

GEORGE MACDONALD

THE POETICAL WORKS
OF GEORGE
MACDONALD IN TWO
VOLUMES — VOLUME 2

George MacDonald
The poetical works of
George MacDonald in
two volumes — Volume 2

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=35006849

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George MacDonald

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PARABLES

THE MAN OF SONGS

"Thou wanderest in the land of dreams,
O man of many songs!
To thee what is, but looks and seems;
No realm to thee belongs!"

"Seest thou those mountains, faint and far,
O spirit caged and tame?"
"Blue clouds like distant hills they are,
And like is not the same."

"Nay, nay; I know each mountain well,
Each cliff, and peak, and dome!
In that cloudland, in one high dell,
Nesteth my little home."

THE HILLS

Behind my father's cottage lies
A gentle grassy height
Up which I often ran—to gaze
Back with a wondering sight,
For then the chimneys I thought high
Were down below me quite!

All round, where'er I turned mine eyes,
Huge hills closed up the view;
The town 'mid their converging roots
Was clasped by rivers two;
From, one range to another sprang
The sky's great vault of blue.

It was a joy to climb their sides,
And in the heather lie!
A joy to look at vantage down
On the castle grim and high!
Blue streams below, white clouds above,
In silent earth and sky!

And now, where'er my feet may roam,

At sight of stranger hill
A new sense of the old delight
Springs in my bosom still,
And longings for the high unknown
Their ancient channels fill.

For I am always climbing hills,
From the known to the unknown—
Surely, at last, on some high peak,
To find my Father's throne,
Though hitherto I have only found
His footsteps in the stone!

And in my wanderings I did meet
Another searching too:
The dawning hope, the shared quest
Our thoughts together drew;
Fearless she laid her band in mine
Because her heart was true.

She was not born among the hills,
Yet on each mountain face
A something known her inward eye
By inborn light can trace;
For up the hills must homeward be,
Though no one knows the place.

Clasp my hand close, my child, in thine—

A long way we have come!

Clasp my hand closer yet, my child,

Farther we yet must roam—

Climbing and climbing till we reach

Our heavenly father's home.

THE JOURNEY

I

Hark, the rain is on my roof!
Every murmur, through the dark,
Stings me with a dull reproof
Like a half-extinguished spark.
Me! ah me! how came I here,
Wide awake and wide alone!
Caught within a net of fear,
All my dreams undreamed and gone!

I will rise; I will go forth.
Better dare the hideous night,
Better face the freezing north
Than be still, where is no light!
Black wind rushing round me now,
Sown with arrowy points of rain!
Gone are there and then and now—
I am here, and so is pain!

Dead in dreams the gloomy street!

I will out on open roads.
Eager grow my aimless feet—
Onward, onward something goads!
I will take the mountain path,
Beard the storm within its den;
Know the worst of this dim wrath
Harassing the souls of men.

Chasm 'neath chasm! rock piled on rock!
Roots, and crumbling earth, and stones!
Hark, the torrent's thundering shock!
Hark, the swaying pine tree's groans!
Ah! I faint, I fall, I die,
Sink to nothingness away!—
Lo, a streak upon the sky!
Lo, the opening eye of day!

II

Mountain summits lift their snows
O'er a valley green and low;
And a winding pathway goes
Guided by the river's flow;
And a music rises ever,
As of peace and low content,

From the pebble-paven river
Like an odour upward sent.

And the sound of ancient harms
Moans behind, the hills among,
Like the humming of the swarms
That unseen the forest throng.
Now I meet the shining rain
From a cloud with sunny weft;
Now against the wind I strain,
Sudden burst from mountain cleft.

Now a sky that hath a moon
Staining all the cloudy white
With a faded rainbow—soon
Lost in deeps of heavenly night!
Now a morning clear and soft,
Amber on the purple hills;
Warm blue day of summer, oft
Cooled by wandering windy rills!

Joy to travel thus along
With the universe around!
Every creature of the throng,
Every sight and scent and sound
Homeward speeding, beauty-laden,

Beelike, to its hive, my soul!
Mine the eye the stars are made in!
Mine the heart of Nature's whole!

III

Hills retreating on each hand
Slowly sink into the plain;
Solemn through the outspread land
Rolls the river to the main.
In the glooming of the night
Something through the dusky air
Doubtful glimmers, faintly white,
But I know not what or where.

Is it but a chalky ridge
Bared of sod, like tree of bark?
Or a river-spanning bridge
Miles away into the dark?
Or the foremost leaping waves
Of the everlasting sea,
Where the Undivided laves
Time with its eternity?

Is it but an eye-made sight,
In my brain a fancied gleam?
Or a faint aurora-light
From the sun's tired smoking team?
In the darkness it is gone,
Yet with every step draws nigh;
Known shall be the thing unknown
When the morning climbs the sky!

Onward, onward through the night
Matters it I cannot see?
I am moving in a might
Dwelling in the dark and me!
End or way I cannot lose—
Grudge to rest, or fear to roam;
All is well with wanderer whose
Heart is travelling hourly home.

IV

Joy! O joy! the dawning sea
Answers to the dawning sky,
Foretaste of the coming glee
When the sun will lord it high!
See the swelling radiance growing

To a dazzling glory-might!
See the shadows gently going
'Twixt the wave-tops wild with light!

Hear the smiting billows clang!
See the falling billows lean
Half a watery vault, and hang
Gleaming with translucent green,
Then in thousand fleeces fall,
Thundering light upon the strand!—
This the whiteness which did call
Through the dusk, across the land!

See, a boat! Out, out we dance!
Fierce blasts swoop upon my sail!
What a terrible expanse—
Tumbling hill and heaving dale!
Stayless, helpless, lost I float,
Captive to the lawless free!
But a prison is my boat!
Oh, for petrel-wings to flee!

Look below: each watery whirl
Cast in beauty's living mould!
Look above: each feathery curl
Dropping crimson, dropping gold!—

Oh, I tremble in the flush
Of the everlasting youth!
Love and awe together rush:
I am free in God, the Truth!

THE TREE'S PRAYER

Alas, 'tis cold and dark!
The wind all night hath sung a wintry tune!
Hail from black clouds that swallowed up the moon
Beat, beat against my bark.

Oh! why delays the spring?
Not yet the sap moves in my frozen veins;
Through all my stiffened roots creep numbing pains,
That I can hardly cling.

The sun shone yester-morn;
I felt the glow down every fibre float,
And thought I heard a thrush's piping note
Of dim dream-gladness born.

Then, on the salt gale driven,
The streaming cloud hissed through my outstretched arms,
Tossed me about in slanting snowy swarms,
And blotted out the heaven.

All night I brood and choose

Among past joys. Oh, for the breath of June!
The feathery light-flakes quavering from the moon
The slow baptizing dews!

Oh, the joy-frantic birds!—
They are the tongues of us, mute, longing trees!
Aha, the billowy odours! and the bees
That browse like scattered herds!

The comfort-whispering showers
That thrill with gratefulness my youngest shoot!
The children playing round my deep-sunk root,
Green-caved from burning hours!

See, see the heartless dawn,
With naked, chilly arms latticed across!
Another weary day of moaning loss
On the thin-shadowed lawn!

But icy winter's past;
Yea, climbing suns persuade the relenting wind:
I will endure with steadfast, patient mind;
My leaves *will* come at last!

WERE I A SKILFUL PAINTER

Were I a skilful painter,
My pencil, not my pen,
Should try to teach thee hope and fear,
And who would blame me then?—
Fear of the tide of darkness
That floweth fast behind,
And hope to make thee journey on
In the journey of the mind.

Were I a skilful painter,
What should I paint for thee?—
A tiny spring-bud peeping out
From a withered wintry tree;
The warm blue sky of summer
O'er jagged ice and snow,
And water hurrying gladsome out
From a cavern down below;

The dim light of a beacon
Upon a stormy sea,
Where a lonely ship to windward beats
For life and liberty;
A watery sun-ray gleaming

Athwart a sullen cloud
And falling on some grassy flower
The rain had earthward bowed;

Morn peeping o'er a mountain,
In ambush for the dark,
And a traveller in the vale below
Rejoicing like a lark;
A taper nearly vanished
Amid the dawning gray,
And a maiden lifting up her head,
And lo, the coming day!

I am no skilful painter;
Let who will blame me then
That I would teach thee hope and fear
With my plain-talking pen!—
Fear of the tide of darkness
That floweth fast behind,
And hope to make thee journey on
In the journey of the mind.

FAR AND NEAR. [The fact which suggested
this poem is related by Clarke in his Travels.]

I

Blue sky above, blue sea below,
Far off, the old Nile's mouth,
'Twas a blue world, wherein did blow
A soft wind from the south.

In great and solemn heaves the mass
Of pulsing ocean beat,
Unwrinkled as the sea of glass
Beneath the holy feet.

With forward leaning of desire
The ship sped calmly on,
A pilgrim strong that would not tire
Or hasten to be gone.

II

List!—on the wave!—what can they be,
Those sounds that hither glide?
No lovers whisper tremulously
Under the ship's round side!

No sail across the dark blue sphere
Holds white obedient way;
No far-fled, sharp-winged boat is near,
No following fish at play!

'Tis not the rippling of the wave,
Nor sighing of the cords;
No winds or waters ever gave
A murmur so like words;

Nor wings of birds that northward strain,
Nor talk of hidden crew:
The traveller questioned, but in vain—
He found no answer true.

III

A hundred level miles away,
On Egypt's troubled shore,
Two nations fought, that sunny day,
With bellowing cannons' roar.

The fluttering whisper, low and near,
Was that far battle's blare;
A lipping, rippling motion here,
The blasting thunder there.

