

**GEORGE
MEREDITH**

POEMS,
VOLUME 2

George Meredith
Poems. Volume 2

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Poems – Volume 2:

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George Meredith

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TO J. M

Let Fate or Insufficiency provide
Mean ends for men who what they are would be:
Pinned in their narrow day no change they see
Save one which strikes the blow to brutes and pride.
Our faith is ours and comes not on a tide:
And whether Earth's great offspring, by decree,
Must rot if they abjure rapacity,
Not argument but effort shall decide.
They number many heads in that hard flock:
Trim swordsmen they push forth: yet try thy steel.
Thou, fighting for poor humankind, wilt feel
The strength of Roland in thy wrist to hew
A chasm sheer into the barrier rock,
And bring the army of the faithful through.

LINES TO A FRIEND VISITING AMERICA

I

Now farewell to you! you are
One of my dearest, whom I trust:
Now follow you the Western star,
And cast the old world off as dust.

II

From many friends adieu! adieu!
The quick heart of the word therein.
Much that we hope for hangs with you:
We lose you, but we lose to win.

III

The beggar-king, November, frets:
His tatters rich with Indian dyes
Goes hugging: we our season's debts
Pay calmly, of the Spring forewise.

IV

We send our worthiest; can no less,
If we would now be read aright,—
To that great people who may bless
Or curse mankind: they have the might.

V

The proudest seasons find their graves,
And we, who would not be wooed, must court.
We have let the blunderers and the waves
Divide us, and the devil had sport.

VI

The blunderers and the waves no more
Shall sever kindred sending forth
Their worthiest from shore to shore
For welcome, bent to prove their worth.

VII

Go you and such as you afloat,
Our lost kinsfellowship to revive.
The battle of the antidote
Is tough, though silent: may you thrive!

VIII

I, when in this North wind I see
The straining red woods blown awry,
Feel shuddering like the winter tree,
All vein and artery on cold sky.

IX

The leaf that clothed me is torn away;
My friend is as a flying seed.
Ay, true; to bring replenished day
Light ebbs, but I am bare, and bleed.

X

What husky habitations seem
These comfortable sayings! they fell,
In some rich year become a dream:—
So cries my heart, the infidel! . . .

XI

Oh! for the strenuous mind in quest,
Arabian visions could not vie
With those broad wonders of the West,
And would I bid you stay? Not I!

XII

The strange experimental land
Where men continually dare take
Niagara leaps;—unshattered stand
'Twixt fall and fall;—for conscience' sake,

XIII

Drive onward like a flood's increase;—
Fresh rapids and abysses engage;—
(We live—we die) scorn fireside peace,
And, as a garment, put on rage,

XIV

Rather than bear God's reprimand,
By rearing on a full fat soil
Concrete of sin and sloth;—this land,
You will observe it coil in coil.

XV

The land has been discover'd long,
The people we have yet to know;
Themselves they know not, save that strong
For good and evil still they grow.

XVI

Nor know they us. Yea, well enough
In that inveterate machine
Through which we speak the printed stuff
Daily, with voice most hugeous, mien

XVII

Tremendous:—as a lion's show
The grand menagerie paintings hide:
Hear the drum beat, the trombones blow!
The poor old Lion lies inside! . . .

XVIII

It is not England that they hear,
But mighty Mammon's pipers, trained
To trumpet out his moods, and stir
His sluggish soul: *her* voice is chained:

XIX

Almost her spirit seems moribund!
O teach them, 'tis not she displays
The panic of a purse rotund,
Eternal dread of evil days,—

XX

That haunting spectre of success
Which shows a heart sunk low in the girths:
Not England answers nobleness,—
'Live for thyself: thou art not earth's.'

XXI

Not she, when struggling manhood tries
For freedom, air, a hopefuller fate,
Points out the planet, Compromise,
And shakes a mild reproving pate:

XXII

Says never: 'I am well at ease,
My sneers upon the weak I shed:
The strong have my cajoleries:
And those beneath my feet I tread.'

XXIII

Nay, but 'tis said for her, great Lord!
The misery's there! The shameless one
Adjures mankind to sheathe the sword,
Herself not yielding what it won:—

XXIV

Her sermon at cock-crow doth preach,
On sweet Prosperity—or greed.
'Lo! as the beasts feed, each for each,
God's blessings let us take, and feed!'

XXV

Ungrateful creatures crave a part—
She tells them firmly she is full;
Lost sheared sheep hurt her tender heart
With bleating, stops her ears with wool:—

XXVI

Seized sometimes by prodigious qualms
(Nightmares of bankruptcy and death),—
Showers down in lumps a load of alms,
Then pants as one who has lost a breath;

XXVII

Believes high heaven, whence favours flow,
Too kind to ask a sacrifice
For what it specially doth bestow;—
Gives *she*, 'tis generous, cheese to mice.

XXVIII

She saw the young Dominion strip
For battle with a grievous wrong,
And curled a noble Norman lip,
And looked with half an eye sidelong;

XXIX

And in stout Saxon wrote her sneers,
Denounced the waste of blood and coin,
Implored the combatants, with tears,
Never to think they could rejoin.

XXX

Oh! was it England that, alas!
Turned sharp the victor to cajole?
Behold her features in the glass:
A monstrous semblance mocks her soul!

XXXI

A false majority, by stealth,
Have got her fast, and sway the rod:
A headless tyrant built of wealth,
The hypocrite, the belly-God.

XXXII

To him the daily hymns they raise:
His tastes are sought: his will is done:
He sniffs the putrid steam of praise,
Place for true England here is none!

XXXIII

But can a distant race discern
The difference 'twixt her and him?
My friend, that will you bid them learn.
He shames and binds her, head and limb.

XXXIV

Old wood has blossoms of this sort.
Though sound at core, she is old wood.
If freemen hate her, one retort
She has; but one!—'You are my blood.'

XXXV

A poet, half a prophet, rose
In recent days, and called for power.
I love him; but his mountain prose—
His Alp and valley and wild flower—

XXXVI

Proclaimed our weakness, not its source.
What medicine for disease had he?
Whom summoned for a show of force?
Our titular aristocracy!

XXXVII

Why, these are great at City feasts;
From City riches mainly rise:
'Tis well to hear them, when the beasts
That die for us they eulogize!

XXXVIII

But these, of all the liveried crew
Obeisant in Mammon's walk,
Most deferent ply the facial screw,
The spinal bend, submissive talk.

XXXIX

Small fear that they will run to books
(At least the better form of seed)!
I, too, have hoped from their good looks,
And fables of their Northman breed;—

XL

Have hoped that they the land would head
In acts magnanimous; but, lo,
When fainting heroes beg for bread
They frown: where they are driven they go.

XLI

Good health, my friend! and may your lot
Be cheerful o'er the Western rounds.
This butter-woman's market-trot
Of verse is passing market-bounds.

XLII

Adieu! the sun sets; he is gone.
On banks of fog faint lines extend:
Adieu! bring back a braver dawn
To England, and to me my friend.

November 15th, 1867.

TIME AND SENTIMENT

I see a fair young couple in a wood,
And as they go, one bends to take a flower,
That so may be embalmed their happy hour,
And in another day, a kindred mood,
Haply together, or in solitude,
Recovered what the teeth of Time devour,
The joy, the bloom, and the illusive power,
Wherewith by their young blood they are endued
To move all enviable, framed in May,
And of an aspect sisterly with Truth:
Yet seek they with Time's laughing things to wed:
Who will be prompted on some pallid day
To lift the hueless flower and show that dead,
Even such, and by this token, is their youth.

LUCIFER IN STARLIGHT

On a starred night Prince Lucifer uprose.
Tired of his dark dominion swung the fiend
Above the rolling ball in cloud part screened,
Where sinners hugged their spectre of repose.
Poor prey to his hot fit of pride were those.
And now upon his western wing he leaned,
Now his huge bulk o'er Afric's sands careened,
Now the black planet shadowed Arctic snows.
Soaring through wider zones that pricked his scars
With memory of the old revolt from Awe,
He reached a middle height, and at the stars,
Which are the brain of heaven, he looked, and sank.
Around the ancient track marched, rank on rank,
The army of unalterable law.

