedy

MATTHEW.

He keeps his counsel like an alchemist,
And in his secrecy is wise as he.

JASPER.

What moons have slipp'd since last I saw you, Miles—
How fare your Oxford studies? You have grown ;
But eyes, once bright, are dim with midnight studies,
And cheeks, once fresh, are pallid. Does it seem
So long ago since we were boys, and bathed
At early morn together?

MILES.

Since you brought
Brave tales and flowers to please me when I lay
Sick of a fever, since in gratitude,
When I was quite recovered, and could strip
Under Heaven's eye, in the cool, morning wind,
With safety, I made over in return
The art of swimming. That is all, yes, all
I ever did to serve and help you, Jasper ;
You train'd my backward mind, nigh all your own
Had grasp'd of knowledge to my humbler sense
Render'd in simple terms ; and so I grew
More worthy of my teacher, to be known
And loved by him, and in the town be call'd
His friend—a butcher's son, who all day long
Wore the blue frock, the shop-floor scrubb'd, the meat
Took round, or call'd for orders in the cart.
I owe you all the difference from then
To now, for though hard study since has won
This Oxford scholarship, it was your hand
Which help'd me first to take the path whereby
I hope to reach distinction in my day.

The Soul's Renunciation

JASPER.

We stand together, do you mark me, friends?
All young, our sanguine spirits, full of hopes,
Are buoy'd within us, as the dancing boat—
In mellow moonlight anchor'd far away—
Is buoy'd on shining waters, by one rope
Restrain'd alone. What binds us? Look abroad!
Suppose we all this night should vow to start
On some high quest, a gallant band, together?
To all high thoughts, to all supernal aims
There comes, as prelude first, an exodus—
A going outward of the heart and mind
From self, and from the meaner forms of life,
Soul with the world-soul mingling. Unto this
Well if we add that lesser, yet most fair,
Outgoing, the rover's, when with eager heart,
Flush'd face and kindling eyes, he seeks in strange
And distant lands to satisfy the great,
Mysterious longing which impels him on,
Which brooks no rest, but "Onward, Onward!" cries—
Wherever faring, still a further field.

MATTHEW.

It is the sea which calls your fancy forth;
That beauty's silence and those voices both
Call loud on you! On me the mighty Past
Has laid her spells—wide as the sea this night
It spreads before. What pictures there I see!
What vanish'd crowds at my command come forth
And play their parts! The peopled vistas stretch,
Till lost in legend, as the main in mist,
All life dilated into symbols turns,
Fact into myth, and man himself to god
Is magnified.

A Soul's Comedy

JASPER.

I have not prized the past
Beyond its worth, nor eyes of vain regret
Have cast thereon, nor wish'd that past return'd,
But rather striven to keep my mind abreast
Of this our age, and with the foremost there
I seek to stand. The gods are gone and dead,
But Faith lives on, and in a thousand ways
Her aim fulfils to raise and perfect man.
I stand in spirit on the foremost point
Of life, the future like a formless world
Spreads out before me, and my soul therein
Forecasts with joy the destinies of men.

BASIL.

There is no need to search the sleepy past,
Nor from the future to evoke with pain
The pre-existent souls of days unborn,
To gratify the senses or the heart.
Within the shining, sultry courts of Love,
In Love's own House, my soul elects to dwell;
Delight is there; yet should you tire awhile,
Cast up the painted windows, look abroad—
Behold, before you over the fair expanse,
What loaded vines of Bacchus!

MILES.

Speak to him!
Speak, Jasper! Ever he is pure with you;
Some nobler mood evoke, some lofty end
Proclaim, so dare him to its utmost height:
He'll reach it then, and—strongly spurr'd—
transcend it.

The Soul's Renunciation

JASPER.

*When will thy revel be done ?
When will thy brain at length
Free from the fumes of wine,
Thine eyes no more made dim
By the foes of sleep,
Thine aching heart no more
By turbulent passions and fires
Of fever and frenzy consumed,
Rise as a sleeper awaken'd,
Seeing things as they are,
The path of thy life before thee,
The lost, the forgotten, the true,
The upward leading path ?*

*An inward, warning voice
Cries back to the words I speak,
To the vital questions ask'd
Fain would an answer give,
Which shall thy soul uplift—
When wilt thou listen thereto ?*

*Think of the prospects bright,
Which to the soul made free
Open a vista prolong'd !
Heir of immortal life,
Heir of the ages past,
Son of the Timeless, rise !
Thine are the earth and sea,
Thine are the moon and sun,
The starry depths and heights
Are thine ; the vastness, the immensity,
These are thy fields to work in, to achieve,
To gain and reign !*

MATTHEW.

So therefore to the sea, ye neophytes !

A Soul's Comedy

SCENE III.—*A Bedroom.*—WILLIAM MORVEN,
JASPER.

WILLIAM MORVEN.

I hear a step upon the stairs without
Which sounds familiar, on the door a hand
Is laid, the latch is lifted: who is there?
Is that you, Jasper Cartwright?

JASPER.

It is I.

WILLIAM MORVEN.

And have you read the packet?

JASPER.

I have read,
And thought thereon.

WILLIAM MORVEN.

Well, what has brought you here?

JASPER.

I have revisited my house and home
For some old corners' sake, and most for you,
Poor man of malice.

A Soul's Comedy

But in your spirit is the light of self
Put out, I know. I leave you loathing life,
While I depart, untouch'd by fear of death,
Into the endless blank, and take untold
My hatred's secret to molest you more :
You shall not know what roused it and maintain'd :
Because my brother in a will preferr'd
An orphan brat before him? Count it that ;
Or seek with subtlety a deeper cause ;
Conclude it malice out of madness sprung,
And still be wrong.

JASPER.

You fail at least in me.
That secret fill'd my spirit for a space
With burning shame, but now the dreadful tale
Has multiplied my nature's wonted strength
An hundred-fold. Henceforth my soul rejects
The lesser self, that part which shame alone—
Like this—can tarnish, and for evermore,
On its own true and individual height,
Stands up, self-poised, to contemplate below
The house of flesh, to feel with pride and joy
Their interests divided evermore.
Old man, I owe you this! . . . You sink back now,
And in your eyes the light fades suddenly.
O die not thus with malice in the heart!
Stretch forth your hand ; be thankful this has work'd
My weal and triumph.

WILLIAM MORVEN.

Are you so great of heart?
And shall I enter in the lists with you—
But that's too late—to win another prize?

The Soul's Renunciation

JASPER.

I bid you mark that lovely line of light,
The last which lingers in the placid West !
I pray that God may kindle in your mind
Some thought as bright and beautiful in these
Your latest moments, and the same prolong
To shine through your eternity ! In truth,
I vanquish now—O, do not turn your face
To that blank wall !

WILLIAM MORVEN.

I will not own in life
Your mastery. Some purpose known to none
Takes up the tangled threads of your strange life,
And deftly weaves. . . . Did furies ere your birth
Combine against you, or fore-casting Fate,
High doom decreeing for a nature high,
In darkness shape with care its prudent ends ?

JASPER.

The solemn problem solves at length itself :
I know what wisdom for what perfect end
Let Nature's clean and sanctifying laws
Be trampled. The false self has died in me ;
The spirit remains, to prove its high descent.
Lead, and still lead, strong spirit, as the moon
Draws seething on the billowy sea behind,
Which stagnant else, and prone 'twixt shore and shore
Lifeless would lie !

BOOK II

SCENE I.—*A Library, with long windows looking out on the distant sea.*—JASPER, JOHN NORTH.

JOHN NORTH.

Is your name Jasper Cartwright?

JASPER.

Sir, it is;

Command his service!

JOHN NORTH.

It is dark about you :
Come nearer, Jasper, let me study you !
What dims my eyes? How tall and brave you are !
God love you, nephew ! Is it well with you ?
I am John Blake, your uncle.

JASPER.

That I know.

JOHN NORTH.

When last we parted what a babe you were !
Now your straight figure with its stately head
Stoops to the measure of my sea-dried form.

The Soul's Renunciation

JASPER.

Your voice is deep and searching, like the sea ;
In your bluff presence does the soul thereof
Take visible expression, yet your words,
O tann'd sea-toiler, seem no sailor's speech !

JOHN NORTH.

My soul is soften'd at the sight of you !

JASPER.

And mine expands within an eager breast,
As if your words invoked its noblest mood.

JOHN NORTH.

It is so beautiful and bright a thing
To see you, Jasper, bright and beautiful !

JASPER.

Your eyes are full of fire and prophecy,
As if your soul, like Enoch's, walk'd with God.
May God be with you ! My heart yearns towards
you ;
I swear your spirit, like a star, has ruled
In all my life, though you were far removed.

JOHN NORTH.

My ship is waiting in the Downs a wind
To bear her up the Channel, so I seized
This chance, the first, to see you. Where is he,
That lame, eccentric man, who guarded you ?

JASPER.

I trust his spirit at the Source of Life
Renews its strength for ever : he is dead.

A Soul's Comedy

JOHN NORTH.

If I have wrong'd you, Jasper!

JASPER.

That were strange!
I know your heart is set towards faith in God
And love to all men.

JOHN NORTH.

Let us walk awhile. . . .
Behold the sea before us!

JASPER.

It is now
Night, and a vast, amazing moon above
The deep has risen, circling towards the South,
Towards Walmer's cliffs, St. Margaret's fairy bay,
And Dover's looming heights.

JOHN NORTH.

I come this day
To know if you are happy: is that so?

JASPER.

Look in my eyes! What do you see therein?

JOHN NORTH.

I think, some fathomless and timeless sea.

JASPER.

Hold well the question answer'd!

The Soul's Renunciation

JOHN NORTH.

Your face is pale.

JASPER.

The moonbeams fall thereon.

JOHN NORTH.

Your lips are white.

JASPER.

The wind is in the North and cold withal.

JOHN NORTH.

Your eyes are sad, though steady as a god's.

JASPER.

The wilderness of waters fixes them.

JOHN NORTH.

What is it sets you from your age apart?
What makes me conscious, as I stand beside you,
Of some strange presence, more of ghost's than man's,
As if some spirit, melancholy, cold
And high—to earth a stranger—dwelt in you?
Speak, Jasper, I adjure you!

JASPER.

I repeat
That you, unconsciously and far away,
Have ruled my life. Now you are near indeed;
As star to star approaching, so your soul

A Soul's Comedy

Perturbs me with its presence—all things move
More swiftly in me, life and thought and love.

JOHN NORTH.

These words distress me with their doubtful meaning !

JASPER.

Your hand has led me to the heights of life ;
If from those summits I behold a fair
And ample prospect, if I see below
My meaner nature, if I live this day
As conscious of a Presence call'd God within,
As centred in the God Which dwells without—
I owe you this.

JOHN NORTH.

The bold and healthy mind
Can conquer pain, and make of shame itself
The substance of a triumph.

JASPER.

Wise are you !

JOHN NORTH.

Is that your case ?

JASPER.

The pain of sense is light ;
If shame fell on me, would you know thereof ?

JOHN NORTH.

I came one day to see you, years ago—
Did you hear that ?

The Soul's Renunciation

JASPER.

They did not fail to tell.

JOHN NORTH.

I fail'd to find you—you were far away ;
But, Jasper, in the man who guarded you
I met an old acquaintance, one indeed
Whose life I saved at sea by risking mine.
He bade me welcome warmly, told me how
The charge his brother had accepted first
Devolved on him. I stay'd the night at Deal ;
We supp'd together ; he declared his wish
To act in your regard a father's part,
Till warming somewhat towards a man so long
Forgotten, full of pity for his lame,
Disabled body, longing to increase
His kindness towards you, spurr'd by more than these,
I told him something secret which concerned
Yourself—most sacred. I adjure you, say
If that religious confidence, reposed
Not wisely, may be, yet with pure intent,
Has been betray'd.

JASPER.

I cannot answer, No—
I cannot hide from you the pregnant truth :
I do know all. The man your faith reposed in
Betray'd his pledge because he hated me.
Your tale was cherish'd in his inmost heart ;
He gloated on it ; he brought me back from school ;
He train'd me softly, humour'd all my whims ;
And I grew up beside him delicate
In tastes and aspect, train'd to shrink from pain,
From all things gross revolting. Why was this ?
That on the nature thus refined with care

A Soul's Comedy

Shame's blow might fall more heavily. I reach'd
To man's estate, and taught, through all, your gift
To look for as my chiefest hope in life,
He sent my uncle's story. . . . Do not turn!
The tide before us rolls and thunders in.

JOHN NORTH.

Ah, Jasper!

JASPER.

Do not grieve, nor deeply now
Reproach yourself; I do not now reproach you,
I do not grieve. My spirit in its calm
Is poised for ever as the moon in air,
And shall with measured motions like the moon
The sacred altitudes of life ascend,
Ambitious of its zenith. While it soars,
It strips the mists of passion, as the moon
Her veil of vapour. O, I swear that tale
Awoke to life soul-strength which long lay latent!

