

**PROCTER
ADELAIDE
ANNE**

LEGENDS AND LYRICS.
PART 1

Adelaide Procter
Legends and Lyrics. Part 1

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Procter A.

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Adelaide Anne Procter

Legends and Lyrics. Part 1

DEDICATION

TO MATILDA M. HAYS.

“Our tokens of love are for the most part barbarous. Cold and lifeless, because they do not represent our life. The only gift is a portion of thyself. Therefore let the farmer give his corn; the miner, a gem; the sailor, coral and shells; the painter, his picture; and the poet, his poem.” – Emerson’s Essays.

A. A. P.

May, 1858

AN INTRODUCTION BY CHARLES DICKENS

In the spring of the year 1853, I observed, as conductor of the weekly journal *Household Words*, a short poem among the proffered contributions, very different, as I thought, from the shoal of verses perpetually setting through the office of such a periodical, and possessing much more merit. Its authoress was quite unknown to me. She was one Miss Mary Berwick, whom I had never heard of; and she was to be addressed by letter, if addressed at all, at a circulating library in the western district of London. Through this channel, Miss Berwick was informed that her poem was accepted, and was invited to send another. She complied, and became a regular and frequent contributor. Many letters passed between the journal and Miss Berwick, but Miss Berwick herself was never seen.

How we came gradually to establish, at the office of *Household Words*, that we knew all about Miss Berwick, I have never discovered. But we settled somehow, to our complete satisfaction, that she was governess in a family; that she went to Italy in that capacity, and returned; and that she had long been in the same family. We really knew nothing whatever of her, except that she was remarkably business-like, punctual, self-reliant, and reliable: so I suppose we insensibly invented the rest. For myself, my mother was not a more real personage to me, than Miss Berwick the governess became.

This went on until December, 1854, when the Christmas number, entitled *The Seven Poor Travellers*, was sent to press. Happening to be going to dine that day with an old and dear friend, distinguished in literature as Barry Cornwall, I took with me an early proof of that number, and remarked, as I laid it on the drawing-room table, that it contained a very pretty poem, written by a certain Miss Berwick. Next day brought me the disclosure that I had so spoken of the poem to the mother of its writer, in its writer's presence; that I had no such correspondent in existence as Miss Berwick; and that the name had been assumed by Barry Cornwall's eldest daughter, Miss Adelaide Anne Procter.

The anecdote I have here noted down, besides serving to explain why the parents of the late Miss Procter have looked to me for these poor words of remembrance of their lamented child, strikingly illustrates the honesty, independence, and quiet dignity, of the lady's character. I had known her when she was very young; I had been honoured with her father's friendship when I was myself a young aspirant; and she had said at home, "If I send him, in my own name, verses that he does not honestly like, either it will be very painful to him to return them, or he will print them for papa's sake, and not for their own. So I have made up my mind to take my chance fairly with the unknown volunteers."

Perhaps it requires an editor's experience of the profoundly unreasonable grounds on which he is often urged to accept unsuitable articles – such as having been to school with the writer's husband's brother-in-law, or having lent an alpenstock in Switzerland to the writer's wife's nephew, when that interesting stranger had broken his own – fully to appreciate the delicacy and the self-respect of this resolution.

Some verses by Miss Procter had been published in the *Book of Beauty*, ten years before she became Miss Berwick. With the exception of two poems in the *Cornhill Magazine*, two in *Good Words*, and others in a little book called *A Chaplet of Verses* (issued in 1862 for the benefit of a Night Refuge), her published writings first appeared in *Household Words*, or *All the Year Round*. The present edition contains the whole of her *Legends and Lyrics*, and originates in the great favour with which they have been received by the public.

Miss Procter was born in Bedford Square, London, on the 30th of October, 1825. Her love of poetry was conspicuous at so early an age, that I have before me a tiny album made of small note-paper, into which her favourite passages were copied for her by her mother's hand before she herself could write. It looks as if she had carried it about, as another little girl might have carried a doll. She soon displayed a remarkable memory, and great quickness of apprehension. When she was quite a young child, she learned with facility several of the problems of Euclid. As she grew

older, she acquired the French, Italian, and German languages; became a clever pianoforte player; and showed a true taste and sentiment in drawing. But, as soon as she had completely vanquished the difficulties of any one branch of study, it was her way to lose interest in it, and pass to another. While her mental resources were being trained, it was not at all suspected in her family that she had any gift of authorship, or any ambition to become a writer. Her father had no idea of her having ever attempted to turn a rhyme, until her first little poem saw the light in print.

When she attained to womanhood, she had read an extraordinary number of books, and throughout her life she was always largely adding to the number. In 1853 she went to Turin and its neighbourhood, on a visit to her aunt, a Roman Catholic lady. As Miss Procter had herself professed the Roman Catholic Faith two years before, she entered with the greater ardour on the study of the Piedmontese dialect, and the observation of the habits and manners of the peasantry. In the former, she soon became a proficient. On the latter head, I extract from her familiar letters written home to England at the time, two pleasant pieces of description.