IV

Can this dull sighing in my breast
So faint and undefined,
Be the worn edge of far unrest
Borne on the spirit's wind?

The uproar of high battle fought
Betwixt the bond and free,
The thunderous roll of armed thought

Dwarfed to an ache in me?

MY ROOM

To G. E. M.

'Tis a little room, my friend—
Baby walks from end to end;
All the things look sadly real
This hot noontide unideal;
Vaporous heat from cope to basement
All you see outside the casement,
Save one house all mud-becrusted,
And a street all drought-bedusted!
There behold its happiest vision,
Trickling water-cart's derision!
Shut we out the staring space,
Draw the curtains in its face!

Close the eyelids of the room,
Fill it with a scarlet gloom:
Lo, the walls with warm flush dyed!
Lo, the ceiling glorified,
As when, lost in tenderest pinks,
White rose on the red rose thinks!
But beneath, a hue right rosy,
Red as a geranium-posy,
Stains the air with power estranging,

Known with unknown clouding, changing.
See in ruddy atmosphere
Commonplaceness disappear!
Look around on either hand—
Are we not in fairyland?

On that couch, inwrap in mist
Of vaporized amethyst,
Lie, as in a rose's heart:
Secret things I would impart;
Any time you would believe them—
Easier, though, you will receive them
Bathed in glowing mystery
Of the red light shadowy;
For this ruby-hearted hue,
Sanguine core of all the true,
Which for love the heart would plunder
Is the very hue of wonder;
This dissolving dreamy red
Is the self-same radiance shed
From the heart of poet young,
Glowing poppy sunlight-stung:
If in light you make a schism
'Tis the deepest in the prism.

This poor-seeming room, in fact
Is of marvels all compact,

So disguised by common daylight
By its disenchanting gray light,
Only eyes that see by shining,
Inside pierce to its live lining.
Loftiest observatory
Ne'er unveiled such hidden glory;
Never sage's furnace-kitchen
Magic wonders was so rich in;
Never book of wizard old
Clasped such in its iron hold.

See that case against the wall,
Darkly-dull-purpureal!—
A piano to the prosy,
But to us in twilight rosy—
What?—A cave where Nereids lie,
Naiads, Dryads, Oreads sigh,
Dreaming of the time when they
Danced in forest and in bay.
In that chest before your eyes
Nature self-enchanted lies;—
Lofty days of summer splendour;
Low dim eyes of opal tender;
Airy hunts of cloud and wind;
Brooding storm—below, behind;
Awful hills and midnight woods;
Sunny rains in solitudes;
Babbling streams in forests hoar;

Seven-hued icebergs; oceans froze.—
Yes; did I not say *enchanted*,
That is, hid away till wanted?
Do you hear a low-voiced singing?
'Tis the sorceress's, flinging
Spells around her baby's riot,
Binding her in moveless quiet:—
She at will can disenchant them,
And to prayer believing grant them.

You believe me: soon will night
Free her hands for fair delight;
Then invoke her—she will come.
Fold your arms, be blind and dumb.
She will bring a book of spells
Writ like crabbed oracles;
Like Sabrina's will her hands
Thaw the power of charmed bands.
First will ransomed music rush
Round thee in a glorious gush;
Next, upon its waves will sally,
Like a stream-god down a valley,
Nature's self, the formless former,
Nature's self, the peaceful stormer;
She will enter, captive take thee,
And both one and many make thee,
One by softest power to still thee,
Many by the thoughts that fill thee.—

Let me guess three guesses where
She her prisoner will bear!

On a mountain-top you stand
Gazing o'er a sunny land;
Shining streams, like silver veins,
Rise in dells and meet in plains;
Up yon brook a hollow lies
Dumb as love that fears surprise;
Moorland tracts of broken ground
O'er it rise and close it round:
He who climbs from bosky dale
Hears the foggy breezes wail.
Yes, thou know'st the nest of love,
Know'st the waste around, above!
In thy soul or in thy past,
Straight it melts into the vast,
Quickly vanishes away
In a gloom of darkening gray.

Sinks the sadness into rest,
Ripple like on water's breast:
Mother's bosom rests the daughter—
Grief the ripple, love the water;
And thy brain like wind-harp lies
Breathed upon from distant skies,
Till, soft-gathering, visions new

Grow like vapours in the blue:
White forms, flushing hyacinthine,
Move in motions labyrinthine;
With an airy wishful gait
On the counter-motion wait;
Sweet restraint and action free
Show the law of liberty;
Master of the revel still
The obedient, perfect will;
Hating smallest thing awry,
Breathing, breeding harmony;
While the god-like graceful feet,
For such mazy marvelling meet,
Press from air a shining sound,
Rippling after, lingering round:
Hair afloat and arms aloft
Fill the chord of movement soft.

Gone the measure polyhedral!
Towers aloft a fair cathedral!
Every arch—like praying arms
Upward flung in love's alarms,
Knit by clasped hands o'erhead—
Heaves to heaven a weight of dread;
In thee, like an angel-crowd,
Grows the music, praying loud,
Swells thy spirit with devotion
As a strong wind swells the ocean,

Sweeps the visioned pile away,
Leaves thy heart alone to pray.

As the prayer grows dim and dies
Like a sunset from the skies,
Glides another change of mood
O'er thy inner solitude:
Girt with Music's magic zone,
Lo, thyself magician grown!
Open-eyed thou walk'st through earth
Brooding on the aeonian birth
Of a thousand wonder-things
In divine dusk of their springs:
Half thou seest whence they flow,
Half thou seest whither go—
Nature's consciousness, whereby
On herself she turns her eye,
Hoping for all men and thee
Perfected, pure harmony.

But when, sinking slow, the sun
Leaves the glowing curtain dun,
I, of prophet-insight reft,
Shall be dull and dreamless left;
I must hasten proof on proof,
Weaving in the warp my woof!

What are those upon the wall,
Ranged in rows symmetrical?
Through the wall of things external
Posterns they to the supernal;
Through Earth's battlemented height
Loopholes to the Infinite;
Through locked gates of place and time,
Wickets to the eternal prime
Lying round the noisy day
Full of silences always.

That, my friend? Now, it is curious
You should hit upon the spurious!
'Tis a door to nowhere, that;
Never soul went in thereat;
Lies behind, a limy wall
Hung with cobwebs, that is all.

Do not open that one yet,
Wait until the sun is set.
If you careless lift its latch
Glimpse of nothing will you catch;
Mere negation, blank of hue,
Out of it will stare at you;
Wait, I say, the coming night,
Fittest time for second sight,

Then the wide eyes of the mind
See far down the Spirit's wind.
You may have to strain and pull,
Force and lift with cunning tool,
Ere the rugged, ill-joined door
Yield the sight it stands before:
When at last, with grating sweep,
Wide it swings—behold, the deep!

Thou art standing on the verge
Where material things emerge;
Hoary silence, lightning fleet,
Shooteth hellward at thy feet!
Fear not thou whose life is truth,
Gazing will renew thy youth;
But where sin of soul or flesh
Held a man in spider-mesh,
It would drag him through that door,
Give him up to loreless lore,
Ages to be blown and hurled
Up and down a deedless world.

Ah, your eyes ask how I brook
Doors that are not, doors to look!
That is whither I was tending,
And it brings me to good ending.

Baby is the cause of this;
Odd it seems, but so it is;—
Baby, with her pretty prate
Molten, half articulate,
Full of hints, suggestions, catches,
Broken verse, and music snatches!
She, like seraph gone astray,
Must be shown the homeward way;
Plant of heaven, she, rooted lowly,
Must put forth a blossom holy,
Must, through culture high and steady,
Slow unfold a gracious lady;
She must therefore live in wonder,
See nought common up or under;
She the moon and stars and sea,
Worm and butterfly and bee,
Yea, the sparkle in a stone,
Must with marvel look upon;
She must love, in heaven's own blueness,
Both the colour and the newness;
Must each day from darkness break,
Often often come awake,
Never with her childhood part,
Change the brain, but keep the heart.

So, from lips and hands and looks,
She must learn to honour books,

Turn the leaves with careful fingers,
Never lean where long she lingers;
But when she is old enough
She must learn the lesson rough
That to seem is not to be,
As to know is not to see;
That to man or book, *appearing*
Gives no title to revering;
That a pump is not a well,
Nor a priest an oracle:
This to leave safe in her mind,
I will take her and go find
Certain no-books, dreary apes,
Tell her they are mere mock-shapes
No more to be honoured by her
But be laid upon the fire;
Book-appearance must not hinder
Their consuming to a cinder.

Would you see the small immortal
One short pace within Time's portal?
I will fetch her.—Is she white?
Solemn? true? a light in light?
See! is not her lily-skin
White as whitest ermelin
Washed in palest thinnest rose?
Very thought of God she goes,
Ne'er to wander, in her dance,

Out of his love-radiance!

But, my friend, I've rattled plenty
To suffice for mornings twenty!
I should never stop of course,
Therefore stop I will perform.—
If I led them up, choragic,
To reveal their nature magic,
Twenty things, past contradiction,
Yet would prove I spoke no fiction
Of the room's belongings cryptic
Read by light apocalyptic:
There is that strange thing, glass-masked,
With continual questions tasked,
Ticking with untiring rock:
It is called an eight-day clock,
But to me the thing appears
Busy winding up the years,
Drawing on with coiling chain
The epiphany again.

DEATH AND BIRTH

'Tis the midnight hour; I heard
The Abbey-bell give out the word.
Seldom is the lamp-ray shed
On some dwarfed foot-farer's head
In the deep and narrow street
Lying ditch-like at my feet
Where I stand at lattice high
Downward gazing listlessly
From my house upon the rock,
Peak of earth's foundation-block.

