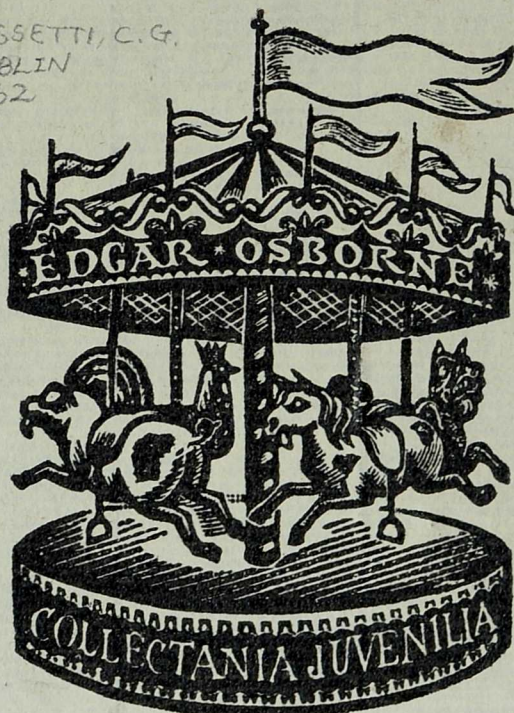




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ROSSETTI, C. G.
GOBLIN
1862



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"Buy from us with @golden curl"

A. Macmillan

GOBLIN MARKET
and other poems
by Christina Rossetti



"Golden head by golden head"

London and Cambridge
Macmillan and Co. 1862

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WJL

GOBLIN MARKET

AND

OTHER POEMS.

BY

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

WITH TWO DESIGNS BY D. G. ROSSETTI.

Cambridge

MACMILLAN AND CO.

AND 23, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

London

1862.

LONDON :

BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.

TO

MY MOTHER,

IN ALL REVERENCE AND LOVE,

I INSCRIBE THIS BOOK.

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GOBLIN MARKET.

MORNING and evening

Maids heard the goblins cry :

“Come buy our orchard fruits,

Come buy, come buy :

Apples and quinces,

Lemons and oranges,

Plump unpecked cherries,

Melons and raspberries,

Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,

Swart-headed mulberries,

Wild free-born cranberries,

Crab-apples, dewberries,

Pine-apples, blackberries,

Apricots, strawberries ;—

All ripe together

In summer weather,—
Morns that pass by,
Fair eves that fly ;
Come buy, come buy :
Our grapes fresh from the vine,
Pomegranates full and fine,
Dates and sharp bullaces,
Rare pears and greengages,
Damsons and bilberries,
Taste them and try :
Currants and gooseberries,
Bright-fire-like barberries,
Figs to fill your mouth,
Citrons from the South,
Sweet to tongue and sound to eye ;
Come buy, come buy."

Evening by evening
Among the brookside rushes,
Laura bowed her head to hear,

Lizzie veiled her blushes :
Crouching close together
In the cooling weather,
With clasping arms and cautioning lips,
With tingling cheeks and finger tips.
“Lie close,” Laura said,
Pricking up her golden head :
“We must not look at goblin men,
We must not buy their fruits :
Who knows upon what soil they fed
Their hungry thirsty roots ? ”
“Come buy,” call the goblins
Hobbling down the glen.
“Oh,” cried Lizzie, “Laura, Laura,
You should not peep at goblin men.”
Lizzie covered up her eyes,
Covered close lest they should look ;
Laura reared her glossy head,
And whispered like the restless brook :
“Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie,

Down the glen tramp little men.

One hauls a basket,

One bears a plate,

One lugs a golden dish

Of many pounds weight.

How fair the vine must grow

Whose grapes are so luscious ;

How warm the wind must blow

Through those fruit bushes."

"No," said Lizzie : "No, no, no ;

Their offers should not charm us,

Their evil gifts would harm us."

She thrust a dimpled finger

In each ear, shut eyes and ran :

Curious Laura chose to linger

Wondering at each merchant man.

One had a cat's face,

One whisked a tail,

One tramped at a rat's pace,

One crawled like a snail,

One like a wombat prowled obtuse and furry,
One like a ratel tumbled hurry skurry.
She heard a voice like voice of doves
Cooing all together :
They sounded kind and full of loves
In the pleasant weather.

Laura stretched her gleaming neck
Like a rush-imbedded swan,
Like a lily from the beck,
Like a moonlit poplar branch,
Like a vessel at the launch
When its last restraint is gone.

Backwards up the mossy glen
Turned and trooped the goblin men,
With their shrill repeated cry,
“Come buy, come buy.”
When they reached where Laura was
They stood stock still upon the moss,

Leering at each other,
Brother with queer brother ;
Signalling each other,
Brother with sly brother.
One set his basket down,
One reared his plate ;
One began to weave a crown
Of tendrils, leaves and rough nuts brown
(Men sell not such in any town) ;
One heaved the golden weight
Of dish and fruit to offer her :
“ Come buy, come buy,” was still their cry.
Laura stared but did not stir,
Longed but had no money :
The whisk-tailed merchant bade her taste
In tones as smooth as honey,
The cat-faced purr’d,
The rat-paced spoke a word
Of welcome, and the snail-paced even was heard ;
One parrot-voiced and jolly

Cried "Pretty Goblin" still for "Pretty Polly ;"—
One whistled like a bird.

But sweet-tooth Laura spoke in haste :
"Good folk, I have no coin ;
To take were to purloin :
I have no copper in my purse,
I have no silver either,
And all my gold is on the furze
That shakes in windy weather
Above the rusty heather."
"You have much gold upon your head,"
They answered all together :
"Buy from us with a golden curl."
She clipped a precious golden lock,
She dropped a tear more rare than pearl,
Then sucked their fruit globes fair or red :
Sweeter than honey from the rock,
Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,
Clearer than water flowed that juice ;

She never tasted such before,
How should it cloy with length of use ?
She sucked and sucked and sucked the more
Fruits which that unknown orchard bore ;
She sucked until her lips were sore ;
Then flung the emptied rinds away
But gathered up one kernel-stone,
And knew not was it night or day
As she turned home alone.

Lizzie met her at the gate
Full of wise upbraidings :
“ Dear, you should not stay so late,
Twilight is not good for maidens ;
Should not loiter in the glen
In the haunts of goblin men.
Do you not remember Jeanie,
How she met them in the moonlight,
Took their gifts both choice and many,
Ate their fruits and wore their flowers

Plucked from bowers
Where summer ripens at all hours ?
But ever in the noonlight
She pined and pined away ;
Sought them by night and day,
Found them no more but dwindled and grew grey ;
Then fell with the first snow,
While to this day no grass will grow
Where she lies low :
I planted daisies there a year ago
That never blow.
You should not loiter so.”
“Nay, hush,” said Laura :
“Nay, hush, my sister :
I ate and ate my fill,
Yet my mouth waters still ;
To-morrow night I will
Buy more :” and kissed her :
“Have done with sorrow ;
I’ll bring you plums to-morrow

Fresh on their mother twigs,
Cherries worth getting ;
You cannot think what figs
My teeth have met in,
What melons icy-cold
Piled on a dish of gold
Too huge for me to hold,
What peaches with a velvet nap,
Pellucid grapes without one seed :
Odorous indeed must be the mead
Whereon they grow, and pure the wave they drink
With lilies at the brink,
And sugar-sweet their sap."

Golden head by golden head,
Like two pigeons in one nest
Folded in each other's wings,
They lay down in their curtained bed :
Like two blossoms on one stem,
Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow,

Like two wands of ivory
Tipped with gold for awful kings.
Moon and stars gazed in at them,
Wind sang to them lullaby,
Lumbering owls forbore to fly,
Not a bat flapped to and fro
Round their rest :
Cheek to cheek and breast to breast
Locked together in one nest.

Early in the morning
When the first cock crowed his warning,
Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,
Laura rose with Lizzie :
Fetched in honey, milked the cows,
Aired and set to rights the house,
Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,
Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,
Next churned butter, whipped up cream,
Fed their poultry, sat and sewed ;

Talked as modest maidens should :
Lizzie with an open heart,
Laura in an absent dream,
One content, one sick in part ;
One warbling for the mere bright day's delight,
One longing for the night.

At length slow evening came :
They went with pitchers to the reedy brook ;
Lizzie most placid in her look,
Laura most like a leaping flame.
They drew the gurgling water from its deep ;
Lizzie plucked purple and rich golden flags,
Then turning homewards said : "The sunset flushes
Those furthest loftiest crags ;
Come, Laura, not another maiden lags,
No wilful squirrel wags,
The beasts and birds are fast asleep."
But Laura loitered still among the rushes
And said the bank was steep.

And said the hour was early still,
The dew not fall'n, the wind not chill :
Listening ever, but not catching
The customary cry,
"Come buy, come buy,"
With its iterated jingle
Of sugar-baited words :
Not for all her watching
Once discerning even one goblin
Racing, whisking, tumbling, hobbling ;
Let alone the herds
That used to tramp along the glen,
In groups or single,
Of brisk fruit-merchant men.

Till Lizzie urged, "O Laura, come ;
I hear the fruit-call but I dare not look :
You should not loiter longer at this brook :
Come with me home.
The stars rise, the moon bends her arc,

Each glowworm winks her spark,
Let us get home before the night grows dark :
For clouds may gather
Though this is summer weather,
Put out the lights and drench us through ;
Then if we lost our way what should we do ?”

Laura turned cold as stone
To find her sister heard that cry alone,
That goblin cry,
“Come buy our fruits, come buy.”
Must she then buy no more such dainty fruits ?
Must she no more that succous pasture find,
Gone deaf and blind ?
Her tree of life drooped from the root :
She said not one word in her heart’s sore ache ;
But peering thro’ the dimness, nought discerning,
Trudged home, her pitcher dripping all the way ;
So crept to bed, and lay
Silent till Lizzie slept ;

Then sat up in a passionate yearning,
And gnashed her teeth for baulked desire, and wept
As if her heart would break.

Day after day, night after night,
Laura kept watch in vain
In sullen silence of exceeding pain.
She never caught again the goblin cry :
“Come buy, come buy ;”—
She never spied the goblin men
Hawking their fruits along the glen :
But when the noon waxed bright
Her hair grew thin and grey ;
She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth turn
To swift decay and burn
Her fire away.

One day remembering her kernel-stone
She set it by a wall that faced the south ;
Dewed it with tears, hoped for a root,

Watched for a waxing shoot,
But there came none ;
It never saw the sun,
It never felt the trickling moisture run :
While with sunk eyes and faded mouth
She dreamed of melons, as a traveller sees
False waves in desert drouth
With shade of leaf-crowned trees,
And burns the thirstier in the sandful breeze.

She no more swept the house,
Tended the fowls or cows,
Fetched honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,
Brought water from the brook :
But sat down listless in the chimney-nook
And would not eat.

Tender Lizzie could not bear
To watch her sister's cankerous care
Yet not to share.