A BETROTHAL

“We have been to a ball, of which I must give you a description. Last Tuesday we had just done dinner at about seven, and stepped out into the balcony to look at the remains of the sunset behind the mountains, when we heard very distinctly a band of music, which rather excited my astonishment, as a solitary organ is the utmost that toils up here. I went out of the room for a few minutes, and, on my returning, Emily said, ‘Oh! That band is playing at the farmer’s near here. The daughter is *fiancée* to-day, and they have a ball.’ I said, ‘I wish I was going!’ ‘Well,’ replied she, ‘the farmer’s wife did call to invite us.’ ‘Then I shall certainly go,’ I exclaimed. I applied to Madame B., who said she would like it very much, and we had better go, children and all. Some of the servants were already gone. We rushed away to put on some shawls, and put off any shred of black we might have about us (as the people would have been quite annoyed if we had appeared on such an occasion with any black), and we started. When we reached the farmer’s, which is a stone’s throw above our house, we were received with great enthusiasm; the only drawback being, that no one spoke French, and we did not yet speak Piedmontese. We were placed on a bench against the wall, and the people went on dancing. The room was a large whitewashed kitchen (I suppose), with several large pictures in black frames, and very smoky. I distinguished the Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian, and the others appeared equally lively and appropriate subjects. Whether they were Old Masters or not, and if so, by whom, I could not ascertain. The band were seated opposite us. Five men, with wind instruments, part of the band of the National Guard, to which the farmer’s sons belong. They played really admirably, and I began to be afraid that some idea of our dignity would prevent me getting a partner; so, by Madame B.’s advice, I went up to the bride, and offered to dance with her. Such a handsome young woman! Like one of Uwins’s pictures. Very dark, with a quantity of black hair, and on an immense scale. The children were already dancing, as well as the maids. After we came to an end of our dance, which was what they called a Polka-Mazourka, I saw the bride trying to screw up the courage of her *fiancé* to ask me to dance, which after a little hesitation he did. And admirably he danced, as indeed they all did – in excellent time, and with a little more spirit than one sees in a ball-room. In fact, they were very like one’s ordinary partners, except that they wore earrings and were in their shirt-sleeves, and truth compels me to state that they decidedly smelt of garlic. Some of them had been smoking, but threw away their cigars when we came in. The only thing that did not look cheerful was, that the room was only lighted by two or three oil-lamps, and that there seemed to be no preparation for refreshments. Madame B., seeing this, whispered to her maid, who disengaged herself from her partner, and ran off to the house; she and the kitchenmaid presently returning with a large tray covered with all kinds of cakes (of which we are great consumers and always have a stock), and a large hamper full of bottles of wine, with coffee and sugar. This seemed all very acceptable. The *fiancée* was requested to distribute the eatables, and a bucket of water being produced to wash the glasses in, the wine disappeared very quickly – as fast as they could open the bottles. But, elated, I suppose, by this,

the floor was sprinkled with water, and the musicians played a Monferrino, which is a Piedmontese dance. Madame B. danced with the farmer's son, and Emily with another distinguished member of the company. It was very fatiguing – something like a Scotch reel. My partner was a little man, like Perrot, and very proud of his dancing. He cut in the air and twisted about, until I was out of breath, though my attempts to imitate him were feeble in the extreme. At last, after seven or eight dances, I was obliged to sit down. We stayed till nine, and I was so dead beat with the heat that I could hardly crawl about the house, and in an agony with the cramp, it is so long since I have danced.”

A MARRIAGE

The wedding of the farmer's daughter has taken place. We had hoped it would have been in the little chapel of our house, but it seems some special permission was necessary, and they applied for it too late. They all said, “This is the Constitution. There would have been no difficulty before!” the lower classes making the poor Constitution the scapegoat for everything they don't like. So as it was impossible for us to climb up to the church where the wedding was to be, we contented ourselves with seeing the procession pass. It was not a very large one, for, it requiring some activity to go up, all the old people remained at home. It is not etiquette for the bride's mother to go, and no unmarried woman can go to a wedding – I suppose for fear of its making her discontented with her own position. The procession stopped at our door, for the bride to receive our congratulations. She was dressed in a shot silk, with a yellow handkerchief, and rows of a large gold chain. In the afternoon they sent to request us to go there. On our arrival we found them dancing out of doors, and a most melancholy affair it was. All the bride's sisters were not to be recognised, they had cried so. The mother sat in the house, and could not appear. And the bride was sobbing so, she could hardly stand! The most melancholy spectacle of all to my mind was, that the bridegroom was decidedly tipsy. He seemed rather affronted at all the distress. We danced a Monferrino; I with the bridegroom; and the bride crying the whole time. The company did their utmost to enliven her by firing pistols, but without success, and at last they began a series of yells, which reminded me of a set of savages. But even this delicate method of consolation failed, and the wishing good-bye began. It was altogether so melancholy an affair that Madame B. dropped a few tears, and I was very near it, particularly when the poor mother came out to see the last of her daughter, who was finally dragged off between her brother and uncle, with a last explosion of pistols. As she lives quite near, makes an excellent match, and is one of nine children, it really was a most desirable marriage, in spite of all the show of distress. Albert was so discomfited by it, that he forgot to kiss the bride as he had intended to do, and therefore went to call upon her yesterday, and found her very smiling in her new house, and supplied the omission. The cook came home from the wedding, declaring she was cured of any wish to marry – but I would not recommend any man to act upon that threat and make her an offer. In a couple of days we had some rolls of the bride's first baking, which they call Madonnas. The musicians, it seems, were in the same state as the bridegroom, for, in escorting her home, they all fell down in the mud. My wrath against the bridegroom is somewhat calmed by finding that it is considered bad luck if he does not get tipsy at his wedding.”