JOHN NORTH.

Your nature out of agony may thus
New force evoke; the keen, observant mind
Is not by this deceived. I could not face you—
No, roughly school'd and rugged though I be,
I could not come with empty hands before you,
And find you thus divorced by word of mine
From boyhood's natural and healthy joy;
Compell'd by effort of the mind within
To conjure up a strange, unnatural bliss,
Akin to madness; and your wounded soul
To soothe and comfort so. I grieve indeed;
My burning brain is whirling like a wheel;
But still one thought supports me.

The Soul's Renunciation

JASPER.

Let my strength
Sustain you rather ; do not fear to tax me.
I have not grieved ; the mind is clear and cool,
While if my heart beats fast, it throbs with hope.

JOHN NORTH.

O stalwart heart, declare what moved in Morven
The hate which thus an unoffending lad
Pursued !

JASPER.

His brother in a will preferr'd
The orphan boy before him.

JOHN NORTH.

That was all ?

JASPER.

It was not all ; he kept some reason back
To trouble me, but that in part incited.

JOHN NORTH.

Before your father met with Mary North,
Before my wreck and rescue, Morven came,
Then in the prime of life—a striving man,
Pushing his way—to Boston. There he settled,
And, what with tact and what with enterprise,
Contrived to flourish. Soon he sought a wife,
And Mary's face entranced him ; her he woo'd—
Some love, more passion, in his stormy heart
Engraved her image. When the girl refused him—

A Soul's Comedy

I know not why—and I return'd to sea,
He still pursued her, with her coldness striving,
Till partly seeking change of scene for health,
And more escape from him, to Lyme she went,
And there he lost her. Not till years elapsed
Did I again meet Morven; much meanwhile
Had pass'd—I wreck'd, she wedded, then her death,
And all you know. I saved his life at sea,
And found with sorrow how that cross in love
Had, like strong acid upon steel, destroy'd
The man's best nature. Years once more went by,
Then lastly, Jasper, in this town of Deal,
And in that house whose windows shine afar,
I met with Morven, found him charged to guard
The child whom Mary North had borne the man
She chose in place of him. Was Morven changed?
A lame, old man, his star of fortune set,
Perhaps his heart had alter'd. Did he trace
Some pleasing likeness in the face of Jasper
Which charm'd his fancy back to Mary maid,
When first he woo'd her? Well, I question'd Morven—
He did not answer till I press'd him, then
Look'd up quite frankly, said the boy was good
And like his mother, but he'd pack'd him off,
Since boys at best were troublesome, to school.
Then I adjured him by the living God
To tell me whether unrequited love,
Though dead no doubt, had left some spleen behind
By which the lad might suffer. So at first
He storm'd, then soften'd, said I'd saved his life,
And he'd bear with me, swore he meant you well,
Till I took heart. But when the night wore on,
And we grew friendly, he address'd me, Jasper,
A searching question—only God knows how
The rumour spread, but it had come to him,
And he suspected there was something wrong
With Mary's marriage. It was then, my lad,

The Soul's Renunciation

Not in loquacious mood but moved for you,
That I might utterly disarm his wrath
Against your mother, I reveal'd to him
How bitterly the girl he loved had suffer'd
For her sad choice. I thought him touch'd thereby,
And so I begg'd him to be kind to you,
And keep the secret, since the course of things
Had well avenged him. Was this weak in me?
But ever after on the stormy deep
I cursed my folly, often long'd to see you,
And learn how matters fared in your respect.
But when my heart was changed—I'll speak of that—
Much more this fill'd my mind; my plans I made,
And sail'd at length for England: here I find
My fears fulfill'd. Now, you are kind of heart!
You will not harbour an ungentle thought
Against a man who wrong'd you; but at times
Such thoughts force entrance, at the door of mind
In lonely moments, in desponding moods
In wakeful midnights, knocking. So I bear
A gift to bless you which shall silence these,
Shall wring confession from their backward voice
That I've atoned. I've watch'd its beauty wax—
And, Jasper, Jasper, to redeem my wrong
I bring you a most fair and gentle maiden,
My only daughter. If your heart be free,
Will this not please you? Will it raise your hopes?
Can you forgive me now? . . . My toil is done;
I look to end my days on English soil;
A week will take my ship to London docks,
And end my business there. That time elapsed,
I'll bring my daughter down to Deal with me;
Till I can purchase land and build thereon,
I look to tarry, if I may, with you.
But now farewell! I see your soul is moved;
Her name is Gertrude; she is fair and tall;
Her heart is clean, her lips, since early youth,

A Soul's Comedy

I've taught in prayer to name you day by day.
In one brief week expect us. . . . Pray till then!
I trust your soul has found—as mine at length—
The pearl beyond all price in Christ possess'd.
O may the bride elect I bring to you
In earthly life become, my lad, the sign
And human symbol of that pearl unseen,
Which with the mystic counter and the name,
And most of all the bright and morning star,
Are in the paradise of Christ and God
Before all time, I trust, prepared for you!

SCENE II.—*An Evening Walk.*—JASPER, GERTRUDE.

JASPER.

All our homeward way
Will scarlet sunset, fringed by stormy cloud,
Make splendid, and with speaking images
Invest the mind, while heaven's translucent vault
Is thinly sown above with gleaming stars.

GERTRUDE.

Your gaze, abstracted, draws you far away.

JASPER.

The sunset's flaming heart has fix'd my eyes.

GERTRUDE.

You are so cold, so strange, your soul so high
Uplifted; I can never reach to you!
We stand together, my hand slips in yours,

The Soul's Renunciation

But you are distant still, and your clear voice,
As freezing winds from mountains far away,
Falls like cold snow. One terrible abyss—
Divides me ever from your grandeur, those
High dreams, the prospects which are blank to me.
There seems a nimbus round you. Let me kneel!
You have the face of Christ; I worship you,
But love you only as an unknown God,
With veneration of a mind devout,
Quite abjectly—with unimpassion'd love,
Mind-sprung, for noble things not realised.
My father pledged me as a child to you,
He stood the sponsor for my future love
To God, then you. How shall I pay the debt—
With both so far above me, man and God? . . .
To die for you—ah, that were worth the dying!

JASPER.

Nay, live to love me! That is worth the living.
My soul is ravish'd in a dream of you
In these abstracted moods. With constant love,
Pure, clear, profound and purged from things of time
I merge myself in you. . . . Fair, vast, and fresh,
Behold the sea, dear heart, the open sea! . . .
I fix my life in yours for evermore,
Soul gazing in soul-eyes of my beloved,
While with a gentle pressure of mouth to mouth
Sweet thoughts unspeakable pass and repass
In faint electric currents.

GERTRUDE.

When I pray'd,
Your picture fill'd my mind; I painted you,
But you were human, you were near me then;
I kiss'd you truly in my dreams at night,

A Soul's Comedy

But now my spirit cannot feel your lips,
As if we kiss'd through some thin plate of glass.

JASPER.

Sweet beyond sweetness, earth's foretaste of Heaven
And spiritual intercourse of souls,
The sacred doom which shapes my life to come
Has blest its labours by your ministry,
The service of your company and love.
All aspirations of my nobler self,
God-given, shall transfigure and inflame
Your gentle being, growing one therewith
Till my best hopes converge and centre there.

GERTRUDE.

Shall God's strong sons with mortal daughters mate?
I will not tempt you, Jasper, from the heights;
But eagles' nests sky-built on lofty crags
Are dizzy for a dove. In the green glades,
In simple life of earth, I'll love you well;
I cannot love you on the mountain-tops,
I tremble there.

JASPER.

My strength shall bear you up!

GERTRUDE.

Why was I made so small? Why stunted thus?
If I could follow you, dare all your flights,
Poise with still wings in breathless zones of thought,
High contemplation's spaces! I've no dream
To mate with yours, no aspirations, no
Great plans for man; I can only wait and pray,
Love too—you do not dream how I can love!

The Soul's Renunciation

Turn your eyes on me for mine own are dim,
And overcharged with tears I fain would keep
From falling; put your arms about me thus!
If I could win you down to dwell with me
In simple life of thought, in homely paths
Where all men travel—I am tempting you!—
Cleave close to Nature, cleave to natural love;
'Twill soothe and satisfy two constant hearts!
When harvest breathes its soul of fragrance round,
We'll mark the contrast made by dark green trees
Against a vivid and illumined sky
Ere night one hour has fallen.

JASPER.

Thou first star,
Whose lamp is kindled in the South so high,
To mark it and adore!

GERTRUDE.

Or in the evening silence strange, intense,
To pause on sloping road, near elms or oaks,
And hearken momentarily the slow, clear lapse
Of recent rain from heavy boughs and leaves,
While up from hollows and from open dells,
From meads and pastures, comes the eve's white mist.
From out of these the silent, dreaming kine,
Across the hedges and the trees betwixt,
Look sadly towards us—

JASPER.

Seeking lone sea-coasts,
And the sea's music, mother of thoughts sublime
And deepest feeling.

A Soul's Comedy

SCENE III.—*A Room at Twilight.*—JASPER, MILES.

JASPER.

Shall I stand with you, Miles—dear friend—as now,
By some wide open window, when your hair
And mine are grey, when all your youth, like mine,
Has vanish'd, when the dark and lonely night
Descends on meadows where the mists exhale,
And the dim, shrouded, solitary moon
Drops down unnoticed—with the night and rack
Striving, drops down—into the deep abyss?

MILES.

Your silence chill'd me; now these mournful words
Breed darker thoughts within me. Age is distant;
Life's vistas offer us a noble space
To work and reign in—may our stars ascend!

JASPER.

If something call'd me from my home and you!

MILES.

You must not dream it, Jasper.

JASPER.

But I see
The future like a plain where our two paths
Diverge for ever.

The Soul's Renunciation

MILES.

Will you go from home?
Good friends are round you, and your future bride
Dwells with her father here; here have you found
A scope for kindly actions. Where is more?
What calls you forth?

JASPER.

A voice for many moons
Which bids me seek abroad an ampler field
Of inward thought and action.

MILES.

God forbid
That I should check you. Though I love you well,
And though my spirit, like a thirsty stag,
May vainly seek refreshment, the bright angels
Shall not reproach me that my need or love
Should thwart such wings, should check such bold ascent.
I bid you still remember her to whom
Your faith is plighted; will you leave her, Jasper?

JASPER.

Come forth abroad, the wind is cool and strong,
The clouds have gather'd; to the sea come down,
Where oft as boys we bathed—recall it now!—
By Sandown Castle's shelt'ring wall of white
And crumbling stone. The crested wave which broke
About your body in the sea's rough sport
Batter'd my own. Now we are boys no more,
Nor evermore shall we, at morn, stand stripp'd
And shivering side by side, nor walk at noon
On winter mornings miles along the beach,

A Soul's Comedy

Among low sand-hills. . . . The white sea-gull's
wings
Flash'd far above. . . . We shall do thus no more.

MILES.

Heaven clears! there is a promise in the stars;
Their manifold, mild eyes gleam over us:
Star-watchers number them, but none can count
The years before us—wherein our souls will live.
What do the stars foretell me? Life together,
Life ever—life for you and me together!

JASPER.

If I were gone from my accustom'd place,
Miles, lives there anyone on earth this day
Who in my place would love, with love like mine,
One maid forsaken? All your face, I see,
Turns white and ghostly: is the wind so cold?
What makes the breath within you come and go
Because we never in our lives may stand
Like this together in the night and wind? . . .
You do not answer! Have I loved you, Miles?
And is there anything my hands this day
Can do to crown that blameless life of yours?
You seem my own creation; in my hands
Your early boyhood's raw material
Was placed by Providence, to shape and cleanse;
I think this night before the throne of God
My soul could lead your own in holy pride,
And beg some blessing of the all-Father's lips
On a complete creation. . . . It is done—
One thing remains, to find a star as bright
To mate your spirit in the heaven of love:
That star is Gertrude! Do not shrink from me;
Long did you strive, with agony of mind,
To check an honourable, worthy love.

The Soul's Renunciation

I know that Gertrude also loves you well,
And though the sense of duty binds her now,
Her spirit little to my own responds.
I will not hide, when this was first reveal'd,
That sorrow fill'd me; now my stronger self
Reclaims supremacy: the last gift may well
Be worthy its receiver, gentle friend!

MILES.

My life is ever divorced from all its joy!
On my soul's faith and perfect love for you,
I never spoke with Gertrude! Did our eyes
Meet ever? Did those speak, and shew, unbidden,
What both have striven perchance to hide from self?
You bring to burning lips with friendly hand
A sacred wine of life; I dare not drink,
But evermore with deep desire thereof
My heart will thirst.

JASPER.

Within your hands, dear Miles,
I leave it—may it be the wine of life!
I see the future like a shining sea
Spread out before me: I have work therein.

MILES.

May sacred angels guard your kingly soul
Call'd to ascend! My thoughts shall fix on you
Their earnest strength, and you shall rise through all,
While they through all shall like a rampart high
From harm enclose you! Yea, my prayers and blessings
Shall not in vigilance and might be less
Than your high angels to defend a soul
Rising to native stars.