She night and morning
Caught the goblins' cry :
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy :"—
Beside the brook, along the glen,
She heard the tramp of goblin men,
The voice and stir
Poor Laura could not hear ;
Longed to buy fruit to comfort her,
But feared to pay too dear.
She thought of Jeanie in her grave,
Who should have been a bride ;
But who for joys brides hope to have
Fell sick and died
In her gay prime,
In earliest Winter time,
With the first glazing rime,
With the first snow-fall of crisp Winter time.

Till Laura dwindling

Seemed knocking at Death's door :
Then Lizzie weighed no more
Better and worse ;
But put a silver penny in her purse,
Kissed Laura, crossed the heath with clumps of furze
At twilight, halted by the brook :
And for the first time in her life
Began to listen and look.

Laughed every goblin
When they spied her peeping :
Came towards her hobbling,
Flying, running, leaping,
Puffing and blowing,
Chuckling, clapping, crowing,
Clucking and gobbling,
Mopping and mowing,
Full of airs and graces,
Pulling wry faces,
Demure grimaces,

Cat-like and rat-like,
Ratel- and wombat-like,
Snail-paced in a hurry,
Parrot-voiced and whistler,
Helter skelter, hurry skurry,
Chattering like magpies,
Fluttering like pigeons,
Gliding like fishes,—
Hugged her and kissed her,
Squeezed and caressed her :
Stretched up their dishes,
Panniers, and plates :
“Look at our apples
Russet and dun,
Bob at our cherries,
Bite at our peaches,
Citrons and dates,
Grapes for the asking,
Pears red with basking
Out in the sun,

Plums on their twigs ;
Pluck them and suck them,
Pomegranates, figs."—

“ Good folk,” said Lizzie,
Mindful of Jeanie :
“ Give me much and many : ”—
Held out her apron,
Tossed them her penny.
“ Nay, take a seat with us,
Honour and eat with us,”
They answered grinning :
“ Our feast is but beginning.
Night yet is early,
Warm and dew-pearly,
Wakeful and starry :
Such fruits as these
No man can carry ;
Half their bloom would fly,
Half their dew would dry,

Half their flavour would pass by.

Sit down and feast with us,

Be welcome guest with us,

Cheer you and rest with us."—

"Thank you," said Lizzie : "But one waits

At home alone for me :

So without further parleying,

If you will not sell me any

Of your fruits though much and many,

Give me back my silver penny

I tossed you for a fee."—

They began to scratch their pates,

No longer wagging, purring,

But visibly demurring,

Grunting and snarling.

One called her proud,

Cross-grained, uncivil ;

Their tones waxed loud,

Their looks were evil.

Lashing their tails

They trod and hustled her,
Elbowed and jostled her,
Clawed with their nails,
Barking, mewling, hissing, mocking,
Tore her gown and soiled her stocking,
Twitched her hair out by the roots,
Stamped upon her tender feet,
Held her hands and squeezed their fruits
Against her mouth to make her eat.

White and golden Lizzie stood,
Like a lily in a flood,—
Like a rock of blue-veined stone
Lashed by tides obstreperously,—
Like a beacon left alone
In a hoary roaring sea,
Sending up a golden fire,—
Like a fruit-crowned orange-tree
White with blossoms honey-sweet
Sore beset by wasp and bee,—

Like a royal virgin town
Topped with gilded dome and spire
Close beleaguered by a fleet
Mad to tug her standard down.

One may lead a horse to water,
Twenty cannot make him drink.
Though the goblins cuffed and caught her,
Coaxed and fought her,
Bullied and besought her,
Scratched her, pinched her black as ink,
Kicked and knocked her,
Mauled and mocked her,
Lizzie uttered not a word ;
Would not open lip from lip
Lest they should cram a mouthful in :
But laughed in heart to feel the drip
Of juice that syrugged all her face,
And lodged in dimples of her chin,
And streaked her neck which quaked like curd.

At last the evil people
Worn out by her resistance
Flung back her penny, kicked their fruit
Along whichever road they took,
Not leaving root or stone or shoot ;
Some writhed into the ground,
Some dived into the brook
With ring and ripple,
Some scudded on the gale without a sound,
Some vanished in the distance.

In a smart, ache, tingle,
Lizzie went her way ;
Knew not was it night or day ;
Sprang up the bank, tore thro' the furze,
Threaded copse and dingle,
And heard her penny jingle
Bouncing in her purse,—
Its bounce was music to her ear.
She ran and ran

As if she feared some goblin man
Dogged her with gibe or curse
Or something worse :
But not one goblin skurried after,
Nor was she pricked by fear ;
The kind heart made her windy-paced
That urged her home quite out of breath with haste
And inward laughter.

She cried "Laura," up the garden,
"Did you miss me ?
Come and kiss me.
Never mind my bruises,
Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,
Goblin pulp and goblin dew.
Eat me, drink me, love me ;
Laura, make much of me :
For your sake I have braved the glen
And had to do with goblin merchant men."

Laura started from her chair,
Flung her arms up in the air,
Clutched her hair :
“ Lizzie, Lizzie, have you tasted
For my sake the fruit forbidden ?
Must your light like mine be hidden,
Your young life like mine be wasted,
Undone in mine undoing
And ruined in my ruin,
Thirsty, cankered, goblin-ridden ? ”—
She clung about her sister,
Kissed and kissed and kissed her :
Tears once again
Refreshed her shrunken eyes,
Dropping like rain
After long sultry drouth ;
Shaking with aguish fear, and pain,
She kissed and kissed her with a hungry mouth.

Her lips began to scorch,

That juice was wormwood to her tongue,
She loathed the feast :
Writhing as one possessed she leaped and sung,
Rent all her robe, and wrung
Her hands in lamentable haste,
And beat her breast.
Her locks streamed like the torch
Borne by a racer at full speed,
Or like the mane of horses in their flight,
Or like an eagle when she stems the light
Straight toward the sun,
Or like a caged thing freed,
Or like a flying flag when armies run.

Swift fire spread through her veins, knocked at her
heart,
Met the fire smouldering there
And overbore its lesser flame ;
She gorged on bitterness without a name :
Ah ! fool, to choose such part

Of soul-consuming care !
Sense failed in the mortal strife :
Like the watch-tower of a town
Which an earthquake shatters down,
Like a lightning-stricken mast,
Like a wind-uprooted tree
Spun about,
Like a foam-topped waterspout
Cast down headlong in the sea,
She fell at last ;
Pleasure past and anguish past,
Is it death or is it life ?

Life out of death.

That night long Lizzie watched by her,
Counted her pulse's flagging stir,
Felt for her breath,
Held water to her lips, and cooled her face
With tears and fanning leaves :
But when the first birds chirped about their eaves,

And early reapers plodded to the place
Of golden sheaves,
And dew-wet grass
Bowed in the morning winds so brisk to pass,
And new buds with new day
Opened of cup-like lilies on the stream,
Laura awoke as from a dream,
Laughed in the innocent old way,
Hugged Lizzie but not twice or thrice ;
Her gleaming locks showed not one thread of grey,
Her breath was sweet as May
And light danced in her eyes.

Days, weeks, months, years,
Afterwards, when both were wives
With children of their own ;
Their mother-hearts beset with fears,
Their lives bound up in tender lives ;
Laura would call the little ones
And tell them of her early prime,

Those pleasant days long gone
Of not-returning time :
Would talk about the haunted glen,
The wicked, quaint fruit-merchant men,
Their fruits like honey to the throat
But poison in the blood ;
(Men sell not such in any town :)
Would tell them how her sister stood
In deadly peril to do her good,
And win the fiery antidote :
Then joining hands to little hands
Would bid them cling together,
“ For there is no friend like a sister
In calm or stormy weather ;
To cheer one on the tedious way,
To fetch one if one goes astray,
To lift one if one totters down,
To strengthen whilst one stands.”

IN THE ROUND TOWER AT JHANSI,

JUNE 8, 1857.

A HUNDRED, a thousand to one ; even so ;

Not a hope in the world remained :

The swarming howling wretches below

Gained and gained and gained.

Skene looked at his pale young wife :—

“Is the time come ?”—“The time is come !”—

Young, strong, and so full of life :

The agony struck them dumb.

Close his arm about her now,

Close her cheek to his,

Close the pistol to her brow—

God forgive them this !

“Will it hurt much?”—“No, mine own :

I wish I could bear the pang for both.”

“I wish I could bear the pang alone :

Courage, dear, I am not loth.”

Kiss and kiss : “It is not pain

Thus to kiss and die.

One kiss more.”—“And yet one again.”—

“Good bye.”—“Good bye.”

DREAM LAND.

WHERE sunless rivers weep
 Their waves into the deep,
 She sleeps a charmed sleep :

Awake her not.

Led by a single star,
 She came from very far
 To seek where shadows are
 Her pleasant lot.

She left the rosy morn,
 She left the fields of corn,
 For twilight cold and lorn
 And water springs.

Through sleep, as through a veil,
 She sees the sky look pale,

And hears the nightingale
That sadly sings.

Rest, rest, a perfect rest
Shed over brow and breast ;
Her face is toward the west,
The purple land.

She cannot see the grain
Ripening on hill and plain ;
She cannot feel the rain
Upon her hand.

Rest, rest, for evermore
Upon a mossy shore ;
Rest, rest at the heart's core
Till time shall cease :
Sleep that no pain shall wake,
Night that no morn shall break
Till joy shall overtake
Her perfect peace.

AT HOME.

WHEN I was dead, my spirit turned

To seek the much frequented house :

I passed the door, and saw my friends

Feasting beneath green orange boughs ;

From hand to hand they pushed the wine,

They sucked the pulp of plum and peach ;

They sang, they jested, and they laughed,

For each was loved of each.

I listened to their honest chat :

Said one : "To-morrow we shall be

Plod plod along the featureless sands

And coasting miles and miles of sea."

Said one : "Before the turn of tide

We will achieve the eyrie-seat."

Said one : "To-morrow shall be like
To-day, but much more sweet."

"To-morrow," said they, strong with hope,
And dwelt upon the pleasant way :
"To-morrow," cried they one and all,
While no one spoke of yesterday.
Their life stood full at blessed noon ;
I, only I, had passed away :
"To-morrow and to-day," they cried ;
I was of yesterday.

I shivered comfortless, but cast
No chill across the tablecloth ;
I all-forgotten shivered, sad
To stay and yet to part how loth :
I passed from the familiar room,
I who from love had passed away,
Like the remembrance of a guest
That tarrieth but a day.

A TRIAD.

SONNET.

THREE sang of love together : one with lips
 Crimson, with cheeks and bosom in a glow,
 Flushed to the yellow hair and finger tips ;
 And one there sang who soft and smooth as snow
 Bloomed like a tinted hyacinth at a show ;
 And one was blue with famine after love,
 Who like a harpstring snapped rang harsh and low
 The burden of what those were singing of.
 One shamed herself in love ; one temperately
 Grew gross in soulless love, a sluggish wife ;
 One famished died for love. Thus two of three
 Took death for love and won him after strife ;
 One droned in sweetness like a fattened bee :
 All on the threshold, yet all short of life.

LOVE FROM THE NORTH.

I HAD a love in soft south land,
Beloved through April far in May ;
He waited on my lightest breath,
And never dared to say me nay.