THE STAR SIRIUS

Bright Sirius! that when Orion pales
To dotlings under moonlight still art keen
With cheerful fervour of a warrior's mien
Who holds in his great heart the battle-scales:
Unquenched of flame though swift the flood assails,
Reducing many lustrous to the lean:
Be thou my star, and thou in me be seen
To show what source divine is, and prevails.
Long watches through, at one with godly night,
I mark thee planting joy in constant fire;
And thy quick beams, whose jets of life inspire
Life to the spirit, passion for the light,
Dark Earth since first she lost her lord from sight
Has viewed and felt them sweep her as a lyre.

SENSE AND SPIRIT

The senses loving Earth or well or ill
Ravel yet more the riddle of our lot.
The mind is in their trammels, and lights not
By trimming fear-bred tales; nor does the will
To find in nature things which less may chill
An ardour that desires, unknowing what.
Till we conceive her living we go distraught,
At best but circle-windsails of a mill.
Seeing she lives, and of her joy of life
Creatively has given us blood and breath
For endless war and never wound unhealed,
The gloomy Wherefore of our battle-field
Solves in the Spirit, wrought of her through strife
To read her own and trust her down to death.

EARTH'S SECRET

Not solitarily in fields we find
Earth's secret open, though one page is there;
Her plainest, such as children spell, and share
With bird and beast; raised letters for the blind.
Not where the troubled passions toss the mind,
In turbid cities, can the key be bare.
It hangs for those who hither thither fare,
Close interthreading nature with our kind.
They, hearing History speak, of what men were,
And have become, are wise. The gain is great
In vision and solidity; it lives.
Yet at a thought of life apart from her,
Solidity and vision lose their state,
For Earth, that gives the milk, the spirit gives.

INTERNAL HARMONY

Assured of worthiness we do not dread
Competitors; we rather give them hail
And greeting in the lists where we may fail:
Must, if we bear an aim beyond the head!
My betters are my masters: purely fed
By their sustainment I likewise shall scale
Some rocky steps between the mount and vale;
Meanwhile the mark I have and I will wed.
So that I draw the breath of finer air,
Station is nought, nor footways laurel-strewn,
Nor rivals tightly belted for the race.
Good speed to them! My place is here or there;
My pride is that among them I have place:
And thus I keep this instrument in tune.

GRACE AND LOVE

Two flower-enfolding crystal vases she
I love fills daily, mindful but of one:
And close behind pale morn she, like the sun
Priming our world with light, pours, sweet to see,
Clear water in the cup, and into me
The image of herself: and that being done,
Choice of what blooms round her fair garden run
In climbers or in creepers or the tree
She ranges with unerring fingers fine,
To harmony so vivid that through sight
I hear, I have her heavenliness to fold
Beyond the senses, where such love as mine,
Such grace as hers, should the strange Fates withhold
Their starry more from her and me, unite.

APPRECIATION

Earth was not Earth before her sons appeared,
Nor Beauty Beauty ere young Love was born:
And thou when I lay hidden wast as morn
At city-windows, touching eyelids bleared;
To none by her fresh wingedness endeared;
Unwelcome unto revellers outworn.
I the last echoes of Diana's horn
In woodland heard, and saw thee come, and cheered.
No longer wast thou then mere light, fair soul!
And more than simple duty moved thy feet.
New colours rose in thee, from fear, from shame,
From hope, effused: though not less pure a scroll
May men read on the heart I taught to beat:
That change in thee, if not thyself, I claim.

THE DISCIPLINE OF WISDOM

Rich labour is the struggle to be wise,
While we make sure the struggle cannot cease.
Else better were it in some bower of peace
Slothful to swing, contending with the flies.
You point at Wisdom fixed on lofty skies,
As mid barbarian hordes a sculptured Greece:
She falls. To live and shine, she grows her fleece,
Is shorn, and rubs with follies and with lies.
So following her, your hewing may attain
The right to speak unto the mute, and shun
That sly temptation of the illumined brain,
Deliveries oracular, self-spun.
Who sweats not with the flock will seek in vain
To shed the words which are ripe fruit of sun.

THE STATE OF AGE

Rub thou thy battered lamp: nor claim nor beg
Honours from aught about thee. Light the young.
Thy frame is as a dusty mantle hung,
O grey one! pendant on a loosened peg.
Thou art for this our life an ancient egg,
Or a tough bird: thou hast a rudderless tongue,
Turning dead trifles, like the cock of dung,
Which runs, Time's contrast to thy halting leg.
Nature, it is most sure, not thee admires.
But hast thou in thy season set her fires
To burn from Self to Spirit through the lash,
Honoured the sons of Earth shall hold thee high:
Yea, to spread light when thy proud letter I
Drops prone and void as any thoughtless dash.

PROGRESS

In Progress you have little faith, say you:
Men will maintain dear interests, wreak base hates,
By force, and gentle women choose their mates
Most amorously from the gilded fighting crew:
The human heart Bellona's mad halloo
Will ever fire to dicing with the Fates.
'Now at this time,' says History, 'those two States
Stood ready their past wrestling to renew.
They sharpened arms and showed them, like the brutes
Whose haunches quiver. But a yellow blight
Fell on their waxing harvests. They deferred
The bloody settlement of their disputes
Till God should bless them better.' They did right.
And naming Progress, both shall have the word.

THE WORLD'S ADVANCE

Judge mildly the tasked world; and disincline
To brand it, for it bears a heavy pack.
You have perchance observed the inebriate's track
At night when he has quitted the inn-sign:
He plays diversions on the homeward line,
Still that way bent albeit his legs are slack:
A hedge may take him, but he turns not back,
Nor turns this burdened world, of curving spine.
'Spiral,' the memorable Lady terms
Our mind's ascent: our world's advance presents
That figure on a flat; the way of worms.
Cherish the promise of its good intents,
And warn it, not one instinct to efface
Ere Reason ripens for the vacant place.

A CERTAIN PEOPLE

As Puritans they prominently wax,
And none more kindly gives and takes hard knocks.
Strong psalmic chanting, like to nasal cocks,
They join to thunderings of their hearty thwacks.
But naughtiness, with hoggerly, not lacks
When Peace another door in them unlocks,
Where conscience shows the eyeing of an ox
Grown dully apprehensive of an Axe.
Graceless they are when gone to frivolousness,
Fearing the God they flout, the God they glut.
They need their pious exercises less
Than schooling in the Pleasures: fair belief
That these are devilish only to their thief,
Charged with an Axe nigh on the occiput.

THE GARDEN OF EPICURUS

That Garden of sedate Philosophy
Once flourished, fenced from passion and mishap,
A shining spot upon a shaggy map;
Where mind and body, in fair junction free,
Luted their joyful concord; like the tree
From root to flowering twigs a flowing sap.
Clear Wisdom found in tended Nature's lap
Of gentlemen the happy nursery.
That Garden would on light supremest verge,
Were the long drawing of an equal breath
Healthful for Wisdom's head, her heart, her aims.
Our world which for its Babels wants a scourge,
And for its wilds a husbandman, acclaims
The crucifix that came of Nazareth.

A LATER ALEXANDRIAN

An inspiration caught from dubious hues
Filled him, and mystic wrynesses he chased;
For they lead farther than the single-faced,
Wave subtler promise when desire pursues.
The moon of cloud discoloured was his Muse,
His pipe the reed of the old moaning waste.
Love was to him with anguish fast enlaced,
And Beauty where she walked blood-shot the dews.
Men railed at such a singer; women thrilled
Responsively: he sang not Nature's own
Divinest, but his lyric had a tone,
As 'twere a forest-echo of her voice:
What barrenly they yearn for seemed distilled
From what they dread, who do through tears rejoice.