A Soul's Comedy

JASPER.

Your valiant eyes
Have brighten'd suddenly, as a clouded sea
Whereon the moonbeams rifting heaven's grey veil
One moment dream and gleam.

MILES.

In yours I read—
Ah, yet a little while and all is well
With you, my Jasper!

SCENE IV.—*The Sea-shore*.—FATHER PAUL, JASPER.

FATHER PAUL.

You should have wealth.

JASPER.

My uncle squander'd it.

FATHER PAUL.

Where is the money that your father left you?

JASPER.

Its bulk is small; invested here and there,
One hundred guineas in the year it yields.
But I go forth, and have no fear for me;
I feel the strong hand of Almighty God
About me tighten; my appointed part
I shall fulfil.

The Soul's Renunciation

FATHER PAUL.

For all the brave resolve
God bless you, lad ! My soul above itself
Seems lifted now ; I shall remain to crown
Your life with gladness. Take these words to heart !
In toil and pain recall them. They shall grow
True by the power of will.

SCENE V.—*A Glen.*—MATTHEW, BASIL,
MILES, ERNEST.

MATTHEW.

The darkness falls round Jasper's speeding ship,
Grey waves, now winds have freshen'd, break in foam
On its strong sides ; a passing shower of rain,
On decks and canvas, low, fast driving clouds
Precipitate. Illimitable, cold,
Forlorn, the desolating ocean lifts
A pain'd, inquiring voice, which fills the wind,
Till stars take shape upon the phosphor vault,
And like a phantom, pale and grandiose,
Through mists dispersed breaks forth the silent moon.

MILES.

God guard him there, encompass all his path !
Our prayers that follow on his forward flight
Be stars about him in his hours of gloom,
A thousand lights enkindling. . . . Is there one
He has not served ? Let him stand forth and speak
On whom the generous spirit of the man

A Soul's Comedy

Diffused no happy influence! Speak him
Who is not better for his gracious sight;
Who is not cleaner for his hand's strong grasp,
Clear, searching voice, eyes' light, mind's altitude;
Who is not truer for the words he spoke;
Who will not prove to man and angels both,
By noble course, how Jasper works in us,
Turns all to good. Make answer, sailor lad
He saved from drowning in a winter storm;
That youth he nursed in fever; the blind girl
He read to; those two brothers whom he taught,
And from a vicious and a vagrant life
Converted; the abandon'd wife his purse
Supported; her five children whom he fed;
The honest tradesman whom an evil chance
Had threaten'd, but his help in time restored. . . .
One fine, dark face lights suddenly, the blood
To cheek and brow comes flushing.

BASIL.

For his sake,
The world and pleasures of the world will I
Renounce completely, pray through all my days,
A priest, for Jasper, unto God most High
The clean oblation offer all my life.
I had some hopes and plans—on these I trample;
I had strong passions—and here root up all;
From early boyhood with an eager thirst
I craved for pleasure; in a month or less,
I thought to wed the woman that I love,
Whose face will haunt me in my fasts and watches
With fair, reproachful eyes. But all I leave—
That God may crown him, Mary smile on him,
Bright angel-bands watch over him, high saints
For him make intercession. May each prayer
Bring one new angel for his faithful keeping!

The Soul's Renunciation

MILES.

I'll not forsake the world for Jasper's sake,
But take it more completely to my heart,
Spend life, die for it, unto all do good,
Love all, serve all. Be his the recompense!

MATTHEW.

He loved the light; to this my days are vow'd.
For Jasper's sake with more devoted faith
I'll follow where it leads—for truth's pure light
Live I! I swear it, I will love the light!

ERNEST.

Because my reason, though respecting Jasper,
Must deprecate impracticable schemes,
I will be twice as faithful to myself,
And never put another's whims or wishes
Before my own advancement and success—
I will be true to self; I swear it, friends!

A SOUL'S COMEDY

PART III

THE SOUL'S RECOMPENSE

“ Non dubito multos bonæ conscientiæ et voluntatis homines illud donum dei clanculum possidere.”—NOVUM LUMEN CHEMICUM.

PROLOGUE

A Poet's Walk.—AUSTIN BLAKE, *solus*.

The frost is white upon this winding road,
And on each bare thorn hangs the melting rime,
A thousand gems which in noon-sunlight gleam
And quiver. Already in the roadside ditch
A tender shoot is lifted here and there,
Prophetic of the green spring's gracious time.
This morning, early in the year's first month,
There is no cloud—there is not one white cloud—
In yon blue zenith, soft with light suffused!
So I return to thee from my wild dreams—
From lofty, fever'd dreams to thee return—
Soul of the world, Queen Nature, thrice divine!
(A sparrow flits across my path and now
His chirp sounds in the thicket.) Raise once more
Thy seering glass; I have the eyes to see:
(Is that the wren upon the paling perch'd?
God bless thee, Jenny, on some darker day,
Among the barren flats that fringe the shore,
By Worth, I saw thee last.) My dreams return,
Their pictures shine within me! (Thou hast come
To greet me, Robin, of the bold, black eye
And breast that makes thee beautiful—all hail!
An early spring thine ample joys increase!)
Nature, thy cause is mine; that bond proclaims
A common origin, a kindred soul,
A heart in energies as great as thine.

I see the kindly hand of God draw back
Those everlasting gateways of the West;

A Soul's Comedy

Some storm-clouds gather as the sun descends,
But, all suffused and sanctified with light,
There shines the eternal blue. Through senses dim,
Through veils of space and time, do chosen eyes
Behold the light of spiritual realms,
Angelic spheres impinging on our own,
The soul's bright home behold, and so find rest.
I gaze in wonder, standing awed and still,
Most sacred voices as of choirs divine,
The starry harmonies of heaven afar,
Seem floating towards me over gulfs of time,
Till all the music of mere earth grows faint,
And every beauty of the natural world
Turns pale and cold, and emptied joys of sense
Are ghosts alone which haunt a fever'd dream.

O world unknown, beyond the reach of man,
O heritage of happiness supreme,
The purer moments of our human hearts
Are golden glimpses of thy life and light ;
But doubt and fear come darkling through my mind,
While surging tides of passion flood the soul,
And drain each source of spiritual strength.
Those pure ambitions of an earlier time,
That innocence of heart which clothed the trees,
Green country lanes, wide prospects seen from hills,
Illimitable heaven and open sea,
With light and beauty borrow'd from within,
Are now no more, beyond all hope seem lost ;
This unresponsive heart no answer gives
To gentle calls which came so oft of yore.
The sweet attractions of ennobled life,
That inner joy, that spiritual faith,
All these have fail'd me ; round me wind and cling
The bonds of flesh, world-darkness dense and deep,
And sense-delights—mere dregs of holier bliss.

The Soul's Recompense

The sun sinks down beneath the verge; and night—
With all her silent majesty of stars—
Resumes her reign, serenity prevails
Over the face of Nature; as of old
The rising moon diffuses tranquil light.
But visions fade, old voices sink and die,
The tumult only in my soul remains—
My soul which strives among the rocks and gulfs
To find a way through Life's mysterious maze,
Or sunk in day-dreams dreads to wake and find
All lights gone out, all sacred shrines left bare,
Phantasmal Edens desolate and waste,
And overtaken by eternal night.

SCENE I.—*A Lodging in London.*—AUSTIN BLAKE,
OTWAY, WILLIAM, ARNOLD.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

For the last time amidst your kindly hearts,
My friends, I stand. I waited you awhile
Here, in my lonely lodging which commands
This noble spectacle of wharf and rail;
And waiting thus, pacing the floor, this book
Held in my hand, two fingers in the leaves
A place retaining, through my eager mind
Came crowding sundry honourable themes
For friendly converse with congenial minds
On this wild evening. Now all my thoughts confused
Quite fail me. . . . I go from you to the coast;
God knows, good friends, when next we meet—too well
The future holds her secrets! . . . Help me out!
What shall we speak of? Not of parting yet—
Postpone that loss! . . . Day wanes; three hours or
more

A Soul's Comedy

Pale sunshine—striving with the smoke and mist—
Made dingy nimbus round this roaring town ;
Now clouds blown onward by the icy blast,
Inwrap the fair, faint blue. Comes tempest. . . . Hark !
That shrill, fierce wind ! Lost Spirit, wailing voice,
Defiant still, my spirit to your tones
Makes answer ! Is there nothing in the wind,
Brave friends, which drives to power's sublimest heights
Your valiant souls ? I see some lonely shore,
A bleak, long scourged, most solitary shore,
With barren arms ring the mad, striving sea ;
I see the desert's driving sand, whirl'd upward,
Move like that column'd cloud which went by day
Before the hordes of Israel. And when
These eyes turn inward, in my soul I see
Wild wastes and waters by the wind's wild voice
Torn into shreds of tempest. . . . Arnold, speak,
And William Arthur ! In God's name I ask you
What great ambition have your thoughts struck out—
With mighty mallet—from the cold, grey stone
Of daily purpose ? You are weak, and I,
O I am weak indeed, save when my soul
Is lifted into frenzy ! But I stand
This night before you—see, the night descends,
While the sky darkens more with storm than night,
And all this hour a rising wind about
The narrow street is driving, seeking space,
Space like the sea, space like a Libyan waste,
Space like some world of chaos, only space
To strive and storm in. So my soul would rend
Its frame, through bounds of narrow channels bursting ;
The earth, the universe of stars and space
Would fill with self, would be in all a part,
Including, bounding all. Insensate thought ! . . .
I stand this night before you, while my hopes
Dilate my being, and with outstretch'd hands
I cry to you, adjuring—Do not go

The Soul's Recompense

Down to the grave wearing your lives away
With the mean, trivial, miserable cares
Which furrow half these faces of mankind!
Make for yourselves some care, some hope, some high
Ambition, that your souls may groan beneath,
And groaning greaten; be not worms which writhe
Beneath a fallen twig. I swear to you
Your nature's scope under ambition's weight
Shall stand like Atlas, Earth's incumbent star
Supporting. O to stand and see the world,
One surging concourse, chase the gilded straws
Blown by some wind of fortune! How they pass
And pass before the windows of my soul!

Forgive me, friends, I do not count indeed
Your hearts among the common! When we met,
Like kindred atoms, suddenly we join'd
Our souls together—one bright, crystal star
Of heaven-born shining. Was it well to meet?
I centred thus, my individual life
Affecting yours? Your glowing eyes respond
In silence. Therefore unto each and all
This night I cry—Ye souls, by light within
Raised up above the straw's worth, what bright hope
Is this which makes your shining? . . . William, speak!
What is your first ambition?

WILLIAM.

To compose
Some book that will live after me.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

What book?

A Soul's Comedy

WILLIAM.

I know not yet ; at least my plans are secret.
If I succeed, you all will hear thereof ;
Should failure come, I'll meet it as I may,
And none shall know.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Declare the scope and aim !

WILLIAM.

Well, prose, not verse—you are our bard confess'd,
I would not snatch your laurels ; all my aim
To raise mankind.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

You, Otway, from a son
Of song divine descended—may the priest
Of Bacchus speak in you !—you stand forth there,
And on your ruddy, bearded face the eve's
Last light rests redly ! Yours the massive head,
Broad brow, and many questions do that brain
Perplex, on many subjects of the time
Bold are your thoughts ; you bear a light within you,
And in your time the Muse's sacred skirt
Has brush'd you, passing. God save you, Otway, speak !
What is your first ambition ?

OTWAY.

One with Scott's !
To found a noble family, and thus,
In this my native land, fair name and fame
Perpetuate in brave and gentle men.
Speak honestly, my comrades ! To beget

The Soul's Recompense

A line of heroes is a broader hope
Than making books.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Awhile, my friends, defer
The answer. And you, Arnold, musing there,
Your figure in the crimson curtain's folds
And twilight gloom involved—as much that mind
In dream is lost, with eyelids over eyes
Drooping so far—return, return amongst us!
God's smile your upright soul make beautiful!
What is your first ambition?

ARNOLD.

To help you—
That is my hope and aim; and, William Arthur,
To help you also is my aim and hope.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

God save you, Arnold, you have shamed us all!

ARNOLD.

I have my private views, as you must know,
Austin, full well; and I indeed may write
A book some day; I also, in my time,
Made high resolves that wait, through feeble health,
Fulfilment still; but in my love for you
Sickness or health are nothing. You command
Heart, strength and purse, so far as small resources
Can meet your wants.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

My friends, three aims distinct—
Postponing Arnold's—three young hearts inform.
Mine's long declared! But, think, who dares to hold

A Soul's Comedy

These hopes sublime? Look at me! What am I?
A thriftless student, worn with thought intense,
Consumed by mine ambition! What are you?
Speak, Otway, opulent in dreams! Your bread—
A city clerk—quill-driving, day by day,
The bitter bread we die from—this you earn . . .
Coarse fare, coarse clothes, a lodging in a mean
And dingy street, and you—my God!—therein,
Beside a lonely rushlight burning dimly,
Of stately halls, of acres wide and fair,
Where the wheat ripens and rich orchards yield
Their mellow harvest, and of a long, long line
Of heirs whose glory greatens with its length,
Are dreaming in a wealthy reverie.
I say your aim, my friend, is mad like mine;
I do not chide.