He saddened if my cheer was sad,
But gay he grew if I was gay ;
We never differed on a hair,
My yes his yes, my nay his nay.

The wedding hour was come, the aisles
Were flushed with sun and flowers that day ;
I pacing balanced in my thoughts :
' It's quite too late to think of nay.'—

My bridegroom answered in his turn,
Myself had almost answered 'yea :'
When through the flashing nave I heard
A struggle and resounding 'nay'.

Bridemaids and bridegroom shrank in fear,
But I stood high who stood at bay :
"And if I answer yea, fair Sir,
What man art thou to bar with nay?"

He was a strong man from the north,
Light-locked, with eyes of dangerous gray :
"Put yea by for another time
In which I will not say thee nay."

He took me in his strong white arms,
He bore me on his horse away
O'er crag, morass, and hairbreadth pass,
But never asked me yea or nay.

He made me fast with book and bell,
With links of love he makes me stay ;
Till now I've neither heart nor power
Nor will nor wish to say him nay.

WINTER RAIN.

EVERY valley drinks,
Every dell and hollow :
Where the kind rain sinks and sinks,
Green of Spring will follow.

Yet a lapse of weeks
Buds will burst their edges,
Strip their wool-coats, glue-coats, streaks,
In the woods and hedges ;

Weave a bower of love
For birds to meet each other,
Weave a canopy above
Nest and egg and mother

But for fattening rain

We should have no flowers,

Never a bud or leaf again

But for soaking showers ;

Never a mated bird

In the rocking tree-tops,

Never indeed a flock or herd

To graze upon the lea-crops.

Lambs so woolly white,

Sheep the sun-bright leas on,

They could have no grass to bite

But for rain in season.

We should find no moss

In the shadiest places,

Find no waving meadow grass

Pied with broad-eyed daisies :

But miles of barren sand,
With never a son or daughter,
Not a lily on the land,
Or lily on the water.

COUSIN KATE.

I WAS a cottage maiden
Hardened by sun and air,
Contented with my cottage mates,
Not mindful I was fair.
Why did a great lord find me out,
And praise my flaxen hair ?
Why did a great lord find me out
To fill my heart with care ?

He lured me to his palace home—
Woe's me for joy thereof—
To lead a shameless shameful life,
His plaything and his love.
He wore me like a silken knot,
He changed me like a glove ;

So now I moan, an unclean thing,
Who might have been a dove.

O Lady Kate, my cousin Kate,
You grew more fair than I :
He saw you at your father's gate,
Chose you, and cast me by.
He watched your steps along the lane,
Your work among the rye ;
He lifted you from mean estate
To sit with him on high.

Because you were so good and pure
He bound you with his ring :
The neighbours call you good and pure,
Call me an outcast thing.
Even so I sit and howl in dust,
You sit in gold and sing : *
Now which of us has tenderer heart ?
You had the stronger wing.

O cousin Kate, my love was true,
Your love was writ in sand :
If he had fooled not me but you,
If you stood where I stand,
He'd not have won me with his love
Nor bought me with his land ;
I would have spit into his face
And not have taken his hand.

Yet I've a gift you have not got,
And seem not like to get :
For all your clothes and wedding-ring
I've little doubt you fret.
My fair-haired son, my shame, my pride,
Cling closer, closer yet :
Your father would give lands for one
To wear his coronet.

NOBLE SISTERS.

"Now did you mark a falcon,

Sister dear, sister dear,

Flying toward my window

In the morning cool and clear ?

With jingling bells about her neck,

But what beneath her wing ?

It may have been a ribbon,

Or it may have been a ring."—

"I marked a falcon swooping

At the break of day :

And for your love, my sister dove,

I 'frayed the thief away."—

“Or did you spy a ruddy hound,
Sister fair and tall,
Went snuffing round my garden bound,
Or crouched by my bower wall?
With a silken leash about his neck;
But in his mouth may be
A chain of gold and silver links,
Or a letter writ to me.”—

“I heard a hound, highborn sister,
Stood baying at the moon:
I rose and drove him from your wall
Lest you should wake too soon.”—

“Or did you meet a pretty page
Sat swinging on the gate;
Sat whistling whistling like a bird,
Or may be slept too late:
With eaglets broidered on his cap,
And eaglets on his glove?

If you had turned his pockets out,
You had found some pledge of love."—
"I met him at this daybreak,
Scarce the east was red :
Lest the creaking gate should anger you,
I packed him home to bed."—

"Oh patience, sister. Did you see
A young man tall and strong,
Swift-footed to uphold the right
And to uproot the wrong,
Come home across the desolate sea
To woo me for his wife ?
And in his heart my heart is locked,
And in his life my life."—

"I met a nameless man, sister,
Hard by your chamber door :
I said : Her husband loves her much,
And yet she loves him more."—

“Fie, sister, fie, a wicked lie,

A lie, a wicked lie,

I have none other love but him,

Nor will have till I die.

And you have turned him from our door,

And stabbed him with a lie :

I will go seek him thro’ the world

In sorrow till I die.”—

“Go seek in sorrow, sister,

And find in sorrow too :

If thus you shame our father’s name

My curse go forth with you.”—

SPRING.

FROST-LOCKED all the winter,
Seeds, and roots, and stones of fruits,
What shall make their sap ascend
That they may put forth shoots?
Tips of tender green,
Leaf, or blade, or sheath;
Telling of the hidden life
That breaks forth underneath,
Life nursed in its grave by Death.

Blows the thaw-wind pleasantly,
Drips the soaking rain,
By fits looks down the waking sun :
Young grass springs on the plain ;

Young leaves clothe early hedgerow trees ;
Seeds, and roots, and stones of fruits,
Swollen with sap put forth their shoots ;
Curled-headed ferns sprout in the lane ;
Birds sing and pair again.

There is no time like Spring,
When life's alive in everything,
Before new nestlings sing,
Before cleft swallows speed their journey back
Along the trackless track—
God guides their wing,
He spreads their table that they nothing lack—,
Before the daisy grows a common flower,
Before the sun has power
To scorch the world up in his noontide hour.

There is no time like Spring,
Like Spring that passes by ;
There is no life like Spring-life born to die,—

Piercing the sod,
Clothing the uncouth clod,
Hatched in the nest,
Fledged on the windy bough,
Strong on the wing :
There is no time like Spring that passes by,
Now newly born, and now
Hastening to die.

THE LAMBS OF GRASMERE, 1860.

THE upland flocks grew starved and thinned :

 Their shepherds scarce could feed the lambs
Whose milkless mothers butted them,
 Or who were orphaned of their dams.

The lambs athirst for mother's milk

 Filled all the place with piteous sounds :
Their mothers' bones made white for miles
 The pastureless wet pasture grounds.

Day after day, night after night,

 From lamb to lamb the shepherds went,
With teapots for the bleating mouths
 Instead of nature's nourishment.

The little shivering gaping things

 Soon knew the step that brought them aid,

And fondled the protecting hand,
And rubbed it with a woolly head.

Then, as the days waxed on to weeks,
It was a pretty sight to see
These lambs with frisky heads and tails
Skipping and leaping on the lea,
Bleating in tender, trustful tones,
Resting on rocky crag or mound,
And following the beloved feet
That once had sought for them and found.

These very shepherds of their flocks,
These loving lambs so meek to please,
Are worthy of recording words
And honour in their due degrees :
So I might live a hundred years,
And roam from strand to foreign strand,
Yet not forget this flooded spring
And scarce-saved lambs of Westmoreland.

A BIRTHDAY.

My heart is like a singing bird

Whose nest is in a watered shoot ;

My heart is like an appletree

Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit ;

My heart is like a rainbow shell

That paddles in a halcyon sea ;

My heart is gladder than all these

Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down ;

Hang it with vair and purple dyes ;

Carve it in doves, and pomegranates,

And peacocks with a hundred eyes ;

Work it in gold and silver grapes,
In leaves, and silver fleurs-de-lys ;
Because the birthday of my life
Is come, my love is come to me.

REMEMBER.

SONNET.

REMEMBER me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land ;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of our future that you planned :
Only remember me ; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve :
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.

AFTER DEATH.

SONNET.

THE curtains were half drawn, the floor was swept
And strewn with rushes, rosemary and may
Lay thick upon the bed on which I lay,
Where through the lattice ivy-shadows crept.
He leaned above me, thinking that I slept
And could not hear him ; but I heard him say :
“ Poor child, poor child : ” and as he turned away
Came a deep silence, and I knew he wept.
He did not touch the shroud, or raise the fold
That hid my face, or take my hand in his,
Or ruffle the smooth pillows for my head :
He did not love me living ; but once dead
He pitied me ; and very sweet it is
To know he still is warm though I am cold.

AN END.

LOVE, strong as Death, is dead.

Come, let us make his bed

Among the dying flowers :

A green turf at his head ;

And a stone at his feet,

Whereon we may sit

In the quiet evening hours.

He was born in the Spring,

And died before the harvesting :

On the last warm summer day

He left us ; he would not stay

For Autumn twilight cold and grey.

Sit we by his grave, and sing

He is gone away.

To few chords and sad and low

Sing we so :

Be our eyes fixed on the grass

Shadow-veiled as the years pass,

While we think of all that was

In the long ago.

MY DREAM.

HEAR now a curious dream I dreamed last night,
Each word whereof is weighed and sifted truth.

I stood beside Euphrates while it swelled
Like overflowing Jordan in its youth :
It waxed and coloured sensibly to sight ;
Till out of myriad pregnant waves there welled
Young crocodiles, a gaunt blunt-featured crew,
Fresh-hatched perhaps and daubed with birthday dew.
The rest if I should tell, I fear my friend
My closest friend would deem the facts untrue ;
And therefore it were wisely left untold ;
Yet if you will, why hear it to the end.

Each crocodile was girt with massive gold
And polished stones that with their wearers grew :
But one there was who waxed beyond the rest,
Wore kinglier girdle and a kingly crown,
Whilst crowns and orbs and sceptres starred his breast.
All gleamed compact and green with scale on scale,
But special burnishment adorned his mail
And special terror weighed upon his frown ;
His punier brethren quaked before his tail,
Broad as a rafter, potent as a flail.
So he grew lord and master of his kin :
But who shall tell the tale of all their woes ?
An execrable appetite arose,
He battened on them, crunched, and sucked them in.
He knew no law, he feared no binding law,
But ground them with inexorable jaw :
The luscious fat distilled upon his chin,
Exuded from his nostrils and his eyes,
While still like hungry death he fed his maw ;
Till every minor crocodile being dead

And buried too, himself gorged to the full,
He slept with breath oppressed and unstrung claw.
Oh marvel passing strange which next I saw :
In sleep he dwindled to the common size,
And all the empire faded from his coat.
Then from far off a wingèd vessel came,
Swift as a swallow, subtle as a flame :
I know not what it bore of freight or host,
But white it was as an avenging ghost.
It levelled strong Euphrates in its course ;
Supreme yet weightless as an idle mote
It seemed to tame the waters without force
Till not a murmur swelled or billow beat :
Lo, as the purple shadow swept the sands,
The prudent crocodile rose on his feet
And shed appropriate tears and wrung his hands.