There her windows, every story,
Shine with far-off nebulous glory!
Round her in that luminous cloud
Stars obedient press and crowd,
She the centre of all gazing,
She the sun her planets dazing!
In her eyes' victorious lightning
Some are paling, some are brightening:
Those on which they gracious turn,
Stars combust, all tenfold burn;
Those from which they look away
Listless roam in twilight gray!
When on her my looks I bent

Wonder shook me like a tent,
And my eyes grew dim with sheen,
Wasting light upon its queen!
But though she my eyes might chain,
Rule my ebbing flowing brain,
Truth alone, without, within,
Can the soul's high homage win!

He, I do not doubt, is there
Who unveiled my idol fair!
And I thank him, grateful much,
Though his end was none of such.
He from shapely lips of wit
Let the fire-flakes lightly flit,
Scorching as the snow that fell
On the damned in Dante's hell;
With keen, gentle opposition,
Playful, merciless precision,
Mocked the sweet romance of youth
Balancing on spheric truth;
He on sense's firm set plane
Rolled the unstable ball amain:
With a smile she looked at me,
Stung my soul, and set me free.

Welcome, friend! Bring in your bricks.
Mortar there? No need to mix?

That is well. And picks and hammers?
Verily these are no shammers!—
There, my friend, build up that niche,
That one with the painting rich!

Yes, you're right; it is a show
Picture seldom can bestow;
City palaces and towers,
Terraced gardens, twilight bowers,
Vistas deep through swaying masts,
Pennons flaunting in the blasts:
Build; my room it does not fit;
Brick-glaze is the thing for it!

Yes, a window you may call it;
Not the less up you must wall it:
In that niche the dead world lies;
Bury death, and free mine eyes.

There were youths who held by me,
Said I taught, yet left them free:
Will they do as I said then?
God forbid! As ye are men,
Find the secret—follow and find!
All forget that lies behind;
Me, the schools, yourselves, forsake;

In your souls a silence make;
Hearken till a whisper come,
Listen, follow, and be dumb.

There! 'tis over; I am dead!
Of my life the broken thread
Here I cast out of my hand!—
O my soul, the merry land!
On my heart the sinking vault
Of my ruining past makes halt;
Ages I could sit and moan
For the shining world that's gone!

Haste and pierce the other wall;
Break an opening to the All!
Where? No matter; done is best.
Kind of window? Let that rest:
Who at morning ever lies
Pondering how to ope his eyes!

I bethink me: we must fall
On the thinnest of the wall!
There it must be, in that niche!—
No, the deepest—that in which
Stands the Crucifix.

You start?—

Ah, your half-believing heart
Shrinks from that as sacrilege,
Or, at least, upon its edge!
Worse than sacrilege, I say,
Is it to withhold the day
From the brother whom thou knowest
For the God thou never sawest!

Reverently, O marble cold,
Thee in living arms I fold!
Thou who art thyself the way
From the darkness to the day,
Window, thou, to every land,
Wouldst not one dread moment stand
Shutting out the air and sky
And the dayspring from on high!
Brother with the rugged crown,
Gently thus I lift thee down!

Give me pick and hammer; you
Stand aside; the deed I'll do.
Yes, in truth, I have small skill,
But the best thing is the will.

Stroke on stroke! The frescoed plaster
Clashes downward, fast and faster.
Hark, I hear an outer stone
Down the rough rock rumbling thrown!
There's a cranny! there's a crack!
The great sun is at its back!
Lo, a mass is outward flung!
In the universe hath sprung!

See the gold upon the blue!
See the sun come blinding through!
See the far-off mountain shine
In the dazzling light divine!
Prisoned world, thy captive's gone!
Welcome wind, and sky, and sun!

LOVE'S ORDEAL

A recollection and attempted completion of a prose fragment read in boyhood.

"Hear'st thou that sound upon the window pane?"
Said the youth softly, as outstretched he lay
Where for an hour outstretched he had lain—
Softly, yet with some token of dismay.
Answered the maiden: "It is but the rain
That has been gathering in the west all day!
Why shouldst thou hearken so? Thine eyelids close,
And let me gather peace from thy repose."

"Hear'st thou that moan creeping along the ground?"
Said the youth, and his veiling eyelids rose
From deeps of lightning-haunted dark profound
Ruffled with herald blasts of coming woes.
"I hear it," said the maiden; "'tis the sound
Of a great wind that here not seldom blows;
It swings the huge arms of the dreary pine,
But thou art safe, my darling, clasped in mine."

"Hear'st thou the baying of my hounds?" said he;
"Draw back the lattice bar and let them in."

From a rent cloud the moonlight, ghostily,
Slid clearer to the floor, as, gauntly thin,
She opening, they leaped through with bound so free,
Then shook the rain-drops from their shaggy skin.
The maiden closed the shower-bespattered glass,
Whose spotted shadow through the room did pass.

The youth, half-raised, was leaning on his hand,
But, when again beside him sat the maid,
His eyes for one slow minute having scanned
Her moonlit face, he laid him down, and said,
Monotonous, like solemn-read command:
"For Love is of the earth, earthy, and is laid
Lifeless at length back in the mother-tomb."
Strange moanings from the pine entered the room.

And then two shadows like the shadow of glass,
Over the moonbeams on the cottage floor,
As wind almost as thin and shapeless, pass;
A sound of rain-drops came about the door,
And a soft sighing as of plummy grass;
A look of sorrowing doubt the youth's face wore;
The two great hounds half rose; with aspect grim
They eyed his countenance by the taper dim.

Shadow nor moaning sound the maiden noted,

But on his face dwelt her reproachful look;
She doubted whether he the saying had quoted
Out of some evil, earth-begotten book,
Or up from his deep heart, like bubbles, had floated
Words which no maiden ever yet could brook;
But his eyes held the question, "Yea or No?"
Therefore the maiden answered, "Nay, not so;

"Love is of heaven, eternal." Half a smile
Just twinned his lips: shy, like all human best,
A hopeful thought bloomed out, and lived a while;
He looked one moment like a dead man blest—
His soul a bark that in a sunny isle
At length had found the haven of its rest;
But he could not remain, must forward fare:
He spoke, and said with words abrupt and bare,

"Maiden, I have loved other maidens." Pale
Her red lips grew. "I loved them, yes, but they
Successively in trial's hour did fail,
For after sunset clouds again are gray."
A sudden light shone through the fringy veil
That drooping hid her eyes; and then there lay
A stillness on her face, waiting; and then
The little clock rung out the hour of ten.

Moaning once more the great pine-branches bow
To a soft plaining wind they would not stem.
Brooding upon her face, the youth said, "Thou
Art not more beautiful than some of them,
But a fair courage crowns thy peaceful brow,
Nor glow thine eyes, but shine serene like gem
That lamps from radiant store upon the dark
The light it gathered where its song the lark.

"The horse that broke this day from grasp of three,
Thou sawest then the hand thou holdest, hold:
Ere two fleet hours are gone, that hand will be
Dry, big-veined, wrinkled, withered up and old!—
No woman yet hath shared my doom with me."
With calm fixed eyes she heard till he had told;
The stag-hounds rose, a moment gazed at him,
Then laid them down with aspect yet more grim.

Spake on the youth, nor altered look or tone:
"'Tis thy turn, maiden, to say no or dare."—
Was it the maiden's, that importunate moan?—
"At midnight, when the moon sets, wilt thou share
The terror with me? or must I go alone
To meet an agony that will not spare?"
She answered not, but rose to take her cloak;
He staid her with his hand, and further spake.

"Not yet," he said; "yet there is respite; see,
Time's finger points not yet to the dead hour!
Enough is left even now for telling thee
The far beginnings whence the fearful power
Of the great dark came shadowing down on me:
Red roses crowding clothe my love's dear bower—
Nightshade and hemlock, darnel, toadstools white
Compass the place where I must lie to-night!"

Around his neck the maiden put her arm
And knelt beside him leaning on his breast,
As o'er his love, to keep it strong and warm,
Brooding like bird outspread upon her nest.
And well the faith of her dear eyes might charm
All doubt away from love's primeval rest!
He hid his face upon her heart, and there
Spake on with voice like wind from lonely lair.

A drearier moaning through the pine did go
As if a human voice complained and cried
For one long minute; then the sound grew low,
Sank to a sigh, and sighing sank and died.
Together at the silence two voices mow—
His, and the clock's, which, loud grown, did divide
The hours into live moments—sparks of time
Scorching the soul that trembles for the chime.

He spoke of sins ancestral, born in him
Impulses; of resistance fierce and wild;
Of failure weak, and strength reviving dim;
Self-hatred, dreariness no love beguiled;
Of storm, and blasting light, and darkness grim;
Of torrent paths, and tombs with mountains piled;
Of gulfs in the unsunned bosom of the earth;
Of dying ever into dawning birth.

"But when I find a heart whose blood is wine;
Whose faith lights up the cold brain's passionless hour;
Whose love, like unborn rose-bud, will not pine,
But waits the sun and the baptizing shower—
Till then lies hid, and gathers odours fine
To greet the human summer, when its flower
Shall blossom in the heart and soul and brain,
And love and passion be one holy twain—

"Then shall I rest, rest like the seven of yore;
Slumber divine will steep my outworn soul
And every stain dissolve to the very core.
She too will slumber, having found her goal.
Time's ocean o'er us will, in silence frore,
Aeonian tides of change-filled seasons roll,
And our long, dark, appointed period fill.

Then shall we wake together, loving still."