To William turn awhile;
His plans are vague—that's why he wraps them round
With mystery—his spirit at the curb
Of uncongenial labour, in a sense
Of bondage, has begotten in his heart
Deep hatred of our social order's false
Distinctions. Anything he'll risk to make
This world, which does not recognise him yet,
Stand still before him, into silence awed,
As the shamed earth was silent in the sight
Of one great Greek. Go back into yourself
I cry: make clear your thoughts, then strive with Fate,
And in despite of Fate and Fortune wring
The end you seek from the averted, closed,
Reluctant hands of opportunity!

Now, Arnold, what best words in your regard
To use? Our aspirations from ourselves
Divided, of such kindness we deserve
But little, having served you in no way.

The Soul's Recompense

To some more worthy end than that which love
Prompts in respect of Austin and his small,
Eccentric circle of high-fever'd hearts,
Rich days devote. Serene and sphered apart,
Your soul inhabits a more healthful clime
Than we, distracted spirits, ever yet
Have enter'd. The world waits you and much needs.
Be that your field, in its regard, not ours,
Make plans! Before me spreads your life in fair,
Unfailing sequence of immortal acts,
Not days alone! Unselfish purpose, high
And gentle heart, man waits you and much needs! . . .

Fair words I give you, bold and ardent hearts,
To help your plans; you pause on them; our speech
Drops suddenly to silence, while the wild,
Wild wind without grows louder, while the rain
Is swept against the panes, while more and more
The starless, frightful night, deepens without.
So in this room it deepens, where I see
Your faces only shining white and still,
Like spectres in the darkness; and as much
Within my soul the spirit of the night
Makes woful gloom. . . . You are not ghosts indeed,
Your warm hands clasp me; but a space so brief,
And in the future will my mind evoke
Your ghosts alone—phantasmal, silent, fair
Creations of the memory. Speak then—
Speak now—while still your voices in my heart
Make living music, give me also help!

WILLIAM.

Who can? Your spirit by a thousand hopes
Is rent within you, by a thousand plans
Your mind's absorb'd, a thousand strong desires
Make tempest in the human heart of you.

A Soul's Comedy

Such scatter'd forces in a single point
Collect, then, like the sunbeams by a glass
Drawn in one burning focus, they shall work
With tenfold force! You cannot with two wings
Cover the breadth of heaven; those two arms—
Outstretch'd—will never the great ocean waste
Encompass! Be immortal in one thing!

AUSTIN BLAKE.

I thank you, gentle friend: in doubtful moods
So self chides self. There's wisdom in those words;
But when bright hopes have pass'd before my mind
In fair procession, O I swear the least
Has dazzled with its beauty! Can I then
Bid one come forth, rejected, from the rest? . . .
Your plans this night I learn; now hear my hopes!
I'll speak, as calmly as a burning heart
Makes possible, of dreams which—once achieved—
Shall ev'ry moment of existence fill
With deepest meaning, but frustrated leave
All life a blank. . . . Fame, pleasure, wisdom, wealth,
World-roaming, wild adventure, joy of love,
Supernal light,—should these my soul attain,
I still might miss the peace that passes thought;
But what a royal harvest reap'd from life,
And what endowment for eternity—
Tremendous gifts! The spirit strives and wins,
Exhausts the springs of pleasure, but no less
From wisdom's fount drinks deeply, does its strength
And noble nature prove in varied paths,
Sins too and suffers, makes of earth and all
Her wonders an inheritance, lifts up
The veil, resolves the secrets, and confronts
The dangers of the future, then seeks out
Untrembling, keen, triumphant, the next stage
Of its eternal pilgrimage, convinced

The Soul's Recompense

And certain, that but little in the last
Was left untried, that to the whole extent
Of high capacities and chance therein
It truly lived.

WILLIAM.

What would you ask of Wealth?

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Sufficient to pursue my high designs.

WILLIAM.

What is the Fame you covet?

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Say, the bard's,
The hero's, the world-pilgrim's—even more :
In every path I enter to achieve.

WILLIAM.

What would you seek in Pleasure?

AUSTIN BLAKE.

I would tax
Her whole resources and exhaust them all.

WILLIAM.

And now, what hope from Wisdom?

AUSTIN BLAKE.

To know all ;
My strong desire demands eternal truth,
To solve all problems and all doubts disperse.

A Soul's Comedy

WILLIAM.

What is your dream of love ?

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Love's self I ask !
Here in this heart a hungry gulf has long
Tormented me ! I'd fill it to the brim
With love. Not men nor angels shall forbid me
All love's delights—permitted or denied ;
I claim them all to satisfy my soul's
Illimitable craving ; that deep want
Shall justify, allow me, and commend
Me all !

ARNOLD.

I thrust myself before you now,
Eternally protesting ; your own soul,
Austin, protests within you !

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Well-a-way,
The single word unnerves me, torn within
And miserably buffeted about
By two conflicting natures. One is nursed
On royal aspirations, and at times
By God's High Light is brighten'd ; one is low—
Strong passion's fever and the lust for things
Forbidden revel in that dark domain.
Yet, strange and terrible, the lofty hope,
The thought exalted, and the hero-dreams
Of love most pure, the sacrifice of self,
The bold ambitions, with their glory tinge
Dark lust and hopes unholy. . . . For a word
In heat of fancy spoken, count, my friends,

The Soul's Recompense

This free confession an atonement fair ;
The time will come—nor seems remote in thought—
When I must rise and over self assert
Supreme dominion, the immortal mind
Henceforth alone, as monarch of the man,
Its ends achieving, whose transcendent light
From burning points unnumber'd, through all life
Diffused, and every point a noble deed,
Shall purge, I trust, the spirit and the heart
From a thousand stains.

ARNOLD.

The only shrine of love
Where man may worship, and be faithful still
To God and to himself, is purity.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

For those high words at your own shrine of thought
I worship, Arnold.

WILLIAM.

In the name of God,
How should we help you, O too stormy, strange
And wayward heart ! Beware—such hopes themselves
Are passions—lest your passion and the hope
Make shipwreck of your nature !

AUSTIN BLAKE.

There is none
Indeed to help me—to the world I turn,
Not one comes forward. Courage, heart of mine !
Thrill spirit, thrill within me ! Shape me forth
The glory and the wonder of my life,
Its dreams fulfill'd !

A Soul's Comedy

OTWAY.

A poet from the first
Were you ; don't linger, seeking in the way
To catch vague voices ; one has spoken clearly.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Recall me thus for ever when I stray.
And I go forth that I may write for you
The poem I have plann'd beside the sea,
Chief heart-inspirer. As the moon ascends
And brightens over city streets and parks,
The narrow gardens 'twixt the looming lines
Of silent houses, and the shining, still,
Serpent-like stream, this poem—like a star—
Above my soul sheds lustre, searching all
Its secret depths, and like a town the haunts
Of lesser thoughts—one populous domain—
Transfigur'd lie beneath.

But night grows late.
Come forth—the storm is over ! With the rain
These streets still shine, though now the wind is lull'd ;
Peeps out one star above us, and behind
The fitful January lightnings play.
Heaven brightens over us, but wrecks of storm
Are scatter'd round ; great slates and tiles blown down
Lie strewn about the pavement. . . . Did we mark
One star ? Look up ! Through that rent cloud you'll
count

A score. Yon clouded patch of phantom light
Shews where the moonbeams battle with the mist.
My friends, walk with me ; William, take my arm,
And on the left be Arnold ! It is well
To feel you thus support and prop me up,
Who soon depart and stand henceforth alone.

The Soul's Recompense

This is the week's last day. You see that street
Which crosses this; all in a crowded part
It winds; this night they hold a market there.
Hark, how the costers shout! Their trucks line all
The street—no passage but at walking pace
For horse to-night. Come down with me and see
The busy hive—one swarm—turn'd out to hunt
For forage. Do you love mankind like me,
Though seldom mingling with them? Do you merge
The lonely student, who, in dreams absorb'd,
Surveys from lofty pinnacles of mind
The strife and life of sense, in social man,
And, leaving quite the higher range of thought,
Take pleasure in the littleness below,
Mix even with vice, losing the dreamer's itch
To reconstruct society and make
The world anew upon a private plan,
Eclipsing all creation? I have sold
My golden hopes to rectify the age
For leave to study it in scenes like this. . . .
Don't heed my moods, which vary night and day!
Have I no mission? Am I false to that?
God judge me so! I'll die in the world's cause
Or win, by God! It needs us each and all;
Should one of you put out to any use
Save man's his talents, with a poet's curse
I'll visit him! . . . A boy, this street I paced;
And of one eve in summer, when the air
Was close and sultry—swifter then than now
The lightnings play'd—I think, who plunged in dream
Stray'd down and up. Of friendship, glory, love,
I dream'd that day, of friendship great as love,
Of glory won to magnify myself
In one boy's eyes. I know not when nor why
I came to love him, he to like me well,
Fast friends both vow'd henceforward. Oft we walk'd
These ways together, whiling half the night

A Soul's Comedy

With lightest talk, and each a score of times
Would half-way home his comrade safely see.

Proclaim the victory of "holy light" !
It breaks, it struggles, it prevails ; the moon,
Dispersing clouds, has clear'd an azure space
To shine and sail in. AVE, Heaven's bright queen !
In thy blue zenith, on thy height sublime,
How cool, how calm, art thou ! Thy one white star
Doth ever follow thee with even steps,
And thou thyself art stately, sure of foot,
And movest on for ever. Of thy light
Full fain is earth, the sea to meet it yearns ;
The strong sea follows on thy path for aye
With eager, moaning heart ; man looks for thee,
Each poet's nature, than the sea more vast,
Ascends in thought to thee. And thy light falls ;
Thou dost not pause, thy light alone is shed ;
Thy light makes answer unto earth and sea ;
The fever'd heart of man is still'd thereby,
And in the spirit of the bard it sows
The deathless seed of song, as thy soft dews,
Which fall to earth in silence, sprout ere morn
Into a thousand flowers !

OTWAY.

The poet speaks !

WILLIAM.

And now we mix among the motley throng ;
Our thoughts are lost in all the sights we see,
As in the crowd our forms.

The Soul's Recompense

SCENE II.—*The Sea-shore*.—AUSTIN BLAKE.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Strong sea, most bright, most blue, most beautiful,
The soul itself expanding! Speed the day
When I shall cross thee, make thy wonders mine
Through moons of wild adventure! How thy waves
Beckon like hands, how all thy voices call
My spirit, knowing it has faith in thee,
Faith never failing, knowing how it loves
Each of thy changeful aspects—never one
Did yet repel it! Soul on soul is calling,
Vastness to vastness; and thy mighty voice
Finds in my heart an answer as prolong'd,
As infinite. Great spirit, search in mine,
Search through; the same immensity is there—
Unplumb'd abysses, caverns where the light
Will never reach, a hunger as thine own
Unsatisfied, a craving never still'd,
A vast and homeless nature like thyself!

SCENE III.—*A Darkened Room*.—FATHER PAUL,
MARY BLAKE.

MARY.

Grey hair that once was raven, wither'd face
He loved for being lovely, eyes made dim
With weeping and again beyond themselves
Grown bright with fast and watching! You are right
To doubt it thus—how should you know me, father?

A Soul's Comedy

FATHER PAUL.

His rich voice haunts for ever ; the boy's form
Among the sandhills in the morning light
By the sea's marge ! A wind had swept the Downs,
Clouds from the West roll'd upward, on the shore
The high tide beat ; the pulses of their blood
Ran wildly, and the woman and the boy
Stood there together.

MARY.

Because I die this day,
Because the barren bosom of the beach
Lies stripp'd and dry, because the shining sea
Recedes, like life, because the heart is old,
And I have fasted long, watch'd and pray'd long,
And wept alone, one question : where is he ?

FATHER PAUL.

Old wrongs are now forgotten, and old sins
Hath God long pardon'd. O, if far away
That soul the mission of true life achieving
Fulfil the promise of his early youth,
And God's most holy will, if noble deeds
Have wash'd all stains away, if grace be Jasper's,
Mary, will this content you ?

MARY.

Once again
To hear that name—ascend, most gentle soul !
Ascend, sweet spirit, up the height of life,
My prayers thy shield !—and mine by you pronounced—
O bitterness and saltness of the sea !

The Soul's Recompense

FATHER PAUL.

My penitent and spiritual child,
Time's bitter turns to God's supernal sweetness.

MARY.