AN ORSON OF THE MUSE

Her son, albeit the Muse's livery
And measured courtly paces rouse his taunts,
Naked and hairy in his savage haunts,
To Nature only will he bend the knee;
Spouting the founts of her distillery
Like rough rock-sources; and his woes and wants
Being Nature's, civil limitation daunts
His utterance never; the nymphs blush, not he.
Him, when he blows of Earth, and Man, and Fate,
The Muse will hearken to with graver ear
Than many of her train can waken: him
Would fain have taught what fruitful things and dear
Must sink beneath the tidewaves, of their weight,
If in no vessel built for sea they swim.

THE POINT OF TASTE

Unhappy poets of a sunken prime!
You to reviewers are as ball to bat.
They shadow you with Homer, knock you flat
With Shakespeare: bludgeons brainingly sublime
On you the excommunicates of Rhyme,
Because you sing not in the living Fat.
The wiry whizz of an intrusive gnat
Is verse that shuns their self-producing time.
Sound them their clocks, with loud alarum trump,
Or watches ticking temporal at their fobs,
You win their pleased attention. But, bright God
O' the lyre, what bully-drawlers they applaud!
Rather for us a tavern-catch, and bump
Chorus where Lumpkin with his Giles hobnobs.

CAMELUS SALTAT

What say you, critic, now you have become
An author and maternal?—in this trap
(To quote you) of poor hollow folk who rap
On instruments as like as drum to drum.
You snarled tut-tut for welcome to tum-tum,
So like the nose fly-teased in its noon's nap.
You scratched an insect-slaughtering thunder-clap
With that between the fingers and the thumb.
It seemeth mad to quit the Olympian couch,
Which bade our public gobble or reject.
O spectacle of Peter, shrewdly pecked,
Piper, by his own pepper from his pouch!
What of the sneer, the jeer, the voice austere,
You dealt?—the voice austere, the jeer, the sneer.

CONTINUED

Oracle of the market! thence you drew
The taste which stamped you guide of the inept.—
A North-sea pilot, Hildebrand yclept,
A sturdy and a briny, once men knew.
He loved small beer, and for that copious brew,
To roll ingurgitation till he slept,
Rations exchanged with flavour for the adept:
And merrily plied him captain, mate and crew.
At last this dancer to the Polar star
Sank, washed out within, and overboard was pitched,
To drink the sea and pilot him to land.
O captain-critic! printed, neatly stitched,
Know while the pillory-eggs fly fast, they are
Not eggs, but the drowned soul of Hildebrand.

MY THEME

Of me and of my theme think what thou wilt:
The song of gladness one straight bolt can check.
But I have never stood at Fortune's beck:
Were she and her light crew to run atilt
At my poor holding little would be spilt;
Small were the praise for singing o'er that wreck.
Who courts her dooms to strife his bended neck;
He grasps a blade, not always by the hilt.
Nathless she strikes at random, can be fell
With other than those votaries she deals
The black or brilliant from her thunder-rift.
I say but that this love of Earth reveals
A soul beside our own to quicken, quell,
Irradiate, and through ruinous floods uplift.

CONTINUED

'Tis true the wisdom that my mind exacts
Through contemplation from a heart unbent
By many tempests may be stained and rent:
The summer flies it mightily attracts.
Yet they seem choicer than your sons of facts,
Which scarce give breathing of the sty's content
For their diurnal carnal nourishment:
Which treat with Nature in official pacts.
The deader body Nature could proclaim.
Much life have neither. Let the heavens of wrath
Rattle, then both scud scattering to froth.
But during calms the flies of idle aim
Less put the spirit out, less baffle thirst
For light than swinish grunTERS, blest or curst.

ON THE DANGER OF WAR

Avert, High Wisdom, never vainly wooed,
This threat of War, that shows a land brain-sick.
When nations gain the pitch where rhetoric
Seems reason they are ripe for cannon's food.
Dark looms the issue though the cause be good,
But with the doubt 'tis our old devil's trick.
O now the down-slope of the lunatic
Illumine lest we redden of that brood.
For not since man in his first view of thee
Ascended to the heavens giving sign
Within him of deep sky and sounded sea,
Did he unforfeiting thy laws transgress;
In peril of his blood his ears incline
To drums whose loudness is their emptiness.

TO CARDINAL MANNING

I, wakeful for the skylark voice in men,
Or straining for the angel of the light,
Rebuked am I by hungry ear and sight,
When I behold one lamp that through our fen
Goes hourly where most noisome; hear again
A tongue that loathsomeness will not affright
From speaking to the soul of us forthright
What things our craven senses keep from ken.
This is the doing of the Christ; the way
He went on earth; the service above guile
To prop a tyrant creed: it sings, it shines;
Cries to the Mammonites: Allay, allay
Such misery as by these present signs
Brings vengeance down; nor them who rouse revile.

TO COLONEL CHARLES (DYING GENERAL C.B.B.)

I

An English heart, my commandant,
A soldier's eye you have, awake
To right and left; with looks askant
On bulwarks not of adamant,
Where white our Channel waters break.

II

Where Grisnez winks at Dungeness
Across the ruffled strip of salt,
You look, and like the prospect less.
On men and guns would you lay stress,
To bid the Island's foemen halt.

III

While loud the Year is raising cry
At birth to know if it must bear
In history the bloody dye,
An English heart, a soldier's eye,
For the old country first will care.

IV

And how stands she, artillerist,
Among the vapours waxing dense,
With cannon charged? 'Tis hist! and hist!
And now she screws a gouty fist,
And now she counts to clutch her pence.

V

With shudders chill as aconite,
The couchant chewer of the cud
Will start at times in pussy fright

Before the dogs, when reads her sprite
The streaks predicting streams of blood.

VI

She thinks they may mean something; thinks
They may mean nothing: haply both.
Where darkness all her daylight drinks,
She fain would find a leader lynx,
Not too much taxing mental sloth.

VII

Cleft like the fated house in twain,
One half is, Arm! and one, Retrench!
Gambetta's word on dull MacMahon:
'The cow that sees a passing train':
So spies she Russian, German, French.

VIII

She? no, her weakness: she unbraced
Among those athletes fronting storms!
The muscles less of steel than paste,
Why, they of nature feel distaste
For flash, much more for push, of arms.

IX

The poet sings, and well know we,
That 'iron draws men after it.'
But towering wealth may seem the tree
Which bears the fruit *Indemnity*,
And draw as fast as battle's fit,

X

If feeble be the hand on guard,
Alas, alas! And nations are
Still the mad forces, though the scarred.
Should they once deem our emblem Pard
Wagger of tail for all save war;—

XI

Mechanically screwed to flail
His flanks by Presses conjuring fear;—
A money-bag with head and tail;—
Too late may valour then avail!
As you beheld, my cannonier,

XII

When with the staff of Benedek,
On the plateau of Königgrätz,
You saw below that wedging speck;
Foresaw proud Austria rammed to wreck,
Where Chlum drove deep in smoky jets.

February 1887.

TO CHILDREN: FOR TYRANTS

I

Strike not thy dog with a stick!
I did it yesterday:
Not to undo though I gained
The Paradise: heavy it rained
On Kobold's flanks, and he lay.

II

Little Bruno, our long-ear pup,
From his hunt had come back to my heel.
I heard a sharp worrying sound,
And Bruno foamed on the ground,
With Koby as making a meal.

III

I did what I could not undo
 Were the gates of the Paradise shut
Behind me: I deemed it was just.
I left Koby crouched in the dust,
 Some yards from the woodman's hut.

IV

He bewhimpered his welting, and I
 Scarce thought it enough for him: so,
By degrees, through the upper box-grove,
Within me an old story hove,
 Of a man and a dog: you shall know.