Her face on his, her mouth to his mouth pressed,
Was all the answer of the trusting maid.
Close in his arms he held her to his breast
For one brief moment—would have yet assayed
Some deeper word her heart to strengthen, lest
It should though faithful be too much afraid;
But the clock gave the warning to the hour—
And on the thatch fell sounds not of a shower.

One long kiss, and the maiden rose. A fear
Lay, thin as a glassy shadow, on her heart;
She trembled as some unknown thing were near,
But smiled next moment—for they should not part!
The youth arose. With solemn-joyous cheer,
He helped the maid, whose trembling hands did thwart
Her haste to wrap her in her mantle's fold;
Then out they passed into the midnight cold.

The moon was sinking in the dim green west,
Curled upward, half-way to the horizon's brink,
A leaf of glory falling to its rest,
The maiden's hand, still trembling, sought to link
Her arm to his, with love's instinctive quest,
But his enfolded her; hers did not sink,

But, thus set free, it stole his body round,
And so they walked, in freedom's fetters bound.

Pressed to his side, she felt, like full-toned bell,
A mighty heart heave large in measured play;
But as the floating moon aye lower fell
Its bounding force did, by slow loss, decay.
It throbbed now like a bird; now like far knell
Pulsed low and faint! And now, with sick dismay,
She felt the arm relax that round her clung,
And from her circling arm he forward hung.

His footsteps feeble, short his paces grow;
Her strength and courage mount and swell amain.
He lifted up his head: the moon lay low,
Nigh the world's edge. His lips with some keen pain
Quivered, but with a smile his eyes turned slow
Seeking in hers the balsam for his bane
And finding it—love over death supreme:
Like two sad souls they walked met in one dream.¹

¹ In a lovely garden walking Two lovers went hand in hand; Two wan, worn figures, talking They sat in the flowery land. On the cheek they kissed one another, On the mouth with sweet refrain; Fast held they each the other, And were young and well again. Two little bells rang shrilly— The dream went with the hour: She lay in the cloister stilly, He far in the dungeon-tower! From Uhland.

Hanging his head, behind each came a hound,
 Padding with gentle paws upon the road.
 Straight silent pines rose here and there around;
 A dull stream on the left side hardly flowed;
 A black snake through the sluggish waters wound.
 Hark, the night raven! see the crawling toad!
 She thinks how dark will be the moonless night,
 How feeblest ray is yet supernal light.

 The moon's last gleam fell on dim glazed eyes,
 A body shrunken from its garments' fold:
 An aged man whose bent knees could not rise,
 He tottered in the maiden's tightening hold.
 She shivered, but too slight was the disguise
 To hide from love what never yet was old;
 She held him fast, with open eyes did pray,
 Walked through the fear, and kept the onward way.

 Toward a gloomy thicket of tall firs,
 Dragging his inch-long steps, he turned aside.
 There Silence sleeps; not one green needle stirs.
 They enter it. A breeze begins to chide
 Among the cones. It swells until it whirs,
 Vibrating so each sharp leaf that it sighed:
 The grove became a harp of mighty chords,
 Wing-smote by unseen creatures wild for words.

But when he turned again, toward the cleft
Of a great rock, as instantly it ceased,
And the tall pines stood sudden, as if reft
Of a strong passion, or from pain released;
Again they wove their straight, dark, motionless weft
Across the moonset-bars; and, west and east,
Cloud-giants rose and marched up cloudy stairs;
And like sad thoughts the bats came unawares.

'Twas a drear chamber for thy bridal night,
O poor, pale, saviour bride! An earthen lamp
With shaking hands he kindled, whose faint light
Mooned out a tiny halo on the damp
That filled the cavern to its unseen height,
Dim glimmering like death-candle in a swamp.
Watching the entrance, each side lies a hound,
With liquid light his red eyes gleaming round.

A heap rose grave-like from the rocky floor
Of moss and leaves, by many a sunny wind
Long tossed and dried—with rich furs covered o'er
Expectant. Up a jealous glory shined
In her possessing heart: he should find more
In her than in those faithless! With sweet mind
She, praying gently, did herself unclothe,
And lay down by him, trusting, and not loath.

Once more a wind came, flapping overhead;
The hounds pricked up their ears, their eyes flashed fire.
The trembling maiden heard a sudden tread—
Dull, yet plain dented on the windy gyre,
As if long, wet feet o'er smooth pavement sped—
Come fiercely up, as driven by longing dire
To enter; followed sounds of hurried rout:
With bristling hair, the hounds stood looking out.

Then came, half querulous, a whisper old,
Feeble and hollow as if shut in a chest:
"Take my face on your bosom; I am cold."
She bared her holy bosom's truth-white nest,
And forth her two hands instant went, love-bold,
And took the face, and close against her pressed:
Ah, the dead chill!—Was that the feet again?—
But her great heart kept beating for the twain.

She heard the wind fall, heard the following rain
Swelling the silent waters till their sound
Went wallowing through the night along the plain.
The lamp went out, by the slow darkness drowned.
Must the fair dawn a thousand years refrain?
Like centuries the feeble hours went round.
Eternal night entombed her with decay:

To her live soul she clasped the breathless clay.

The world stood still. Her life sank down so low
That but for wretchedness no life she knew.
A charnel wind moaned out a moaning—*No*;
From the devouring heart of earth it blew.
Fair memories lost all their sunny glow:
Out of the dark the forms of old friends grew
But so transparent blanched with dole and smart
She saw the pale worm lying in each heart.

And, worst of all—Oh death of keep-fled life!
A voice within her woke and cried: In sooth
Vain is all sorrow, hope, and care, and strife!
Love and its beauty, its tenderness and truth
Are shadows bred in hearts too fancy-rife,
Which melt and pass with sure-decaying youth:
Regard them, and they quiver, waver, blot;
Gaze at them fixedly, and they are not.

And all the answer the poor child could make
Was in the tightened clasp of arms and hands.
Hopeless she lay, like one Death would not take
But still kept driving from his empty lands,
Yet hopeless held she out for his dear sake;
The darksome horror grew like drifting sands

Till nought was precious—neither God nor light,
And yet she braved the false, denying night.

So dead was hope, that, when a glimmer weak
Stole through a fissure somewhere in the cave,
Thinning the clotted darkness on his cheek,
She thought her own tired eyes the glimmer gave:
He moved his head; she saw his eyes, love-meek,
And knew that Death was dead and filled the Grave.
Old age, convicted lie, had fled away!
Youth, Youth eternal, in her bosom lay!

With a low cry closer to him she crept
And on his bosom hid a face that glowed:
It was his turn to comfort—he had slept!
Oh earth and sky, oh ever patient God,
She had not yielded, but the truth had kept!
New love, new bliss in weeping overflowed.
I can no farther tell the tale begun;
They are asleep, and waiting for the sun.

THE LOST SOUL

Look! look there!
Send your eyes across the gray
By my finger-point away
Through the vaporous, fummy air.
Beyond the air, you see the dark?
Beyond the dark, the dawning day?
On its horizon, pray you, mark
Something like a ruined heap
Of worlds half-uncreated, that go back:
Down all the grades through which they rose
Up to harmonious life and law's repose,
Back, slow, to the awful deep
Of nothingness, mere being's lack:
On its surface, lone and bare,
Shapeless as a dumb despair,
Formless, nameless, something lies:
Can the vision in your eyes
Its idea recognize?

'Tis a poor lost soul, alack!—
Half he lived some ages back;
But, with hardly opened eyes,
Thinking him already wise,
Down he sat and wrote a book;

Drew his life into a nook;
Out of it would not arise
To peruse the letters dim,
Graven dark on his own walls;
Those, he judged, were chance-led scrawls,
Or at best no use to him.
A lamp was there for reading these;
This he trimmed, sitting at ease,
For its aid to write his book,
Never at his walls to look—
Trimmed and trimmed to one faint spark
Which went out, and left him dark.—
I will try if he can hear
Spirit words with spirit ear!

Motionless thing! who once,
Like him who cries to thee,
Hadst thy place with thy shining peers,
Thy changeful place in the changeless dance
Issuing ever in radiance
From the doors of the far eternity,
With feet that glitter and glide and glance
To the music-law that binds the free,
And sets the captive at liberty—
To the clang of the crystal spheres!
O heart for love! O thirst to drink
From the wells that feed the sea!
O hands of truth, a human link

'Twixt mine and the Father's knee!
O eyes to see! O soul to think!
O life, the brother of me!
Has Infinitude sucked back all
The individual life it gave?
Boots it nothing to cry and call?
Is thy form an empty grave?

It heareth not, brothers, the terrible thing!
Sounds no sense to its ear will bring!
Let us away, 'tis no use to tarry;
Love no light to its heart will carry!
Sting it with words, it will never shrink;
It will not repent, it cannot think!
Hath God forgotten it, alas!
Lost in eternity's lumber-room?
Will the wind of his breathing never pass
Over it through the insensate gloom?
Like a frost-killed bud on a tombstone curled,
Crumbling it lies on its crumbling world,
Sightless and deaf, with never a cry,
In the hell of its own vacuity!

See, see yon angel crossing our flight
Where the thunder vapours loom,
From his upcast pinions flashing the light
Of some outbreaking doom!

Up, brothers! away! a storm is nigh!
Smite we the wing up a steeper sky!
What matters the hail or the clashing winds,
The thunder that buffets, the lightning that blinds!
We know by the tempest we do not lie
Dead in the pits of eternity!

THE THREE HORSES

What shall I be?—I will be a knight
Walled up in armour black,
With a sword of sharpness, a hammer of might.
And a spear that will not crack—
So black, so blank, no glimmer of light
Will betray my darkling track.

Saddle my coal-black steed, my men,
Fittest for sunless work;
Old Night is steaming from her den,
And her children gather and lurk;
Bad things are creeping from the fen,
And sliding down the murk.