I know not, father—the shamed blood mounts swiftly
And the shamed eyes from your keen glance averted
To Mary's image turn unconsciously—
I know not, father, how from one so young
The thing was compass'd, but a boy was born.
He lived, he grew; a youth beside the sea
He dwells this day; most noble hopes he nurses;
Fame in the future, with its proudest tones,
May celebrate his genius, and this land
The poems of the minstrel, Austin Blake,
May count as precious and as pearls preserve.
But not this life-long secret to reveal
Nor learn how Jasper fares—from what far height
His soul ascended shines o'er earth and sea—
Your early penitent, to death drawn nigh,
Has sent for you. More solemn cause impell'd.
In your kind, venerable hands I leave
The holy trust reposed before in me,
That self-same trust, to bring my orphan back,
Who makes a wilful shipwreck of his faith.
Within your charge I leave his priceless soul
As I shall shortly into God's commend
My own. Have mercy on myself in him!

Your patient, kindly eyes shine down on me;
The dim lamp also on your features casts
Wan light; not years have changed you, Father Paul,
Nor those white hairs—the same familiar face
Beneath them. So the mountain heights, by sun
Made green through all the summer, in the long

A Soul's Comedy

Mid-winter frosts, snow-cover'd, still present
Their former outlines. . . . Friend, you carry there
The holy oils ; you carry in your breast
The Christ we worship. Kneel and pray with me !
But pray not yet for my departing soul,
Nor Jasper's weal, for whom my midnight prayers
In life ascended ! First for Austin pray—
May the True Shepherd of the souls of men
To His one fold lead back that roving sheep !

SCENE IV.—*A Presbytery.*—JASPER CARTWRIGHT,
FATHER PAUL.

FATHER PAUL.

Sit with me in the sacristy ; the night
Is falling fast, and lately in the church
We chanted Compline ; still upon this hearth
The cinders of the sacred charcoal glow,
And all about the ceiling low and dark
Sweet fume of incense lingers. None will now
Disturb us, Jasper, for the church is closed,
And in its loneliness and silence fills
More with God's presence. I will leave ajar
This door, which opens on the Sanctuary,
And in the deep'ning twilight you and I
Can see the altar-lamp ; its dim red glass
Shines humbly, like a mild and saintly soul
Before her God. . . . That we should meet again
After these years, and you but late return'd
From such long travels ! Are now these roving done ?
Or will the fever seize and drive you forth
Afresh, none warning ? Will most friends in vain
Wait tidings from you, till some years gone by,
And expectation over, memory even

The Soul's Recompense

Relaxing hold upon the image of you,
All suddenly your star descends—your voice
Pervades the mind with a familiar tone,
And then we look into your eyes, and know you.
Tell me whence are you?

JASPER.

From the seas come over.

FATHER PAUL.

And you are lean and pale and poorly clad!
We sit here talking, while the wind and rain
Are wild without; cold is it, and most dark,
And it is long since we in any place
Have talk'd together.

JASPER.

Your familiar form
Dissolves me, and that venerable head!
It is so long since I have seen you—now
We sit together, and the whole space seems
A dream's length only. . . . Is it years in truth?

FATHER PAUL.

When last you left me, Jasper, strong were you,
Bold was your eye, a stalwart, noble lad!
And you were gifted both in face and mien
As God gifts few, while in the mind dwelt fair
And generous hopes beyond the wont of man.
Now are you gaunt and wasted; those strange eyes
Will haunt me in my dreams for many moons.

JASPER.

When last I left you in a far-off past,
I purposed in some service of mankind

A Soul's Comedy

My days to use, and nurse one light within,
Clear shining on a portal of the soul,
Till that should open—as I felt—on God
Throned in the soul.

FATHER PAUL.

Recount your work abroad.
Strange tidings reach'd us from beyond the sea
Which said you founded in the distant West
A little colony of orphan lads,
Who—after some new fashion of your own—
Were rear'd in simple precincts, full of joy,
To prudent labour, both of brain and hands.
Where now are these? How did the scheme succeed?
Have they gone forth—to manhood grown at length—
Equipp'd for human services? What since
Have your thoughts turn'd to? Ah, confide in me!

JASPER.

By works like these enlarging nature's scope,
I found my ark of refuge and retreat. . . .
The oil has fail'd; the light in the altar-lamp
Sinks down; strange errant shadows deepen round us.
What is that voice without? . . . It is the wind's,
The wild, world-wandering, homeless wind of night.

FATHER PAUL.

God save you, dearest son! What grief is this?

JASPER.

Have you stood ever on a field of war
And seen the midnight moon pour sadly down
Her spectral light on faces pale in death—
Distorted, cold? In suffering's cause, in man's
I've witness'd that. And have you paced at noon—

The Soul's Recompense

When from high zenith the torrid sun diffused
His burning shafts—a city struck with pest?
But fair white bodies—in a poison'd house—
Pang-drawn beside me, stiffen'd as they fell.
I heard one clock behind me night by night
Tick in the silence like a beating heart;
I heard the dread-struck passenger without
Fly past, with bated breath, the infected place.
Once when the dark sky lighten'd, when the thin
And livid lips of morning open'd writhing,
While from a saffron cavity within
Pour'd sickly beams, the spirit of the plague
Took dreadful shape before me: swooning there,
The pest reign'd in me. . . . It is cold and dark.
What is that bell, my father? The passing bell?
What soul has fled?

FATHER PAUL.

It rings for evening prayer.

JASPER.

Well, it was hard with me through many days,
On naked stones, the open field and road,
In swoons and fits of sickness and great cold,
Haunted and senseless. Then through weary weeks
Shaking I lay, upon the point of death,
In hospital by charitable hands
With kindness tended. Yet I live this day,
And something enter'd in the heart has turn'd
All woe to peace.

FATHER PAUL.

Your face with sudden heat
Flushes, then pales; and now your lips are white,
While those unearthly eyes with dreadful fire
Are glittering: what fever preys on you?

A Soul's Comedy

JASPER.

You question, friend : what profits it to speak
Of such things further? Of my soul therein
Some refuge finding from itself and shame
Long since forgotten? There are deeper wells
Of memory stored within ; on other ways
Than active service in the world without
The soul has doors which open. I have found
One gate and pathway : if I speak of this,
God's priest, white minister, through service grown
Into the likeness of His saints, think well
On that far past wherein you led my steps
And, whether near or far, by force of love,
Kept me within the altar's reach, between
The chancel rail and sanctuary lamp.
If on one summit of the soul since then
I ever stood, or found a place of light
In my own centre, count this term attain'd
As something once made possible by you,
Whose torch, uplifted from the first of things,
Through darkness shew'd the mystery of God.
I may be near to death, I may have seen
My service set to failure and complete
Its wreckage, but the dregs and lees of self
Were emptied so ; but service, sacrifice
Were made thereby sufficient to themselves,
From all their meed divested. The result?
It drove me inward, and—past mere states of peace—
I found the unity and God therein.
Old friend, there are the dark nights of the soul,
Yet never can the soul forget when God
Has once been guest within her. The wasted frame
Brings dark nights also to material mind,
Yet the soul's light remains.

The Soul's Recompense

FATHER PAUL.

Pray God therein
Has bless'd you truly; the Church knows these states,
And the saints also knew; the end is God
And His most blessed vision. But without
Her pale, she only prays and hopes for those
Who reach, or think they do, her ends by paths
From hers apart.

JASPER.

The soul is to herself
A witness.

FATHER PAUL.

God confirm it in the end. . . .
O Jasper Cartwright, does your mind still hold
The parting words I utter'd long ago—
Which promised gladness in the natural sense,
Speaking as man, not priest? Your eyes respond;
The thought within you quickens. Then go down
To your old home, my son, beside the sea,
And wait me there.

JASPER.

I will indeed go down
And rest a little. There is one therein
To welcome me.

FATHER PAUL.

O nevermore on earth;
Direct your thoughts above where he sits crown'd!
The house is empty, it has pass'd to strangers;
Your old friend Miles was drown'd a month ago;
His wife, your cousin, has renounced the world,
And in a distant convent prays for him.

A Soul's Comedy

But do not grieve! My heart is fill'd with joy
When I think on him, what a noble life
He led, his charity, his kindly heart,
His holy zeal for that new faith whereto
At length I led him. His pure, blameless course
Was closed in glory, like a mild May-day
Which sets with autumn splendour. (How your face
Has lighted suddenly!) One stormy night
A smack had grounded on the Goodwin sands;
The life-boat straight put forth with Miles therein;
They reach'd the sinking craft—the sea ran high—
The crew were saved, but in the act of helping
Its last man down, our friend himself was lost;
Some high wave swept him past the reach of all:
A week went by before the body was found.

JASPER.

He died for others as he lived. Your tale
Has soften'd night itself. One star comes forth,
And, lo, the moon among the racing clouds
In witness shews her solemn face serene!

SCENE V.—*By the Sea.*—JASPER, ERNEST JOHNSON.

JASPER.

The blue, curved waves uplifted catch the light
And shine beyond endurance; the sea lies
Beneath the sunshine in a swoon of joy,
Its surface spread that grateful, warm embrace
To feel in full completeness. Who has said
The sea sleeps ever? When calmest, most it wakes,
When sooth'd as now by sunlight, then the sense
Of life is keenest. The broad fields at noon

The Soul's Recompense

Lie dreaming, and great forests by the night
Are hush'd into a stillness more than sleep—
Enchantment; but through all the sea retains
A conscious life, of motion, music made.

ERNEST.

Do you remember how we spoke together,
One summer twilight when your friends and mine
Were with us? On the threshold of man's life
We stood, projecting towards the coming time
Our eager thought. You challenged then my aims,
Till, somewhat stung with an implied contempt,
I cried—"Defer the question! I demand
The test of time; let ten years pass, and then
Compare your visionary schemes with my
More humble aims, and what has gain'd us most
Hold both in value." . . . In less scornful mood
You took my challenge.

JASPER.

I repent this day
That idle compact.

ERNEST.

Do you fear the test?

JASPER.

It has a poor assumption which my heart
Recoils from, making mere material gain
A standard to compute the worth of life.
But have your wish; contrast, if so you will,
Your ways and mine: are all the ends achieved?

ERNEST.

Look on me and compare yourself with me!
Or, first, contrast this present with that prime

A Soul's Comedy

Of youth when we debated, years ago,
On all our cherish'd plans and purposes.
You flourish'd then; the hope of high success
Inform'd your heart with strength to dare and do,
And you were beautiful; your mind full oft
Was visited by subtle and lofty thoughts,
While your estate might answer for yourself,
Though much embarrass'd by a guardian's debts.
I stood beside you as a meaner thing;
You scarcely knew the limit of your soul's
Resource, so ample seeming; mine was gauged
By all, and even by myself as well.
But your soul from its upward soaring brought—
What truly? Some bright light about the brow,
And some deep, far-off meaning in the eyes—
Not more? But check me. By degrees I rose,
Achieving all I purposed, and became
A wealthy merchant, married to the girl
On whom my heart was set from early youth.
I have a country seat and good town house,
Am of a happy home contented head—
Seven sons sprung from me. Now I see you thin
And pale and poor, and grief has fallen on you—
Your star seems set.

JASPER.

You do not know what star
Has risen over summits of the soul,
And in what sky a star-outshining sun
Springs upward. But the nimbus of its light
Is round me ever—mine the palm of life.
You have not won it, friend, of realms it rules—
Not even dream'd! You stand in earthly sunlight
Before me, and this manhood is alone
That youth grown riper; you are patient still
And kindly-hearted, with the world well-pleas'd;
Can so afford full gently and full long

The Soul's Recompense

To bear plain speaking from a man like me,
And with a bountiful and easy smile,
Your face turn'd somewhat, hear me calmly out. . . .
If pain assail'd you, could you bear it, Ernest?
If failure came upon you, and want after,
Could you bear those? If death should call for you,
Would you go willingly, with no keen pang?
That which your skill created for yourself
Is dear, of course; you do not wish to leave it.
Your life is crown'd with comfort and success,
And some few cares are better, to your thought,
Than things unknown, so, therefore, life than death.
But I have learn'd to suffer, to abstain
And die. My spirit in its pain and want,
My frame in toil, has lived, I think, more truly
Than yours has done, though all has prosper'd with you.
Forgive me, Ernest!

ERNEST.

Ah, how pale are you!
How your hand trembles, in the morning light
Uplifted, how you lean upon your staff! . . .
Our friends are dead, alone of all I stay!
Miles last we buried, who in death was true
To your great teachings. Would I win from you
A crown's least jewel? May I rather add!
I claim my methods have in mundane things
Borne fruit tenfold—for earthly life I plann'd;
If yours have brought you to the brink of want
They've failed, though only from my point, perhaps.
I do not doubt, yours looms the nobler part,
And nobler you; on all who knew you, Jasper,
Have you exerted happy influence,
And man is better for your birth in time.
Do I not feel how oft that face has haunted,
How it has prompted kindly deeds and thoughts?
And was not Miles himself a stone inert

A Soul's Comedy

Before your master-hand had fashion'd him,
And life infused? Then Matthew also, Jasper :
Spurred on by you into an earnest life,
He vow'd to follow with unselfish toil
His search for Truth, and gain'd at least from that
Patience in doubt and pain. I seal'd his eyes :
He said that ever, like a star in night,
Your image led him and abode with him. . . .
Remember Basil—in extremes of course !
When he turn'd Trappist he was saint thenceforth ;
He vow'd his life to God, my friend, for you,
And died in odour of all sanctity.
I melt you now.

