

**COVENTRY  
PATMORE**

THE UNKNOWN  
EROS

Coventry Patmore  
**The Unknown Eros**

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# Coventry Patmore

## The Unknown Eros

### PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION

To this edition of “The Unknown Eros” are added all the other poems I have written, in what I venture—because it has no other name—to call “catalectic verse.” Nearly all English metres owe their existence as metres to “catalexis,” or pause, for the time of one or more feet, and, as a rule, the position and amount of catalexis are fixed. But the verse in which this volume is written is catalectic *par excellence*, employing the pause (as it does the rhyme) with freedom only limited by the exigencies of poetic passion. From the time of Drummond of Hawthornden to our own, some of the noblest flights of English poetry have been taken on the wings of this verse; but with ordinary readers it has been more or less discredited by the far greater number of abortive efforts, on the part sometimes of considerable poets, to adapt it to purposes with which it has no expressional correspondence; or to vary it by rhythmical movements which are destructive of its character.

Some persons, unlearned in the subject of metre, have objected to this kind of verse that it is “lawless.” But it has its laws as truly as any other. In its highest order, the lyric or “ode,” it is a tetrameter, the line having the time of eight iambics. When it descends to narrative, or the expression of a less-exalted strain of thought, it becomes a trimeter, having the time of six iambics, or even a dimeter, with the time of four; and it is allowable to vary the tetrameter “ode” by the occasional introduction of passages in either or both of these inferior measures, but not, I think, by the use of any other. The license to rhyme at indefinite intervals is counterbalanced, in the writing of all poets who have employed this metre successfully, by unusual frequency in the recurrence of the same rhyme.

For information on the generally overlooked but primarily important function of catalexis in English verse I refer such readers as may be curious about the subject to the Essay printed as an appendix to the later editions of my collected poems.

I do not pretend to have done more than very moderate justice to the exceeding grace and dignity and the inexhaustible expressiveness of which this kind of metre is capable; but I can say that I have never attempted to write in it in the absence of that one justification of and prime qualification for its use, namely, the impulse of some thought that “voluntary moved harmonious numbers.”

COVENTRY PATMORE.  
HASTINGS, 1890.

## THE UNKNOWN EROS

*“Deliciae meae esse cum filiis hominum.”*

**PROV. VIII. 31.**

### PROEM

‘Many speak wisely, some inerrably:  
Witness the beast who talk’d that should have bray’d,  
And Caiaphas that said  
Expedient ’twas for all that One should die;  
But what avails  
When Love’s right accent from their wisdom fails,  
And the Truth-criers know not what they cry!  
Say, wherefore thou,  
As under bondage of some bitter vow,  
Warblest no word,  
When all the rest are shouting to be heard?  
Why leave the fervid running just when Fame  
’Gan whispering of thy name  
Amongst the hard-pleased Judges of the Course?  
Parch’d is thy crystal-flowing source?  
Pierce, then, with thought’s steel probe, the trodden ground,  
Till passion’s buried floods be found;  
Intend thine eye  
Into the dim and undiscover’d sky  
Whose lustres are the pulsings of the heart,  
And promptly, as thy trade is, watch to chart  
The lonely suns, the mystic hazes and throng’d sparkles bright  
That, named and number’d right  
In sweet, transpicuous words, shall glow alway  
With Love’s three-stranded ray,  
Red wrath, compassion golden, lazuline delight.’  
Thus, in reproof of my despondency,  
My Mentor; and thus I:  
O, season strange for song!  
And yet some timely power persuades my lips.  
Is’t England’s parting soul that nerves my tongue,  
As other Kingdoms, nearing their eclipse,  
Have, in their latest bards, uplifted strong  
The voice that was their voice in earlier days?  
Is it her sudden, loud and piercing cry,  
The note which those that seem too weak to sigh  
Will sometimes utter just before they die?  
Lo, weary of the greatness of her ways,  
There lies my Land, with hasty pulse and hard,