What can it mean ? you ask. I answer not
For meaning, but myself must echo, What ?
And tell it as I saw it on the spot.

SONG.

Oh roses for the flush of youth,
And laurel for the perfect prime ;
But pluck an ivy branch for me
Grown old before my time.

Oh violets for the grave of youth,
And bay for those dead in their prime ;
Give me the withered leaves I chose
Before in the old time.

THE HOUR AND THE GHOST.

BRIDE.

O LOVE, love, hold me fast,
He draws me away from thee ;
I cannot stem the blast,
Nor the cold strong sea :
Far away a light shines
Beyond the hills and pines ;
It is lit for me.

BRIDEGROOM.

I have thee close, my dear,
No terror can come near ;
Only far off the northern light shines clear.

GHOST.

Come with me, fair and false,
To our home, come home.
It is my voice that calls :
Once thou wast not afraid
When I wooed, and said,
'Come, our nest is newly made'—
Now cross the tossing foam.

BRIDE.

Hold me one moment longer,
He taunts me with the past,
His clutch is waxing stronger,
Hold me fast, hold me fast.
He draws me from thy heart,
And I cannot withhold :
He bids my spirit depart
With him into the cold :—
Oh bitter vows of old !

BRIDEGROOM.

Lean on me, hide thine eyes :
Only ourselves, earth and skies,
Are present here : be wise.

GHOST.

Lean on me, come away,
I will guide and steady :
Come, for I will not stay :
Come, for house and bed are ready.
Ah, sure bed and house,
For better and worse, for life and death :
Goal won with shortened breath :
Come, crown our vows.

BRIDE.

One moment, one more word,
While my heart beats still,
While my breath is stirred
By my fainting will.

O friend forsake me not,
Forget not as I forgot :
But keep thy heart for me,
Keep thy faith true and bright ;
Through the lone cold winter night
Perhaps I may come to thee.

BRIDEGROOM.

Nay peace, my darling, peace :
Let these dreams and terrors cease :
Who spoke of death or change or aught but ease ?

GHOST.

O fair frail sin,
O poor harvest gathered in !
Thou shalt visit him again
To watch his heart grow cold ;
To know the gnawing pain
I knew of old ;
To see one much more fair

Fill up the vacant chair,
Fill his heart, his children bear :—
While thou and I together
In the outcast weather
Toss and howl and spin.

A SUMMER WISH.

LIVE all thy sweet life thro',
Sweet Rose, dew-sprent,
Drop down thine evening dew
To gather it anew
When day is bright :
I fancy thou wast meant
Chiefly to give delight.

Sing in the silent sky,
Glad soaring bird ;
Sing out thy notes on high
To sunbeam straying by
Or passing cloud ;
Heedless if thou art heard
Sing thy full song aloud.

Oh that it were with me
As with the flower ;
Blooming on its own tree
For butterfly and bee
Its summer morns :
That I might bloom mine hour
A rose in spite of thorns.

Oh that my work were done
As birds' that soar
Rejoicing in the sun :
That when my time is run
And daylight too,
I so might rest once more
Cool with refreshing dew.

AN APPLE GATHERING.

I PLUCKED pink blossoms from mine apple tree

And wore them all that evening in my hair :

Then in due season when I went to see

I found no apples there.

With dangling basket all along the grass

As I had come I went the selfsame track :

My neighbours mocked me while they saw me pass

So empty-handed back.

Lilian and Liliás smiled in trudging by,

Their heaped-up basket teased me like a jeer ;

Sweet-voiced they sang beneath the sunset sky,

Their mother's home was near.

Plump Gertrude passed me with her basket full,
A stronger hand than hers helped it along ;
A voice talked with her through the shadows cool
More sweet to me than song.

Ah Willie, Willie, was my love less worth
Than apples with their green leaves piled above ?
I counted rosiest apples on the earth
Of far less worth than love.

So once it was with me you stooped to talk
Laughing and listening in this very lane :
To think that by this way we used to walk
We shall not walk again !

I let my neighbours pass me, ones and twos
And groups ; the latest said the night grew chill,
And hastened : but I loitered, while the dew
Fell fast I loitered still.

SONG.

Two doves upon the selfsame branch,

Two lilies on a single stem,

Two butterflies upon one flower :—

Oh happy they who look on them.

Who look upon them hand in hand

Flushed in the rosy summer light ;

Who look upon them hand in hand

And never give a thought to night.

MAUDE CLARE.

Out of the church she followed them

With a lofty step and mien :

His bride was like a village maid,

Maude Clare was like a queen.

“Son Thomas,” his lady mother said,

With smiles, almost with tears :

“May Nell and you but live as true

As we have done for years ;

“Your father thirty years ago

Had just your tale to tell ;

But he was not so pale as you,

Nor I so pale as Nell.”

My lord was pale with inward strife,
And Nell was pale with pride ;
My lord gazed long on pale Maude Clare
Or ever he kissed the bride.

“Lo, I have brought my gift, my lord,
Have brought my gift,” she said :
“To bless the hearth, to bless the board,
To bless the marriage-bed.

“Here’s my half of the golden chain
You wore about your neck,
That day we waded ankle-deep
For lilies in the beck :

“Here’s my half of the faded leaves
We plucked from budding bough,
With feet amongst the lily leaves,—
The lilies are budding now.”

He strove to match her scorn with scorn,
He faltered in his place :
“Lady,” he said,—“Maude Clare,” he said,—
“Maude Clare :”—and hid his face.

She turn'd to Nell : “My Lady Nell,
I have a gift for you ;
Though, were it fruit, the bloom were gone,
Or, were it flowers, the dew.

“Take my share of a fickle heart,
Mine of a paltry love :
Take it or leave it as you will,
I wash my hands thereof.”

“And what you leave,” said Nell, “I'll take,
And what you spurn, I'll wear ;
For he's my lord for better and worse,
And him I love, Maude Clare.

“Yea, though you’re taller by the head,
More wise, and much more fair ;
I’ll love him till he loves me best,
Me best of all, Maude Clare.”

ECHO.

COME to me in the silence of the night ;
Come in the speaking silence of a dream ;
Come with soft rounded cheeks and eyes as bright
As sunlight on a stream ;
Come back in tears,
O memory, hope, love of finished years.

Oh dream how sweet, too sweet, too bitter sweet,
Whose wakening should have been in Paradise,
Where souls brimfull of love abide and meet ;
Where thirsting longing eyes
Watch the slow door
That opening, letting in, lets out no more.

Yet come to me in dreams, that I may live

My very life again though cold in death :

Come back to me in dreams, that I may give

Pulse for pulse, breath for breath :

Speak low, lean low,

As long ago, my love, how long ago !

MY SECRET.

I TELL my secret ? No indeed, not I :

Perhaps some day, who knows ?

But not to-day ; it froze, and blows, and snows,

And you're too curious : fie !

You want to hear it ? well :

Only, my secret's mine, and I won't tell.

Or, after all, perhaps there's none :

Suppose there is no secret after all,

But only just my fun.

To-day's a nipping day, a biting day ;

In which one wants a shawl,

A veil, a cloak, and other wraps :

I cannot ope to every one who taps,

And let the draughts come whistling through my
hall;

Come bounding and surrounding me,

Come buffeting, astounding me,

Nipping and clipping through my wraps and all.

I wear my mask for warmth : who ever shows

His nose to Russian snows

To be pecked at by every wind that blows ?

You would not peck ? I thank you for good will,

Believe, but leave that truth untested still.

Spring's an expansive time : yet I don't trust
March with its peck of dust,
Nor April with its rainbow-crowned brief showers,
Nor even May, whose flowers
One frost may wither through the sunless hours.

Perhaps some languid summer day,
When drowsy birds sing less and less,
And golden fruit is ripening to excess,

If there's not too much sun nor too much cloud,
And the warm wind is neither still nor loud,
Perhaps my secret I may say,
Or you may guess.

ANOTHER SPRING.

If I might see another Spring

I'd not plant summer flowers and wait :

I'd have my crocuses at once,

My leafless pink mezereons,

My chill-veined snowdrops, choicer yet

My white or azure violet,

Leaf-nested primrose ; anything

To blow at once not late.

If I might see another Spring

I'd listen to the daylight birds

That build their nests and pair and sing,

Nor wait for mateless nightingale ;

I'd listen to the lusty herds,
The ewes with lambs as white as snow,
I'd find out music in the hail
And all the winds that blow.

If I might see another Spring—
Oh stinging comment on my past
That all my past results in "if"—
If I might see another Spring
I'd laugh to-day, to-day is brief ;
I would not wait for anything :
I'd use to-day that cannot last,
Be glad to-day and sing.

A PEAL OF BELLS.

STRIKE the bells wantonly,

Tinkle tinkle well ;

Bring me wine; bring me flowers,

Ring the silver bell.

All my lamps burn scented oil,

Hung on laden orange trees,

Whose shadowed foliage is the foil

To golden lamps and oranges.

Heap my golden plates with fruit,

Golden fruit, fresh-plucked and ripe ;

Strike the bells and breathe the pipe ;

Shut out showers from summer hours—

Silence that complaining lute—

Shut out thinking, shut out pain,
From hours that cannot come again.

Strike the bells solemnly,
Ding dong deep :
My friend is passing to his bed,
Fast asleep ;
There's plaited linen round his head,
While foremost go his feet—
His feet that cannot carry him.
My feast's a show, my lights are dim ;
Be still, your music is not sweet,—
There is no music more for him :
His lights are out, his feast is done ;
His bowl that sparkled to the brim
Is drained, is broken, cannot hold ;
My blood is chill, his blood is cold ;
His death is full, and mine begun.

FATA MORGANA.

A BLUE-EYED phantom far before
Is laughing, leaping toward the sun :
Like lead I chase it evermore,
I pant and run.

It breaks the sunlight bound on bound :
Goes singing as it leaps along
To sheep-bells with a dreamy sound
A dreamy song.

I laugh, it is so brisk and gay ;
It is so far before, I weep :
I hope I shall lie down some day,
Lie down and sleep.

“NO THANK YOU, JOHN.”

I NEVER said I loved you, John :

Why will you teaze me day by day,
And wax a weariness to think upon
With always “do” and “pray?”

You know I never loved you, John ;

No fault of mine made me your toast :
Why will you haunt me with a face as wan
As shows an hour-old ghost ?

I dare say Meg or Moll would take

Pity upon you, if you'd ask :
And pray don't remain single for my sake
Who can't perform that task.

I have no heart ?—Perhaps I have not ;
But then you're mad to take offence
That I don't give you what I have not got :
Use your own common sense.

Let bygones be bygones :
Don't call me false, who owed not to be true :
I'd rather answer "No" to fifty Johns
Than answer "Yes" to you.

Let's mar our pleasant days no more,
Song-birds of passage, days of youth :
Catch at to-day, forget the days before ;
I'll wink at your untruth.