* * * * *

Those readers of Miss Procter's poems who should suppose from their tone that her mind was of a gloomy or despondent cast, would be curiously mistaken. She was exceedingly humorous, and had a great delight in humour. Cheerfulness was habitual with her, she was very ready at a sally or a reply, and in her laugh (as I remember well) there was an unusual vivacity, enjoyment, and sense of drollery. She was perfectly unconstrained and unaffected: as modestly silent about her productions, as she was generous with their pecuniary results. She was a friend who inspired the strongest attachments; she was a finely sympathetic woman, with a great accordant heart and a sterling noble nature. No claim can be set up for her, thank God, to the possession of any of the conventional poetical qualities. She

never by any means held the opinion that she was among the greatest of human beings; she never suspected the existence of a conspiracy on the part of mankind against her; she never recognised in her best friends, her worst enemies; she never cultivated the luxury of being misunderstood and unappreciated; she would far rather have died without seeing a line of her composition in print, than that I should have maundered about her, here, as “the Poet”, or “the Poetess”.

With the recollection of Miss Procter as a mere child and as a woman, fresh upon me, it is natural that I should linger on my way to the close of this brief record, avoiding its end. But, even as the close came upon her, so must it come here.

Always impelled by an intense conviction that her life must not be dreamed away, and that her indulgence in her favourite pursuits must be balanced by action in the real world around her, she was indefatigable in her endeavours to do some good. Naturally enthusiastic, and conscientiously impressed with a deep sense of her Christian duty to her neighbour, she devoted herself to a variety of benevolent objects. Now, it was the visitation of the sick, that had possession of her; now, it was the sheltering of the houseless; now, it was the elementary teaching of the densely ignorant; now, it was the raising up of those who had wandered and got trodden under foot; now, it was the wider employment of her own sex in the general business of life; now, it was all these things at once. Perfectly unselfish, swift to sympathise and eager to relieve, she wrought at such designs with a flushed earnestness that disregarded season, weather, time of day or night, food, rest. Under such a hurry of the spirits, and such incessant occupation, the strongest constitution will commonly go down. Hers, neither of the strongest nor the weakest, yielded to the burden, and began to sink.

To have saved her life, then, by taking action on the warning that shone in her eyes and sounded in her voice, would have been impossible, without changing her nature. As long as the power of moving about in the old way was left to her, she must exercise it, or be killed by the restraint. And so the time came when she could move about no longer, and took to her bed.

All the restlessness gone then, and all the sweet patience of her natural disposition purified by the resignation of her soul, she lay upon her bed through the whole round of changes of the seasons. She lay upon her bed through fifteen months. In all that time, her old cheerfulness never quitted her. In all that time, not an impatient or a querulous minute can be remembered.

At length, at midnight on the second of February, 1864, she turned down a leaf of a little book she was reading, and shut it up.

The ministering hand that had copied the verses into the tiny album was soon around her neck, and she quietly asked, as the clock was on the stroke of one:

“Do you think I am dying, mamma?”

“I think you are very, very ill to-night, my dear!”

“Send for my sister. My feet are so cold. Lift me up?”

Her sister entering as they raised her, she said: “It has come at last!” And with a bright and happy smile, looked upward, and departed.

Well had she written:

Why shouldst thou fear the beautiful angel, Death,
Who waits thee at the portals of the skies,
Ready to kiss away thy struggling breath,
Ready with gentle hand to close thine eyes?

Oh what were life, if life were all? Thine eyes
Are blinded by their tears, or thou wouldst see
Thy treasures wait thee in the far-off skies,
And Death, thy friend, will give them all to thee.

VERSE: THE ANGEL'S STORY

Through the blue and frosty heavens
Christmas stars were shining bright;
Glistening lamps throughout the City
Almost matched their gleaming light;

While the winter snow was lying,
And the winter winds were sighing,
Long ago, one Christmas night.
While, from every tower and steeple,
Pealing bells were sounding clear,
(Never with such tones of gladness,
Save when Christmas time is near,)
Many a one that night was merry
Who had toiled through all the year.

That night saw old wrongs forgiven,
Friends, long parted, reconciled;
Voices all unused to laughter,
Mournful eyes that rarely smiled,
Trembling hearts that feared the morrow,
From their anxious thoughts beguiled.

Rich and poor felt love and blessing
From the gracious season fall;
Joy and plenty in the cottage,
Peace and feasting in the hall;
And the voices of the children
Ringing clear above it all!

Yet one house was dim and darkened;
Gloom, and sickness, and despair,
Dwelling in the gilded chambers.
Creeping up the marble stair,
Even stilled the voice of mourning —
For a child lay dying there.

Silken curtains fell around him,
Velvet carpets hushed the tread.
Many costly toys were lying,
All unheeded, by his bed;
And his tangled golden ringlets
Were on downy pillows spread.
The skill of all that mighty City

To save one little life was vain;

One little thread from being broken,
One fatal word from being spoken;
Nay, his very mother's pain,
And the mighty love within her,
Could not give him health again.

So she knelt there still beside him,
She alone with strength to smile,
Promising that he should suffer
No more in a little while,
Murmuring tender song and story
Weary hours to beguile.