Her ancient beauty marr'd,  
And, in her cold and aimless roving sight,  
Horror of light;  
Sole vigour left in her last lethargy,  
Save when, at bidding of some dreadful breath,  
The rising death  
Rolls up with force;  
And then the furiously gibbering corse  
Shakes, panglessly convuls'd, and sightless stares,  
Whilst one Physician pours in rousing wines,  
One anodynes,  
And one declares  
That nothing ails it but the pains of growth.  
    My last look loth  
Is taken; and I turn, with the relief  
Of knowing that my life-long hope and grief  
Are surely vain,  
To that unshapen time to come, when She,  
A dim, heroic Nation long since dead,  
The foulness of her agony forgot,  
Shall all benignly shed  
Through ages vast  
The ghostly grace of her transfigured past  
Over the present, harass'd and forlorn,  
Of nations yet unborn;  
And this shall be the lot  
Of those who, in the bird-voice and the blast  
Of her omniloquent tongue,  
Have truly sung  
Or greatly said,  
To shew as one  
With those who have best done,  
And be as rays,  
Thro' the still altering world, around her changeless head.  
    Therefore no 'plaint be mine  
Of listeners none,  
No hope of render'd use or proud reward,  
In hasty times and hard;  
But chants as of a lonely thrush's throat  
At latest eve,  
That does in each calm note  
Both joy and grieve;  
Notes few and strong and fine,  
Gilt with sweet day's decline,  
And sad with promise of a different sun.  
    'Mid the loud concert harsh  
Of this fog-folded marsh,  
To me, else dumb,  
Uranian Clearness, come!

Give me to breathe in peace and in surprise  
The light-thrill'd ether of your rarest skies,  
Till inmost absolution start  
The welling in the grateful eyes,  
The heaving in the heart.  
Winnow with sighs  
And wash away  
With tears the dust and stain of clay,  
Till all the Song be Thine, as beautiful as Morn,  
Bedeck'd with shining clouds of scorn;  
And Thou, Inspirer, deign to brood  
O'er the delighted words, and call them Very Good.  
This grant, Clear Spirit; and grant that I remain  
Content to ask unlikely gifts in vain.

## BOOK I

### I. SAINT VALENTINE'S DAY

Well dost thou, Love, thy solemn Feast to hold  
In vestal February;  
Not rather choosing out some rosy day  
From the rich coronet of the coming May,  
When all things meet to marry!  
O, quick, praevernal Power  
That signall'st punctual through the sleepy mould  
The Snowdrop's time to flower,  
Fair as the rash oath of virginity  
Which is first-love's first cry;  
O, Baby Spring,  
That flutter'st sudden 'neath the breast of Earth  
A month before the birth;  
Whence is the peaceful poignancy,  
The joy contrite,  
Sadder than sorrow, sweeter than delight,  
That burthens now the breath of everything,  
Though each one sighs as if to each alone  
The cherish'd pang were known?  
At dusk of dawn, on his dark spray apart,  
With it the Blackbird breaks the young Day's heart;  
In evening's hush  
About it talks the heavenly-minded Thrush;  
The hill with like remorse  
Smiles to the Sun's smile in his westering course;  
The fisher's drooping skiff  
In yonder sheltering bay;  
The choughs that call about the shining cliff;  
The children, noisy in the setting ray;  
Own the sweet season, each thing as it may;  
Thoughts of strange kindness and forgotten peace  
In me increase;  
And tears arise  
Within my happy, happy Mistress' eyes,  
And, lo, her lips, averted from my kiss,  
Ask from Love's bounty, ah, much more than bliss!  
Is't the sequester'd and exceeding sweet  
Of dear Desire electing his defeat?  
Is't the waked Earth now to yon purpling cope  
Uttering first-love's first cry,  
Vainly renouncing, with a Seraph's sigh,  
Love's natural hope?