Let him go!—let him go! Let him plunge!—Keep away!
He's a foal of the third seal's brood!
Gaunt with armour, in grim array
Of poitrel and frontlet-hood,
Let him go, a living castle, away—
Right for the evil wood.

I and Ravenwing on the course,

Heavy in fighting gear—
Woe to the thing that checks our force,
That meets us in career!
Giant, enchanter, devil, or worse—
What cares the couched spear!

Slow through the trees zigzag I ride.
See! the goblins!—to and fro!
From the skull of the dark, on either side,
See the eyes of a dragon glow!
From the thickets the silent serpents glide—
I pass them, I let them go;

For somewhere in the evil night
A little one cries alone;
An aged knight, outnumbered in fight,
But for me will be stricken prone;
A lady with terror is staring white,
For her champion is overthrown.

The child in my arms, to my hauberk prest,
Like a trembling bird will cling;
I will cover him over, in iron nest,
With my shield, my one steel wing,
And bear him home to his mother's breast,
A radiant, rescued thing.

Spur in flank, and lance in rest,
On the old knight's foes I flash;
The caitiffs I scatter to east and west
With clang and hurtle and crash;
Leave them the law, as knaves learn it best,
In bruise, and breach, and gash.

The lady I lift on my panting steed;
On the pommel she holds my mace;
Hand on bridle I gently lead
The horse at a gentle pace;
The thickets with martel-axe I heed,
For the wood is an evil place.

What treasure is there in manly might
That hid in the bosom lies!
Who for the crying will not fight
Had better be he that cries!
A man is a knight that loves the right
And mounts for it till he dies.

Alas, 'tis a dream of ages hoar!
In the fens no dragons won;
No giants from moated castles roar;

Through the forest wide roadways run;
Of all the deeds they did of yore
Not one is left to be done!

If I should saddle old Ravenwing
And hie me out at night,
Scared little birds away would spring
An ill-shot arrow's flight:
The idle fancy away I fling,
Now I will dream aright!

Let a youth bridle Twilight, my dapple-gray,
With broad rein and snaffle bit;
He must bring him round at break of day
When the shadows begin to flit,
When the darkness begins to dream away,
And the owls begin to sit.

Ungraithed in plate or mail I go,
With only my sword—gray-blue
Like the scythe of the dawning come to mow
The night-sprung shadows anew
From the gates of the east, that, fair and slow,
Maid Morning may walk through.

I seek no forest with darkness grim,
To the open land I ride;
Low light, from the broad horizon's brim,
Lies wet on the flowing tide,
And mottles with shadows dun and dim
The mountain's rugged side.

Steadily, hasteless, o'er valley and hill.
O'er the moor, along the beach,
We ride, nor slacken our pace until
Some city of men we reach;
There, in the market, my horse stands still,
And I lift my voice and preach.

Wealth and poverty, age and youth
Around me gather and throng;
I tell them of justice, of wisdom, of truth,
Of mercy, and law, and wrong;
My words are moulded by right and ruth
To a solemn-chanted song.

They bring me questions which would be scanned,
That strife may be forgot;
Swerves my balance to neither hand,
The poor I favour no jot;
If a man withstand, out sweeps my brand.

I slay him upon the spot.

But what if my eye have in it a beam
And therefore spy his mote?
Righteousness only, wisdom supreme
Can tell the sheep from the goat!
Not thus I dream a wise man's dream,
Not thus take Wrong by the throat!

Lead Twilight home. I dare not kill;
The sword myself would scare.—
When the sun looks over the eastern hill,
Bring out my snow-white mare:
One labour is left which no one will
Deny me the right to share!

Take heed, my men, from crest to heel
Snow-white have no speck;
No curb, no bit her mouth must feel,
No tightening rein her neck;
No saddle-girth drawn with buckle of steel
Shall her mighty breathing check!

Lay on her a cloth of silver sheen,
Bring me a robe of white;

Wherever we go we must be seen
By the shining of our light—
A glistening splendour in forest green,
A star on the mountain-height.

With jar and shudder the gates unclose;
Out in the sun she leaps!
A unit of light and power she goes
Levelling vales and steeps:
The wind around her eddies and blows,
Before and behind her sleeps.

Oh joy, oh joy to ride the world
And glad, good tidings bear!
A flag of peace on the winds unfurled
Is the mane of my shining mare:
To the sound of her hoofs, lo, the dead stars hurled
Quivering adown the air!

Oh, the sun and the wind! Oh, the life and the love!
Where the serpent swung all day
The loud dove coos to the silent dove;
Where the web-winged dragon lay
In its hole beneath, on the rock above
Merry-tongued children play.

With eyes of light the maidens look up
As they sit in the summer heat
Twining green blade with golden cup—
They see, and they rise to their feet;
I call aloud, for I must not stop,
"Good tidings, my sisters sweet!"

For mine is a message of holy mirth
To city and land of corn;
Of praise for heaviness, plenty for dearth,
For darkness a shining morn:
Clap hands, ye billows; be glad, O earth,
For a child, a child is born!

Lo, even the just shall live by faith!
None argue of mine and thine!
Old Self shall die an ecstatic death
And be born a thing divine,
For God's own being and God's own breath
Shall be its bread and wine.

Ambition shall vanish, and Love be king,
And Pride to his darkness hie;
Yea, for very love of a living thing
A man would forget and die,

If very love were not the spring
Whence life springs endlessly!

The myrtle shall grow where grew the thorn;
Earth shall be young as heaven;
The heart with remorse or anger torn
Shall weep like a summer even;
For to us a child, a child is born,
Unto us a son is given!

Lord, with thy message I dare not ride!
I am a fool, a beast!
The little ones only from thy side
Go forth to publish thy feast!
And I, where but sons and daughters abide,
Would have walked about, a priest!

Take Snow-white back to her glimmering stall;
There let her stand and feed!—
I am overweening, ambitious, small,
A creature of pride and greed!
Let me wash the hoofs, let me be the thrall,
Jesus, of thy white steed!

THE GOLDEN KEY

From off the earth the vapours curled,
Went up to meet their joy;
The boy awoke, and all the world
Was waiting for the boy!

The sky, the water, the wide earth
Was full of windy play—
Shining and fair, alive with mirth,
All for his holiday!

The hill said "Climb me;" and the wood
"Come to my bosom, child;
Mine is a merry gamboling brood,
Come, and with them go wild."

The shadows with the sunlight played,
The birds were singing loud;
The hill stood up with pines arrayed—
He ran to join the crowd.

But long ere noon, dark grew the skies,

Pale grew the shrinking sun:
"How soon," he said, "for clouds to rise
When day was but begun!"

The wind grew rough; a wilful power
It swept o'er tree and town;
The boy exulted for an hour,
Then weary sat him down.

And as he sat the rain began,
And rained till all was still:
He looked, and saw a rainbow span
The vale from hill to hill.

He dried his tears. "Ah, now," he said,
"The storm was good, I see!
Yon pine-dressed hill, upon its head
I'll find the golden key!"

He thrud the copse, he climbed the fence,
At last the top did scale;
But, lo, the rainbow, vanished thence,
Was shining in the vale!

"Still, here it stood! yes, here," he said,

"Its very foot was set!

I saw this fir-tree through the red,

This through the violet!"

He searched and searched, while down the skies

Went slow the slanting sun.

At length he lifted hopeless eyes,

And day was nearly done!

Beyond the vale, above the heath,

High flamed the crimson west;

His mother's cottage lay beneath

The sky-bird's rosy breast.

"Oh, joy," he cried, "not *all* the way

Farther from home we go!

The rain will come another day

And bring another bow!"

Long ere he reached his mother's cot,

Still tiring more and more,

The red was all one cold gray blot,

And night lay round the door.

But when his mother stroked his head
The night was grim in vain;
And when she kissed him in his bed
The rainbow rose again.

Soon, things that are and things that seem
Did mingle merrily;
He dreamed, nor was it all a dream,
His mother had the key.

SOMNIUM MYSTICI

A Microcosm In Terza Rima

I

Quiet I lay at last, and knew no more
Whether I breathed or not, so worn I lay
With the death-struggle. What was yet before
Neither I met, nor turned from it away;
My only conscious being was the rest
Of pain gone dead—dead with the bygone day,
And long I could have lingered all but blest
In that half-slumber. But there came a sound
As of a door that opened—in the west
Somewhere I thought it. As the hare the hound,
The noise did start my eyelids and they rose.
I turned my eyes and looked. Then straight I found
It was my chamber-door that did unclose,
For a tall form up to my bedside drew.
Grand was it, silent, its very walk repose;
And when I saw the countenance, I knew
That I was lying in my chamber dead;

For this my brother—brothers such are few—
That now to greet me bowed his kingly head,
Had, many years ago, like holy dove
Returning, from his friends and kindred sped,
And, leaving memories of mournful love,
Passed vanishing behind the unseen veil;
And though I loved him, all high words above.
Not for his loss then did I weep or wail,
Knowing that here we live but in a tent,
And, seeking home, shall find it without fail.
Feeble but eager, toward him my hands went—
I too was dead, so might the dead embrace!
Taking me by the shoulders down he bent,
And lifted me. I was in sickly case,
But, growing stronger, stood up on the floor,
There turned, and once regarded my dead face
With curious eyes: its brow contentment wore,
But I had done with it, and turned away.
I saw my brother by the open door,
And followed him out into the night blue-gray.
The houses stood up hard in limpid air,
The moon hung in the heavens in half decay,
And all the world to my bare feet lay bare.

