

**GEORGE
MEREDITH**

POEMS,
VOLUME 3

George Meredith
Poems. Volume 3

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Poems – Volume 3:

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George Meredith

Poems – Volume 3

A STAVE OF ROVING TIM

(ADDRESSED TO CERTAIN
FRIENDLY TRAMPS.)

I

The wind is East, the wind is West,
Blows in and out of haven;
The wind that blows is the wind that's best,
And croak, my jolly raven!
If here awhile we jigged and laughed,
The like we will do yonder;
For he's the man who masters a craft,
And light as a lord can wander.
So, foot the measure, Roving Tim,
And croak, my jolly raven!
The wind according to its whim

Is in and out of haven.

II

You live in rows of snug abodes,
With gold, maybe, for counting;
And mine's the beck of the rainy roads
Against the sun a-mounting.
I take the day as it behaves,
Nor shiver when 'tis airy;
But comes a breeze, all you are on waves,
Sick chickens o' Mother Carey!
So, now for next, cries Roving Tim,
And croak, my jolly raven!
The wind according to its whim
Is in and out of haven.

III

Sweet lass, you screw a lovely leer,
To make a man consider.
If you were up with the auctioneer,
I'd be a handsome bidder.
But wedlock clips the rover's wing;

She tricks him fly to spider;
And when we get to fights in the Ring,
It's trumps when you play outsider.
So, wrench and split, cries Roving Tim,
And croak, my jolly raven!
The wind according to its whim
Is in and out of haven.

IV

Along my winding way I know
A shady dell that's winking;
The very corner for Self and Co
To do a world of thinking.
And shall I this? and shall I that?
Till Nature answers, ne'ther!
Strike match and light your pipe in your hat,
Rejoicing in sound shoe-leather!
So lead along, cries Roving Tim,
And croak, my jolly raven!
The wind according to its whim
Is in and out of haven.

V

A cunning hand 'll hand you bread,
With freedom for your capers.
I'm not so sure of a cunning head;
It steers to pits or vapours.
But as for Life, we'll bear in sight
The lesson Nature teaches;
Regard it in a sailing light,
And treat it like thirsty leeches.
So, fly your jib, cries Roving Tim,
And top your boom, old raven!
The wind according to its whim
Is in and out of haven.

VI

She'll take, to please her dame and dad,
The shopman nicely shaven.
She'll learn to think o' the marching lad
When perchers show they're craven.
You say the shopman piles a heap,
While I perhaps am fasting;
And bless your wits, it haunts him in sleep,

His tin-kettle chance of lasting!
So hail the road, cries Roving Tim,
And hail the rain, old raven!
The wind according to its whim
Is in and out of haven.

VII

He's half a wife, yon pecker bill;
A book and likewise preacher.
With any soul, in a game of skill,
He'll prove your over-reacher.
The reason is, his brains are bent
On doing things right single.
You'd wish for them when pitching your tent
At night in a whirly dingle!
So, off we go, cries Roving Tim,
And on we go, old raven!
The wind according to its whim
Is in and out of haven.

VIII

Lord, no, man's lot is not for bliss;

To call it woe is blindness:
It'll here a kick, and it's there a kiss,
And here and there a kindness.
He starts a hare and calls her joy;
He runs her down to sorrow:
The dogs within him bother the boy,
But 'tis a new day to-morrow.
So, I at helm, cries Roving Tim,
And you at bow, old raven!
The wind according to its whim
Is in and out of haven.

JUMP-TO-GLORY JANE

I

A revelation came on Jane,
The widow of a labouring swain:
And first her body trembled sharp,
Then all the woman was a harp
With winds along the strings; she heard,
Though there was neither tone nor word.

II

For past our hearing was the air,
Beyond our speaking what it bare,
And she within herself had sight
Of heaven at work to cleanse outright,
To make of her a mansion fit
For angel hosts inside to sit.

III

They entered, and forthwith entranced,
Her body braced, her members danced;
Surprisingly the woman leapt;
And countenance composed she kept:
As gossip neighbours in the lane
Declared, who saw and pitied Jane.

IV

These knew she had been reading books,
The which was witnessed by her looks
Of late: she had a mania
For mad folk in America,
And said for sure they led the way,
But meat and beer were meant to stay.