Fair-meaning Earth, foredoom'd to perjury!  
Behold, all-amorous May,  
With roses heap'd upon her laughing brows,  
Avoids thee of thy vows!  
Were it for thee, with her warm bosom near,  
To abide the sharpness of the Seraph's sphere?  
Forget thy foolish words;  
Go to her summons gay,  
Thy heart with dead, wing'd Innocencies fill'd,  
Ev'n as a nest with birds  
After the old ones by the hawk are kill'd.  
    Well dost thou, Love, to celebrate  
The noon of thy soft ecstasy,  
Or e'er it be too late,  
Or e'er the Snowdrop die!

## II. WIND AND WAVE

The wedded light and heat,  
Winnowing the witless space,  
Without a let,  
What are they till they beat  
Against the sleepy sod, and there beget  
Perchance the violet!  
Is the One found,  
Amongst a wilderness of as happy grace,  
To make Heaven's bound;  
So that in Her  
All which it hath of sensitively good  
Is sought and understood  
After the narrow mode the mighty Heavens prefer?  
She, as a little breeze  
Following still Night,  
Ripples the spirit's cold, deep seas  
Into delight;  
But, in a while,  
The immeasurable smile  
Is broke by fresher airs to flashes blent  
With darkling discontent;  
And all the subtle zephyr hurries gay,  
And all the heaving ocean heaves one way,  
'Tward the void sky-line and an unguess'd weal;  
Until the vanward billows feel  
The agitating shallows, and divine the goal,  
And to foam roll,  
And spread and stray  
And traverse wildly, like delighted hands,  
The fair and feckless sands;  
And so the whole  
Unfathomable and immense  
Triumphing tide comes at the last to reach  
And burst in wind-kiss'd splendours on the deaf'ning beach,  
Where forms of children in first innocence  
Laugh and fling pebbles on the rainbow'd crest  
Of its untired unrest.

### III. WINTER

I, singularly moved  
To love the lovely that are not beloved,  
Of all the Seasons, most  
Love Winter, and to trace  
The sense of the Trophonian pallor on her face.  
It is not death, but plenitude of peace;  
And the dim cloud that does the world enfold  
Hath less the characters of dark and cold  
Than warmth and light asleep,  
And correspondent breathing seems to keep  
With the infant harvest, breathing soft below  
Its eider coverlet of snow.  
Nor is in field or garden anything  
But, duly look'd into, contains serene  
The substance of things hoped for, in the Spring,  
And evidence of Summer not yet seen.  
On every chance-mild day  
That visits the moist shaw,  
The honeysuckle, 'sdaining to be crost  
In urgency of sweet life by sleet or frost,  
'Voids the time's law  
With still increase  
Of leaflet new, and little, wandering spray;  
Often, in sheltering brakes,  
As one from rest disturb'd in the first hour,  
Primrose or violet bewilder'd wakes,  
And deems 'tis time to flower;  
Though not a whisper of her voice he hear,  
The buried bulb does know  
The signals of the year,  
And hails far Summer with his lifted spear.  
The gorse-field dark, by sudden, gold caprice,  
Turns, here and there, into a Jason's fleece;  
Lilies, that soon in Autumn slipp'd their gowns of green,  
And vanish'd into earth,  
And came again, ere Autumn died, to birth,  
Stand full-array'd, amidst the wavering shower,  
And perfect for the Summer, less the flower;  
In nook of pale or crevice of crude bark,  
Thou canst not miss,  
If close thou spy, to mark  
The ghostly chrysalis,  
That, if thou touch it, stirs in its dream dark;  
And the flush'd Robin, in the evenings hoar,  
Does of Love's Day, as if he saw it, sing;

But sweeter yet than dream or song of Summer or Spring  
Are Winter's sometime smiles, that seem to well  
From infancy ineffable;  
Her wandering, languorous gaze,  
So unfamiliar, so without amaze,  
On the elemental, chill adversity,  
The uncomprehended rudeness; and her sigh  
And solemn, gathering tear,  
And look of exile from some great repose, the sphere  
Of ether, moved by ether only, or  
By something still more tranquil.