II

Now I had suffered in my life, as they
Must suffer, and by slow years younger grow,
From whom the false fool-self must drop away,
Compact of greed and fear, which, gathered slow,
Darkens the angel-self that, evermore,
Where no vain phantom in or out shall go,
Moveless beholds the Father—stands before
The throne of revelation, waiting there,
With wings low-drooping on the sapphire-floor,
Until it find the Father's ideal fair,
And be itself at last: not one small thorn
Shall needless any pilgrim's garments tear;
And but to say I had suffered I would scorn
Save for the marvellous thing that next befell:
Sudden I grew aware I was new-born;
All pain had vanished in the absorbent swell
Of some exalting peace that was my own;
As the moon dwelt in heaven did calmness dwell
At home in me, essential. The earth's moan
Lay all behind. Had I then lost my part
In human griefs, dear part with them that groan?
"Tis weariness!" I said; but with a start
That set it trembling and yet brake it not,
I found the peace was love. Oh, my rich heart!
For, every time I spied a glimmering spot
Of window pane, "There, in that silent room,"
Thought I, "mayhap sleeps human heart whose lot
Is therefore dear to mine!" I cared for whom
I saw not, had not seen, and might not see!

After the love crept prone its shadow-gloom,
But instant a mightier love arose in me,
As in an ocean a single wave will swell,
And heaved the shadow to the centre: we
Had called it prayer, before on sleep I fell.
It sank, and left my sea in holy calm:
I gave each man to God, and all was well.
And in my heart stirred soft a sleeping psalm.

III

No gentlest murmur through the city crept;
Not one lone word my brother to me had spoken;
But when beyond the city-gate we stept
I knew the hovering silence would be broken.
A low night wind came whispering: through and through
It did baptize me with the pledge and token
Of that soft spirit-wind which blows and blew
And fans the human world since evermore.
The very grass, cool to my feet, I knew
To be love also, and with the love I bore
To hold far sympathy, silent and sweet,
As having known the secret from of yore
In the eternal heart where all things meet,
Feelings and thinkings, and where still they are bred.
Sudden he stood, and with arrested feet

I also. Like a half-sunned orb, his head
Slow turned the bright side: lo, the brother-smile
That ancient human glory on me shed
Clothéd in which Jesus came forth to wile
Unto his bosom every labouring soul,
And all dividing passions to beguile
To winsome death, and then on them to roll
The blessed stone of the holy sepulchre!
"Thank God," he said, "thou also now art whole
And sound and well! For the keen pain, and stir
Uneasy, and sore grief that came to us all,
In that we knew not how the wine and myrrh
Could ever from the vinegar and gall
Be parted, are deep sunk, yea drowned in God;
And yet the past not folded in a pall,
But breathed upon, like Aaron's withered rod,
By a sweet light that brings the blossoms through,
Showing in dreariest paths that men have trod
Another's foot-prints, spotted of crimson hue,
Still on before wherever theirs did wend;
Yea, through the desert leading, of thyme and rue,
The desert souls in which young lions rend
And roar—the passionate who, to be blest,
Ravin as bears, and do not gain their end,
Because that, save in God, there is no rest."

IV

Something my brother said to me like this,
But how unlike it also, think, I pray:
His eyes were music, and his smile a kiss;
Himself the word, his speech was but a ray
In the clear nimbus that with verity
Of absolute utterance made a home-born day
Of truth about him, lamping solemnly;
And when he paused, there came a swift repose,
Too high, too still to be called ecstasy—
A purple silence, lanced through in the close
By such keen thought that, with a sudden smiling,
It grew sheen silver, hearted with burning rose.
He was a glory full of reconciling,
Of faithfulness, of love with no self-stain,
Of tenderness, and care, and brother-wiling
Back to the bosom of a speechless gain.

V

I cannot tell how long we joyous talked,
For from my sense old time had vanished quite,
Space dim-remaining—for onward still we walked.

No sun arose to blot the pale, still night—
Still as the night of some great spongy stone
That turns but once an age betwixt the light
And the huge shadow from its own bulk thrown,
And long as that to me before whose face
Visions so many slid, and veils were blown
Aside from the vague vast of Isis' grace.
Innumerable thoughts yet throng that infinite hour,
And hopes which greater hopes unceasing chase,
For I was all responsive to his power.
I saw my friends weep, wept, and let them weep;
I saw the growth of each grief-nurtured flower;
I saw the gardener watching—in their sleep
Wiping their tears with the napkin he had laid
Wrapped by itself when he climbed Hades' steep;
What wonder then I saw nor was dismayed!
I saw the dull, degraded monsters nursed
In money-marshes, greedy men that preyed
Upon the helpless, ground the feeblest worst;
Yea all the human chaos, wild and waste,
Where he who will not leave what God hath cursed
Now fruitless wallows, now is stung and chased
By visions lovely and by longings dire.
"But who believeth, he shall not make haste,
Even passing through the water and the fire,
Or sad with memories of a better lot!
He, saved by hope, for all men will desire,
Knowing that God into a mustard-jot
May shut an aeon; give a world that lay

Wombed in its sun, a molten unorb'd clot,
One moment from the red rim to spin away
Librating—ages to roll on weary wheel
Ere it turn homeward, almost spent its day!
Who knows love all, time nothing, he shall feel
No anxious heart, shall lift no trembling hand;
Tender as air, but clothed in triple steel,
He for his kind, in every age and land,
Hoping will live; and, to his labour bent,
The Father's will shall, doing, understand."
So spake my brother as we onward went:
His words my heart received, as corn the lea,
And answered with a harvest of content.
We came at last upon a lonesome sea.

VI

And onward still he went, I following
Out on the water. But the water, lo,
Like a thin sheet of glass, lay vanishing!
The starry host in glorious twofold show
Looked up, looked down. The moment I saw this,
A quivering fear thorough my heart did go:
Unstayed I walked across a twin abyss,
A hollow sphere of blue; nor floor was found
Of questing eye, only the foot met the kiss

Of the cool water lightly crisping round
The edges of the footsteps! Terror froze
My fallen eyelids. But again the sound
Of my guide's voice on the still air arose:
"Hast thou forgotten that we walk by faith?
For keenest sight but multiplies the shows.
Lift up thine eyelids; take a valiant breath;
Terrified, dare the terror in God's name;
Step wider; trust the invisible. Can Death
Avail no more to hearten up thy flame?"
I trembled, but I opened wide mine eyes,
And strode on the invisible sea. The same
High moment vanished all my cowardice,
And God was with me. The well-pleased stars
Threw quivering smiles across the gulfy skies,
The white aurora flashed great scimitars
From north to zenith; and again my guide
Full turned on me his face. No prison-bars
Latticed across a soul I there descried,
No weather-stains of grief; quiet age-long
Brooded upon his forehead clear and wide;
Yet from that face a pang shot, vivid and strong,
Into my heart. For, though I saw him stand
Close to me in the void as one in a throng,
Yet on the border of some nameless land
He stood afar; a still-eyed mystery
Caught him whole worlds away. Though in my hand
His hand I held, and, gazing earnestly,
Searched in his countenance, as in a mine,

For jewels of contentment, satisfy
My heart I could not. Seeming to divine
My hidden trouble, gently he stooped and kissed
My forehead, and his arms did round me twine,
And held me to his bosom. Still I missed
That ancient earthly nearness, when we shared
One bed, like birds that of no morrow wist;
Roamed our one father's farm; or, later, fared
Along the dusty highways of the old clime.
Backward he drew, and, as if he had bared
My soul, stood reading there a little time,
While in his eyes tears gathered slow, like dew
That dims the grass at evening or at prime,
But makes the stars clear-goldener in the blue:
And on his lips a faint ethereal smile
Hovered, as hangs the mist of its own hue
Trembling about a purple flower, the while
Evening grows brown. "Brother! brother!" I cried;
But straight outbursting tears my words beguile,
And in my bosom all the utterance died.

VII

A moment more he stood, then softly sighed.
"I know thy pain; but this sorrow is far
Beyond my help," his voice at length replied

To my beseeching tears. "Look at yon star
Up from the low east half-way, all ablaze:
Think'st thou, because no cloud between doth mar
The liquid glory that from its visage rays,
Thou therefore knowest that same world on high,
Its people and its orders and its ways?"
"What meanest thou?" I said. "Thou know'st that
Would hold, not thy dear form, but the self-thee!
Thou art not near me! For thyself I cry!"
"Not the less near that nearer I shall be.
I have a world within thou dost not know—
Would I could make thee know it! but all of me
Is thine, though thou not yet canst enter so
Into possession that betwixt us twain
The frolic homeliness of love should flow
As o'er the brim of childhood's cup again:
Away the deeper childhood first must wipe
That clouded consciousness which was our pain.
When in thy breast the godlike hath grown ripe,
And thou, Christ's little one, art ten times more
A child than when we played with drum and pipe
About our earthly father's happy door,
Then—" He ceased not; his holy utterance still
Flowing went on, like spring from hidden store
Of wasteless waters; but I wept my fill,
Nor heeded much the comfort of his speech.
At length he said: "When first I clomb the hill—
With earthly words I heavenly things would reach—
Where dwelleth now the man we used to call

Father, whose voice, oh memory dear! did teach
Us in our beds, when straight, as once a stall
Became a temple, holy grew the room,
Prone on the ground before him I did fall,
So grand he towered above me like a doom;
But now I look into the well-known face
Fearless, yea, basking blessed in the bloom
Of his eternal youthfulness and grace."