Let us strike hands as hearty friends ;
No more, no less ; and friendship's good :
Only don't keep in view ulterior ends,
And points not understood

In open treaty. Rise above

Quibbles and shuffling off and on :

Here's friendship for you if you like ; but love,—

No thank you, John.

MAY.

I CANNOT tell you how it was ;
But this I know : it came to pass
Upon a bright and breezy day
When May was young ; ah, pleasant May !
As yet the poppies were not born
Between the blades of tender corn ;
The last eggs had not hatched as yet,
Nor any bird foregone its mate.

I cannot tell you what it was ;
But this I know : it did but pass.
It passed away with sunny May,
With all sweet things it passed away,
And left me old, and cold, and grey.

A PAUSE OF THOUGHT.

I LOOKED for that which is not, nor can be,
 And hope deferred made my heart sick in truth :
 But years must pass before a hope of youth
 Is resigned utterly.

I watched and waited with a steadfast will :
 And though the object seemed to flee away
 That I so longed for, ever day by day
 I watched and waited still.

Sometimes I said : This thing shall be no more ;
 My expectation wearies and shall cease ;
 I will resign it now and be at peace :
 Yet never gave it o'er.

Sometimes I said : It is an empty name
I long for ; to a name why should I give
The peace of all the days I have to live ?—
Yet gave it all the same.

Alas, thou foolish one ! alike unfit
For healthy joy and salutary pain :
Thou knowest the chase useless, and again
Turnest to follow it.

TWILIGHT CALM.

Oh, pleasant eventide !

Clouds on the western side

Grow grey and greyer hiding the warm sun :

The bees and birds, their happy labours done,

Seek their close nests and bide.

Screened in the leafy wood

The stock-doves sit and brood :

The very squirrel leaps from bough to bough

But lazily ; pauses ; and settles now

Where once he stored his food.

One by one the flowers close,

Lily and dewy rose

Shutting their tender petals from the moon :
The grasshoppers are still ; but not so soon
Are still the noisy crows.

The dormouse squats and eats
Choice little dainty bits
Beneath the spreading roots of a broad lime ;
Nibbling his fill he stops from time to time
And listens where he sits.

From far the lowings come
Of cattle driven home :
From farther still the wind brings fitfully
The vast continual murmur of the sea,
Now loud, now almost dumb.

The gnats whirl in the air,
The evening gnats ; and there
The owl opes broad his eyes and wings to sail
For prey ; the bat wakes ; and the shell-less snail
Comes forth clammy and bare.

Hark ! that's the nightingale,
Telling the selfsame tale
Her song told when this ancient earth was young :
So echoes answered when her song was sung
In the first wooded vale.

We call it love and pain
The passion of her strain ;
And yet we little understand or know :
Why should it not be rather joy that so
Throbs in each throbbing vein ?

In separate herds the deer
Lie ; here the bucks, and here
The does, and by its mother sleeps the fawn :
Through all the hours of night until the dawn
They sleep, forgetting fear.

The hare sleeps where it lies
With wary half-closed eyes ;

The cock has ceased to crow, the hen to cluck :

Only the fox is out, some heedless duck

Or chicken to surprise.

Remote, each single star

Comes out, till there they are

All shining brightly : how the dew drops fall damp !

While close at hand the glowworm lights her lamp

Or twinkles from afar.

But evening now is done

As much as if the sun

Day-giving had arisen in the East :

For night has come ; and the great calm has ceased,

The quiet sands have run.

WIFE TO HUSBAND.

PARDON the faults in me,

For the love of years ago :

Good bye.

I must drift across the sea,

I must sink into the snow,

I must die.

You can bask in this sun,

You can drink wine, and eat :

Good bye.

I must gird myself and run,

Though with unready feet :

I must die.

Blank sea to sail upon,
Cold bed to sleep in :
Good bye.
Whilst you clasp, I must be gone
For all your weeping :
I must die.

A kiss for one friend,
And a word for two,—
Good bye :—
A lock that you must send,
A kindness you must do :
I must die.

Not a word for you,
Not a lock or kiss,
Good bye.
We, one, must part in two ;
Verily death is this :
I must die.

THREE SEASONS.

“A cup for hope !” she said,
In springtime ere the bloom was old :
The crimson wine was poor and cold
By her mouth’s richer red.

“A cup for love !” how low,
How soft the words ; and all the while
Her blush was rippling with a smile
Like summer after snow.

“A cup for memory !”
Cold cup that one must drain alone :
While autumn winds are up and moan
Across the barren sea.

Hope, memory, love :

Hope for fair morn, and love for day,

And memory for the evening grey

And solitary dove.

MIRAGE.

THE hope I dreamed of was a dream,
Was but a dream ; and now I wake
Exceeding comfortless, and worn, and old,
For a dream's sake.

I hang my harp upon a tree,
A weeping willow in a lake ;
I hang my silenced harp there, wrung and snapt
For a dream's sake.

Lie still, lie still, my breaking heart ;
My silent heart, lie still and break :
Life, and the world, and mine own self, are changed
For a dream's sake.

SHUT OUT.

THE door was shut. I looked between
Its iron bars ; and saw it lie,
My garden, mine, beneath the sky,
Pied with all flowers bedewed and green :

From bough to bough the song-birds crossed,
From flower to flower the moths and bees ;
With all its nests and stately trees
It had been mine, and it was lost.

A shadowless spirit kept the gate,
Blank and unchanging like the grave.
I peering through said : " Let me have
Some buds to cheer my outcast state."

He answered not. "Or give me, then,
But one small twig from shrub or tree ;
And bid my home remember me
Until I come to it again."

The spirit was silent ; but he took
Mortar and stone to build a wall ;
He left no loophole great or small
Through which my straining eyes might look :

So now I sit here quite alone
Blinded with tears ; nor grieve for that,
For nought is left worth looking at
Since my delightful land is gone.

A violet bed is budding near,
Wherein a lark has made her nest :
And good they are, but not the best ;
And dear they are, but not so dear.

SOUND SLEEP.

SOME are laughing, some are weeping ;
She is sleeping, only sleeping.
Round her rest wild flowers are creeping ;
There the wind is heaping, heaping
Sweetest sweets of Summer's keeping,
By the corn fields ripe for reaping.

There are lilies, and there blushes
The deep rose, and there the thrushes
Sing till latest sunlight flushes
In the west ; a fresh wind brushes
Through the leaves while evening hushes.

There by day the lark is singing
And the grass and weeds are springing ;

There by night the bat is winging ;
There for ever winds are bringing
Far-off chimes of church-bells ringing.

Night and morning, noon and even,
Their sound fills her dreams with Heaven :
The long strife at length is striven :
Till her grave-bands shall be riven
Such is the good portion given
To her soul at rest and shriven.

SONG.

SHE sat and sang alway

By the green margin of a stream,
Watching the fishes leap and play
Beneath the glad sunbeam.

I sat and wept alway

Beneath the moon's most shadowy beam,
Watching the blossoms of the May
Weep leaves into the stream.

I wept for memory :

She sang for hope that is so fair :
My tears were swallowed by the sea ;
Her songs died on the air.

SONG.

WHEN I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me ;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree :
Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet ;
And if thou wilt, remember,
And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
I shall not feel the rain ;
I shall not hear the nightingale
Sing on, as if in pain :

And dreaming through the twilight
That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
And haply may forget.

DEAD BEFORE DEATH.

SONNET.

AH ! changed and cold, how changed and very cold,
 With stiffened smiling lips and cold calm eyes :
 Changed, yet the same ; much knowing, little wise ;
This was the promise of the days of old !
 Grown hard and stubborn in the ancient mould,
 Grown rigid in the sham of lifelong lies :
 We hoped for better things as years would rise,
 But it is over as a tale once told.
 All fallen the blossom that no fruitage bore,
 All lost the present and the future time,
 All lost, all lost, the lapse that went before :
 So lost till death shut-to the opened door,
 So lost from chime to everlasting chime,
 So cold and lost for ever evermore.

BITTER FOR SWEET.

SUMMER is gone with all its roses,
Its sun and perfumes and sweet flowers,
Its warm air and refreshing showers :
And even Autumn closes.

Yea, Autumn's chilly self is going,
And winter comes which is yet colder ;
Each day the hoar-frost waxes bolder
And the last buds cease blowing.

SISTER MAUDE.

Who told my mother of my shame,
Who told my father of my dear ?
Oh who but Maude, my sister Maude,
Who lurked to spy and peer.

Cold he lies, as cold as stone,
With his clotted curls about his face :
The comeliest corpse in all the world
And worthy of a queen's embrace.

You might have spared his soul, sister,
Have spared my soul, your own soul too :
Though I had not been born at all,
He'd never have looked at you.

My father may sleep in Paradise,

My mother at Heaven-gate :

But sister Maude shall get no sleep

Either early or late.

My father may wear a golden gown,

My mother a crown may win ;

If my dear and I knocked at Heaven-gate

Perhaps they'd let us in :

But sister Maude, oh sister Maude,

Bide *you* with death and sin.

REST.

SONNET.

O EARTH, lie heavily upon her eyes ;
 Seal her sweet eyes weary of watching, Earth ;
 Lie close around her ; leave no room for mirth
 With its harsh laughter, nor for sound of sighs.
 She hath no questions, she hath no replies,
 Hushed in and curtained with a blessèd dearth
 Of all that irked her from the hour of birth ;
 With stillness that is almost Paradise.
 Darkness more clear than noon-day holdeth her,
 Silence more musical than any song ;
 Even her very heart has ceased to stir :
 Until the morning of Eternity
 Her rest shall not begin nor end, but be ;
 And when she wakes she will not think it long.

THE FIRST SPRING DAY.

I WONDER if the sap is stirring yet,
If wintry birds are dreaming of a mate,
If frozen snowdrops feel as yet the sun
And crocus fires are kindling one by one :

Sing, robin, sing ;

I still am sore in doubt concerning Spring.

I wonder if the springtide of this year
Will bring another Spring both lost and dear ;
If heart and spirit will find out their Spring,
Or if the world alone will bud and sing :

Sing, hope, to me ;

Sweet notes, my hope, soft notes for memory.

The sap will surely quicken soon or late,
The tardiest bird will twitter to a mate ;
So Spring must dawn again with warmth and bloom,
Or in this world, or in the world to come :

Sing, voice of Spring,
Till I too blossom and rejoice and sing.

THE CONVENT THRESHOLD.

THERE'S blood between us, love, my love,
There's father's blood, there's brother's blood ;
And blood's a bar I cannot pass :
I choose the stairs that mount above,
Stair after golden skyward stair,
To city and to sea of glass.
My lily feet are soiled with mud,
With scarlet mud which tells a tale
Of hope that was, of guilt that was,
Of love that shall not yet avail ;
Alas, my heart, if I could bare
My heart, this selfsame stain is there :
I seek the sea of glass and fire
To wash the spot, to burn the snare ;

Lo, stairs are meant to lift us higher :
Mount with me, mount the kindled stair.