Suddenly an unseen Presence
Checked those constant moaning cries,
Stilled the little heart's quick fluttering,
Raised those blue and wondering eyes,
Fixed on some mysterious vision,
With a startled sweet surprise.

For a radiant angel hovered,
Smiling, o'er the little bed;
White his raiment, from his shoulders
Snowy dove-like pinions spread,
And a starlike light was shining
In a Glory round his head.

While, with tender love, the angel,
Leaning o'er the little nest,
In his arms the sick child folding,
Laid him gently on his breast,
Sobs and wailings told the mother
That her darling was at rest.

So the angel, slowly rising,
Spread his wings; and, through the air,
Bore the child, and while he held him
To his heart with loving care,
Placed a branch of crimson roses
Tenderly beside him there.

While the child, thus clinging, floated
Towards the mansions of the Blest,
Gazing from his shining guardian
To the flowers upon his breast,
Thus the angel spake, still smiling
On the little heavenly guest:

“Know, dear little one, that Heaven

Does no earthly thing disdain,
Man's poor joys find there an echo
Just as surely as his pain;
Love, on earth so feebly striving,
Lives divine in Heaven again!

“Once in that great town below us,
In a poor and narrow street,
Dwelt a little sickly orphan;
Gentle aid, or pity sweet,
Never in life's rugged pathway
Guided his poor tottering feet.

“All the striving anxious forethought
That should only come with age,
Weighed upon his baby spirit,
Showed him soon life's sternest page;
Grim Want was his nurse, and Sorrow
Was his only heritage.

“All too weak for childish pastimes,
Drearly the hours sped;
On his hands so small and trembling
Leaning his poor aching head,
Or, through dark and painful hours,
Lying sleepless on his bed.

“Dreaming strange and longing fancies
Of cool forests far away;
And of rosy, happy children,
Laughing merrily at play,
Coming home through green lanes, bearing
Trailing boughs of blooming May.

“Scarce a glimpse of azure heaven
Gleamed above that narrow street,
And the sultry air of Summer
(That you call so warm and sweet)
Fevered the poor Orphan, dwelling
In the crowded alley's heat.

“One bright day, with feeble footsteps
Slowly forth he tried to crawl,
Through the crowded city's pathways,
Till he reached a garden-wall;
Where 'mid princely halls and mansions
Stood the lordliest of all.

“There were trees with giant branches,

Velvet glades where shadows hide;
There were sparkling fountains glancing,
Flowers, which in luxuriant pride
Even wafted breaths of perfume
To the child who stood outside.

“He against the gate of iron
Pressed his wan and wistful face,
Gazing with an awe-struck pleasure
At the glories of the place;
Never had his brightest day-dream
Shone with half such wondrous grace.

“You were playing in that garden,
Throwing blossoms in the air,
Laughing when the petals floated
Downwards on your golden hair;
And the fond eyes watching o’er you,
And the splendour spread before you,
Told a House’s Hope was there.

“When your servants, tired of seeing
Such a face of want and woe,
Turning to the ragged Orphan,
Gave him coin, and bade him go,
Down his cheeks so thin and wasted,
Bitter tears began to flow.

“But that look of childish sorrow
On your tender child-heart fell,
And you plucked the reddest roses
From the tree you loved so well,
Passed them through the stern cold grating,
Gently bidding him ‘Farewell!’

“Dazzled by the fragrant treasure
And the gentle voice he heard,
In the poor forlorn boy’s spirit,
Joy, the sleeping Seraph, stirred;
In his hand he took the flowers,
In his heart the loving word.

“So he crept to his poor garret;
Poor no more, but rich and bright,
For the holy dreams of childhood —
Love, and Rest, and Hope, and Light —
Floated round the Orphan’s pillow
Through the starry summer night.

“Day dawned, yet the visions lasted;
All too weak to rise he lay;
Did he dream that none spake harshly —
All were strangely kind that day?
Surely then his treasured roses
Must have charmed all ills away.

“And he smiled, though they were fading;
One by one their leaves were shed;
‘Such bright things could never perish,
They would bloom again,’ he said.
When the next day’s sun had risen
Child and flowers both were dead.

“Know, dear little one! our Father
Will no gentle deed disdain;
Love on the cold earth beginning
Lives divine in Heaven again,
While the angel hearts that beat there
Still all tender thoughts retain.”

So the angel ceased, and gently
O’er his little burthen leant;
While the child gazed from the shining,
Loving eyes that o’er him bent,
To the blooming roses by him,
Wondering what that mystery meant.

Thus the radiant angel answered,
And with tender meaning smiled:
“Ere your childlike, loving spirit,
Sin and the hard world defiled,
God has given me leave to seek you —
I was once that little child!”

* * *

In the churchyard of that city
Rose a tomb of marble rare,
Decked, as soon as Spring awakened,
With her buds and blossoms fair —
And a humble grave beside it —
No one knew who rested there.

VERSE: ECHOES

Still the angel stars are shining,
Still the rippling waters flow,
But the angel-voice is silent
That I heard so long ago.
Hark! the echoes murmur low,
Long ago!

Still the wood is dim and lonely,
Still the plashing fountains play,
But the past and all its beauty,
Whither has it fled away?
Hark! the mournful echoes say,
Fled away!