## IV. BEATA

Of infinite Heaven the rays,  
Piercing some eyelet in our cavern black,  
Ended their viewless track  
On thee to smite  
Solely, as on a diamond stalactite,  
And in mid-darkness lit a rainbow's blaze,  
Wherein the absolute Reason, Power, and Love,  
That erst could move  
Mainly in me but toil and weariness,  
Renounced their deadening might,  
Renounced their undistinguishable stress  
Of withering white,  
And did with gladdest hues my spirit caress,  
Nothing of Heaven in thee showing infinite,  
Save the delight.

## V. THE DAY AFTER TO-MORROW

Perchance she droops within the hollow gulf  
Which the great wave of coming pleasure draws,  
Not guessing the glad cause!  
Ye Clouds that on your endless journey go,  
Ye Winds that westward flow,  
Thou heaving Sea  
That heav'st 'twixt her and me,  
Tell her I come;  
Then only sigh your pleasure, and be dumb;  
For the sweet secret of our either self  
We know.  
Tell her I come,  
And let her heart be still'd.  
One day's controlled hope, and then one more,  
And on the third our lives shall be fulfill'd!  
Yet all has been before:  
Palm placed in palm, twin smiles, and words astray.  
What other should we say?  
But shall I not, with ne'er a sign, perceive,  
Whilst her sweet hands I hold,  
The myriad threads and meshes manifold  
Which Love shall round her weave:  
The pulse in that vein making alien pause  
And varying beats from this;  
Down each long finger felt, a differing strand  
Of silvery welcome bland;  
And in her breezy palm  
And silken wrist,  
Beneath the touch of my like numerous bliss  
Complexly kiss'd,  
A diverse and distinguishable calm?  
What should we say!  
It all has been before;  
And yet our lives shall now be first fulfill'd,  
And into their summ'd sweetness fall distill'd  
One sweet drop more;  
One sweet drop more, in absolute increase  
Of unrelapsing peace.  
O, heaving Sea,  
That heav'st as if for bliss of her and me,  
And separatest not dear heart from heart,  
Though each 'gainst other beats too far apart,  
For yet awhile  
Let it not seem that I behold her smile.  
O, weary Love, O, folded to her breast,

Love in each moment years and years of rest,  
Be calm, as being not.  
Ye oceans of intolerable delight,  
The blazing photosphere of central Night,  
Be ye forgot.  
Terror, thou swarthy Groom of Bride-bliss coy,  
Let me not see thee toy.  
O, Death, too tardy with thy hope intense  
Of kisses close beyond conceit of sense;  
O, Life, too liberal, while to take her hand  
Is more of hope than heart can understand;  
Perturb my golden patience not with joy,  
Nor, through a wish, profane  
The peace that should pertain  
To him who does by her attraction move.  
Has all not been before?  
One day's controlled hope, and one again,  
And then the third, and ye shall have the rein,  
O Life, Death, Terror, Love!  
But soon let your unrestful rapture cease,  
Ye flaming Ethers thin,  
Condensing till the abiding sweetness win  
One sweet drop more;  
One sweet drop more in the measureless increase  
Of honied peace.

## VI. TRISTITIA

Darling, with hearts conjoin'd in such a peace  
That Hope, so not to cease,  
Must still gaze back,  
And count, along our love's most happy track,  
The landmarks of like inconceiv'd increase,  
Promise me this:  
If thou alone should'st win  
God's perfect bliss,  
And I, beguiled by gracious-seeming sin,  
Say, loving too much thee,  
Love's last goal miss,  
And any vows may then have memory,  
Never, by grief for what I bear or lack,  
To mar thy joyance of heav'n's jubilee.  
Promise me this;  
For else I should be hurl'd,  
Beyond just doom  
And by thy deed, to Death's interior gloom,  
From the mild borders of the banish'd world  
Wherein they dwell  
Who builded not unalterable fate  
On pride, fraud, envy, cruel lust, or hate;  
Yet loved too laxly sweetness and heart's ease,  
And strove the creature more than God to please.  
For such as these  
Loss without measure, sadness without end!  
Yet not for this do thou disheaven'd be  
With thinking upon me.  
Though black, when scann'd from heaven's surpassing bright,  
This might mean light,  
Foil'd with the dim days of mortality.  
For God is everywhere.  
Go down to deepest Hell, and He is there,  
And, as a true but quite estranged Friend,  
He works, 'gainst gnashing teeth of devilish ire,  
With love deep hidden lest it be blasphemed,  
If possible, to blend  
Ease with the pangs of its inveterate fire;  
Yea, in the worst  
And from His Face most wilfully accurst  
Of souls in vain redeem'd,  
He does with potions of oblivion kill  
Remorse of the lost Love that helps them still.  
Apart from these,  
Near the sky-borders of that banish'd world,