"But something separates us," yet I cried;
"Let light at least begin the dark to chase,
The dark begin to waver and divide,
And clear the path of vision. In the old time,
When clouds one heart did from the other hide,
A wind would blow between! If I would climb,
This foot must rise ere that can go up higher:
Some big A teach me of the eternal prime."
He answered me: "Hearts that to love aspire
Must learn its mighty harmony ere they can
Give out one perfect note in its great quire;
And thereto am I sent—oh, sent of one
Who makes the dumb for joy break out and sing:
He opens every door 'twixt man and man;
He to all inner chambers all will bring."

VIII

It was enough; Hope waked from dreary swoond,
And Hope had ever been enough for me,
To kennel driving grim Tomorrow's hound;
From chains of school and mode she set me free,
And urged my life to living.—On we went
Across the stars that underlay the sea,
And came to a blown shore of sand and bent.
Beyond the sand a marshy moor we crossed
Silent—I, for I pondered what he meant,
And he, that sacred speech might not be lost—
And came at length upon an evil place:
Trees lay about like a half-buried host,
Each in its desolate pool; some fearful race
Of creatures was not far, for howls and cries
And gurgling hisses rose. With even pace
Walking, "Fear not," he said, "for this way lies
Our journey." On we went; and soon the ground
Slow from the waste began a gentle rise;
And tender grass in patches, then all round,
Came clouding up, with its fresh homely tinge
Of softest green cold-flushing every mound;
At length, of lowly shrubs a scattered fringe;
And last, a gloomy forest, almost blind,
For on its roof no sun-ray did impinge,
So that its very leaves did share the mind
Of a brown shadowless day. Not, all the year,
Once part its branches to let through a wind,
But all day long the unmoving trees appear
To ponder on the past, as men may do

That for the future wait without a fear,
And in the past the coming present view.

IX

I know not if for days many or few
Pathless we thrid the wood; for never sun,
Its sylvan-traceried windows peeping through,
Mottled with brighter green the mosses dun,
Or meted with moving shadows Time the shade.
No life was there—not even a spider spun.
At length we came into a sky-roofed glade,
An open level, in a circle shut
By solemn trees that stood aside and made
Large room and lonely for a little hut
By grassy sweeps wide-margined from the wood.
'Twas built of saplings old, that had been cut
When those great trees no larger by them stood;
Thick with an ancient moss, it seemed to have grown
Thus from the old brown earth, a covert rude,
Half-house, half-grave; half-lifted up, half-prone.
To its low door my brother led me. "There
Is thy first school," he said; "there be thou shown
Thy pictured alphabet. Wake a mind of prayer,
And praying enter." "But wilt thou not come,
Brother?" I said. "No," said he. And I, "Where

Then shall I find thee? Thou wilt not leave me dumb,
And a whole world of thoughts unuttered?"
With half-sad smile and dewy eyes, and some
Conflicting motions of his kingly head,
He pointed to the open-standing door.
I entered: inward, lo, my shadow led!
I turned: his countenance shone like lightning hoar!
Then slow he turned from me, and parted slow,
Like one unwilling, whom I should see no more;
With voice nor hand said, *Farewell, I must go!*
But drew the clinging door hard to the post.
No dry leaves rustled 'neath his going; no
Footfalls came back from the departing ghost.
He was no more. I laid me down and wept;
I dared not follow him, restrained the most
By fear I should not see him if I leapt
Out after him with cries of pleading love.
Close to the wall, in hopeless loss, I crept;
There cool sleep came, God's shadow, from above.

X

I woke, with calmness cleansed and sanctified—
The peace that filled my heart of old, when I
Woke in my mother's lap; for since I died
The past lay bare, even to the dreaming shy

That shadowed my yet gathering unborn brain.
And, marvelling, on the floor I saw, close by
My elbow-pillowed head, as if it had lain
Beside me all the time I dreamless lay,
A little pool of sunlight, which did stain
The earthen brown with gold; marvelling, I say,
Because, across the sea and through the wood,
No sun had shone upon me all the way.
I rose, and through a chink the glade I viewed,
But all was dull as it had always been,
And sunless every tree-top round it stood,
With hardly light enough to show it green;
Yet through the broken roof, serenely glad,
By a rough hole entered that heavenly sheen.
Then I remembered in old years I had
Seen such a light—where, with dropt eyelids gloomed,
Sitting on such a floor, dark women sad
In a low barn-like house where lay entombed
Their sires and children; only there the door
Was open to the sun, which entering plumed
With shadowy palms the stones that on the floor
Stood up like lidless chests—again to find
That the soul needs no brain, but keeps her store
In hidden chambers of the eternal mind.
Thence backward ran my roused Memory
Down the ever-opening vista—back to blind
Anticipations while my soul did lie
Closed in my mother's; forward thence through bright
Spring morns of childhood, gay with hopes that fly

Bird-like across their doming blue and white,
To passionate summer noons, to saddened eyes
Of autumn rain, so on to wintred night;
Thence up once more to the dewy dawn that weaves
Saffron and gold—weaves hope with still content,
And wakes the worship that even wrong bereaves
Of half its pain. And round her as she went
Hovered a sense as of an odour dear
Whose flower was far—as of a letter sent
Not yet arrived—a footstep coming near,
But, oh, how long delayed the lifting latch!—
As of a waiting sun, ready to peer
Yet peering not—as of a breathless watch
Over a sleeping beauty—babbling rime
About her lips, but no winged word to catch!
And here I lay, the child of changeeful Time
Shut in the weary, changeless Evermore,
A dull, eternal, fadeless, fruitless clime!
Was this the dungeon of my sinning sore—
A gentle hell of loneliness, foredoomed
For such as I, whose love was yet the core
Of all my being? The brown shadow gloomed
Persistent, faded, warm. No ripple ran
Across the air, no roaming insect boomed.
"Alas," I cried, "I am no living man!
Better were darkness and the leave to grope
Than light that builds its own drear prison! Can
This be the folding of the wings of Hope?"

XI

That instant—through the branches overhead
No sound of going went—a shadow fell
Isled in the unrippled pool of sunlight fed
From some far fountain hid in heavenly dell.
I looked, and in the low roofs broken place
A single snowdrop stood—a radiant bell
Of silvery shine, softly subdued by grace
Of delicate green that made the white appear
Yet whiter. Blind it bowed its head a space,
Half-timid—then, as in despite of fear,
Unfolded its three rays. If it had swung
Its pendent bell, and music golden clear—
Division just entrancing sounds among—
Had flickered down as tender as flakes of snow,
It had not shed more influence as it rung
Than from its look alone did rain and flow.
I knew the flower; perceived its human ways;
Dim saw the secret that had made it grow:
My heart supplied the music's golden phrase.
Light from the dark and snowdrops from the earth,
Life's resurrection out of gross decays,
The endless round of beauty's yearly birth,
And nations' rise and fall—were in the flower,
And read themselves in silence. Heavenly mirth

Awoke in my sad heart. For one whole hour
I praised the God of snowdrops. But at height
The bliss gave way. Next, faith began to cower;
And then the snowdrop vanished from my sight.

XII

Last, I began in unbelief to say:

"No angel this! a snowdrop—nothing more!
A trifle which God's hands drew forth in play
From the tangled pond of chaos, dank and frore,
Threw on the bank, and left blindly to breed!
A wilful fancy would have gathered store
Of evanescence from the pretty weed,
White, shapely—then divine! Conclusion lame
O'erdriven into the shelter of a creed!
Not out of God, but nothingness it came:
Colourless, feeble, flying from life's heat,
It has no honour, hardly shunning shame!"
When, see, another shadow at my feet!
Hopeless I lifted now my weary head:
Why mock me with another heavenly cheat?—
A primrose fair, from its rough-blanketed bed
Laughed, lo, my unbelief to heavenly scorn!
A sun-child, just awake, no prayer yet said,
Half rising from the couch where it was born,

And smiling to the world! I breathed again;
Out of the midnight once more dawned the morn,
And fled the phantom Doubt with all his train.

XIII

I was a child once more, nor pondered life,
Thought not of what or how much. All my soul
With sudden births of lovely things grew rife.
In peeps a daisy: on the instant roll
Rich lawny fields, with red tips crowding the green,
Across the hollows, over ridge and knoll,
To where the rosy sun goes down serene.
From out of heaven in looks a pimpernel:
I walk in morning scents of thyme and bean;
Dewdrops on every stalk and bud and bell
Flash, like a jewel-orchard, many roods;
Glow ruby suns, which emerald suns would quell;
Topaz saint-glories, sapphire beatitudes
Blaze in the slanting sunshine all around;
Above, the high-priest-lark, o'er fields and woods—
Rich-hearted with his five eggs on the ground—
The sacrifice bore through the veil of light,
Odour and colour offering up in sound.—
Filled heart-full thus with forms of lowly might
And shapeful silences of lovely lore,

I sat a child, happy with only sight,
And for a time I needed nothing more.

XIV

Supine to the revelation I did lie,
Passive as prophet to his dreaming deep,
Or harp Aeolian to the breathing sky,
And blest as any child whom twilight sleep
Holds half, and half lets go. But the new day
Of higher need up-dawned with sudden leap:
"Ah, flowers," I said, "ye are divinely gay,
But your fair music is too far and fine!
Ye are full cups, yet reach not to allay
The drought of those for human love who pine
As the hart for water-brooks!" At once a face
Was looking in my face; its eyes through mine
Were feeding me with tenderness and grace,
And by their love I knew my mother's eyes.
Gazing in them, there grew in me apace
A longing grief, and love did swell and rise
Till weeping I brake out and did bemoan
My blameful share in bygone tears and cries:
"O mother, wilt thou plead for me?" I groan;
"I say not, plead with Christ, but plead with those
Who, gathered now in peace about his throne,

Were near me when my heart was full of throes,
And longings vain alter a flying bliss,
Which oft the fountain by the threshold froze:
They must forgive me, mother! Tell them this:
No more shall swell the love-dividing sigh;
Down at their feet I lay my selfishness."
The face grew passionate at this my cry;
The gathering tears up to its eyebrims rose;
It grew a trembling mist, that did not fly
But slow dissolved. I wept as one of those
Who wake outside the garden of their dream,
And, lo, the droop-winged hours laborious close
Its opal gates with stone and stake and beam.