V

That she had visited a fair,

Had seen a gauzy lady there,
Alive with tricks on legs alone,
As good as wings, was also known:
And longwhiles in a sullen mood,
Before her jumping, Jane would brood.

VI

A good knee's height, they say, she sprang;
Her arms and feet like those who hang:
As if afire the body sped,
And neither pair contributed.
She jumped in silence: she was thought
A corpse to resurrection caught.

VII

The villagers were mostly dazed;
They jeered, they wondered, and they praised.
'Twas guessed by some she was inspired,
And some would have it she had hired
An engine in her petticoats,
To turn their wits and win their votes.

VIII

Her first was Winny Earnes, a kind
Of woman not to dance inclined;
But she went up, entirely won,
Ere Jump-to-glory Jane had done;
And once a vixen wild for speech,
She found the better way to preach.

IX

No long time after, Jane was seen
Directing jumps at Daddy Green;
And that old man, to watch her fly,
Had eyebrows made of arches high;
Till homeward he likewise did hop,
Oft calling on himself to stop!

X

It was a scene when man and maid,

Abandoning all other trade,
And careless of the call to meals,
Went jumping at the woman's heels.
By dozens they were counted soon,
Without a sound to tell their tune.

XI

Along the roads they came, and crossed
The fields, and o'er the hills were lost,
And in the evening reappeared;
Then short like hobbled horses reared,
And down upon the grass they plumped:
Alone their Jane to glory jumped.

XII

At morn they rose, to see her spring
All going as an engine thing;
And lighter than the gossamer
She led the bobbars following her,
Past old acquaintances, and where
They made the stranger stupid stare.

XIII

When turnips were a filling crop,
In scorn they jumped a butcher's shop:
Or, spite of threats to flog and souse,
They jumped for shame a public-house:
And much their legs were seized with rage
If passing by the vicarage.

XIV

The tightness of a hempen rope
Their bodies got; but laundry soap
Not handsomer can rub the skin
For token of the washed within.
Occasionally coughers cast
A leg aloft and coughed their last.

XV

The weaker maids and some old men,

Requiring rafters for the pen
On rainy nights, were those who fell.
The rest were quite a miracle,
Refreshed as you may search all round
On Club-feast days and cry, Not found!

XVI

For these poor innocents, that slept
Against the sky, soft women wept:
For never did they any theft;
'Twas known when they their camping left,
And jumped the cold out of their rags;
In spirit rich as money-bags.

XVII

They jumped the question, jumped reply;
And whether to insist, deny,
Reprove, persuade, they jumped in ranks
Or singly, straight the arms to flanks,
And straight the legs, with just a knee
For bending in a mild degree.

XVIII

The villagers might call them mad;
An endless holiday they had,
Of pleasure in a serious work:
They taught by leaps where perils lurk,
And with the lambkins practised sports
For 'scaping Satan's pounds and quarts.

XIX

It really seemed on certain days,
When they bobbed up their Lord to praise,
And bobbing up they caught the glance
Of light, our secret is to dance,
And hold the tongue from hindering peace;
To dance out preacher and police.

XX

Those flies of boys disturbed them sore

On Sundays and when daylight wore:
With withies cut from hedge or copse,
They treated them as whipping-tops,
And flung big stones with cruel aim;
Yet all the flock jumped on the same.

XXI

For what could persecution do
To worry such a blessed crew,
On whom it was as wind to fire,
Which set them always jumping higher?
The parson and the lawyer tried,
By meek persistency defied.

XXII

But if they bore, they could pursue
As well, and this the Bishop too;
When inner warnings proved him plain
The chase for Jump-to-glory Jane.
She knew it by his being sent
To bless the feasting in the tent.

XXIII

Not less than fifty years on end,
The Squire had been the Bishop's friend:
And his poor tenants, harmless ones,
With souls to save! fed not on buns,
But angry meats: she took her place
Outside to show the way to grace.

XXIV

In apron suit the Bishop stood;
The crowding people kindly viewed.
A gaunt grey woman he saw rise
On air, with most beseeching eyes:
And evident as light in dark
It was, she set to him for mark.