Your eyes look earthward, mine look up.
I see the far-off city grand,
Beyond the hills a watered land,
Beyond the gulf a gleaming strand
Of mansions where the righteous sup ;
Who sleep at ease among their trees,
Or wake to sing a cadenced hymn
With Cherubim and Seraphim ;
They bore the Cross, they drained the cup,
Racked, roasted, crushed, wrenched limb from limb,
They the offscouring of the world :
The heaven of starry heavens unfurled,
The sun before their face is dim.

You looking earthward what see you ?
Milk-white wine-flushed among the vines,
Up and down leaping, to and fro,

Most glad, most full, made strong with wines,
Blooming as peaches pearled with dew,
Their golden windy hair afloat,
Love-music warbling in their throat,
Young men and women come and go.

You linger, yet the time is short :
Flee for your life, gird up your strength
To flee ; the shadows stretched at length
Show that day wanes, that night draws nigh ;
Flee to the mountain, tarry not.
Is this a time for smile and sigh,
For songs among the secret trees
Where sudden blue birds nest and sport ?
The time is short and yet you stay :
To-day while it is called to-day
Kneel, wrestle, knock, do violence, pray ;
To-day is short, to-morrow nigh :
Why will you die ? why will you die ?

You sinned with me a pleasant sin :
Repent with me, for I repent.
Woe's me the lore I must unlearn !
Woe's me that easy way we went,
So rugged when I would return !
How long until my sleep begin,
How long shall stretch these nights and days ?
Surely, clean Angels cry, she prays ;
She laves her soul with tedious tears :
How long must stretch these years and years ?

I turn from you my cheeks and eyes,
My hair which you shall see no more—
Alas for joy that went before,
For joy that dies, for love that dies.
Only my lips still turn to you,
My livid lips that cry, Repent.
Oh weary life, oh weary Lent,
Oh weary time whose stars are few.

How should I rest in Paradise,
Or sit on steps of heaven alone ?
If Saints and Angels spoke of love
Should I not answer from my throne :
Have pity upon me, ye my friends,
For I have heard the sound thereof :
Should I not turn with yearning eyes,
Turn earthwards with a pitiful pang ?
Oh save me from a pang in heaven.
By all the gifts we took and gave,
Repent, repent, and be forgiven :
This life is long, but yet it ends ;
Repent and purge your soul and save :
No gladder song the morning stars
Upon their birthday morning sang
Than Angels sing when one repents.

I tell you what I dreamed last night :
A spirit with transfigured face
Fire-footed clomb an infinite space.

I heard his hundred pinions clang,
Heaven-bells rejoicing rang and rang,
Heaven-air was thrilled with subtle scents,
Worlds spun upon their rushing cars :
He mounted shrieking : ‘ Give me light.’
Still light was pour’d on him, more light ;
Angels, Archangels he outstripped
Exultant in exceeding might,
And trod the skirts of Cherubim.
Still ‘ Give me light,’ he shrieked ; and dipped
His thirsty face, and drank a sea,
Athirst with thirst it could not slake.
I saw him, drunk with knowledge, take
From aching brows the aureole crown—
His locks writhed like a cloven snake—
He left his throne to grovel down
And lick the dust of Seraphs’ feet :
For what is knowledge duly weighed ?
Knowledge is strong, but love is sweet ;
Yea all the progress he had made

Was but to learn that all is small
Save love, for love is all in all.

I tell you what I dreamed last night :
It was not dark, it was not light,
Cold dews had drenched my plenteous hair
Through clay ; you came to seek me there.
And ‘ Do you dream of me ? ’ you said.
My heart was dust that used to leap
To you ; I answered half asleep :
‘ My pillow is damp, my sheets are red,
There’s a leaden tester to my bed :
Find you a warmer playfellow,
A warmer pillow for your head,
A kinder love to love than mine.’
You wrung your hands ; while I like lead
Crushed downwards through the sodden earth :
You smote your hands but not in mirth,
And reeled but were not drunk with wine.

For all night long I dreamed of you :
I woke and prayed against my will,
Then slept to dream of you again.
At length I rose and knelt and prayed :
I cannot write the words I said,
My words were slow, my tears were few ;
But through the dark my silence spoke
Like thunder. When this morning broke,
My face was pinched, my hair was grey,
And frozen blood was on the sill
Where stifling in my struggle I lay.

If now you saw me you would say :
Where is the face I used to love ?
And I would answer : Gone before ;
It tarries veiled in paradise.
When once the morning star shall rise,
When earth with shadow flees away
And we stand safe within the door,
Then you shall lift the veil thereof.

Look up, rise up : for far above
Our palms are grown, our place is set ;
There we shall meet as once we met
And love with old familiar love.

UP-HILL.

DOES the road wind up-hill all the way ?

Yes, to the very end.

Will the day's journey take the whole long day ?

From morn to night, my friend.

But is there for the night a resting-place ?

A roof for when the slow dark hours begin.

May not the darkness hide it from my face ?

You cannot miss that inn.

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night ?

Those who have gone before.

Then must I knock, or call when just in sight ?

They will not keep you standing at that door.

Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak ?

Of labour you shall find the sum.

Will there be beds for me and all who seek ?

Yea, beds for all who come.

DEVOTIONAL PIECES.

“THE LOVE OF CHRIST WHICH PASSETH
KNOWLEDGE.”

I BORE with thee long weary days and nights,
Through many pangs of heart, through many tears ;
I bore with thee, thy hardness, coldness, slights,
For three and thirty years.

Who else had dared for thee what I have dared ?
I plunged the depth most deep from bliss above ;
I not my flesh, I not my spirit spared :
Give thou Me love for love.

For thee I thirsted in the daily drouth,
For thee I trembled in the nightly frost :
Much sweeter thou than honey to My mouth :
Why wilt thou still be lost ?

I bore thee on My shoulders and rejoiced :

Men only marked upon My shoulders borne
The branding cross ; and shouted hungry-voiced,
Or wagged their heads in scorn.

Thee did nails grave upon My hands, thy name

Did thorns for frontlets stamp between Mine eyes :
I, Holy One, put on thy guilt and shame ;
I, God, Priest, Sacrifice.

A thief upon My right hand and My left ;

Six hours alone, athirst, in misery :
At length in death one smote My heart and cleft
A hiding-place for thee.

Nailed to the racking cross, than bed of down

More dear, whereon to stretch Myself and sleep :
So did I win a kingdom,—share My crown ;
A harvest,—come and reap.

“A BRUISED REED SHALL HE NOT BREAK.”

I WILL accept thy will to do and be,
 Thy hatred and intolerance of sin,
 Thy will at least to love, that burns within
 And thirsteth after Me :

So will I render fruitful, blessing still,
 The germs and small beginnings in thy heart,
 Because thy will cleaves to the better part.—
 Alas, I cannot will.

Dost not thou will, poor soul? Yet I receive
 The inner unseen longings of the soul,
 I guide them turning towards Me ; I control
 And charm hearts till they grieve :

If thou desire, it yet shall come to pass,
 Though thou but wish indeed to choose My love ;
 For I have power in earth and heaven above.—
 I cannot wish, alas !

What, neither choose nor wish to choose ? and yet
 I still must strive to win thee and constrain :
 For thee I hung upon the cross in pain,
 How then can I forget ?

If thou as yet dost neither love, nor hate,
 Nor choose, nor wish,—resign thyself, be still
 Till I infuse love, hatred, longing, will.—
 I do not deprecate.

A BETTER RESURRECTION.

I HAVE no wit, no words, no tears ;
My heart within me like a stone
Is numbed too much for hopes or fears ;
Look right, look left, I dwell alone ;
I lift mine eyes, but dimmed with grief
No everlasting hills I see ;
My life is in the falling leaf :
O Jesus, quicken me.

My life is like a faded leaf,
My harvest dwindled to a husk ;
Truly my life is void and brief
And tedious in the barren dusk ;

My life is like a frozen thing,
No bud nor greenness can I see :
Yet rise it shall—the sap of Spring ;
O Jesus, rise in me.

My life is like a broken bowl,
A broken bowl that cannot hold
One drop of water for my soul
Or cordial in the searching cold ;
Cast in the fire the perished thing,
Melt and remould it, till it be
A royal cup for Him my King :
O Jesus, drink of me.

ADVENT.

THIS Advent moon shines cold and clear,

These Advent nights are long ;

Our lamps have burned year after year

And still their flame is strong.

“ Watchman, what of the night ? ” we cry

Heart-sick with hope deferred ;

“ No speaking signs are in the sky,”

Is still the watchman’s word.

The Porter watches at the gate,

The servants watch within ;

The watch is long betimes and late,

The prize is slow to win.

“ Watchman, what of the night ? ” but still

His answer sounds the same :

“No daybreak tops the utmost hill,
“Nor pale our lamps of flame.”

One to another hear them speak
The patient virgins wise :
“Surely He is not far to seek”—
“All night we watch and rise.”
“The days are evil looking back,
The coming days are dim ;
Yet count we not His promise slack,
But watch and wait for Him.”

One with another, soul with soul,
They kindle fire from fire :
“Friends watch us who have touched the goal.”
“They urge us, come up higher.”
“With them shall rest our waysore feet,
With them is built our home,
With Christ.”—“They sweet, but He most sweet,
Sweeter than honeycomb.”

There no more parting, no more pain,
The distant ones brought near,
The lost so long are found again,
Long lost but longer dear :
Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard,
Nor heart conceived that rest,
With them our good things long deferred,
With Jesus Christ our Best.

We weep because the night is long,
We laugh for day shall rise,
We sing a slow contented song
And knock at Paradise.
Weeping we hold Him fast, Who wept
For us, we hold Him fast ;
And will not let Him go except
He bless us first or last.

Weeping we hold Him fast to-night ;
We will not let Him go

Till daybreak smite our wearied sight

And summer smite the snow :

Then figs shall bud, and dove with dove

Shall coo the livelong day ;

Then He shall say, " Arise, My love,

My fair one, come away."

THE THREE ENEMIES.

THE FLESH.

"Sweet, thou art pale."

"More pale to see,

Christ hung upon the cruel tree

And bore His Father's wrath for me."

"Sweet, thou art sad."

"Beneath a rod

More heavy, Christ for my sake trod

The winepress of the wrath of God."

"Sweet, thou art weary."

"Not so Christ :

Whose mighty love of me sufficed

For Strength, Salvation, Eucharist."

“Sweet, thou art footsore.”

“If I bleed,

His feet have bled : yea, in my need

His Heart once bled for mine indeed.”

THE WORLD.

“Sweet, thou art young.”

“So He was young

Who for my sake in silence hung

Upon the Cross with Passion wrung.”

“Look, thou art fair.”

“He was more fair

Than men, Who deigned for me to wear

A visage marred beyond compare.”

“And thou hast riches.”

“Daily bread :

All else is His ; Who living, dead,

For me lacked where to lay His Head.”

“And life is sweet.”

“It was not so
To Him, Whose Cup did overflow
With mine unutterable woe.”

THE DEVIL.

“Thou drinkest deep.”

“When Christ would sup
He drained the dregs from out my cup :
So how should I be lifted up ?”

“Thou shalt win Glory.”

“In the skies,
Lord Jesus, cover up mine eyes
Lest they should look on vanities.”

“Thou shalt have Knowledge.”