Still the bird of night complaineth,
(Now, indeed, her song is pain,)
Visions of my happy hours,
Do I call and call in vain?
Hark! the echoes cry again,
All in vain!

Cease, oh echoes, mournful echoes!
Once I loved your voices well;
Now my heart is sick and weary —
Days of old, a long farewell!
Hark! the echoes sad and dreary
Cry farewell, farewell!

VERSE: A FALSE GENIUS

I see a Spirit by thy side,
Purple-winged and eagle-eyed,
Looking like a Heavenly guide.

Though he seem so bright and fair,
Ere thou trust his proffered care,
Pause a little, and beware!

If he bid thee dwell apart,
Tending some ideal smart
In a sick and coward heart;

In self-worship wrapped alone,
Dreaming thy poor griefs are grown
More than other men have known;

Dwelling in some cloudy sphere,
Though God's work is waiting here,
And God deigneth to be near;

If his torch's crimson glare
Show thee evil everywhere,
Tainting all the wholesome air;

While with strange distorted choice,
Still disdain to rejoice,
Thou *wilt* hear a wailing voice;

If a simple, humble heart,
Seem to thee a meaner part,
Than thy noblest aim and art;

If he bid thee bow before
Crownèd Mind and nothing more,
The great idol men adore;

And with starry veil enfold
Sin, the trailing serpent old,
Till his scales shine out like gold;

Though his words seem true and wise,
Soul, I say to thee – Arise.
He is a Demon in disguise!

VERSE: MY PICTURE

Stand this way – more near the window —
By my desk – you see the light
Falling on my picture better —
Thus I see it while I write!

Who the head may be I know not,
But it has a student air;
With a look half sad, half stately,
Grave sweet eyes and flowing hair.

Little care I who the painter,
How obscure a name he bore;
Nor, when some have named Velasquez,
Did I value it the more.

As it is, I would not give it
For the rarest piece of art;
It has dwelt with me, and listened
To the secrets of my heart.

Many a time, when to my garret,
Weary, I returned at night,
It has seemed to look a welcome
That has made my poor room bright.

Many a time, when ill and sleepless,
I have watched the quivering gleam
Of my lamp upon that picture,
Till it faded in my dream.

When dark days have come, and friendship
Worthless seemed, and life in vain,
That bright friendly smile has sent me
Boldly to my task again.

Sometimes when hard need has pressed me
To bow down where I despise,
I have read stern words of counsel
In those sad reproachful eyes.

Nothing that my brain imagined,
Or my weary hand has wrought,
But it watched the dim Idea
Spring forth into armèd Thought.

It has smiled on my successes,
Raised me when my hopes were low,
And by turns has looked upon me
With all the loving eyes I know.

Do you wonder that my picture
Has become so like a friend? —
It has seen my life's beginnings,
It shall stay and cheer the end!

VERSE: JUDGE NOT

Judge not; the workings of his brain
And of his heart thou canst not see;
What looks to thy dim eyes a stain,
In God's pure light may only be
A scar, brought from some well-won field,
Where thou wouldst only faint and yield.

The look, the air, that frets thy sight,
May be a token, that below
The soul has closed in deadly fight
With some infernal fiery foe,
Whose glance would scorch thy smiling grace,
And cast thee shuddering on thy face!

The fall thou darest to despise —
May be the angel's slackened hand
Has suffered it, that he may rise
And take a firmer, surer stand;
Or, trusting less to earthly things,
May henceforth learn to use his wings.

And judge none lost; but wait, and see,
With hopeful pity, not disdain;
The depth of the abyss may be
The measure of the height of pain
And love and glory that may raise
This soul to God in after days!

VERSE: FRIEND SORROW

Do not cheat thy Heart and tell her,
“Grief will pass away,
Hope for fairer times in future,
And forget to-day.” —
Tell her, if you will, that sorrow
Need not come in vain;
Tell her that the lesson taught her
Far outweighs the pain.

Cheat her not with the old comfort,
“Soon she will forget” —
Bitter truth, alas – but matter
Rather for regret;
Bid her not “Seek other pleasures,
Turn to other things:” —
Rather nurse her caged sorrow
’Till the captive sings.

Rather bid her go forth bravely.
And the stranger greet;
Not as foe, with spear and buckler,
But as dear friends meet;
Bid her with a strong clasp hold her,
By her dusky wings —
Listening for the murmured blessing
Sorrow always brings.

VERSE: ONE BY ONE

One by one the sands are flowing,
One by one the moments fall;
Some are coming, some are going;
Do not strive to grasp them all.

One by one thy duties wait thee,
Let thy whole strength go to each,
Let no future dreams elate thee,
Learn thou first what these can teach.

One by one (bright gifts from Heaven)
Joys are sent thee here below;
Take them readily when given,
Ready too to let them go.

One by one thy griefs shall meet thee,
Do not fear an armèd band;
One will fade as others greet thee;
Shadows passing through the land.

Do not look at life's long sorrow;
See how small each moment's pain;
God will help thee for to-morrow,
So each day begin again.

Every hour that fleets so slowly
Has its task to do or bear;
Luminous the crown, and holy,
When each gem is set with care.

Do not linger with regretting,
Or for passing hours despond;
Nor, the daily toil forgetting,
Look too eagerly beyond.