XXV

Her highest leap had come: with ease

She jumped to reach the Bishop's knees:
Compressing tight her arms and lips,
She sought to jump the Bishop's hips:
Her aim flew at his apron-band,
That he might see and understand.

XXVI

The mild inquiry of his gaze
Was altered to a peaked amaze,
At sight of thirty in ascent,
To gain his notice clearly bent:
And greatly Jane at heart was vexed
By his ploughed look of mind perplexed.

XXVII

In jumps that said, Beware the pit!
More eloquent than speaking it—
That said, Avoid the boiled, the roast;
The heated nose on face of ghost,
Which comes of drinking: up and o'er
The flesh with me! did Jane implore.

XXVIII

She jumped him high as huntsmen go
Across the gate; she jumped him low,
To coax him to begin and feel
His infant steps returning, peel
His mortal pride, exposing fruit,
And off with hat and apron suit.

XXIX

We need much patience, well she knew,
And out and out, and through and through,
When we would gentlefolk address,
However we may seek to bless:
At times they hide them like the beasts
From sacred beams; and mostly priests.

XXX

He gave no sign of making bare,

Nor she of faintness or despair.
Inflamed with hope that she might win,
If she but coaxed him to begin,
She used all arts for making fain;
The mother with her babe was Jane.

XXXI

Now stamped the Squire, and knowing not
Her business, waved her from the spot.
Encircled by the men of might,
The head of Jane, like flickering light,
As in a charger, they beheld
Ere she was from the park expelled.

XXXII

Her grief, in jumps of earthly weight,
Did Jane around communicate:
For that the moment when began
The holy but mistaken man,
In view of light, to take his lift,
They cut him from her charm adrift!

XXXIII

And he was lost: a banished face
For ever from the ways of grace,
Unless pinched hard by dreams in fright.
They saw the Bishop's wavering sprite
Within her look, at come and go,
Long after he had caused her woe.

XXXIV

Her greying eyes (until she sank
At Fredsham on the wayside bank,
Like cinder heaps that whitened lie
From coals that shot the flame to sky)
Had glassy vacancies, which yearned
For one in memory discerned.

XXXV

May those who ply the tongue that cheats,

And those who rush to beer and meats,
And those whose mean ambition aims
At palaces and titled names,
Depart in such a cheerful strain
As did our Jump-to-glory Jane!

XXXVI

Her end was beautiful: one sigh.
She jumped a foot when it was nigh.
A lily in a linen clout
She looked when they had laid her out.
It is a lily-light she bears
For England up the ladder-stairs.

THE RIDDLE FOR MEN

I

This Riddle rede or die,
Says History since our Flood,
To warn her sons of power:—
It can be truth, it can be lie;
Be parasite to twist awry;
The drouthy vampire for your blood;
The fountain of the silver flower;
A brand, a lure, a web, a crest;
Supple of wax or tempered steel;
The spur to honour, snake in nest:
'Tis as you will with it to deal;
To wear upon the breast,
Or trample under heel.

II

And rede you not aright,
Says Nature, still in red

Shall History's tale be writ!
For solely thus you lead to light
The trailing chapters she must write,
And pass my fiery test of dead
Or living through the furnace-pit:
Dislinked from who the softer hold
In grip of brute, and brute remain:
Of whom the woeful tale is told,
How for one short Sultanic reign,
 Their bodies lapse to mould,
 Their souls behowl the plain.

THE SAGE ENAMOURED AND THE HONEST LADY

I

One fairest of the ripe unwedded left
Her shadow on the Sage's path; he found,
By common signs, that she had done a theft.
He could have made the sovereign heights resound
With questions of the wherefore of her state:
He on far other but an hour before
Intent. And was it man, or was it mate,
That she disdained? or was there haply more?

About her mouth a placid humour slipped
The dimple, as you see smooth lakes at eve
Spread melting rings where late a swallow dipped.
The surface was attentive to receive,
The secret underneath enfolded fast.
She had the step of the unconquered, brave,
Not arrogant; and if the vessel's mast
Waved liberty, no challenge did it wave.
Her eyes were the sweet world desired of souls,
With something of a wavering line unspelt.