“Helpless dust !
In Thee, O Lord, I put my trust :
Answer Thou for me, Wise and Just.”

“And Might.”—

“Get thee behind me. Lord,
Who hast redeemed and not abhorred
My soul, oh keep it by Thy Word.”

THE ONE CERTAINTY.

SONNET.

VANITY of vanities, the Preacher saith,
 All things are vanity. The eye and ear
 Cannot be filled with what they see and hear.
 Like early dew, or like the sudden breath
 Of wind, or like the grass that withereth,
 Is man, tossed to and fro by hope and fear :
 So little joy hath he, so little cheer,
 Till all things end in the long dust of death.
 To-day is still the same as yesterday,
 To-morrow also even as one of them ;
 And there is nothing new under the sun :
 Until the ancient race of Time be run,
 The old thorns shall grow out of the old stem,
 And morning shall be cold and twilight grey.

CHRISTIAN AND JEW.

A DIALOGUE.

"OH happy happy land !

Angels like rushes stand

About the wells of light."—

"Alas, I have not eyes for this fair sight :

Hold fast my hand."

"As in a soft wind, they

Bend all one blessed way,

Each bowed in his own glory, star with star."—

"I cannot see so far,

Here shadows are."—

"White-winged the cherubim,

Yet whiter seraphim,

Glow white with intense fire of love.”—

“ Mine eyes are dim :

I look in vain above,

And miss their hymn.”—

“ Angels, Archangels cry

One to other ceaselessly

(I hear them sing)

One ‘ Holy, Holy, Holy ’ to their King.”—

“ I do not hear them, I.”—

“ At one side Paradise

Is curtained from the rest,

Made green for wearied eyes ;

Much softer than the breast

Of mother-dove clad in a rainbow’s dyes.

“ All precious souls are there

Most safe, elect by grace,

All tears are wiped for ever from their face :
Untired in prayer
They wait and praise
Hidden for a little space.

“Boughs of the Living Vine
They spread in summer shine
Green leaf with leaf :
Sap of the Royal Vine it stirs like wine
In all both less and chief.

“Sing to the Lord,
All spirits of all flesh, sing ;
For he hath not abhorred
Our low estate nor scorned our offering :
Shout to our King.”—

“But Zion said :
My Lord forgetteth me.

Lo, she hath made her bed
In dust ; forsaken weepeth she
Where alien rivers swell the sea.

“She laid her body as the ground,
Her tender body as the ground to those
Who passed ; her harpstrings cannot sound
In a strange land ; discrowned
She sits, and drunk with woes.”—

“O drunken not with wine,
Whose sins and sorrows have fulfilled the sum,—
Be not afraid, arise, be no more dumb ;
Arise, shine,
For thy light is come.”—

“Can these bones live ?”—

“God knows :

The prophet saw such clothed with flesh and skin ;

A wind blew on them, and life entered in ;
They shook and rose.

Hasten the time, O Lord, blot out their sin,
Let life begin."

SWEET DEATH.

THE sweetest blossoms die.

And so it was that, going day by day
Unto the Church to praise and pray,
And crossing the green churchyard thoughtfully,
I saw how on the graves the flowers
Shed their fresh leaves in showers,
And how their perfume rose up to the sky
Before it passed away.

The youngest blossoms die.

They die and fall and nourish the rich earth
From which they lately had their birth ;
Sweet life, but sweeter death that passeth by

And is as though it had not been :—
All colours turn to green ;
The bright hues vanish and the odours fly,
The grass hath lasting worth.

And youth and beauty die.

So be it, O my God, Thou God of truth :
Better than beauty and than youth
Are Saints and Angels, a glad company ;
And Thou, O Lord, our Rest and Ease,
Art better far than these.

Why should we shrink from our full harvest ? why
Prefer to glean with Ruth ?

SYMBOLS.

I WATCHED a rosebud very long
Brought on by dew and sun and shower,
Waiting to see the perfect flower :
Then, when I thought it should be strong,
It opened at the matin hour
And fell at evensong.

I watched a nest from day to day,
A green nest full of pleasant shade,
Wherein three speckled eggs were laid :
But when they should have hatched in May,
The two old birds had grown afraid
Or tired, and flew away.

Then in my wrath I broke the bough
That I had tended so with care,
Hoping its scent should fill the air ;
I crushed the eggs, not heeding how
Their ancient promise had been fair :
I would have vengeance now.

But the dead branch spoke from the sod,
And the eggs answered me again :
Because we failed dost thou complain ?
Is thy wrath just ? And what if God,
Who waiteth for thy fruits in vain,
Should also take the rod ?

“CONSIDER THE LILIES OF THE FIELD.”

FLOWERS preach to us if we will hear :—

The rose saith in the dewy morn :

I am most fair ;

Yet all my loveliness is born

Upon a thorn.

The poppy saith amid the corn :

Let but my scarlet head appear

And I am held in scorn ;

Yet juice of subtle virtue lies

Within my cup of curious dyes.

The lilies say : Behold how we

Preach without words of purity.

The violets whisper from the shade

Which their own leaves have made :

Men scent our fragrance on the air,
Yet take no heed
Of humble lessons we would read.

But not alone the fairest flowers :
The merest grass
Along the roadside where we pass,
Lichen and moss and sturdy weed,
Tell of His love who sends the dew,
The rain and sunshine too,
To nourish one small seed.

THE WORLD.

SONNET.

By day she wooes me, soft, exceeding fair :
But all night as the moon so changeth she ;
Loathsome and foul with hideous leprosy
And subtle serpents gliding in her hair.
By day she wooes me to the outer air,
Ripe fruits, sweet flowers, and full satiety :
But through the night, a beast she grins at me,
A very monster void of love and prayer.
By day she stands a lie : by night she stands
In all the naked horror of the truth
With pushing horns and clawed and clutching hands.
Is this a friend indeed ; that I should sell
My soul to her, give her my life and youth,
Till my feet, cloven too, take hold on hell ?

A TESTIMONY.

I SAID of laughter : it is vain.

Of mirth I said : what profits it ?

Therefore I found a book, and writ
Therein how ease and also pain,
How health and sickness, every one
Is vanity beneath the sun.

Man walks in a vain shadow ; he

Disquieteth himself in vain.

The things that were shall be again :

The rivers do not fill the sea,

But turn back to their secret source ;

The winds too turn upon their course.

Our treasures moth and rust corrupt,
Or thieves break through and steal, or they
Make themselves wings and fly away.

One man made merry as he supped,
Nor guessed how when that night grew dim
His soul would be required of him.

We build our houses on the sand
Comely withoutside and within ;
But when the winds and rains begin
To beat on them, they cannot stand :
They perish, quickly overthrown,
Loose from the very basement stone.

All things are vanity, I said :

Yea vanity of vanities.

The rich man dies ; and the poor dies :
The worm feeds sweetly on the dead.
Whate'er thou lackest, keep this trust :
All in the end shall have but dust :

The one inheritance, which best
And worst alike shall find and share :
The wicked cease from troubling there,
And there the weary be at rest ;
There all the wisdom of the wise
Is vanity of vanities.

Man flourishes as a green leaf
And as a leaf doth pass away ;
Or as a shade that cannot stay
And leaves no track, his course is brief :
Yet man doth hope and fear and plan
Till he is dead :—oh foolish man !

Our eyes cannot be satisfied
With seeing, nor our ears be filled
With hearing : yet we plant and build
And buy and make our borders wide ;
We gather wealth, we gather care,
But know not who shall be our heir.

Why should we hasten to arise

So early, and so late take rest ?

Our labour is not good ; our best

Hopes fade ; our heart is stayed on lies :

Verily, we sow wind ; and we

Shall reap the whirlwind, verily.

He who hath little shall not lack ;

He who hath plenty shall decay :

Our fathers went ; we pass away ;

Our children follow on our track :

So generations fail, and so

They are renewed and come and go.

The earth is fattened with our dead ;

She swallows more and doth not cease :

Therefore her wine and oil increase

And her sheaves are not numberèd ;

Therefore her plants are green, and all

Her pleasant trees lusty and tall.

Therefore the maidens cease to sing,
And the young men are very sad ;
Therefore the sowing is not glad,
And mournful is the harvesting.
Of high and low, of great and small,
Vanity is the lot of all.

A King dwelt in Jerusalem ;
He was the wisest man on earth ;
He had all riches from his birth,
And pleasures till he tired of them ;
Then, having tested all things, he
Witnessed that all are vanity.

SLEEP AT SEA.

SOUND the deep waters :—

Who shall sound that deep ?—

Too short the plummet,

And the watchmen sleep.

Some dream of effort

Up a toilsome steep ;

Some dream of pasture grounds

For harmless sheep.

White shapes flit to and fro

From mast to mast ;

They feel the distant tempest

That nears them fast :

Great rocks are straight ahead,
Great shoals not past ;
They shout to one another
Upon the blast.

Oh, soft the streams drop music
Between the hills,
And musical the birds' nests
Beside those rills :
The nests are types of home
Love-hidden from ills,
The nests are types of spirits
Love-music fills.

So dream the sleepers,
Each man in his place ;
The lightning shows the smile
Upon each face :
The ship is driving, driving,
It drives apace :

And sleepers smile, and spirits

Bewail their case.

The lightning glares and reddens

Across the skies ;

It seems but sunset

To those sleeping eyes.

When did the sun go down

On such a wise ?

From such a sunset

When shall day arise ?

“ Wake,” call the spirits :

But to heedless ears :

They have forgotten sorrows

And hopes and fears ;

They have forgotten perils

And smiles and tears ;

Their dream has held them long,

Long years and years.

“Wake,” call the spirits again :

But it would take

A louder summons

To bid them awake.

Some dream of pleasure

For another’s sake ;

Some dream, forgetful

Of a lifelong ache.

One by one slowly,

Ah, how sad and slow !

Wailing and praying

The spirits rise and go :

Clear stainless spirits

White as white as snow ;

Pale spirits, wailing

For an overthrow.

One by one flitting,

Like a mournful bird

Whose song is tired at last

For no mate heard.

The loving voice is silent,

The useless word ;

One by one flitting

Sick with hope deferred.

Driving and driving,

The ship drives amain :

While swift from mast to mast

Shapes flit again,

Flit silent as the silence

Where men lie slain ;

Their shadow cast upon the sails

Is like a stain.

No voice to call the sleepers,

No hand to raise :

They sleep to death in dreaming,

Of length of days.

Vanity of vanities,

The Preacher says :

Vanity is the end

Of all their ways.

FROM HOUSE TO HOME.

THE first was like a dream through summer heat,
 The second like a tedious numbing swoon,
 While the half-frozen pulses lagged to beat
 Beneath a winter moon.

“But,” says my friend, “what was this thing and
 where?”

It was a pleasure-place within my soul ;
 An earthly paradise supremely fair
 That lured me from the goal.

The first part was a tissue of hugged lies ;
 The second was its ruin fraught with pain :
 Why raise the fair delusion to the skies
 But to be dashed again ?

My castle stood of white transparent glass
 Glittering and frail with many a fretted spire,
But when the summer sunset came to pass
 It kindled into fire.