Hours are golden links, God's token,
Reaching Heaven; but one by one
Take them, lest the chain be broken
Ere the pilgrimage be done.

VERSE: TRUE HONOURS

Is my darling tired already,
Tired of her day of play?
Draw your little stool beside me,
Smooth this tangled hair away.
Can she put the logs together,
Till they make a cheerful blaze?
Shall her blind old Uncle tell her
Something of his youthful days?

Hark! The wind among the cedars
Waves their white arms to and fro;
I remember how I watched them
Sixty Christmas Days ago:
Then I dreamt a glorious vision
Of great deeds to crown each year —
Sixty Christmas Days have found me
Useless, helpless, blind – and here!

Yes, I feel my darling stealing
Warm soft fingers into mine —
Shall I tell her what I fancied
In that strange old dream of mine?
I was kneeling by the window,
Reading how a noble band,
With the red cross on their breast-plates,
Went to gain the Holy Land.

While with eager eyes of wonder
Over the dark page I bent,
Slowly twilight shadows gathered
Till the letters came and went;
Slowly, till the night was round me;
Then my heart beat loud and fast,
For I felt before I saw it
That a spirit near me passed.

Then I raised my eyes, and shining
Where the moon's first ray was bright
Stood a wingèd Angel-warrior
Clothed and panoplied in light:
So, with Heaven's love upon him,
Stern in calm and resolute will,
Looked St. Michael – does the picture
Hang in the old cloister still?

Threefold were the dreams of honour
That absorbed my heart and brain;
Threefold crowns the Angel promised,
Each one to be bought by pain:
While he spoke, a threefold blessing
Fell upon my soul like rain.
HELPER OF THE POOR AND SUFFERING;
VICTOR IN A GLORIOUS STRIFE;

SINGER OF A NOBLE POEM:
Such the honours of my life.
Ah, that dream! Long years that gave me
Joy and grief as real things
Never touched the tender memory
Sweet and solemn that it brings —
Never quite effaced the feeling
Of those white and shadowing wings.

Do those blue eyes open wider?
Does my faith too foolish seem?
Yes, my darling, years have taught me
It was nothing but a dream.
Soon, too soon, the bitter knowledge
Of a fearful trial rose,
Rose to crush my heart, and sternly
Bade my young ambition close.

More and more my eyes were clouded,
Till at last God's glorious light
Passed away from me for ever,
And I lived and live in night.
Dear, I will not dim your pleasure,
Christmas should be only gay —
In my night the stars have risen,
And I wait the dawn of day.

Spite of all I could be happy;
For my brothers' tender care
In their boyish pastimes ever
Made me take, or feel a share.
Philip, even then so thoughtful,
Max so noble, brave and tall,
And your father, little Godfrey,
The most loving of them all.

Philip reasoned down my sorrow,
Max would laugh my gloom away,
Godfrey's little arms put round me,
Helped me through my dreariest day;

While the promise of my Angel,
Like a star, now bright, now pale,
Hung in blackest night above me,
And I felt it could not fail.

Years passed on, my brothers left me,
Each went out to take his share
In the struggle of life; my portion
Was a humble one – to bear.
Here I dwelt, and learnt to wander
Through the woods and fields alone,
Every cottage in the village
Had a corner called my own.

Old and young, all brought their troubles,
Great or small, for me to hear;
I have often blessed my sorrow
That drew others' grief so near.
Ah, the people needed helping —
Needed love – (for Love and Heaven
Are the only gifts not bartered,
They alone are freely given) —

And I gave it. Philip's bounty,
(We were orphans, dear,) made toil
Prosper, and want never fastened
On the tenants of the soil.
Philip's name (Oh, how I gloried,
He so young, to see it rise!)
Soon grew noted among statesmen
As a patriot true and wise.

And his people all felt honoured
To be ruled by such a name;
I was proud too that they loved me;
Through their pride in him it came.
He had gained what I had longed for,
I meanwhile grew glad and gay,
'Mid his people, to be serving
Him and them, in some poor way.

How his noble earnest speeches,
With untiring fervour came;
HELPER OF THE POOR AND SUFFERING;
Truly he deserved the name!
Had my Angel's promise failed me?
Had that word of hope grown dim?
Why, my Philip had fulfilled it,
And I loved it best in him!

Max meanwhile – ah, you, my darling,
Can his loving words recall —
'Mid the bravest and the noblest,
Braver, nobler, than them all.
How I loved him! how my heart thrilled
When his sword clanked by his side.
When I touched his gold embroidery,
Almost *saw* him in his pride!

So we parted; he all eager
To uphold the name he bore,
Leaving in my charge – he loved me —
Some one whom he loved still more:
I must tend this gentle flower,
I must speak to her of him,
For he feared – Love still is fearful —
That his memory might grow dim.

I must guard her from all sorrow,
I must play a brother's part,
Shield all grief and trial from her,
If it need be, with my heart.
Years passed, and his name grew famous;
We were proud, both she and I;
And we lived upon his letters,
While the slow days fled by.

Then at last – you know the story,
How a fearful rumour spread,
Till all hope had slowly faded,
And we heard that he was dead.
Dead! Oh, those were bitter hours;
Yet within my soul there dwelt
A warning, and while others mourned him,
Something like a hope I felt.