They hold the look whose tenderness condoles
For what the sister in the look has dealt
Of fatal beyond healing; and her tones
A woman's honeyed amorous outvied,
As when in a dropped viol the wood-throb moans
Among the sobbing strings, that plain and chide
Like infants for themselves, less deep to thrill
Than those rich mother-notes for them breathed round.
Those voices are not magic of the will
To strike love's wound, but of love's wound give sound,
Conveying it; the yearnings, pains and dreams.
They waft to the moist tropics after storm,
When out of passion spent thick incense steams,
And jewel-belted clouds the wreck transform.

Was never hand on brush or lyre to paint
Her gracious manners, where the nuptial ring
Of melody clasped motion in restraint:
The reed-blade with the breeze thereof may sing.
With such endowments armed was she and decked
To make her spoken thoughts eclipse her kind;
Surpassing many a giant intellect,
The marvel of that cradled infant mind.
It clenched the tiny fist, it curled the toe;
Cherubic laughed, enticed, dispensed, absorbed;
And promised in fair feminine to grow
A Sage's match and mate, more heavenly orb'd.

II

Across his path the spouseless Lady cast
Her shadow, and the man that thing became.
His youth uprising called his age the Past.
This was the strong grey head of laurelled name,
And in his bosom an inverted Sage
Mistook for light of morn the light which sank.
But who while veins run blood shall know the page
Succeeding ere we turn upon our blank?
Comes Beauty with her tale of moon and cloud,
Her silvered rims of mystery pointing in
To hollows of the half-veiled unavowed,
Where beats her secret life, grey heads will spin
Quick as the young, and spell those hieroglyphs
Of phosphorescent dusk, devoutly bent;
They drink a cup to whirl on dizzier cliffs
For their shamed fall, which asks, why was she sent!
Why, and of whom, and whence; and tell they truth,
The legends of her mission to beguile?

Hard likeness to the toilful apes of youth
He bore at times, and tempted the sly smile;
And not on her soft lips was it descried.
She stepped her way benevolently grave:
Nor sign that Beauty fed her worm of pride,

By tossing victim to the courtier knave,
Let peep, nor of the naughty pride gave sign.
Rather 'twas humbleness in being pursued,
As pilgrim to the temple of a shrine.
Had he not wits to pierce the mask he wooed?
All wisdom's armoury this man could wield;
And if the cynic in the Sage it pleased
Traverse her woman's curtain and poor shield,
For new example of a world diseased;
Showing her shrineless, not a temple, bare;
A curtain ripped to tatters by the blast;
Yet she most surely to this man stood fair:
He worshipped like the young enthusiast,
Named simpleton or poet. Did he read
Right through, and with the voice she held reserved
Amid her vacant ruins jointly plead?

Compassion for the man thus noble nerved
The pity for herself she felt in him,
To wreak a deed of sacrifice, and save;
At least, be worthy. That our soul may swim,
We sink our heart down bubbling under wave.
It bubbles till it drops among the wrecks.
But, ah! confession of a woman's breast:
She eminent, she honoured of her sex!
Truth speaks, and takes the spots of the confessed,
To veil them. None of women, save their vile,
Plays traitor to an army in the field.
The cries most vindicating most defile.

How shall a cause to Nature be appealed,
When, under pressure of their common foe,
Her sisters shun the Mother and disown,
On pain of his intolerable crow
Above the fiction, built for him, o'erthrown?
Irrational he is, irrational
Must they be, though not Reason's light shall wane
In them with ever Nature at close call,
Behind the fiction torturing to sustain;
Who hear her in the milk, and sometimes make
A tongueless answer, shivered on a sigh:
Whereat men dread their lofty structure's quake
Once more, and in their hosts for tocsin ply
The crazy roar of peril, leonine
For injured majesty. That sigh of dames
Is rare and soon suppressed. Not they combine
To shake the structure sheltering them, which tames
Their lustier if not wilder: fixed are they,
In elegancy scarce denoting ease;
And do they breathe, it is not to betray
The martyr in the caryatides.
Yet here and there along the graceful row
Is one who fetches breath from deeps, who deems,
Moved by a desperate craving, their old foe
May yield a trustier friend than woman seems,
And aid to bear the sculptured floral weight
Massed upon heads not utterly of stone:
May stamp endurance by expounding fate.
She turned to him, and, This you seek is gone;

Look in, she said, as pants the furnace, brief,
Frost-white. She gave his hearing sight to view
The silent chamber of a brown curled leaf:
Thing that had throbb'd ere shot black lightning through.
No further sign of heart could he discern:
The picture of her speech was winter sky;
A headless figure folding a cleft urn,
Where tears once at the overflow were dry.