V

The dog was of novel breed,
 The Shannon retriever, untried:
His master, an old Irish lord,

In an oaken armchair snored
At midnight, whisky beside.

VI

Perched up a desolate tower,
Where the black storm-wind was a whip
To set it nigh spinning, these two
Were alone, like the last of a crew,
Outworn in a wave-beaten ship.

VII

The dog lifted muzzle, and sniffed;
He quitted his couch on the rug,
Nose to floor, nose aloft; whined, barked;
And, finding the signals unmarked,
Caught a hand in a death-grapple tug.

VIII

He pulled till his master jumped
For fury of wrath, and laid on
With the length of a tough knotted staff,
Fit to drive the life flying like chaff,
And leave a sheer carcass anon.

IX

That done, he sat, panted, and cursed
The vile cross of this brute: nevermore
Would he house it to rear such a cur!
The dog dragged his legs, pained to stir,
Eyed his master, dropped, barked at the door.

X

Then his master raised head too, and sniffed:
It struck him the dog had a sense
That honoured both dam and sire.
You have guessed how the tower was afire.
The Shannon retriever dates thence.

XI

I mused: saw the pup ease his heart
Of his instinct for chasing, and sink
Overwrought by excitement so new:
A scene that for Koby to view
Was the seizure of nerves in a link.

XII

And part sympathetic, and part
Imitatively, raged my poor brute;
And I, not thinking of ill,
Doing eviller: nerves are still
Our savage too quick at the root.

XIII

They spring us: I proved it, albeit
I played executioner then
For discipline, justice, the like.

Yon stick I had handy to strike
Should have warned of the tyrant in men.

XIV

You read in your History books,
How the Prince in his youth had a mind
For governing gently his land.
Ah, the use of that weapon at hand,
When the temper is other than kind!

XV

At home all was well; Koby's ribs
Not so sore as my thoughts: if, beguiled,
He forgives me, his criminal air
Throws a shade of Llewellyn's despair
For the hound slain for saving his child.

POEMS AND LYRICS OF THE JOY OF EARTH

THE WOODS OF WESTERMAIN

I

Enter these enchanted woods,
 You who dare.
Nothing harms beneath the leaves
More than waves a swimmer cleaves.
Toss your heart up with the lark,
Foot at peace with mouse and worm,
 Fair you fare.
Only at a dread of dark
Quaver, and they quit their form:
Thousand eyeballs under hoods
 Have you by the hair.
Enter these enchanted woods,
 You who dare.

II

Here the snake across your path
Stretches in his golden bath:
Mossy-footed squirrels leap
Soft as winnowing plumes of Sleep:
Yaffles on a chuckle skim
Low to laugh from branches dim:
Up the pine, where sits the star,
Rattles deep the moth-winged jar.
Each has business of his own;
But should you distrust a tone,
 Then beware.
Shudder all the haunted roods,
All the eyeballs under hoods
 Shroud you in their glare.
Enter these enchanted woods,
 You who dare.

III

Open hither, open hence,
Scarce a bramble weaves a fence,
Where the strawberry runs red,

With white star-flower overhead;
Cumbered by dry twig and cone,
Shredded husks of seedlings flown,
Mine of mole and spotted flint:
Of dire wizardry no hint,
Save mayhap the print that shows
Hasty outward-tripping toes,
Heels to terror on the mould.
These, the woods of Westermain,
Are as others to behold,
Rich of wreathing sun and rain;
Foliage lustreful around
Shadowed leagues of slumbering sound.
Wavy tree-tops, yellow whins,
Shelter eager minikins,
Myriads, free to peck and pipe:
Would you better? would you worse?
You with them may gather ripe
Pleasures flowing not from purse.
Quick and far as Colour flies
Taking the delighted eyes,
You of any well that springs
May unfold the heaven of things;
Have it homely and within,
And thereof its likeness win,
Will you so in soul's desire:
This do sages grant t' the lyre.
This is being bird and more,
More than glad musician this;

Granaries you will have a store
Past the world of woe and bliss;
Sharing still its bliss and woe;
Harnessed to its hungers, no.
On the throne Success usurps,
You shall seat the joy you feel
Where a race of water chirps,
Twisting hues of flourished steel:
Or where light is caught in hoop
Up a clearing's leafy rise,
Where the crossing deerherds troop
Classic splendours, knightly dyes.
Or, where old-eyed oxen chew
Speculation with the cud,
Read their pool of vision through,
Back to hours when mind was mud;
Nigh the knot, which did untwine
Timelessly to drowsy suns;
Seeing Earth a slimy spine,
Heaven a space for winging tons.
Farther, deeper, may you read,
Have you sight for things afield,
Where peeps she, the Nurse of seed,
Cloaked, but in the peep revealed;
Showing a kind face and sweet:
Look you with the soul you see't.
Glory narrowing to grace,
Grace to glory magnified,
Following that will you embrace

Close in arms or aëry wide.
Banished is the white Foam-born
Not from here, nor under ban
Phoebus lyrist, Phoebe's horn,
Pipings of the reedy Pan.
Loved of Earth of old they were,
Loving did interpret her;
And the sterner worship bars
None whom Song has made her stars.
You have seen the huntress moon
Radiantly facing dawn,
Dusky meads between them strewn
Glimmering like downy awn:
Argent Westward glows the hunt,
East the blush about to climb;
One another fair they front,
Transient, yet outshine the time;
Even as dewlight off the rose
In the mind a jewel sows.
Thus opposing grandeurs live
Here if Beauty be their dower:
Doth she of her spirit give,
Fleetingness will spare her flower.
This is in the tune we play,
Which no spring of strength would quell;
In subduing does not slay;
Guides the channel, guards the well:
Tempered holds the young blood-heat,
Yet through measured grave accord,

Hears the heart of wildness beat
Like a centaur's hoof on sward.
Drink the sense the notes infuse,
You a larger self will find:
Sweetest fellowship ensues
With the creatures of your kind.
Ay, and Love, if Love it be
Flaming over *I* and *ME*,
Love meet they who do not shove
Cravings in the van of Love.
Courtly dames are here to woo,
Knowing love if it be true.
Reverence the blossom-shoot
Fervently, they are the fruit.
Mark them stepping, hear them talk,
Goddess, is no myth inane,
You will say of those who walk
In the woods of Westermain.
Waters that from throat and thigh
Dart the sun his arrows back;
Leaves that on a woodland sigh
Chat of secret things no lack;
Shadowy branch-leaves, waters clear,
Bare or veiled they move sincere;
Not by slavish terrors tripped
Being anew in nature dipped,
Growths of what they step on, these;
With the roots the grace of trees.
Casket-breasts they give, nor hide,

For a tyrant's flattered pride,
Mind, which nourished not by light,
Lurks the shuffling trickster sprite:
Whereof are strange tales to tell;
Some in blood writ, tombed in bell.
Here the ancient battle ends,
Joining two astonished friends,
Who the kiss can give and take
With more warmth than in that world
Where the tiger claws the snake,
Snake her tiger clasps infurled,
And the issue of their fight
People lands in snarling plight.
Here her splendid beast she leads
Silken-leashed and decked with weeds
Wild as he, but breathing faint
Sweetness of unfelt constraint.
Love, the great volcano, flings
Fires of lower Earth to sky;
Love, the sole permitted, sings
Sovereignly of *ME* and *I*.
Bowers he has of sacred shade,
Spaces of superb parade,
Voiceful . . . But bring you a note
Wrangling, howsoe'er remote,
Discords out of discord spin
Round and round derisive din:
Sudden will a pallor pant
Chill at screeches miscreant;

Owls or spectres, thick they flee;
Nightmare upon horror broods;
Hooded laughter, monkish glee,
 Gaps the vital air.
Enter these enchanted woods
 You who dare.