JASPER.

(I thank Thee, gracious Lord !
Thou dost Thy servant bid depart in peace.)
If it should be that I could win your soul
To love that light which I have glimpsed from far
By no desert of mine.

ERNEST.

The light is good ;
But well-a-day, old friend, the time is short
And rest which follows on a life of work
Counts somewhat. For the messengers of light—
They cross my path, and even here at Deal
Shines one—perhaps a poet—Austin Blake
His name, a youth in years, whose fervid heart
Has higher promise than his songs, may be ;
But he'll do something by mere earnestness,
A fair chance given. Of him I speak no more,
For he comes yonder, striding over stones,
His eyes turn'd sea-ward, dreaming harmonies :
I doubt not you will like him.

The Soul's Recompense

SCENE VI.—*Green Lanes*.—JASPER CARTWRIGHT,
AUSTIN BLAKE.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

I've seen you once, and yet we greet this day
Like oldest friends, as if I knew you well ;
I speak out secrets, not as things told newly
But to your ears familiar. Why is this ?
We live in daily intercourse with some
For years, yet to each other's inner selves,
And all true feelings of the heart, remain
Like strangers ; then with others by a chance
Speak once, and in a moment is the soul
Laid bare.

JASPER.

We are strangers all till our hearts touch,
But ever after, whether late or soon,
We are friends, true friends.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Yet, being drawn to you
I babble on, while nothing of yourself
Is spoken.

JASPER.

We were speaking last of love.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

And I who am a poet have found none
To love—by some unhappy fate shut out
From Nature's circle of sweet sympathy.
A subtle current of attraction brings
The birds together, and the same blind sense

A Soul's Comedy

Moves in the meanest flower ; but I can draw
No soul towards mine. Does too much love repel
When offer'd? Or has Fate thrust Nature back,
And her kind ministries, to shape some high,
Exceptional end in me, preparing thus
By pain for heights? A little, and my soul
Will gather all her forces, will be nerved
Such state to bear, alone will stand or fall,
Nor seek a foreign solace and support.
But, overtaken by dependent mood,
A little while, a little, let me lean
On human love.

JASPER.

And must you then go forth
On that great quest? I will not stay you, no,
Nor chide you, but the end too well foresee,
Who once myself along that sacred path
Went seeking soul-athirst. The hollow depth
Within you testifies in aching grief
To amplitude of nature, which in vain
Shall seek its complement where the level of life
Spreads out a shallow stream. The common soul,
Whose smaller scope a little of love demands,
A little offers, will receive a free,
Quick-coming answer, and content therewith
Conceives no deeper longing. The shoal stream,
Runs lightly down between its daisied banks,
And the rains feed it and the rills make full ;
In the bright sunshine sparkling, music-making,
It feels the joy of being. But the sea—
Wide, waste, unfathom'd—asks of earth and air,
With multitudinous voices, vainly ever
Some vast inclusive being its peer to be,
And silence listens. By a thousand streams
Fed daily, yet it chafes and hungers still,
And, last, in torment storming on the shore

The Soul's Recompense

It raves despairing ; seeking pity in vain,
Is pitiless, death seeking vainly, death
Inflicts, nor ever from itself is free,
Nor in an ampler being can lose its own.
You are no shallow stream with daisied banks ;
Capacity and passion of stormy main
Resound within you. Where shall the sea find rest ?
Say, in what void abyss pour'd surging down
At length no movement know through all its depths ?
Insensate search ! But as at times the sea,
Soothed by wind-stillness, smooth'd by gentle showers,
Feels all its longing dead, smiles and is calm,
And out of silence, which its rending voice
Vex'd with vain questions, may some secrets learn
Surpassing speech, from disappointment you,
And your unanswer'd longing, may gain at length
A secret. You have sought the love which few
Have power to give, but of that power possess'd,
Give you—no answer seeking, no return ;
Pour yourself forth ! Thus shall you win relief,
Thus shall the pent-up passion of the heart
Escape, and you find refuge from yourself.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

These words are as a prophecy, the heart
Constraining towards fulfilment.

SCENE VII.—*The Bridge at Sandwich*.—FATHER
PAUL, AUSTIN BLAKE.

FATHER PAUL.

Right on the threshold of your life to come
There stands a great event awaiting you.

A Soul's Comedy

I fain would lead you with a bright, white soul
Down the one path of safety, peace and joy
To meet it bravely.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

On the bridge we pause,
And look towards Thanet, where the sinking sun
Rich fields and pastures bathes in amber light.

FATHER PAUL.

I am an old, old man and soon must die,
Can I wish anything on earth for you
But your soul's weal? I have no cause to serve
But Christ's my Master. You are melting now!
The angels listen from their thrones to catch
Each broken word; the Queen of Heaven leans over;
The soft bright eyes of Jesus turn on you,
As once on Peter through a fringe of blood:
The Church herself, that spotless Bride of Christ,
In my poor person lifts extended arms.
Why will you stand in haughty pride apart?
She gave you once a bright baptismal robe:
What rags now wrap you? She invoked on you
The Spirit of God's uncreated Love:
What mournful spirit of the pride of life
Now reigns within you? As a boy, your soul,
God's shrine, transfigured by the mystic bread,
Partook of that Divinity Which once
Your human nature for the soul's dear sake
Partook of long ago: what idols now
Within you dwell?

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Your kindness has indeed
My whole heart melted, and your tears in truth
Have prompted mine. . . . My father, an abyss

The Soul's Recompense

Divides me ever from that fount of faith
At which your spirit drinks eternal life !

FATHER PAUL.

Ah, do not say so, do not speak thus rashly !
Think, Austin, think !

AUSTIN BLAKE.

I have thought long and deeply.

FATHER PAUL.

Pray, Austin, pray !

AUSTIN BLAKE.

And I have tried that also !
But my soul, father, is a stormy sea
Which the dove Prayer can scarcely brood upon.

FATHER PAUL.

That is because your heart is wrong with God.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

There is no meaning left in ancient forms.

FATHER PAUL.

Since you have lost their spirit !

AUSTIN BLAKE.

What are words ?
Your God can search this turbid heart of mine,
As stars search streams in silence night by night.

A Soul's Comedy

Pray! I have pray'd, if it be prayer to stand
At night by the waste sea, and there groan deeper
Than that groans, beating vainly the deaf shore;
Or midst lone meadows, when the world is sleeping,
To call on God, shrieking for God to soothe
My spirit's misery and madness. Say—
Is that not prayer? O I have watch'd all night,
Pacing the city's streets, with my whole soul
Beseeching God to give me something great
To achieve for Him, beseeching God to burn—
With fire divine—all that is mean in me,
To save me from myself, to send His angels
That they may scourge me with unsparing hands
Till my soul frenzied seeks those heights of life
My purer moments free from mist and cloud. . . .
And the night falls, ah, father, the cold, still night!
The pale moon calmly from her face removes
The mists, and uncompanion'd, stately, slowly,
She rises up; there is no haste, no fever.
The revolution of the sky goes on;
The sea itself for ever comes and goes
With measur'd motions; your own face is still;
Your words are gentle; there is rest all round me—
Mind-rest and stately movements; only here—
Here in this heart—the fever burns away!

FATHER PAUL.

You have been sever'd from the source of peace—
From living fountains which alone your thirst
Can slake!

AUSTIN BLAKE.

There came to me a dream one night:
Some angel drew me upward to God's throne,
And bade me look in His eternal eyes.
So I gazed long with gaze of yearning soul,
And now bear witness, to my latest day,

The Soul's Recompense

I'll have no fear of God. If He come to me
With stripes and scourges or the Crown of Life,
In love or anger, still I fear Him not !

FATHER PAUL.

Strange thoughts are these, and in your soul I see
The sense of greatness ; those last words have thrill'd me—
What are you, Austin ?

AUSTIN BLAKE.

From my soul I cry—
A poet ! To be a poet is to bear
The weight of all men's woes ; it is to poise
The world upon one's shoulders, and to be,
Like Atlas, ever in that toil alone.

FATHER PAUL.

How all things shew their darkest side to you !
It is the long-neglected, starving soul
Which rent with anguish battles in that breast,
And sets that brain in fever. To its needs
I bid you minister, and peace is yours ! . . .
May God in mercy minister !

AUSTIN BLAKE.

And night
And stars, and solitude, and this vast sea,
Their ministry continue—all things great
Enlarge the spirit which responds to them !

FATHER PAUL.

A deathless nature turns from things of time
Athirst for the Eternal ; a large heart
Invokes the Infinite ; a soul seeks God.

A Soul's Comedy

Hold fast thereto, as when the sea sucks down
The roaring shingle, a wreck'd seaman clutches
The rough rock, slippery with slime and sea-weed.
Beyond the smiling continent of Faith,
With wealthy pastures and fair sloping uplands,
Shall, when the morning breaks, make glad your eyes,
Who in Doubt's sea now struggles, making land.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

The world of waters gives you images.
Behold, we pause before it, having cross'd
The melancholy marshes! . . . Only think
How all the long night on the lonely coasts
The lone sea washes; how it chafes and falls,
While all along the stony beach is still;
How it speaks always; how its voice pervades
The night, and there is nothing in the world—
There is no thing in all the waste, wide world—
To answer! It is pitiful indeed
When in the darkness anything so great
As the great sea begins to weep and moan—
When things of majesty, like human souls
Or open seas, begin to moan and weep!

SCENE VIII.—*By the Sea.*—JASPER, AUSTIN BLAKE.

JASPER.

Mark, Austin, now beneath the gathering clouds
The sea's sun-brilliant azure slowly change
To yellow, green and grey.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

The wind is keen;
That storm-rack threatens, in the North, to quench

The Soul's Recompense

A brilliant burst of sunshine on the sea.
The cliffs of France fade dimly far away ;
The boatmen cover up their boats and bear
The yellow nets to shelter.

JASPER.

You say that love has fled you, that you seek
In vain to win it. For a heart like yours
The grand arcanum is to love—to love—
And nothing more.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Pass out into the fields,
For now the sun's supremacy complete
Has been asserted. By the rising wind
The clouds are scatter'd, and the heaven once more
Shews white and blue, though pallid vapours still
Brood round the low horizon.

JASPER.

Let us walk
Among the sandhills. Though the trees be leafless,
It now seems summer, by some sudden change
Of natural magic, or at least late spring's
Sweet girlhood opening slowly to that full
And perfect womanhood.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Now we stand alone
Among these barren flats that fringe the shore !
The long North-Foreland's belt of gleaming cliff
Shews bright ; the tide into the bay between
Is rolling swiftly ; 'twixt the West and North
The town of Sandwich stands ; and straining eyes

A Soul's Comedy

The humble spire of Worth can glimpse among
The flat, ill-cultured fields and wilted green
Of sheep-cropp'd pastures. Think we now look forth,
From this far outpost, on the vast extent
Of solemn Faërie Land! It lies spell-bound,
And all its folk are dreaming; in the roads,
Be sure, grass sprouts; upon the chapel-steps
The green moss gathers; there from day to day
Abides the patient spirit of the place,
With fortitude unearthly waiting there
The worshippers. . . .

JASPER.

Beside this pool I stand!
Can the strong soul forget her history,
And chequer'd life its æras? Only then
Can I forget you, Mary. Does the earth,
Our common mother, count you still her child?
How has Fate finish'd the romance begun
Between us?

[*A pause.*]

O my lost and gentle friend!
Do you remember how we wander'd here
On winter mornings when the sea was blue
And the wind balmy, while the white dream-ships,
With unapparent motion through the dim
Mists of the distance, beautiful as ghosts,
Pass'd on their course unknown?

AUSTIN BLAKE.

A Kentish maid
Perchance your boyhood woo'd. A Mary too:
I am a Mary's son. From Saltwood came
My mother. In this town full long she dwelt,
Over these sandhills wander'd. . . . Can I walk
Among them, and not visibly impress'd
On every spot behold her memory?

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The Soul's Recompense

I pass'd among them in a dream this day—
Her girlhood's haunts, where Saltwood's soaring towers
Look eastward over sea. From Brockman's Mount
How oft her eyes have gazed on shore and main,
A prospect fair! On Eachend's further hill
Oft has she stood; a white and winding road
Ascends the eastern side—the rover thence
Looks down into a woodland vale, and there
A little stretch of undulating turf
Gives pleasant pasture to the dreaming kine.
And though these scenes will know her now no more,
Nor ever here her roaming steps return,
Who on a mission undeclared has gone
Forth into lands remote, there lingers yet
The memory of her presence. It fills my mind;
I bear it with me to the ocean's marge,
And its vast voices, seeking news of her,
Oft will I question; or to lonely lanes
Retiring, fir-clothed slopes and shelt'ring yews
In churchyard closes, wait the answering voice.