His was no weak life as mine was,
But a life, so full and strong —
No, I could not think he perished
Nameless, 'mid a conquered throng.
How she drooped! Years passed; no tidings
Came, and yet that little flame
Of strange hope within my spirit
Still burnt on, and lived the same.

Ah! my child, our hearts will fail us,
When to us they strongest seem;
I can look back on those hours

As a fearful, evil dream.
She had long despaired; what wonder
That her heart had turned to mine?
Earthly loves are deep and tender,
Not eternal and divine!

Can I say how bright a future
Rose before my soul that day?
Oh, so strange, so sweet, so tender —
And I had to turn away.
Hard and terrible the struggle,
For the pain not mine alone;
I called back my Brother's spirit,
And I bade him claim his own.

Told her – now I dared to do it —
That I felt the day would rise
When he would return to gladden
My weak heart and her bright eyes.
And I pleaded – pleaded sternly —
In his name, and for his sake:
Now, I can speak calmly of it,
Then, I thought my heart would break.

Soon – ah, Love had not deceived me,
(Love's true instincts never err,)
Wounded, weak, escaped from prison,
He returned to me; to her.
I could thank God that bright morning,
When I felt my Brother's gaze,
That my heart was true and loyal,
As in our old boyish days.

Bought by wounds and deeds of daring,
Honours he had brought away;
Glory crowned his name – my Brother's;
Mine too! – we were one that day.
Since the crown on him had fallen,
“VICTOR IN A NOBLE STRIFE,”
I could live and die contented
With my poor ignoble life.

Well, my darling, almost weary
Of my story? Wait awhile;
For the rest is only joyful;
I can tell it with a smile.
One bright promise still was left me,
Wound so close about my soul,
That, as one by one had failed me,

This dream now absorbed the whole.

“SINGER OF A NOBLE POEM,” —

Ah, my darling, few and rare
Burn the glorious names of Poets,
Like stars in the purple air.
That too, and I glory in it,
That great gift my Godfrey won;
I have my dear share of honour,
Gained by that beloved one.

One day shall my darling read it;
Now she cannot understand
All the noble thoughts, that lighten
Through the genius of the land.
I am proud to be his brother,
Proud to think that hope was true;
Though I longed and strove so vainly,
What I failed in, he could do.

I was long before I knew it,
Longer ere I felt it so;
Then I strung my rhymes together
Only for the poor and low.
And, it pleases me to know it,
(For I love them well indeed,)
They care for my humble verses,
Fitted for their humble need.

And, it cheers my heart to bear it,
Where the far-off settlers roam,
My poor words are sung and cherished,
Just because they speak of Home.
And the little children sing them,
(That, I think, has pleased me best,)
Often, too, the dying love them,
For they tell of Heaven and rest.

So my last vain dream has faded;
(Such as I to think of fame!)
Yet I will not say it failed me,
For it crowned my Godfrey's name.
No; my Angel did not cheat me,
For my long life *has* been blest;
He did give me Love and Sorrow,
He will bring me Light and Rest.

VERSE: A WOMAN'S QUESTION

Before I trust my Fate to thee,
Or place my hand in thine,
Before I let thy Future give
Colour and form to mine,
Before I peril all for thee, question thy soul to-night for me.

I break all slighter bonds, nor feel
A shadow of regret:
Is there one link within the Past,
That holds thy spirit yet?
Or is thy Faith as clear and free as that which I can pledge to thee?

Does there within thy dimmest dreams
A possible future shine,
Wherein thy life could henceforth breathe,
Untouched, unshared by mine?
If so, at any pain or cost, oh, tell me before all is lost.

Look deeper still. If thou canst feel
Within thy inmost soul,
That thou hast kept a portion back,
While I have staked the whole;
Let no false pity spare the blow, but in true mercy tell me so.

Is there within thy heart a need
That mine cannot fulfil?
One chord that any other hand
Could better wake or still?
Speak now – lest at some future day my whole life wither and decay.

Lives there within thy nature bid
The demon-spirit Change,
Shedding a passing glory still
On all things new and strange? —
It may not be thy fault alone – but shield my heart against thy own.

Couldst thou withdraw thy hand one day
And answer to my claim,
That Fate, and that to-day's mistake,
Not thou – had been to blame?
Some soothe their conscience thus: but thou, wilt surely warn and save
me now.

Nay, answer *not*– I dare not hear,
The words would come too late;

Yet I would spare thee all remorse,
So, comfort thee, my Fate —
Whatever on my heart may fall – remember I *would* risk it all!

VERSE: THE THREE RULERS

I saw a Ruler take his stand
And trample on a mighty land;
The People crouched before his beck,
His iron heel was on their neck,
His name shone bright through blood and pain,
His sword flashed back their praise again.

I saw another Ruler rise —
His words were noble, good, and wise;
With the calm sceptre of his pen
He ruled the minds and thoughts of men;
Some scoffed, some praised – while many heard,
Only a few obeyed his word.

Another Ruler then I saw —
Love and sweet Pity were his law:
The greatest and the least had part
(Yet most the unhappy) in his heart —
The People, in a mighty band,
Rose up, and drove him from the land!

VERSE: A DEAD PAST

Spare her at least: look, you have taken from me
The Present, and I murmur not, nor moan;
The Future too, with all her glorious promise;
But do not leave me utterly alone.