IV

You must love the light so well
That no darkness will seem fell.
Love it so you could accost
Fellowly a livid ghost.
Whish! the phantom wisps away,
Owns him smoke to cocks of day.
In your breast the light must burn
Fed of you, like corn in quern
Ever plumping while the wheel
Speeds the mill and drains the meal.
Light to light sees little strange,
Only features heavenly new;
Then you touch the nerve of Change,
Then of Earth you have the clue;
Then her two-sexed meanings melt
Through you, wed the thought and felt.
Sameness locks no scurfy pond

Here for Custom, crazy-fond:
Change is on the wing to bud
Rose in brain from rose in blood.
Wisdom throbbing shall you see
Central in complexity;
From her pasture 'mid the beasts
Rise to her ethereal feasts,
Not, though lightnings track your wit
Starward, scorning them you quit:
For be sure the bravest wing
Preens it in our common spring,
Thence along the vault to soar,
You with others, gathering more,
Glad of more, till you reject
Your proud title of elect,
Perilous even here while few
Roam the arched greenwood with you.

Heed that snare.

Muffled by his cavern-cowl
Squats the scaly Dragon-fowl,
Who was lord ere light you drank,
And lest blood of knightly rank
Stream, let not your fair princess
Stray: he holds the leagues in stress,

Watches keenly there.

Oft has he been riven; slain
Is no force in Westermain.
Wait, and we shall forge him curbs,
Put his fangs to uses, tame,

Teach him, quick as cunning herbs,
How to cure him sick and lame.
Much restricted, much enringed,
Much he frets, the hooked and winged,
 Never known to spare.

'Tis enough: the name of Sage
Hits no thing in nature, nought;
Man the least, save when grave Age
From yon Dragon guards his thought.
Eye him when you hearken dumb
To what words from Wisdom come.
When she says how few are by
Listening to her, eye his eye.

 Self, his name declare.
Him shall Change, transforming late,
Wonderously renovate.
Hug himself the creature may:
What he hugs is loathed decay.
Crying, slip thy scales, and slough!
Change will strip his armour off;
Make of him who was all maw,
Inly only thrilling-shrewd,
Such a servant as none saw
Through his days of dragonhood.
Days when growling o'er his bone,
Sharpened he for mine and thine;
Sensitive within alone;
Scaly as the bark of pine.
Change, the strongest son of Life,

Has the Spirit here to wife.
Lo, their young of vivid breed,
Bear the lights that onward speed,
Threading thickets, mounting glades,
Up the verdurous colonnades,
Round the fluttered curves, and down,
Out of sight of Earth's blue crown,
Whither, in her central space,
Spouts the Fount and Lure o' the chase.
Fount unresting, Lure divine!
There meet all: too late look most.
Fire in water hued as wine,
Springs amid a shadowy host,
Circled: one close-headed mob,
Breathless, scanning divers heaps,
Where a Heart begins to throb,
Where it ceases, slow, with leaps.
And 'tis very strange, 'tis said,
How you spy in each of them
Semblance of that Dragon red,
As the oak in bracken-stem.
And, 'tis said, how each and each:
Which commences, which subsides:
First my Dragon! doth beseech
Her who food for all provides.
And she answers with no sign;
Utters neither yea nor nay;
Fires the water hued as wine;
Kneads another spark in clay.

Terror is about her hid;
Silence of the thunders locked;
Lightnings lining the shut lid;
Fixity on quaking rocked.
Lo, you look at Flow and Drought
Interflashed and interwrought:
Ended is begun, begun
Ended, quick as torrents run.
Young Impulsion spouts to sink;
Luridness and lustre link;
'Tis your come and go of breath;
Mirrored pants the Life, the Death;
Each of either reaped and sown:
Rosiest rosy wanes to crone.
See you so? your senses drift;
'Tis a shuttle weaving swift.
Look with spirit past the sense,
Spirit shines in permanence.
That is She, the view of whom
Is the dust within the tomb,
Is the inner blush above,
Look to loathe, or look to love;
Think her Lump, or know her Flame;
Dread her scourge, or read her aim;
Shoot your hungers from their nerve;
Or, in her example, serve.
Some have found her sitting grave;
Laughing, some; or, browed with sweat,
Hurling dust of fool and knave

In a hissing smithy's jet.
More it were not well to speak;
Burn to see, you need but seek.
Once beheld she gives the key
Airing every doorway, she.
Little can you stop or steer
Ere of her you are the seër.
On the surface she will witch,
Rendering Beauty yours, but gaze
Under, and the soul is rich
Past computing, past amaze.
Then is courage that endures
Even her awful tremble yours.
Then, the reflex of that Fount
Spied below, will Reason mount
Lordly and a quenchless force,
Lighting Pain to its mad source,
Scaring Fear till Fear escapes,
Shot through all its phantom shapes.
Then your spirit will perceive
Fleshly seed of fleshly sins;
Where the passions interweave,
How the serpent tangle spins
Of the sense of Earth misprised,
Brainlessly unrecognized;
She being Spirit in her clods,
Footway to the God of Gods.
Then for you are pleasures pure,
Sureties as the stars are sure:

Not the wanton beckoning flags
Which, of flattery and delight,
Wax to the grim Habit-Hags
Riding souls of men to night:
Pleasures that through blood run sane,
Quickening spirit from the brain.
Each of each in sequent birth,
Blood and brain and spirit, three,
(Say the deepest gnomes of Earth),
Join for true felicity.
Are they parted, then expect
Some one sailing will be wrecked:
Separate hunting are they sped,
Scan the morsel coveted.
Earth that Triad is: she hides
Joy from him who that divides;
Showers it when the three are one
Glassing her in union.
Earth your haven, Earth your helm,
You command a double realm;
Labouring here to pay your debt,
Till your little sun shall set;
Leaving her the future task:
Loving her too well to ask.
Eglantine that climbs the yew,
She her darkest wreathes for those
Knowing her the Ever-new,
And themselves the kin o' the rose.
Life, the chisel, axe and sword,

Wield who have her depths explored:
Life, the dream, shall be their robe
Large as air about the globe;
Life, the question, hear its cry
Echoed with concordant Why;
Life, the small self-dragon ramped,
Thrill for service to be stamped.
Ay, and over every height
Life for them shall wave a wand:
That, the last, where sits affright,
Homely shows the stream beyond.
Love the light and be its lynx,
You will track her and attain;
Read her as no cruel Sphinx
In the woods of Westermain,
Daily fresh the woods are ranged;
Glooms which elsewhere appal,
Sounded: here, their worths exchanged
Urban joins with pastoral:
Little lost, save what may drop
Husk-like, and the mind preserves.
Natural overgrowths they lop,
Yet from nature neither swerves,
Trained or savage: for this cause:
Of our Earth they ply the laws,
Have in Earth their feeding root,
Mind of man and bent of brute.
Hear that song; both wild and ruled.
Hear it: is it wail or mirth?

Ordered, bubbled, quite unschooled?
None, and all: it springs of Earth.
O but hear it! 'tis the mind;
Mind that with deep Earth unites,
Round the solid trunk to wind
Rings of clasping parasites.
Music have you there to feed
Simplest and most soaring need.
Free to wind, and in desire
Winding, they to her attached
Feel the trunk a spring of fire,
And ascend to heights unmatched,
Whence the tidal world is viewed
As a sea of windy wheat,
Momently black, barren, rude;
Golden-brown, for harvest meet,
Dragon-reaped from folly-sown;
Bride-like to the sickle-blade:
Quick it varies, while the moan,
Moan of a sad creature strayed,
Chiefly is its voice. So flesh
Conjures tempest-flails to thresh
Good from worthless. Some clear lamps
Light it; more of dead marsh-damps.
Monster is it still, and blind,
Fit but to be led by Pain.
Glance we at the paths behind,
Fruitful sight has Westermain.
There we laboured, and in turn

Forward our blown lamps discern,
As you see on the dark deep
Far the loftier billows leap,
Foam for beacon bear.