Wander pale spirits among willow'd leas,  
Lost beyond measure, sadden'd without end,  
But since, while erring most, retaining yet  
Some ineffectual fervour of regret,  
Retaining still such weal  
As spurned Lovers feel,  
Preferring far to all the world's delight  
Their loss so infinite,  
Or Poets, when they mark  
In the clouds dun  
A loitering flush of the long sunken sun,  
And turn away with tears into the dark.  
    Know, Dear, these are not mine  
But Wisdom's words, confirmed by divine  
Doctors and Saints, though fitly seldom heard  
Save in their own prepense-occulted word,  
Lest fools be fool'd the further by false hope,  
And wrest sweet knowledge to their own decline;  
And (to approve I speak within my scope)  
The Mistress of that dateless exile gray  
Is named in surpliced Schools *Tristitia*.  
    But, O, my Darling, look in thy heart and see  
How unto me,  
Secured of my prime care, thy happy state,  
In the most unclean cell  
Of sordid Hell,  
And worried by the most ingenious hate,  
It never could be anything but well,  
Nor from my soul, full of thy sanctity,  
Such pleasure die  
As the poor harlot's, in whose body stirs  
The innocent life that is and is not hers:  
Unless, alas, this fount of my relief  
By thy unheavenly grief  
Were closed.  
So, with a consecrating kiss  
And hearts made one in past all previous peace,  
And on one hope reposed,  
Promise me this!

## VII. THE AZALEA

There, where the sun shines first  
Against our room,  
She train'd the gold Azalea, whose perfume  
She, Spring-like, from her breathing grace dispersed.  
Last night the delicate crests of saffron bloom,  
For this their dainty likeness watch'd and nurst,  
Were just at point to burst.  
At dawn I dream'd, O God, that she was dead,  
And groan'd aloud upon my wretched bed,  
And waked, ah, God, and did not waken her,  
But lay, with eyes still closed,  
Perfectly bless'd in the delicious sphere  
By which I knew so well that she was near,  
My heart to speechless thankfulness composed.  
Till 'gan to stir  
A dizzy somewhat in my troubled head—  
It *was* the azalea's breath, and she *was* dead!  
The warm night had the lingering buds disclosed,  
And I had fall'n asleep with to my breast  
A chance-found letter press'd  
In which she said,  
'So, till to-morrow eve, my Own, adieu!  
Parting's well-paid with soon again to meet,  
Soon in your arms to feel so small and sweet,  
Sweet to myself that am so sweet to you!'

## VIII. DEPARTURE

It was not like your great and gracious ways!  
Do you, that have nought other to lament,  
Never, my Love, repent  
Of how, that July afternoon,  
You went,  
With sudden, unintelligible phrase,  
And frighten'd eye,  
Upon your journey of so many days,  
Without a single kiss, or a good-bye?  
I knew, indeed, that you were parting soon;  
And so we sate, within the low sun's rays,  
You whispering to me, for your voice was weak,  
Your harrowing praise.  
Well, it was well,  
To hear you such things speak,  
And I could tell  
What made your eyes a growing gloom of love,  
As a warm South-wind sombres a March grove.  
And it was like your great and gracious ways  
To turn your talk on daily things, my Dear,  
Lifting the luminous, pathetic lash  
To let the laughter flash,  
Whilst I drew near,  
Because you spoke so low that I could scarcely hear.  
But all at once to leave me at the last,  
More at the wonder than the loss aghast,  
With huddled, unintelligible phrase,  
And frighten'd eye,  
And go your journey of all days  
With not one kiss, or a good-bye,  
And the only loveless look the look with which you pass'd:  
'Twas all unlike your great and gracious ways.