Spare me the Past – for, see, she cannot harm you,
She lies so white and cold, wrapped in her shroud;
All, all my own! and, trust me, I will hide her
Within my soul, nor speak to her aloud.

I folded her soft hands upon her bosom,
And strewed my flowers upon her —*they* still live —
Sometimes I like to kiss her closed white eye-lids,
And think of all the joy she used to give.

Cruel indeed it were to take her from me;
She sleeps, she will not wake – no fear – again:
And so I laid her, such a gentle burthen,
Quietly on my heart to still its pain.

I do not think that any smiling Present,
Any vague Future, spite of all her charms,
Could ever rival her. You know you laid her,
Long years ago, then living, in my arms.

Leave her at least – while my tears fall upon her,
I dream she smiles, just as she did of yore;
As dear as ever to me – nay, it may be,
Even dearer still – since I have nothing more.

VERSE: A DOUBTING HEART

Where are the swallows fled?
Frozen and dead,
Perchance upon some bleak and stormy shore.
Oh doubting heart!
Far over purple seas,
They wait, in sunny ease,
The balmy southern breeze,
To bring them to their northern homes once more.

Why must the flowers die?
Prisoned they lie
In the cold tomb, heedless of tears or rain.
Oh doubting heart!
They only sleep below
The soft white ermine snow,
While winter winds shall blow,
To breathe and smile upon you soon again.

The sun has hid its rays
These many days;
Will dreary hours never leave the earth?
Oh doubting heart!
The stormy clouds on high
Veil the same sunny sky,
That soon (for spring is nigh)
Shall wake the summer into golden mirth.

Fair hope is dead, and light
Is quenched in night.
What sound can break the silence of despair?
Oh doubting heart!
Thy sky is overcast,
Yet stars shall rise at last,
Brighter for darkness past,
And angels' silver voices stir the air.

VERSE: A STUDENT

Over an ancient scroll I bent,
Steeping my soul in wise content,
Nor paused a moment, save to chide
A low voice whispering at my side.

I wove beneath the stars' pale shine
A dream, half human, half divine;
And shook off (not to break the charm)
A little hand laid on my arm.

I read; until my heart would glow
With the great deeds of long ago;
Nor heard, while with those mighty dead,
Pass to and fro a faltering tread.

On the old theme I pondered long —
The struggle between right and wrong;
I could not check such visions high,
To soothe a little quivering sigh.

I tried to solve the problem – Life;
Dreaming of that mysterious strife,
How could I leave such reasonings wise,
To answer two blue pleading eyes?

I strove how best to give, and when,
My blood to save my fellow-men —
How could I turn aside, to look
At snowdrops laid upon my book?

Now Time has fled – the world is strange,
Something there is of pain and change;
My books lie closed upon the shelf;
I miss the old heart in myself.

I miss the sunbeams in my room —
It was not always wrapped in gloom:
I miss my dreams – they fade so fast,
Or flit into some trivial past.

The great stream of the world goes by;
None care, or heed, or question, why
I, the lone student, cannot raise
My voice or hand as in old days.

No echo seems to wake again
My heart to anything but pain,
Save when a dream of twilight brings
The fluttering of an angel's wings!

VERSE: A KNIGHT ERRANT

Though he lived and died among us,
Yet his name may be enrolled
With the knights whose deeds of daring
Ancient chronicles have told.

Still a stripling, he encountered
Poverty, and struggled long,
Gathering force from every effort,
Till he knew his arm was strong.

Then his heart and life he offered
To his radiant mistress – Truth;
Never thought, or dream, or faltering,
Marred the promise of his youth.

So he rode forth to defend her,
And her peerless worth proclaim;
Challenging each recreant doubter
Who aspersed her spotless name.

First upon his path stood Ignorance,
Hideous in his brutal might;
Hard the blows and long the battle
Ere the monster took to flight.

Then, with light and fearless spirit,
Prejudice he dared to brave;
Hunting back the lying craven
To her black sulphureous cave.

Followed by his servile minions,
Custom, the old Giant, rose;
Yet he, too, at last was conquered
By the good Knight's weighty blows.

Then he turned, and, flushed with victory
Struck upon the brazen shield
Of the world's great king, Opinion
And defied him to the field.

Once again he rose a conqueror,
And, though wounded in the fight,
With a dying smile of triumph
Saw that Truth had gained her right.

On his failing ear re-echoing
Came the shouting round her throne;
Little cared he that no future
With her name would link his own.

Spent with many a hard-fought battle,
Slowly ebb'd his life away,
And the crowd that flocked to greet her
Trampled on him where he lay.

Gathering all his strength, he saw her
Crowned and reigning in her pride!
Looked his last upon her beauty,
Raised his eyes to God, and died.

VERSE: LINGER, OH, GENTLE TIME

Linger, oh, gentle Time,
Linger, oh, radiant grace of bright To-day!
Let not the hours' chime
Call thee away,
But linger near me still with fond delay.

Linger, for thou art mine!
What dearer treasures can the future hold?
What sweeter flowers than thine
Can she unfold?
What secrets tell my heart thou hast not told?

Oh, linger in thy flight!
For shadows gather round, and should we part,
A dreary starless night
May fill my heart, —
Then pause and linger yet ere thou depart.

Linger, I ask no more, —

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