Hither, hither, if you will,
Drink instruction, or instil,
Run the woods like vernal sap,
Crying, hail to luminousness!

But have care.

In yourself may lurk the trap:
On conditions they caress.
Here you meet the light invoked
Here is never secret cloaked.
Doubt you with the monster's fry
All his orbit may exclude;
Are you of the stiff, the dry,
Cursing the not understood;
Grasp you with the monster's claws;
Govern with his truncheon-saws;
Hate, the shadow of a grain;
You are lost in Westermain:
Earthward swoops a vulture sun,
Nighted upon carrion:
Straightway venom wine-cups shout
Toasts to One whose eyes are out:
Flowers along the reeling floor
Drip henbane and hellebore:
Beauty, of her tresses shorn,
Shrieks as nature's maniac:

Hideousness on hoof and horn
Tumbles, yapping in her track:
Haggard Wisdom, stately once,
Leers fantastical and trips:
Allegory drums the sconce,
Impiousness nibblenips.
Imp that dances, imp that flits,
Imp o' the demon-growing girl,
Maddest! whirl with imp o' the pits
Round you, and with them you whirl
Fast where pours the fountain-rout
Out of Him whose eyes are out:
Multitudes on multitudes,
Drenched in wallowing devilry:
And you ask where you may be,
 In what reek of a lair
Given to bones and ogre-broods:
 And they yell you Where.
Enter these enchanted woods,
 You who dare.

A BALLAD OF PAST MERIDIAN

I

Last night returning from my twilight walk
I met the grey mist Death, whose eyeless brow
Was bent on me, and from his hand of chalk
He reached me flowers as from a withered bough:
O Death, what bitter nosegays givest thou!

II

Death said, I gather, and pursued his way.
Another stood by me, a shape in stone,
Sword-hacked and iron-stained, with breasts of clay,
And metal veins that sometimes fiery shone:
O Life, how naked and how hard when known!

III

Life said, As thou hast carved me, such am I.
Then memory, like the nightjar on the pine,
And sightless hope, a woodlark in night sky,
Joined notes of Death and Life till night's decline
Of Death, of Life, those inwound notes are mine.

THE DAY OF THE DAUGHTER OF HADES

I

He who has looked upon Earth
Deeper than flower and fruit,
Losing some hue of his mirth,
As the tree striking rock at the root,
Unto him shall the marvellous tale
Of Callistes more humanly come
With the touch on his breast than a hail
From the markets that hum.

II

Now the youth footed swift to the dawn.
'Twas the season when wintertide,
In the higher rock-hollows updrawn,
Leaves meadows to bud, and he spied,
By light throwing shallow shade,
Between the beam and the gloom,

Sicilian Enna, whose Maid
Such aspect wears in her bloom
Underneath since the Charioteer
Of Darkness whirled her away,
On a reaped afternoon of the year,
Nigh the poppy-droop of Day.
O and naked of her, all dust,
The majestic Mother and Nurse,
Ringing cries to the God, the Just,
Curled the land with the blight of her curse:
Recollected of this glad isle
Still quaking. But now more fair,
And momentarily fraying the while
The veil of the shadows there,
Soft Enna that prostrate grief
Sang through, and revealed round the vines,
Bronze-orange, the crisp young leaf,
The wheat-blades tripping in lines,
A hue unilluminated by sun
Of the flowers flooding grass as from founts:
All the penetrable dun
Of the morn ere she mounts.

III

Nor had saffron and sapphire and red

Waved aloft to their sisters below,
When gaped by the rock-channel head
Of the lake, black, a cave at one blow,
Reverberant over the plain:
A sound oft fearfully swung
For the coming of wrathful rain:
And forth, like the dragon-tongue
Of a fire beaten flat by the gale,
But more as the smoke to behold,
A chariot burst. Then a wail
Quivered high of the love that would fold
Bliss immeasurable, bigger than heart,
Though a God's: and the wheels were stayed,
And the team of the chariot swart
Reared in marble, the six, dismayed,
Like hoofs that by night plashing sea
Curve and ramp from the vast swan-wave:
For, lo, the Great Mother, She!
And Callistes gazed, he gave
His eyeballs up to the sight:
The embrace of the Twain, of whom
To men are their day, their night,
Mellow fruits and the shearing tomb:
Our Lady of the Sheaves
And the Lily of Hades, the Sweet
Of Enna: he saw through leaves
The Mother and Daughter meet.
They stood by the chariot-wheel,
Embraced, very tall, most like

Fellow poplars, wind-taken, that reel
Down their shivering columns and strike
Head to head, crossing throats: and apart,
For the feast of the look, they drew,
Which Darkness no longer could thwart;
And they broke together anew,
Exulting to tears, flower and bud.
But the mate of the Rayless was grave:
She smiled like Sleep on its flood,
That washes of all we crave:
Like the trance of eyes awake
And the spirit enshrouded, she cast
The wan underworld on the lake.
They were so, and they passed.

IV

He tells it, who knew the law
Upon mortals: he stood alive
Declaring that this he saw:
He could see, and survive.

V

Now the youth was not ware of the beams
With the grasses intertwined,
For each thing seen, as in dreams,
Came stepping to rear through his mind,
Till it struck his remembered prayer
To be witness of this which had flown
Like a smoke melted thinner than air,
That the vacancy doth disown.
And viewing a maiden, he thought
It might now be morn, and afar
Within him the memory wrought
Of a something that slipped from the car
When those, the august, moved by:
Perchance a scarf, and perchance
This maiden. She did not fly,
Nor started at his advance:
She looked, as when infinite thirst
Pants pausing to bless the springs,
Refreshed, unsated. Then first
He trembled with awe of the things
He had seen; and he did transfer,
Divining and doubting in turn,
His reverence unto her;
Nor asked what he crouched to learn:
The whence of her, whither, and why
Her presence there, and her name,
Her parentage: under which sky
Her birth, and how hither she came,
So young, a virgin, alone,

Unfriended, having no fear,
As Oreads have; no moan,
Like the lost upon earth; no tear;
Not a sign of the torch in the blood,
Though her stature had reached the height
When mantles a tender rud
In maids that of youths have sight,
If maids of our seed they be:
For he said: A glad vision art thou!
And she answered him: Thou to me!
As men utter a vow.

VI

Then said she, quick as the cries
Of the rainy cranes: Light! light!
And Helios rose in her eyes,
That were full as the dew-balls bright,
Relucent to him as dews
Unshaded. Breathing, she sent
Her voice to the God of the Muse,
And along the vale it went,
Strange to hear: not thin, not shrill:
Sweet, but no young maid's throat:
The echo beyond the hill
Ran falling on half the note:

And under the shaken ground
Where the Hundred-headed groans
By the roots of great Aetna bound,
As of him were hollow tones
Of wondering roared: a tale
Repeated to sunless halls.
But now off the face of the vale
Shadows fled in a breath, and the walls
Of the lake's rock-head were gold,
And the breast of the lake, that swell
Of the crestless long wave rolled
To shore-bubble, pebble and shell.
A morning of radiant lids
O'er the dance of the earth opened wide:
The bees chose their flowers, the snub kids
Upon hindlegs went sportive, or plied,
Nosing, hard at the dugs to be filled:
There was milk, honey, music to make:
Up their branches the little birds billed:
Chirrup, drone, bleat and buzz ringed the lake.
O shining in sunlight, chief
After water and water's caress,
Was the young bronze-orange leaf,
That clung to the tree as a tress,
Shooting lucid tendrils to wed
With the vine-hook tree or pole,
Like Arachne launched out on her thread.
Then the maiden her dusky stole
In the span of the black-starred zone,

Gathered up for her footing fleet.
As one that had toil of her own
She followed the lines of wheat
Tripping straight through the fields, green blades,
To the groves of olive grey,
Downy-grey, golden-tinged: and to glades
Where the pear-blossom thickens the spray
In a night, like the snow-packed storm:
Pear, apple, almond, plum:
Not wintry now: pushing, warm!
And she touched them with finger and thumb,
As the vine-hook closes: she smiled,
Recounting again and again,
Corn, wine, fruit, oil! like a child,
With the meaning known to men.
For hours in the track of the plough
And the pruning-knife she stepped,
And of how the seed works, and of how
Yields the soil, she seemed adept.
Then she murmured that name of the dearth,
The Beneficent, Hers, who bade
Our husbandmen sow for the birth
Of the grain making earth full glad.
She murmured that Other's: the dirge
Of life-light: for whose dark lap
Our locks are clipped on the verge
Of the realm where runs no sap.
She said: We have looked on both!
And her eyes had a wavering beam

Of various lights, like the froth
Of the storm-swollen ravine stream
In flame of the bolt. What links
Were these which had made him her friend?
He eyed her, as one who drinks,
And would drink to the end.