## IX. EURYDICE

Is this the portent of the day nigh past,  
And of a restless grave  
O'er which the eternal sadness gathers fast;  
Or but the heaped wave  
Of some chance, wandering tide,  
Such as that world of awe  
Whose circuit, listening to a foreign law,  
Conjunctures ours at unguess'd dates and wide,  
Does in the Spirit's tremulous ocean draw,  
To pass unfateful on, and so subside?  
Thee, whom ev'n more than Heaven loved I have,  
And yet have not been true  
Even to thee,  
I, dreaming, night by night, seek now to see,  
And, in a mortal sorrow, still pursue  
Thro' sordid streets and lanes  
And houses brown and bare  
And many a haggard stair  
Ochrous with ancient stains,  
And infamous doors, opening on hapless rooms,  
In whose unhaunted glooms  
Dead pauper generations, witless of the sun,  
Their course have run;  
And ofttimes my pursuit  
Is check'd of its dear fruit  
By things brimful of hate, my kith and kin,  
Furious that I should keep  
Their forfeit power to weep,  
And mock, with living fear, their mournful malice thin.  
But ever, at the last, my way I win  
To where, with perfectly sad patience, nurs't  
By sorry comfort of assured worst,  
Ingrain'd in fretted cheek and lips that pine,  
On pallet poor  
Thou lyest, stricken sick,  
Beyond love's cure,  
By all the world's neglect, but chiefly mine.  
Then sweetness, sweeter than my tongue can tell,  
Does in my bosom well,  
And tears come free and quick  
And more and more abound  
For piteous passion keen at having found,  
After exceeding ill, a little good;  
A little good  
Which, for the while,

Fleets with the current sorrow of the blood,  
Though no good here has heart enough to smile.

## X. THE TOYS

My little Son, who look'd from thoughtful eyes  
And moved and spoke in quiet grown-up wise,  
Having my law the seventh time disobey'd,  
I struck him, and dismiss'd  
With hard words and unkiss'd,  
His Mother, who was patient, being dead.  
Then, fearing lest his grief should hinder sleep,  
I visited his bed,  
But found him slumbering deep,  
With darken'd eyelids, and their lashes yet  
From his late sobbing wet.  
And I, with moan,  
Kissing away his tears, left others of my own;  
For, on a table drawn beside his head,  
He had put, within his reach,  
A box of counters and a red-vein'd stone,  
A piece of glass abraded by the beach  
And six or seven shells,  
A bottle with bluebells  
And two French copper coins, ranged there with careful art,  
To comfort his sad heart.  
So when that night I pray'd  
To God, I wept, and said:  
Ah, when at last we lie with tranced breath,  
Not vexing Thee in death,  
And Thou rememberest of what toys  
We made our joys,  
How weakly understood,  
Thy great commanded good,  
Then, fatherly not less  
Than I whom Thou hast moulded from the clay,  
Thou'lt leave Thy wrath, and say,  
'I will be sorry for their childishness.'