My pleasaunce was an undulating green,
 Stately with trees whose shadows slept below,
With glimpses of smooth garden-beds between
 Like flame or sky or snow.

Swift squirrels on the pastures took their ease,
 With leaping lambs safe from the unfear'd knife ;
All singing-birds rejoicing in those trees
 Fulfilled their careless life.

Woodpigeons cooed there, stockdoves nestled there ;
 My trees were full of songs and flowers and fruit,
Their branches spread a city to the air
 And mice lodged in their root.

My heath lay farther off, where lizards lived

In strange metallic mail, just spied and gone ;
Like darted lightnings here and there perceived
But no where dwelt upon.

Frogs and fat toads were there to hop or plod
And propagate in peace, an uncouth crew,
Where velvet-headed rushes rustling nod
And spill the morning dew.

All caterpillars throve beneath my rule,
With snails and slugs in corners out of sight ;
I never marred the curious sudden stool
That perfects in a night.

Safe in his excavated gallery
The burrowing mole groped on from year to year ;
No harmless hedgehog curled because of me
His prickly back for fear.

Oft times one like an angel walked with me,
With spirit-discerning eyes like flames of fire,
But deep as the unfathomed endless sea
Fulfilling my desire :

And sometimes like a snowdrift he was fair,
And sometimes like a sunset glorious red,
And sometimes he had wings to scale the air
With aureole round his head.

We sang our songs together by the way,
Calls and recalls and echoes of delight ;
So communed we together all the day,
And so in dreams by night.

I have no words to tell what way we walked,
What unforgotten path now closed and sealed ;
I have no words to tell all things we talked,
All things that he revealed :

This only can I tell : that hour by hour

I waxed more feastful, lifted up and glad ;
I felt no thorn-prick when I plucked a flower,
Felt not my friend was sad.

“To-morrow,” once I said to him with smiles :

“To-night,” he answered gravely and was dumb,
But pointed out the stones that numbered miles
And miles and miles to come.

“Not so,” I said : “to-morrow shall be sweet ;

To-night is not so sweet as coming days.”

Then first I saw that he had turned his feet,
Had turned from me his face :

Running and flying miles and miles he went,

But once looked back to beckon with his hand
And cry : “Come home, O love, from banishment :
Come to the distant land.”

That night destroyed me like an avalanche ;

One night turned all my summer back to snow :

Next morning not a bird upon my branch,

Not a lamb woke below,—

No bird, no lamb, no living breathing thing ;

No squirrel scampered on my breezy lawn,

No mouse lodged by his hoard : all joys took wing

And fled before that dawn.

Azure and sun were starved from heaven above,

No dew had fallen, but biting frost lay hoar :

O love, I knew that I should meet my love,

Should find my love no more.

“ My love no more,” I muttered stunned with pain :

I shed no tear, I wrung no passionate hand,

Till something whispered : “ You shall meet again,

Meet in a distant land.”

Then with a cry like famine I arose,

I lit my candle, searched from room to room,
Searched up and down ; a war of winds that froze
Swept through the blank of gloom.

I searched day after day, night after night ;

Scant change there came to me of night or day :

“No more,” I wailed, “no more :” and trimmed my
light,

And gnashed but did not pray,

Until my heart broke and my spirit broke :

Upon the frost-bound floor I stumbled, fell,
And moaned : “It is enough : withhold the stroke.
Farewell, O love, farewell.”

Then life swooned from me. And I heard the song

Of spheres and spirits rejoicing over me :

One cried : “Our sister, she hath suffered long.”—

One answered : “Make her see.”—

One cried : " Oh blessèd she who no more pain,
Who no more disappointment shall receive."—
One answered : " Not so : she must live again ;
Strengthen thou her to live."

So while I lay entranced a curtain seemed
To shrivel with crackling from before my face ;
Across mine eyes a waxing radiance beamed
And showed a certain place.

I saw a vision of a woman, where
Night and new morning strive for domination ;
Incomparably pale, and almost fair,
And sad beyond expression.

Her eyes were like some fire-enshrining gem,
Were stately like the stars, and yet were tender ;
Her figure charmed me like a windy stem
Quivering and drooped and slender.

I stood upon the outer barren ground,
She stood on inner ground that budded flowers ;
While circling in their never-slackening round
Danced by the mystic hours.

But every flower was lifted on a thorn,
And every thorn shot upright from its sands
To gall her feet ; hoarse laughter pealed in scorn
With cruel clapping hands.

She bled and wept, yet did not shrink ; her strength
Was strung up until daybreak of delight :
She measured measureless sorrow toward its length,
And breadth, and depth, and height.

Then marked I how a chain sustained her form,
A chain of living links not made nor riven :
It stretched sheer up through lightning, wind, and storm,
And anchored fast in heaven.

One cried : "How long? yet founded on the Rock

She shall do battle, suffer, and attain."—

One answered : "Faith quakes in the tempest shock :

Strengthen her soul again."

I saw a cup sent down and come to her

Brim full of loathing and of bitterness :

She drank with livid lips that seemed to stir

The depth, not make it less.

But as she drank I spied a hand distil

New wine and virgin honey ; making it

First bitter-sweet, then sweet indeed, until

She tasted only sweet.

Her lips and cheeks waxed rosy-fresh and young ;

Drinking she sang : "My soul shall nothing want ;"

And drank anew : while soft a song was sung,

A mystical slow chant.

One cried : "The wounds are faithful of a friend :

The wilderness shall blossom as a rose."—

One answered : " Rend the veil, declare the end,

Strengthen her ere she goes."

Then earth and heaven were rolled up like a scroll ;

Time and space, change and death, had passed away ;

Weight, number, measure, each had reached its whole ;

The day had come, that day.

Multitudes—multitudes—stood up in bliss,

Made equal to the angels, glorious, fair ;

With harps, palms, wedding-garments, kiss of peace,

And crowned and haloed hair.

They sang a song, a new song in the height,

Harping with harps to Him Who is Strong and True :

They drank new wine, their eyes saw with new light,

Lo, all things were made new.

Tier beyond tier they rose and rose and rose

So high that it was dreadful, flames with flames :
No man could number them, no tongue disclose
Their secret sacred names.

As though one pulse stirred all, one rush of blood
Fed all, one breath swept through them myriad-
voiced, [stood
They struck their harps, cast down their crowns, they
And worshipped and rejoiced.

Each face looked one way like a moon new-lit,
Each face looked one way towards its Sun of Love ;
Drank love and bathed in love and mirrored it
And knew no end thereof.

Glory touched glory on each blessèd head,
Hands locked dear hands never to sunder more :
These were the new-begotten from the dead
Whom the great birthday bore.

Heart answered heart, soul answered soul at rest,

Double against each other, filled, sufficed :

All loving, loved of all ; but loving best

And best beloved of Christ.

I saw that one who lost her love in pain,

Who trod on thorns, who drank the loathsome cup ;

The lost in night, in day was found again ;

The fallen was lifted up.

They stood together in the blessed noon,

They sang together through the length of days ;

Each loving face bent Sunwards like a moon

New-lit with love and praise.

Therefore, O friend, I would not if I might

Rebuild my house of lies, wherein I joyed

One time to dwell : my soul shall walk in white,

Cast down but not destroyed.

Therefore in patience I possess my soul ;

Yea, therefore as a flint I set my face,
To pluck down, to build up again the whole—
But in a distant place.

These thorns are sharp, yet I can tread on them ;

This cup is loathsome, yet He makes it sweet :
My face is steadfast toward Jerusalem,
My heart remembers it.

I lift the hanging hands, the feeble knees—

I, precious more than seven times molten gold—
Until the day when from His storehouses
God shall bring new and old ;

Beauty for ashes, oil of joy for grief,

Garment of praise for spirit of heaviness :
Although to-day I fade as doth a leaf,
I languish and grow less.

Although to-day He prunes my twigs with pain

Yet doth His blood nourish and warm my root :

To-morrow I shall put forth buds again

And clothe myself with fruit.

Although to-day I walk in tedious ways,

To-day His staff is turned into a rod,

Yet will I wait for Him the appointed days

And stay upon my God.

OLD AND NEW YEAR DITTIES.

1.

NEW Year met me somewhat sad :

Old Year leaves me tired,

Stripped of favourite things I had,

Baulked of much desired :

Yet farther on my road to-day

God willing, farther on my way.

New Year coming on apace

What have you to give me ?

Bring you scathe, or bring you grace,

Face me with an honest face ;

You shall not deceive me :

Be it good or ill, be it what you will,

It needs shall help me on my road,

My rugged way to heaven, please God.

2.

WATCH with me, men, women, and children dear,
You whom I love, for whom I hope and fear,
Watch with me this last vigil of the year.
Some hug their business, some their pleasure-scheme;
Some seize the vacant hour to sleep or dream;
Heart locked in heart some kneel and watch apart.

Watch with me blessèd spirits, who delight
All through the holy night to walk in white,
Or take your ease after the long-drawn fight.
I know not if they watch with me : I know
They count this eve of resurrection slow,
And cry, "How long?" with urgent utterance strong.

Watch with me Jesus, in my loneliness :
Though others say me nay, yet say Thou yes ;
Though others pass me by, stop Thou to bless.

Yea, Thou dost stop with me this vigil night ;
To-night of pain, to-morrow of delight :
I, Love, am Thine ; Thou, Lord my God, art mine.

3.

PASSING away, saith the World, passing away :
Chances, beauty and youth sapped day by day :
Thy life never continueth in one stay.
Is the eye waxen dim, is the dark hair changing to grey
That hath won neither laurel nor bay ?
I shall clothe myself in Spring and bud in May :
Thou, root-stricken, shalt not rebuild thy decay
On my bosom for aye.
Then I answered : Yea.

Passing away, saith my Soul, passing away :
With its burden of fear and hope, of labour and play ;
Hearken what the past doth witness and say :
Rust in thy gold, a moth is in thine array,
A canker is in thy bud, thy leaf must decay.
At midnight, at cockcrow, at morning, one certain day

Lo, the Bridegroom shall come and shall not delay :

Watch thou and pray.

Then I answered : Yea.

Passing away, saith my God, passing away :

Winter passeth after the long delay :

New grapes on the vine, new figs on the tender spray,

Turtle calleth turtle in Heaven's May.

Though I tarry wait for Me, trust Me, watch and pray.

Arise, come away, night is past and lo it is day,

My love, My sister, My spouse, thou shalt hear Me say.

Then I answered : Yea.

AMEN.

It is over. What is over ?

Nay, how much is over truly !—

Harvest days we toiled to sow for ;

Now the sheaves are gathered newly,

Now the wheat is garnered duly.

It is finished. What is finished ?

Much is finished known or unknown :

Lives are finished ; time diminished ;

Was the fallow field left unsown ?

Will these buds be always unblown ?

It suffices. What suffices ?

All suffices reckoned rightly :

Spring shall bloom where now the ice is,
Roses make the bramble sightly,
And the quickening sun shine brightly,
And the latter wind blow lightly,
And my garden teem with spices.

THE END.

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