VII

Now the meadows with crocus besprent,
And the asphodel woodsides she left,
And the lake-slopes, the ravishing scent
Of narcissus, dark-sweet, for the cleft
That tutors the torrent-brook,
Delaying its forceful spleen
With many a wind and crook
Through rock to the broad ravine.
By the hyacinth-bells in the brakes,
And the shade-loved white windflower, half hid,
And the sun-loving lizards and snakes
On the cleft's barren ledges, that slid
Out of sight, smooth as waterdrops, all,
At a snap of twig or bark
In the track of the foreign foot-fall,
She climbed to the pineforest dark,
Overbrowsing an emerald chine

Of the grass-billows. Thence, as a wreath,
Running poplar and cypress to pine,
The lake-banks are seen, and beneath,
Vineyard, village, groves, rivers, towers, farms,
The citadel watching the bay,
The bay with the town in its arms,
The town shining white as the spray
Of the sapphire sea-wave on the rock,
Where the rock stars the girdle of sea,
White-ringed, as the midday flock,
Clipped by heat, rings the round of the tree.
That hour of the piercing shaft
Transfixes bough-shadows, confused
In veins of fire, and she laughed,
With her quiet mouth amused
To see the whole flock, adroop,
Asleep, hug the tree-stem as one,
Imperceptibly filling the loop
Of its shade at a slant of sun.
The pipes under pent of the crag,
Where the goatherds in piping recline,
Have whimsical stops, burst and flag
Uncorrected as outstretched swine:
For the fingers are slack and unsure,
And the wind issues querulous:—thorns
And snakes!—but she listened demure,
Comparing day's music with morn's.
Of the gentle spirit that slips
From the bark of the tree she discoursed,

And of her of the wells, whose lips
Are coolness enchanting, rock-sourced.
And much of the sacred loon,
The frolic, the Goatfoot God,
For stories of indolent noon
In the pineforest's odorous nod,
She questioned, not knowing: he can
Be waspish, irascible, rude,
He is oftener friendly to man,
And ever to beasts and their brood.
For the which did she love him well,
She said, and his pipes of the reed,
His twitched lips puffing to tell
In music his tears and his need,
Against the sharp catch of his hurt.
Not as shepherds of Pan did she speak,
Nor spake as the schools, to divert,
But fondly, perceiving him weak
Before Gods, and to shepherds a fear,
A holiness, horn and heel.
All this she had learnt in her ear
From Callistes, and taught him to feel.
Yea, the solemn divinity flushed
Through the shaggy brown skin of the beast,
And the steeps where the cataract rushed,
And the wilds where the forest is priest,
Were his temple to clothe him in awe,
While she spake: 'twas a wonder: she read
The haunts of the beak and the claw

As plain as the land of bread,
But Cities and martial States,
Whither soon the youth veered his theme,
Were impervious barrier-gates
To her: and that ship, a trireme,
Nearing harbour, scarce wakened her glance,
Though he dwelt on the message it bore
Of sceptre and sword and lance
To the bee-swarms black on the shore,
Which were audible almost,
So black they were. It befel
That he called up the warrior host
Of the Song pouring hydromel
In thunder, the wide-winged Song.
And he named with his boyish pride
The heroes, the noble throng
Past Acheron now, foul tide!
With his joy of the godlike band
And the verse divine, he named
The chiefs pressing hot on the strand,
Seen of Gods, of Gods aided, and maimed.
The fleetfoot and ireful; the King;
Him, the prompter in stratagem,
Many-shifted and masterful: Sing,
O Muse! But she cried: Not of them
She breathed as if breath had failed,
And her eyes, while she bade him desist,
Held the lost-to-light ghosts grey-mailed,
As you see the grey river-mist

Hold shapes on the yonder bank.
A moment her body waned,
The light of her sprang and sank:
Then she looked at the sun, she regained
Clear feature, and she breathed deep.
She wore the wan smile he had seen,
As the flow of the river of Sleep,
On the mouth of the Shadow-Queen.
In sunlight she craved to bask,
Saying: Life! And who was she? who?
Of what issue? He dared not ask,
For that partly he knew.

VIII

A noise of the hollow ground
Turned the eye to the ear in debate:
Not the soft overflowing of sound
Of the pines, ranked, lofty, straight,
Barely swayed to some whispers remote,
Some swarming whispers above:
Not the pines with the faint airs afloat,
Hush-hushing the nested dove:
It was not the pines, or the rout
Oft heard from mid-forest in chase,
But the long muffled roar of a shout

Subterranean. Sharp grew her face.
She rose, yet not moved by affright;
'Twas rather good haste to use
Her holiday of delight
In the beams of the God of the Muse.
And the steeps of the forest she crossed,
On its dry red sheddings and cones
Up the paths by roots green-mossed,
Spotted amber, and old mossed stones.
Then out where the brook-torrent starts
To her leap, and from bend to curve
A hurrying elbow darts
For the instant-glancing swerve,
Decisive, with violent will
In the action formed, like hers,
The maiden's, ascending; and still
Ascending, the bud of the furze,
The broom, and all blue-berried shoots
Of stubborn and prickly kind,
The juniper flat on its roots,
The dwarf rhododaphne, behind
She left, and the mountain sheep
Far behind, goat, herbage and flower.
The island was hers, and the deep,
All heaven, a golden hour.
Then with wonderful voice, that rang
Through air as the swan's nigh death,
Of the glory of Light she sang,
She sang of the rapture of Breath.

Nor ever, says he who heard,
Heard Earth in her boundaries broad,
From bosom of singer or bird
A sweetness thus rich of the God
Whose harmonies always are sane.
She sang of furrow and seed,
The burial, birth of the grain,
The growth, and the showers that feed,
And the green blades waxing mature
For the husbandman's armful brown.
O, the song in its burden ran pure,
And burden to song was a crown.
Callistes, a singer, skilled
In the gift he could measure and praise,
By a rival's art was thrilled,
Though she sang but a Song of Days,
Where the husbandman's toil and strife
Little varies to strife and toil:
But the milky kernel of life,
With her numbered: corn, wine, fruit, oil
The song did give him to eat:
Gave the first rapt vision of Good,
And the fresh young sense of Sweet
The grace of the battle for food,
With the issue Earth cannot refuse
When men to their labour are sworn.
'Twas a song of the God of the Muse
To the forehead of Morn.

IX

Him loved she. Lo, now was he veiled:
Over sea stood a swelled cloud-rack:
The fishing-boat heavenward sailed,
Bent abeam, with a whitened track,
Surprised, fast hauling the net,
As it flew: sea dashed, earth shook.
She said: Is it night? O not yet!
With a travail of thoughts in her look.
The mountain heaved up to its peak:
Sea darkened: earth gathered her fowl;
Of bird or of branch rose the shriek.
Night? but never so fell a scowl
Wore night, nor the sky since then
When ocean ran swallowing shore,
And the Gods looked down for men.
Broke tempest with that stern roar
Never yet, save when black on the whirl
Rode wrath of a sovereign Power.
Then the youth and the shuddering girl,
Dim as shades in the angry shower,
Joined hands and descended a maze
Of the paths that were racing alive
Round boulder and bush, cleaving ways,
Incessant, with sound of a hive.