## XI. TIRED MEMORY

The stony rock of death's insensibility  
Well'd yet awhile with honey of thy love  
And then was dry;  
Nor could thy picture, nor thine empty glove,  
Nor all thy kind, long letters, nor the band  
Which really spann'd  
Thy body chaste and warm,  
Thenceforward move  
Upon the stony rock their wearied charm.  
At last, then, thou wast dead.  
Yet would I not despair,  
But wrought my daily task, and daily said  
Many and many a fond, unfeeling prayer,  
To keep my vows of faith to thee from harm.  
In vain.  
'For 'tis,' I said, 'all one,  
The wilful faith, which has no joy or pain,  
As if 'twere none.'  
Then look'd I miserably round  
If aught of duteous love were left undone,  
And nothing found.  
But, kneeling in a Church, one Easter-Day,  
It came to me to say:  
'Though there is no intelligible rest,  
In Earth or Heaven,  
For me, but on her breast,  
I yield her up, again to have her given,  
Or not, as, Lord, Thou wilt, and that for aye.'  
And the same night, in slumber lying,  
I, who had dream'd of thee as sad and sick and dying,  
And only so, nightly for all one year,  
Did thee, my own most Dear,  
Possess,  
In gay, celestial beauty nothing coy,  
And felt thy soft caress  
With heretofore unknown reality of joy.  
But, in our mortal air,  
None thrives for long upon the happiest dream,  
And fresh despair  
Bade me seek round afresh for some extreme  
Of unconceiv'd, interior sacrifice  
Whereof the smoke might rise  
To God, and 'mind him that one pray'd below.  
And so,  
In agony, I cried:

'My Lord, if thy strange will be this,  
That I should crucify my heart,  
Because my love has also been my pride,  
I do submit, if I saw how, to bliss  
Wherein She has no part.'  
And I was heard,  
And taken at my own remorseless word.  
O, my most Dear,  
Was't treason, as I fear?  
'Twere that, and worse, to plead thy veiled mind,  
Kissing thy babes, and murmuring in mine ear,  
'Thou canst not be  
Faithful to God, and faithless unto me!  
Ah, prophet kind!  
I heard, all dumb and blind  
With tears of protest; and I cannot see  
But faith was broken. Yet, as I have said,  
My heart was dead,  
Dead of devotion and tired memory,  
When a strange grace of thee  
In a fair stranger, as I take it, bred  
To her some tender heed,  
Most innocent  
Of purpose therewith blent,  
And pure of faith, I think, to thee; yet such  
That the pale reflex of an alien love,  
So vaguely, sadly shown,  
Did her heart touch  
Above  
All that, till then, had woo'd her for its own.  
And so the fear, which is love's chilly dawn,  
Flush'd faintly upon lids that droop'd like thine,  
And made me weak,  
By thy delusive likeness doubly drawn,  
And Nature's long suspended breath of flame  
Persuading soft, and whispering Duty's name,  
Awhile to smile and speak  
With this thy Sister sweet, and therefore mine;  
Thy Sister sweet,  
Who bade the wheels to stir  
Of sensitive delight in the poor brain,  
Dead of devotion and tired memory,  
So that I lived again,  
And, strange to aver,  
With no relapse into the void inane,  
For thee;  
But (treason was't?) for thee and also her.

## **XII. MAGNA EST VERITAS**

Here, in this little Bay,  
Full of tumultuous life and great repose,  
Where, twice a day,  
The purposeless, glad ocean comes and goes,  
Under high cliffs, and far from the huge town,  
I sit me down.  
For want of me the world's course will not fail:  
When all its work is done, the lie shall rot;  
The truth is great, and shall prevail,  
When none cares whether it prevail or not.

### XIII. 1867. <sup>1</sup>

In the year of the great crime,  
When the false English Nobles and their Jew,  
By God demented, slew  
The Trust they stood twice pledged to keep from wrong,  
One said, Take up thy Song,  
That breathes the mild and almost mythic time  
Of England's prime!  
But I, Ah, me,  
The freedom of the few  
That, in our free Land, were indeed the free,  
Can song renew?  
Ill singing 'tis with blotting prison-bars,  
How high soe'er, betwixt us and the stars;  
Ill singing 'tis when there are none to hear;  
And days are near  
When England shall forget  
The fading glow which, for a little while,  
Illumes her yet,  
The lovely smile  
That grows so faint and wan,  
Her people shouting in her dying ear,  
Are not two daws worth two of any swan!  
Ye outlaw'd Best, who yet are bright  
With the sunken light,  
Whose common style  
Is Virtue at her gracious ease,  
The flower of olden sanctities,  
Ye haply trust, by love's benignant guile,  
To lure the dark and selfish brood  
To their own hated good;  
Ye haply dream  
Your lives shall still their charming sway sustain,  
Unstifled by the fever'd steam  
That rises from the plain.  
Know, 'twas the force of function high,  
In corporate exercise, and public awe  
Of Nature's, Heaven's, and England's Law  
That Best, though mix'd with Bad, should reign,  
Which kept you in your sky!  
But, when the sordid Trader caught  
The loose-held sceptre from your hands distraught,  
And soon, to the Mechanic vain,