JASPER.

The wind is cool; the night approaches; see,
Betwixt the North and East, that cloud fire-tinged!
The naked masts of every anchor'd ship
Shine redly, and the steel-blue, shifting sea
Takes wandering lights and blushes. . . . Now the swell
Deepens. . . . His mother out of Saltwood came!
If this be true which on my mind has flash'd,
This thought supreme! . . . The twilight falls apace;
We spoke about your mother.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Every word
Is lost upon me, who myself have lost!
This sunset which we linger'd long to see

A Soul's Comedy

Has now departed, all the clouds about
The West are burnt to ashes.

JASPER.

Draw that cloak
About your body. . . . Austin, where is he—
Is that the moon behind us? Turn! The moon
Shoots upwards from the ocean scarlet, vast,
All draped in lurid panoply, and leaves
A bloody blush upon the eastern sea
Perceptibly ascending! Where is he
That bore you, Austin? Do not turn, nor shrink!
Is that the ruddy moonlight on your face,
Or burning flush that mantles either cheek?
Speak quickly! With the shame in face and eyes,
Not with the lips, make answer! Is your birth
A secret to be whisper'd in the dark
By your most inward spirit to the mind
Alone? In mercy, for a space avert
Those blazing eyes! Keep silence, breathe it not!
Look round, look up! The night is round; the stars
Are over us; the moon within the mist
Is monstrous and amazing as one thought
Within my soul. This vast, mysterious thing
Before us is the ocean. Let us stand
A little and speak nothing, lest the life
Go suddenly from out us.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

I must speak,
Or madness intervening ends with cries
Intolerable silence.

JASPER.

Mary Blake,
Was she your mother? Do not answer! Strive

The Soul's Recompense

To meet this sudden, unexpected thing
As something old, familiar, long fore-dream'd !
Be it between us now as it may be
To-morrow in the morning, when the truth
Is twelve hours old, when we can meet and say—
My son !

AUSTIN BLAKE.

My father !

SCENE IX.—*A Room in an Inn.*—JASPER,

AUSTIN BLAKE.

JASPER.

Throw up the window, let the breeze come in !
What is the day like—this my latest day ?
Describe it, poet !

AUSTIN BLAKE.

A mist is on the sea,
But the sun breaking southward kindles now
On its calm breast a blaze of golden light.

JASPER.

I have not lived in vain who have found that key
Which opens wide the Palace of the King.
I know that inward path which leads to life's
Supernal heights.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

I hold it surely true
That on some high soul-eminence is hidden

A Soul's Comedy

A lamp of God, miraculously fed.
Unwaning, pure, the solitary flame
Makes beautiful the mountains of the mind,
Its home. Each mist of passion and evil thought,
Ascending, hides from the inferior self
Those saving rays, which still transmit below
Some fitful shafts. Their transitory gleam,
Made variously manifest, we call
By various names—prevision, the gift of faith,
The inspiration of the seer and bard,
A revelation from the world beyond
In flashes and reflections to the soul.
And these half-words, the swift-extinguish'd light,
Beyond all speech, have thrill'd the heart of man,
Have waken'd thoughts beyond all thoughts profound,
Deep longings fed, and shaped from dream and deed
High aims and hopes sublime, the stars of life !

JASPER.

To give all, seeking nothing ; to be faithful,
Though all were faithless, that's the way to peace
And liberty of spirit ! To lose self,
The lesser self, in service and for love
Of others, in God's most holy name and theirs,
Without condition, is the one true way
To find our nobler self which dwells alone
On unattempted summits of the soul !
This is God's blessed secret and the truth
My own life's tale has bodied forth to me.
Choose leave to serve and love, not love's return,
Whose mercenary principle demands
On every gift repayment. Let those lips
Seek no responsive kisses, the white brow
Pressing alone, whose cool and smooth expanse
Takes all, returning nothing. Let that tongue
Most gentle words, most soothing balm of speech,

The Soul's Recompense

On your elected pour ; from them seek none.
And be all life (for these in joy so rich)
By such devotion beautified alone ;
But when devotion ends, when service fails,
Take love within, for—carrying all the keys—
It shall the secret temple of the soul
Open, and there the Lover of the soul—
God on His throne—behold. And He is Thou.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

I set my heart upon the nobler hope
And fight with Nature. . . .

Ernest Johnson sends

A final message ; you have conquer'd him !
He vows himself through all his days remaining
To work with zeal for man, because of you.
He hopes to found a hospital and schools ;
One son will follow in the course he takes :
He looks to greet you in Eternity.

JASPER.

Thou dost Thy servant bid depart in peace !

[A long pause.]

I see you stand before me, a bright soul ;
Your eyes shine in the sunlight, your dark hair
The yellow sunlight brightens ; you are brave,
And towards the future will a stalwart front
Present ; your life has purpose fair and high,
Has golden dreams, and growing in your heart
Has sense of mission. . . . What shaped that life and
mine

Has out of folly, out of shame, a fair
And holy end led forth—I ask no more.
And now the matter in your hands remains ;

A Soul's Comedy

All rests with you to whom the chance is given.
Look to it, Austin, the chance with life is given !
Forth to the strife, my hero ! Poet, forth !
The world is waiting ; the world calls you, go !
God with you, in you ! Prove the god within !
And by the sacrifice of meaner self
Your own transcendent nature's endless life
Insure for ever ! My life dissolves away
In your life's light. Look to it, Austin, look !
Son of the morning, it is in your hands—
All rests with you, to fail or to fulfil !

[*Sic transit anima sacra.*]

AUSTIN BLAKE.

*I bow, my God, to Thy decree,
I will not dare to question Thee :
Henceforth in early hours and late
To this high aim be my days dedicate ;
With all my strength and all my skill
I will Thy plans fulfil.
Thou givest me the golden keys
Which open gates of light,
But contemplating these,
And that immortal height
My soul must scale, I pause and tremble at the sight !
My deeds are known to Thee,
My weakness Thou dost see,
O Lord, Thy will be done—
How shouldst Thou favour this rebellious son ?
This child of earth and fire,
Say, wilt Thou choose to work out Thy desire ?
High hopes I held, and many a lofty aim :
These had redeem'd my shame,
These proved my strong defense.
But I have waived the starry claim
To work delight of sense.*

The Soul's Recompense

*Mine aspiration saves my soul from death,
For that descends from Thee ;
Thou wilt not cast it in the abyss beneath
Of meanness and obscurity.
Now dost Thou kindle loftier trust,
Hast raised me from the mire and dust,
Set facing heights sublime,
Wherefrom the eternal stars look down
On all dim wastes of time.
And Thou hast bidden me climb,
By stony paths, to reach the mystic town :
My soul turns breathless towards that wondrous
goal ;
If glory dazzles me, and the silentness
Of those high places here my heart oppress,
Being unworthy Thine illumined spheres ;
I cry no less, and, lo, mine ears
Are ringing with Thy promises !
The dark clouds quiver and roll,
They pass from off my soul,
The Light Divine falls o'er me.
The road is rough and long,
But it may be smooth'd by song ;
The arm of my Lord is strong :
I see God's life before me !
I turn, I take my way ;
O hope so brave and bold,
My steps shall nevermore delay
Through weary paths of old !
The years are rich in Destiny,
The stars of Heaven do beckon me and bless ;
Set on the watch-towers of futurity,
The beacons of immortal fame
Burn with a stedfast flame ;
While as I forward press,
There is a promise in the passing hours,
A whisper in the leaves and flowers ;*

A Soul's Comedy

*The smallest bird that sings
Reveals me secret things ;
And day and night, and night and day,
The promise never dies away
Miraculously written in the skies :
The very winds are full of prophecies !*

EPILOGUE

By the Sea.—AUSTIN BLAKE.

A book for mine elected, telling all
My life is theirs to use or lose for them,
As best may serve them, telling that I love
Above the world their beauty. Is there one
Who reads this book, whose bright eyes light a face
In truth most lovely? Let him come to me,
On him my faith is fix'd, I choose him now,
My soul's true friend. And if his heart be pure,
His am I for the serving evermore ;
But if not pure, if it at least be kind,
His am I for the serving evermore ;
And if not kind, if it be brave and true,
His am I for the serving evermore ;
But if not brave, since he is beautiful
His am I for the serving evermore.

This book to mine elected, to the souls
In life's fair morning, whom I love, this book !

Is that the night upon the sea, my friends,
Descending? What have multiplied above?—
The stars! What breaks and brightens in the East?
It is the moon, the mother of the gods,
Heaven's queen ascending! Is there one this night
Takes up the wondrous story? . . . Who is this
Stands forth? My one believer, who alone
Accepts the poem! It is well; for thee,
God knows, I wrote it—thou hast heard—enough!

A Soul's Comedy

My soul embarks for mystic coasts unknown,
From all sea-roads which cross the main of mind
Remote. Thou knowest I am strong to bear
And braced for every venture. Morning Light,
Most royal lily and azalean queen,
MIRANDA, promise of the time to come,
I battle ever for the truth and thee,
For man I work in thee. All joys be thine! . . .

O solemn spirit, to the distant stars
Thy glance directing, may that earnest glance
Triumphant search the altitude remote!
I see thine eyes' light span the gulf of space;
And space the final veil, the rarest, pass'd,
I see the Absolute reveal'd before thee. . . .

Go forth, O Poem, to the Star of books
I leave thee! Thou art written; my soul's child
Must aid me now to bid the life of self
A long farewell. Command me therefore now,
All ye to whom I dedicate this book;
Command me in your service evermore!

O Light Divine, lead onward still this mind's
Supernal story, to the end lead on!
I give thee thanks, supreme and gracious God,
For Thy great mercies. In Thy holy hands
I put the high romance. On mountain heights
Be its next scene, I pray Thee! Thou hast school'd
On wintry plains beside a scourging sea
Thy chosen son. To-day the call has come—
Beyond the mountains—from a height undream'd;
I follow on the mandate, only lead!
Lead Light which is unsearchable, lead God
Most holy, named yet nameless, ever more
Reveal'd, yet ever hidden and unknown;
O'er wide sea-waste I follow, plain and hill:
I follow to the mountain of the Lord!

A VALEDICTION

THESE poems are offered as the confession of a man who knows that there is only one character of true excellence in human life, and that is the seal or character which expresses the sanction of eternity. They are the work of a writer who, after trying many paths of experience, has become conscious in part of the mysteries which environ us, and it is obvious that they must appeal, chiefly or only, to those who have been awakened after the same manner. Such persons constitute a kind of secret school, or united but unincorporate fraternity, which independently of all stipulated means of recognition and communication do no less communicate and recognise one another without hesitation or hindrance in every part of the world.

The school in question confesses only to a single necessity, which embodies one interest held in unity thereby. It is a necessity of desire and attainment, the desire of the Great Quest, fulfilment of the Great Experiment—in vastissimum divinitatis pelagus navigare. For the members, external or internal, of this sodality, in the light of this end, it may be said truly that the whole universe bursts forth into a flame and blossoming of parable, symbol and sacrament. All things minister thereto, all things proclaim and manifest it, within their proper measures; the desire and its fulfilment receive their earnest and demonstrations everywhere. Everywhere there is the ringing of bells, ever the passing of Hosts, the smoke of incense, the acclamation of the cosmos to urge and encourage the quest.

How this outward world has thus been efficient to the needs of one mystic and sacramentalist is shewn forth in

A Valediction

these volumes, which are offered by the writer to his brethren, ut adeptis appareat me illis parem et fratrem, as proof positive that he is numbered among them, that he is initiated into their mysteries, and exacts recognition as such in all houses, temples and tarrying places of the confraternity.

“As a mystical poet, as an exponent of the transcendental in life and in literature, Mr. A. E. Waite has won for himself a position of high authority. He stands almost alone to-day in his single-minded devotion to the less frequented paths of literary adventure. His confession of faith is to be found in a score of volumes of real attainment, critical and poetical.”—*The Sunday Times*.

“Mr. A. E. Waite is one of the profoundest and most gifted among modern students of mysticism and a poet of fine imaginative power.”—*The Aberdeen Free Press*.

“He has considerable instinct for form and colour in verse.”—Mr. G. K. Chesterton in *The Speaker*.

“It is sufficient that Mr. Waite does fulfil his purpose, and in these poems of his more or less clearly and beautifully shadows forth in living words something of the inner spiritual life and meaning that is mystically symbolised to the seeing eye in every manifestation of Nature. . . . There is true gold of poetry in the book, and often more of real thought and suggestions in a single page than would go to the making of a whole volume of average minor verse.”—*The Bookman on A Book of Mystery and Vision*.