The height was a fountain-urn
Pouring streams, and the whole solid height
Leaped, chasing at every turn
The pair in one spirit of flight
To the folding pineforest. Yet here,
Like the pause to things hunted, in doubt,
The stillness bred spectral fear
Of the awfulness ranging without,
And imminent. Downward they fled,
From under the haunted roof,
To the valley aquake with the tread
Of an iron-resounding hoof,
As of legions of thunderful horse
Broken loose and in line tramping hard.
For the rage of a hungry force
Roamed blind of its mark over sward:
They saw it rush dense in the cloak
Of its travelling swathe of steam;
All the vale through a thin thread-smoke
Was thrown back to distance extreme:
And dull the full breast of it blinked,
Like a buckler of steel breathed o'er,
Diminished, in strangeness distinct,
Glowing cold, unearthly, hoar:
An Enna of fields beyond sun,
Out of light, in a lurid web;
And the traversing fury spun
Up and down with a wave's flow and ebb;
As the wave breaks to grasp and to spurn,

Retire, and in ravenous greed,
Inveterate, swell its return.
Up and down, as if wringing from speed
Sights that made the unsighted appear,
Delude and dissolve, on it scoured.
Lo, a sea upon land held career
Through the plain of the vale half-devoured.
Callistes of home and escape
Muttered swiftly, unwitting of speech.
She gazed at the Void of shape,
She put her white hand to his reach,
Saying: Now have we looked on the Three.
And divided from day, from night,
From air that is breath, stood she,
Like the vale, out of light.

X

Then again in disorderly words
He muttered of home, and was mute,
With the heart of the cowering birds
Ere they burst off the fowler's foot.
He gave her some redness that streamed
Through her limbs in a flitting glow.
The sigh of our life she seemed,
The bliss of it clothing in woe.

Frailer than flower when the round
Of the sickle encircles it: strong
To tell of the things profound,
Our inmost uttering song,
Unspoken. So stood she awhile
In the gloom of the terror afield,
And the silence about her smile
Said more than of tongue is revealed.
I have breathed: I have gazed: I have been:
It said: and not joylessly shone
The remembrance of light through the screen
Of a face that seemed shadow and stone.
She led the youth trembling, appalled,
To the lake-banks he saw sink and rise
Like a panic-struck breast. Then she called,
And the hurricane blackness had eyes.
It launched like the Thunderer's bolt.
Pale she drooped, and the youth by her side
Would have clasped her and dared a revolt
Sacriligious as ever defied
High Olympus, but vainly for strength
His compassionate heart shook a frame
Stricken rigid to ice all its length.
On a main the black traveller came.
Lo, a chariot, cleaving the storm,
Clove the fountaining lake with a plough,
And the lord of the steeds was in form
He, the God of implacable brow,
Darkness: he: he in person: he raged

Through the wave like a boar of the wilds
From the hunters and hounds disengaged,
And a name shouted hoarsely: his child's.
Horror melted in anguish to hear.
Lo, the wave hissed apart for the path
Of the terrible Charioteer,
With the foam and torn features of wrath,
Hurled aloft on each arm in a sheet;
And the steeds clove it, rushing at land
Like the teeth of the famished at meat.
Then he swept out his hand.

XI

This, no more, doth Callistes recall:
He saw, ere he dropped in swoon,
On the maiden the chariot fall,
As a thundercloud swings on the moon.
Forth, free of the deluge, one cry
From the vanishing gallop rose clear:
And: Skiágeneia! the sky
Rang; Skiágeneia! the sphere.
And she left him therewith, to rejoice,
Repine, yearn, and know not his aim,
The life of their day in her voice,
Left her life in her name.

XII

Now the valley in ruin of fields
And fair meadowland, showing at eve
Like the spear-pitted warrior's shields
After battle, bade men believe
That no other than wrathfullest God
Had been loose on her beautiful breast,
Where the flowery grass was clod,
Wheat and vine as a trailing nest.
The valley, discreet in grief,
Disclosed but the open truth,
And Enna had hope of the sheaf:
There was none for the desolate youth
Devoted to mourn and to crave.
Of the secret he had divined
Of his friend of a day would he rave:
How for light of our earth she pined:
For the olive, the vine and the wheat,
Burning through with inherited fire:
And when Mother went Mother to meet,
She was prompted by simple desire
In the day-destined car to have place
At the skirts of the Goddess, unseen,
And be drawn to the dear earth's face.

She was fire for the blue and the green
Of our earth, dark fire; athirst
As a seed of her bosom for dawn,
White air that had robed and nursed
Her mother. Now was she gone
With the Silent, the God without tear,
Like a bud peeping out of its sheath
To be sundered and stamped with the sere.
And Callistes to her beneath,
As she to our beams, extinct,
Strained arms: he was shade of her shade.
In division so were they linked.
But the song which had betrayed
Her flight to the cavernous ear
For its own keenly wakeful: that song
Of the sowing and reaping, and cheer
Of the husbandman's heart made strong
Through droughts and deluging rains
With his faith in the Great Mother's love:
O the joy of the breath she sustains,
And the lyre of the light above,
And the first rapt vision of Good,
And the fresh young sense of Sweet:
That song the youth ever pursued
In the track of her footing fleet.
For men to be profited much
By her day upon earth did he sing:
Of her voice, and her steps, and her touch
On the blossoms of tender Spring,

Immortal: and how in her soul
She is with them, and tearless abides,
Folding grain of a love for one goal
In patience, past flowing of tides.
And if unto him she was tears,
He wept not: he wasted within:
Seeming sane in the song, to his peers,
Only crazed where the cravings begin.
Our Lady of Gifts prized he less
Than her issue in darkness: the dim
Lost Skiágencia's caress
Of our earth made it richest for him.
And for that was a curse on him raised,
And he withered rathe, dry to his prime,
Though the bounteous Giver be praised
Through the island with rites of old time
Exceedingly fervent, and reaped
Veneration for teachings devout,
Pious hymns when the corn-sheaves are heaped
And the wine-presses ruddily spout,
And the olive and apple are juice
At a touch light as hers lost below.
Whatsoever to men is of use
Sprang his worship of them who bestow,
In a measure of songs unexcelled:
But that soul loving earth and the sun
From her home of the shadows he held
For his beacon where beam there is none:
And to join her, or have her brought back,

In his frenzy the singer would call,
Till he followed where never was track,
On the path trod of all.

THE LARK ASCENDING

He rises and begins to round,
He drops the silver chain of sound,
Of many links without a break,
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake,
All interwoven and spreading wide,
Like water-dimples down a tide
Where ripple ripple overcurls
And eddy into eddy whirls;
A press of hurried notes that run
So fleet they scarce are more than one,
Yet changeingly the trills repeat
And linger ringing while they fleet,
Sweet to the quick o' the ear, and dear
To her beyond the handmaid ear,
Who sits beside our inner springs,
Too often dry for this he brings,
Which seems the very jet of earth
At sight of sun, her music's mirth,
As up he wings the spiral stair,
A song of light, and pierces air
With fountain ardour, fountain play,
To reach the shining tops of day,
And drink in everything discerned
An ecstasy to music turned,
Impelled by what his happy bill

Disperses; drinking, showering still,
Unthinking save that he may give
His voice the outlet, there to live
Renewed in endless notes of glee,
So thirsty of his voice is he,
For all to hear and all to know
That he is joy, awake, aglow;
The tumult of the heart to hear
Through pureness filtered crystal-clear,
And know the pleasure sprinkled bright
By simple singing of delight;
Shrill, irreflective, unrestrained,
Rapt, ringing, on the jet sustained
Without a break, without a fall,
Sweet-silvery, sheer lyrical,
Perennial, quavering up the chord

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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