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<sup>1</sup> In this year the middle and upper classes were disfranchised by Mr. Disraeli's Government, and the final destruction of the liberties of England by the Act of 1884 rendered inevitable.

Sold the proud toy for nought,  
Your charm was broke, your task was sped,  
Your beauty, with your honour, dead,  
And though you still are dreaming sweet  
Of being even now not less  
Than Gods and Goddesses, ye shall not long so cheat  
Your hearts of their due heaviness.  
Go, get you for your evil watching shriven!  
Leave to your lawful Master's itching hands  
Your unking'd lands,  
But keep, at least, the dignity  
Of deigning not, for his smooth use, to be,  
Voteless, the voted delegates  
Of his strange interests, loves and hates.  
In sackcloth, or in private strife  
With private ill, ye may please Heaven,  
And soothe the coming pangs of sinking life;  
And prayer perchance may win  
A term to God's indignant mood  
And the orgies of the multitude,  
Which now begin;  
But do not hope to wave the silken rag  
Of your unsanction'd flag,  
And so to guide  
The great ship, helmless on the swelling tide  
Of that presumptuous Sea,  
Unlit by sun or moon, yet inly bright  
With lights innumerable that give no light,  
Flames of corrupted will and scorn of right,  
Rejoicing to be free.  
And, now, because the dark comes on apace  
When none can work for fear,  
And Liberty in every Land lies slain,  
And the two Tyrannies unchallenged reign,  
And heavy prophecies, suspended long  
At supplication of the righteous few,  
And so discredited, to fulfilment throng,  
Restrain'd no more by faithful prayer or tear,  
And the dread baptism of blood seems near  
That brings to the humbled Earth the Time of Grace,  
Breathless be song,  
And let Christ's own look through  
The darkness, suddenly increased,  
To the gray secret lingering in the East.

#### **XIV. 'IF I WERE DEAD.'**

'If I were dead, you'd sometimes say, Poor Child!  
The dear lips quiver'd as they spake,  
And the tears brake  
From eyes which, not to grieve me, brightly smiled.  
Poor Child, poor Child!  
I seem to hear your laugh, your talk, your song.  
It is not true that Love will do no wrong.  
Poor Child!  
And did you think, when you so cried and smiled,  
How I, in lonely nights, should lie awake,  
And of those words your full avengers make?  
Poor Child, poor Child!  
And now, unless it be  
That sweet amends thrice told are come to thee,  
O God, have Thou *no* mercy upon me!  
Poor Child!

## XV. PEACE

O England, how hast thou forgot,  
In dullard care for undisturb'd increase  
Of gold, which profits not,  
The gain which once thou knew'st was for thy peace!  
Honour is peace, the peace which does accord  
Alone with God's glad word:  
'My peace I send you, and I send a sword.'  
O England, how hast thou forgot,  
How fear'st the things which make for joy, not fear,  
Confronted near.  
Hard days? 'Tis what the pamper'd seek to buy  
With their most willing gold in weary lands.  
Loss and pain risk'd? What sport but understands  
These for incitements! Suddenly to die,  
With conscience a blurr'd scroll?  
The sunshine dreaming upon Salmon's height  
Is not so sweet and white  
As the most heretofore sin-spotted soul  
That darts to its delight  
Straight from the absolution of a faithful fight.  
Myriads of homes unloosen'd of home's bond,  
And fill'd with helpless babes and harmless women fond?  
Let those whose pleasant chance  
Took them, like me, among the German towns,  
After the war that pluck'd the fangs from France,

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