“The many learned works of Mr. A. E. Waite are testimony enough that the Hermetic science is still to be reckoned with. . . . Mr. Waite must at present be accounted our most learned and important writer upon those subjects which lie ‘between the desert and the sown’ of occult and mystic science. . . . Always serious, never sentimental or fatuous, Mr. Waite’s dicta upon mysticism are often brilliant and profound.”—Miss Evelyn Underhill in *The Hibbert Journal*.

“Mr. Waite’s doctrine is, at least, poetical, it has one element of divinity which lends it grace.”—*The Yorkshire Post*.

“It can be by no ordinary strength of natural impulse that he so consistently translates the gorgeous pageantry of the material universe into ‘signs and omens’ of such felicity.”—*The Pilot*.

"Mr. Waite must be well known as a learned and enchanting Mystic ; even those who are not mystics or even thyrus-bearers hold him in respect."—*The Daily Chronicle*.

"Throughout one comes in touch with a fine spirit, alive to all the glory of the world and all that charms the heart and sense of man, yet seeing past these with something of the soul of Galahad. The book is a very striking one, nobly mystic, and rich in memorable verse and significant thought, so closely wedded to emotion that each seems either."—*The Glasgow Herald* on *Strange Houses of Sleep*.

"Mr. Waite is known to all students of mysticism—and happily they are an increasing band—as one of the few competent writers on this fascinating subject."—*The Irish Times*.

"A sacred work, depicting the stages of the soul in its pilgrimage through the world of shadows.—*The Forecast* on *Strange Houses of Sleep*.

"Mr. A. E. Waite stands unrivalled in this department of obscure research."—*The Quest*.

"Mr. Waite . . . has also earned himself an honourable name for sincerity in such matters."—*The Athenæum*.

"Mr. Waite has penetrated very near to the heart of his subject."—*The Saturday Review* on *Studies in Mysticism*.

"The poetry is of a high order, and, apart from its more spiritual aspects, remarkable for a passionate appreciation of natural beauty and for pictorial treatment. . . . *Israfel* is one of those rare books which are part of the salt of the earth ; but it is not for all readers."—*The Graphic*.

"Mr. Waite is an expert on mystical subjects and knows more than their outward seeming."—*The Guardian*.

"There are few better authorities on the subject of mysticism than Mr. A. E. Waite."—*The Weekly Sun*.

"Mr. Waite really is a poet ; some of his lines are beautifully wrought, and there is an air about most of his work of complete mastery of the technique of his art."—*The Morning Leader*.

"Mr. Waite, who would seem to be the chief English authority, has not only concentrated his attention on the doctrine of magic, but has been honestly desirous to lay the results of his extensive investigations before elementary readers in comprehensible terms and in accessible volumes."—*The Edinburgh Review*.

"The well-known mystic and student of mysticism, Mr. A. E. Waite."—*Nature*.

"Mr. Waite is learned in the occult, as everyone knows."—*The Observer*.

"Mr. A. E. Waite, the well-known mystical poet and occultist."—*The Manchester Courier*.

"Mr. Arthur Edward Waite . . . is perhaps the greatest authority in the world on all things occult."—Mr. Arthur Machen in *The Evening News*.

"No one could be more fitted for the task he has undertaken than Mr. Waite, who holds a foremost position in the literature of the higher mysticism."—*The Sunday Special* on *Obermann*.

"Mr. Waite is a deep-voiced, imaginative, cunning rhymers."—*The Daily Chronicle*.

"A brilliant writer, a master of recondite lore. . . It will be a revelation to follow Mr. Waite in his historical investigations, and to think his high thoughts after him. . . . He brings to the execution of his task a rare mastery of the whole history and literature of the subject and a deep insight into its hidden spiritual aspects. . . . Among the students of Christian mysticism Mr. Waite occupies a place quite his own."—*The Glasgow Herald*.

"Surely this volume must mark an epoch in the annals of that most spiritual of arts—poetry—for rarely . . . has any poet sung so beautifully and mystically."—*The Occult Review* on *Strange Houses of Sleep*.

"Pages of exposition written with admirable lucidity and with an earnestness of spirit to which every reader will respond."—*The English Review* on *The Secret Tradition in Freemasonry*.

"Mr. Waite has made his reputation as a writer on occult subjects."—*Literature*.

"Our author combines the grasp of scholarship with the sympathetic attitude and the deep-lying knowledge of hidden things."—*The American Freemason*.

"Apart from his well-known credentials in the world of letters as one of the most learned and prolific authors upon mystical and occult subjects, [he] has the advantage of first-hand knowledge of all ceremonial systems of initiation now working, as well as the possession of, or access to, many that are now in abeyance. The whole craft is deeply obligated to him for presenting it with so admirable a mirror and exegesis of its own doctrine."—*The Freemason*.

"Since the publication of *The Secret Tradition in Freemasonry*, no excuse is any longer possible for ignorance of the fact that the long-lost word of Freemasonry has been recovered—which word is 'the identity between the root-matter of Masonry and that of the other Mysteries'; the 'Secret Tradition,' which is the immemorial knowledge concerning man's way of return whence he came by a method of the inward life."—*The Quest*.

"This author stands pre-eminent among mystic writers for clearness, coherency, and a profound spirituality. . . . We can but yield to the witchery of his theme and style. . . . It is as a real mystic and as a real Mason that Brother A. E. Waite can be here presented to his brethren. . . . A profound scholar, he has freely opened to us his vast stores of learning. . . . Our conductor has the spiritual view. For him the material things are windows through which he may look upon broader fields of spiritual and intellectual truths. And of these sights, transcending outward sense, our author has rare power of interpretation, bringing some matters of holiest meaning to the common ken. . . . Brother Waite is author of many books, each of which has been a great undertaking, and every one accepted as authority."—*The American Tyler-Key-stone*.

"Few living writers possess so extensive and scholarly a knowledge of the history of the different ritual societies that have helped to carry on the 'secret tradition.'"—*The Morning Leader*.

"He has given us a work which should be received with gratitude, and which is not likely to be rivalled—far less surpassed."—*The Sheffield Daily Telegraph* on *Obermann*.

"As a writer on mysticism and the mystics, Mr. Waite's skill and competency are freely acknowledged."—*The Literary World*.

"Among non-Jewish students of the Kabalah and Jewish mysticism, Mr. Waite certainly holds a high place."—*The Academy* on *The Secret Doctrine in Israel*.

"Mr. A. E. Waite is a profound scholar and a distinguished writer on metaphysical and occult subjects."—*To-Day*.

"The literature of occultism has few more learned students than Mr. A. E. Waite."—*Literature*.

"In Mr. Waite we have, on the one hand, a scholar of his subject who is keenly alive to the necessities of a thoroughly scientific literary criticism, and on the other a writer who is entirely sympathetic to all that is good in a sane mysticism."—*The Theosophical Review*.

"His learning is extraordinary, and his experience in this kind of inquiry no less so. His style also is a noble one, not at all after the manner of these days."—*The Daily Chronicle*.

"Mr. Waite has produced a poem very much above the average of poetic merit. . . . Jasper Cartwright's struggle against the circumstances which have combined to ruin his spiritual existence, and his final triumph over them, are powerfully portrayed. . . . Scattered at intervals throughout the volume are passages of more than ordinary beauty."—*The Spectator on A Soul's Comedy*.

"*A Soul's Comedy* is a very extraordinary composition. . . . The story of this poem is in some respects very repulsive, and yet told with great delicacy and beauty. . . . If this poem were recast in the sense that we have indicated, we venture to think that it would be entitled to a high place among the poems of the day."—*The Guardian*.

"The main idea of Jasper's origin is so horrible in its pathetic tragedy as to rouse reminiscences of Ford's masterpiece, and the after-episode of Mary Blake is little less distressing; but out of these seemingly compromising materials Mr. Waite has evoked a tale of human sorrow, struggle, and final triumph such as must appeal to the heart of every true man. . . . The poetry rises at times to unusual heights, as, for instance, in the description of Mary's death, the Benediction in the monastery chapel, Austin Blake's prologue to the third part, or, best of all, the scene where Jasper resigns Gertrude to his friend."—*The Graphic*.

"Mr. A. E. Waite has gained deservedly high distinction by his labours . . . a reputation as one of the foremost authorities on occult and mystical subjects."—*Light*.

"No one who knows Mr. Waite will question his fitness to deal with any subject of a mystical nature. . . . Mr. Waite's careful and systematic labour is beyond all praise."—*The Seeker*.

"Whatever be the reality and significance of Mr. Waite's mysticism, there is no doubt that he has a great deal of poetry in him. . . . The verses themselves are often very beautiful."—*The Standard on A Book of Mystery and Vision*.

"His gorgeous word-painting and incessant use of fine imagery always intoxicate and often convince. The wild beauty of most of his hyperbole also compels admiration."—*The Theosophical Review*.

"Mr. Waite has been among the foremost to promulgate the doctrines of the mystical fraternity which acknowledges the singular importance of man's ultimate destiny as apprehended by and through the sacra-

mental pageantries of external life. . . . The pathos and rhythm of Mr. Waite's verse are both opulent and appropriate, and the general style will be felt to express his mind with accuracy. . . . It has been finely said that idealism is an hypothesis to account for Nature by means other than those of carpentry and chemistry, and to accept this definition is to admit that Mr. Waite is Nature's ideal interpreter; for in every changing aspect of the world he finds distilled a spiritual elixir; he declares the eternal beatitude, and over and throughout all apparent disorder he discovers the . . . seal of God. We are conscious of no inconsistency when we assert that Mr. Waite has realised the spiritual fulness of which all natural phenomena are but the mere externals."—*The London Scotsman*.

"Mr. Waite has a keen perception of that moss which grows on ruins—a fine understanding of the new life which is yet the oldest of all—the *Rex quondam, Rexque futurus* who cannot reign until the usurping Mammon is dethroned."—*The Candid Friend*.

"Mr. Waite is a genuine mystic, and has that note of authority which mystics may love or may resent, but from which they do not turn away. . . . Our great writer on mysticism. . . . By far the deepest and most accomplished writer on mysticism among us."—The Rev. Sir William Robertson Nicoll in *The British Weekly*.

"Everywhere in the poems . . . the common objects and experiences of human life are transmuted to pageantries, emblazonments, gorgeous rites and Eucharistic feasts. The effect is often sumptuous, and it is the lavish use, within artistic limits, of Roman symbol and ceremonial which gives Mr. Waite's verse its peculiar charm; just as, if it be permissible to cite in this connection so diverse a singer, the secret of Mr. Kipling's strength in his finest poems lies in his apt employment of the language of the Bible. The poems are the most remarkable and, on the whole, the most successful attempt to sing the mysteries of mysticism since Blake wrote his 'Prophetic Books.' . . . Mr. Waite's mystical poetry glows with ardour, thrills with rapture, pulses with passion."—Mr. James Douglas in *The Star*.

Mr. Waite shows himself a brother of the literary craft by all possible tests. . . . He is valiant, wise, and self-controlled."—The Rev. William Barry in *The Bookman*.

"Mr. Waite, by far the most learned modern scholar of occultism, has said of alchemists, in a noble sentence, 'they were soul seekers and they had found the soul; they were artificers and they had adorned the soul; they were alchemists and had transmuted it.'"—Mr. John Masefield in *The Quest*.

“Mr. Waite’s message is not sporadic, but systematic. He writes always with and from the open vision, and with his feet upon the rock of knowledge and tested, first hand, spiritual experience. His voice is that of one who has climbed to certain heights above his labouring fellows and shouts down to them an assurance that the path upwards is safe and sure, if severe, and that beyond the wreathing clouds he has seen peaks that will repay the climb. He is expositor, and encourages, as well as seer and poet. . . . And thus it comes about that with ‘the glorious company of the apostles’ of poetry who have striven to express the mystical Ideal in verse . . . it may be claimed that Mr. Waite is to be marked as one who speaks with a confidence, and perhaps with an experience, that is excelled by none, and with a variety of expression and form attained by few. In *The King’s Rendering*, a superb poem, presaging things that shall be, he gives us the vision of the return of the mystic King from Avalon with the Graal. . . . This is poetry at its noblest, but Mr. Waite’s implication is that there remains something nobler still—namely, the personal realisation of what that vision implies. . . . His work carries with it a claim to that tribute which is due to the servitors and illuminators of humanity.”—Mr. W. L. Wilmshurst in *The Occult Review*.

“Undoubtedly one of the most original and remarkable books of verse published for many years. . . . His language is the language of true poetry, his words beautifully chosen, his cadences full of melodious expression, and his themes such as are seldom touched on and still more seldom comprehended in these modern times. He is conscious of mysteries around us, and through the veil of environment he catches the glimpses of distant truths, of secret meanings, and of the goal which gleams afar and towards which men of thought and research are travelling. . . . His verse is often of ecstatic quality.”—*The Birmingham Daily Gazette* on *A Book of Mystery and Vision*.

“Of Mr. Waite one need hardly speak at this late day. . . . Of all living exponents of Mysticism, he is the one who speaks most surely ‘with authority and not as the scribes.’”—*The Presbyterian*.



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