XV

But glory went that glory more might come.
Behold a countless multitude—no less!
A host of faces, me besieging, dumb
In the lone castle of my mournfulness!
Had then my mother given the word I sent,
Gathering my dear ones from the shining press?
And had these others their love-aidance lent
For full assurance of the pardon prayed?
Would they concentrate love, with sweet intent,
On my self-love, to blast the evil shade?

Ah, perfect vision! pledge of endless hope!
Oh army of the holy spirit, arrayed
In comfort's panoply! For words I grope—
For clouds to catch your radiant dawn, my own,
And tell your coming! From the highest cope
Of blue, down to my roof-breach came a cone
Of faces and their eyes on love's will borne,
Bright heads down-bending like the forward blown,
Heavy with ripeness, golden ears of corn,
By gentle wind on crowded harvest-field,
All gazing toward my prison-hut forlorn
As if with power of eyes they would have healed
My troubled heart, making it like their own
In which the bitter fountain had been sealed,
And the life-giving water flowed alone!

XVI

With what I thus beheld, glorified then,
"God, let me love my fill and pass!" I sighed,
And dead, for love had almost died again.
"O fathers, brothers, I am yours!" I cried;
"O mothers, sisters. I am nothing now
Save as I am yours, and in you sanctified!
O men, O women, of the peaceful brow,
And infinite abysses in the eyes

Whence God's ineffable gazes on me, how
Care ye for me, impassioned and unwise?
Oh ever draw my heart out after you!
Ever, O grandeur, thus before me rise
And I need nothing, not even for love will sue!
I am no more, and love is all in all!
Henceforth there is, there can be nothing new—
All things are always new!" Then, like the fall
Of a steep avalanche, my joy fell steep:
Up in my spirit rose as it were the call
Of an old sorrow from an ancient deep;
For, with my eyes fixed on the eyes of him
Whom I had loved before I learned to creep—
God's vicar in his twilight nursery dim
To gather us to the higher father's knee—
I saw a something fill their azure rim
That caught him worlds and years away from me;
And like a javelin once more through me passed
The pang that pierced me walking on the sea:
"O saints," I cried, "must loss be still the last?"

XVII

When I said this, the cloud of witnesses
Turned their heads sideways, and the cloud grew dim
I saw their faces half, but now their bliss

Gleamed low, like the old moon in the new moon's rim.

Then as I gazed, a better kind of light

On every outline 'gan to glimmer and swim,
Faint as the young moon threadlike on the night,

Just born of sunbeams trembling on her edge:

'Twas a great cluster of profiles in sharp white.

Had some far dawn begun to drive a wedge
Into the night, and cleave the clinging dark?

I saw no moon or star, token or pledge
Of light, save that manifold silvery mark,

The shining title of each spirit-book.

Whence came that light? Sudden, as if a spark
Of vital touch had found some hidden nook

Where germs of potent harmonies lay prest,
And their outbursting life old Aether shook,

Rose, as in prayer to lingering promised guest,
From that great cone of faces such a song,

Instinct with hope's harmonical unrest,
That with sore weeping, and the cry "How long?"

I bore my part because I could not sing.

And as they sang, the light more clear and strong
Bordered their faces, till the glory-sting

I could almost no more encounter and bear;

Light from their eyes, like water from a spring,
Flowed; on their foreheads reigned their flashing hair;

I saw the light from eyes I could not see.

"He comes! he comes!" they sang, "comes to our prayer!"
"Oh my poor heart, if only it were *He!*"

I cried. Thereat the faces moved! those eyes

Were turning on me! In rushed ecstasy,
And woke me to the light of lower skies.

XVIII

"What matter," said I, "whether clank of chain
Or over-bliss wakes up to bitterness!"
Stung with its loss, I called the vision vain.
Yet feeling life grown larger, suffering less,
Sleep's ashes from my eyelids I did brush.
The room was veiled, that morning should not press
Upon the slumber which had stayed the rush
Of ebbing life; I looked into the gloom:
Upon her brow the dawn's first grayest flush,
And on her cheek pale hope's reviving bloom,
Sat, patient watcher, darkling and alone,
She who had lifted me from many a tomb!
One then was left me of Love's radiant cone!
Its light on her dear face, though faint and wan,
Was shining yet—a dawn upon it thrown
From the far coming of the Son of Man!

XIX

In every forehead now I see a sky
Catching the dawn; I hear the wintriest breeze
About me blow the news the Lord is nigh.
Long is the night, dark are the polar seas,
Yet slanting suns ascend the northern hill.
Round Spring's own steps the oozy waters freeze
But hold them not. Dreamers are sleeping still,
But labourers, light-stung, from their slumber start:
Faith sees the ripening ears with harvest fill
When but green blades the clinging earth-clods part.

XX

Lord, I have spoken a poor parable,
In which I would have said thy name alone
Is the one secret lying in Truth's well,
Thy voice the hidden charm in every tone,
Thy face the heart of every flower on earth,
Its vision the one hope; for every moan
Thy love the cure! O sharer of the birth
Of little children seated on thy knee!
O human God! I laugh with sacred mirth
To think how all the laden shall go free;
For, though the vision tarry, in healing ruth
One morn the eyes that shone in Galilee
Will dawn upon them, full of grace and truth,

And thy own love—the vivifying core
Of every love in heart of age or youth,
Of every hope that sank 'neath burden sore!

THE SANGREAL:
A Part Of The Story Omitted
In The Old Romances

I

How sir Galahad despaired of finding the Grail

Through the wood the sunny day
Glimmered sweetly glad;
Through the wood his weary way
Rode sir Galahad.

All about stood open porch,
Long-drawn cloister dim;
'Twas a wavering wandering church
Every side of him.

On through columns arching high,
Foliage-vaulted, he

Rode in thirst that made him sigh,
Longing miserably.

Came the moon, and through the trees
Glimmered faintly sad;
Withered, worn, and ill at ease
Down lay Galahad;

Closed his eyes and took no heed
What might come or pass;
Heard his hunger-busy steed
Cropping dewy grass.

Cool and juicy was the blade,
Good to him as wine:
For his labour he was paid,
Galahad must pine!

Late had he at Arthur's board,
Arthur strong and wise,
Pledged the cup with friendly lord,
Looked in ladies' eyes;

Now, alas! he wandered wide,

Resting never more,
Over lake and mountain-side,
Over sea and shore!

Swift in vision rose and fled
All he might have had;
Weary tossed his restless head,
And his heart grew sad.

With the lowliest in the land
He a maiden fair
Might have led with virgin hand
From the altar-stair:

Youth away with strength would glide,
Age bring frost and woe;
Through the world so dreary wide
Mateless he must go!

Lost was life and all its good,
Gone without avail!
All his labour never would
Find the Holy Grail!

II

How sir Galahad found and lost the Grail

Galahad was in the night,
And the wood was drear;
But to men in darksome plight
Radiant things appear:

Wings he heard not floating by,
Heard no heavenly hail;
But he started with a cry,
For he saw the Grail.

Hid from bright beholding sun,
Hid from moonlight wan,
Lo, from age-long darkness won,
It was seen of man!

Three feet off, on cushioned moss,
As if cast away,
Homely wood with carven cross,

Rough and rude it lay!

To his knees the knight rose up,
Loosed his gauntlet-band;
Fearing, daring, toward the cup
Went his naked hand;

When, as if it fled from harm,
Sank the holy thing,
And his eager following arm
Plunged into a spring.

Oh the thirst, the water sweet!
Down he lay and quaffed,
Quaffed and rose up on his feet,
Rose and gayly laughed;

Fell upon his knees to thank,
Loved and lauded there;
Stretched him on the mossy bank,
Fell asleep in prayer;

Dreamed, and dreaming murmured low
Ave, pater, creed;

When the fir-tops gan to glow
Waked and called his steed;

Bitted him and drew his girth,
Watered from his helm:
Happier knight or better worth
Was not in the realm!

Belted on him then his sword,
Braced his slackened mail;
Doubting said: "I dreamed the Lord
Offered me the Grail."

III

How sir Galahad gave up the Quest for the Grail

Ere the sun had cast his light
On the water's face,
Firm in saddle rode the knight
From the holy place,

Merry songs began to sing,
Let his matins bide;
Rode a good hour pondering,
And was turned aside,

Saying, "I will henceforth then
Yield this hopeless quest;
Tis a dream of holy men
This ideal Best!"

"Every good for miracle
Heart devout may hold;
Grail indeed was that fair well
Full of water cold!

"Not my thirst alone it stilled
But my soul it stayed;
And my heart, with gladness filled,
Wept and laughed and prayed!

"Spectral church with cryptic niche
I will seek no more;
That the holiest Grail is, which
Helps the need most sore!"

And he spake with speech more true
Than his thought indeed,
For not yet the good knight knew
His own sorest need.

IV

How sir Galahad sought yet again for the Grail

On he rode, to succour bound,
But his faith grew dim;
Wells for thirst he many found,
Water none for him.

Never more from drinking deep
Rose he up and laughed;
Never more did prayerful sleep
Follow on the draught.

Good the water which they bore,
Plenteously it flowed,
Quenched his thirst, but, ah, no more

Eased his bosom's load!

For the *Best* no more he sighed;

Rode as in a trance;

Life grew poor, undignified,

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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