III

So spake she her first utterance on the rack.
It softened torment, in the funeral hues
Round wan Romance at ebb, but drove her back
To listen to herself, herself accuse
Harshly as Love's imperial cause allowed.
She meant to grovel, and her lover praised
So high o'er the condemnatory crowd,
That she perforce a fellow phoenix blazed.

The picture was of hand fast joined to hand,
Both pushed from angry skies, their grasp more pledged
Under the threatened flash of a bright brand
At arm's length up, for severing action edged.
Why, then Love's Court of Honour contemplate;
And two drowned shorecasts, who, for the life esteemed

Above their lost, invoke an advocate
In Passion's purity, thereby redeemed.

Redeemed, uplifted, glimmering on a throne,
The woman stricken by an arrow falls.
His advocate she can be, not her own,
If, Traitor to thy sex! one sister calls.
Have we such scenes of drapery's mournfulness
On Beauty's revelations, witched we plant,
Over the fair shape humbled to confess,
An angel's buckler, with loud choiric chant.

IV

No knightly sword to serve, nor harp of bard,
The lady's hand in her physician's knew.
She had not hoped for them as her award,
When zig-zag on the tongue electric flew
Her charge of counter-motives, none impure:
But muteness whipped her skin. She could have said,
Her free confession was to work his cure,
Show proofs for why she could not love or wed.
Were they not shown? His muteness shook in thrall
Her body on the verge of that black pit
Sheer from the treacherous confessional,
Demanding further, while perusing it.

Slave is the open mouth beneath the closed.
She sank; she snatched at colours; they were peel
Of fruit past savour, in derision rosed.
For the dark downward then her soul did reel.
A press of hideous impulse urged to speak:
A novel dread of man enchained her dumb.
She felt the silence thicken, heard it shriek,
Heard Life subsiding on the eternal hum:
Welcome to women, when, between man's laws
And Nature's thirsts, they, soul from body torn,
Give suck at breast to a celestial cause,
Named by the mouth infernal, and forsworn.
Nathless her forehead twitched a sad content,
To think the cure so manifest, so frail
Her charm remaining. Was the curtain's rent
Too wide? he but a man of that herd male?
She saw him as that herd of the forked head
Butting the woman harrowed on her knees,
Clothed only in life's last devouring red.
Confession at her fearful instant sees
Judicial Silence write the devil fact
In letters of the skeleton: at once,
Swayed on the supplication of her act,
The rabble reading, roaring to denounce,
She joins. No longer colouring, with skips
At tangles, picture that for eyes in tears
Might swim the sequence, she addressed her lips
To do the scaffold's office at his ears.

Into the bitter judgement of that herd
On women, she, deeming it present, fell.
Her frenzy of abasement hugged the word
They stone with, and so pile their citadel
To launch at outcasts the foul levin bolt.
As had he flung it, in her breast it burned.
Face and reflect it did her hot revolt
From hardness, to the writhing rebel turned;
Because the golden buckler was withheld,
She to herself applies the powder-spark,
For joy of one wild demon burst ere quelled,
Perishing to astound the tyrant Dark.

She had the Scriptural word so scored on brain,
It rang through air to sky, and rocked a world
That danced down shades the scarlet dance profane;
Most women! see! by the man's view dustward hurled,
Impenitent, submissive, torn in two.
They sink upon their nature, the unnamed,
And sops of nourishment may get some few,
In place of understanding, scourged and shamed.

Barely have seasoned women understood
The great Irrational, who thunders power,
Drives Nature to her primitive wild wood,
And courts her in the covert's dewy hour;
Returning to his fortress nigh night's end,
With execration of her daughters' lures.

They help him the proud fortress to defend,
Nor see what front it wears, what life immures,
The murder it commits; nor that its base
Is shifty as a huckster's opening deal
For bargain under smoothest market face,
While Gentleness bids frigid Justice feel,
Justice protests that Reason is her seat;
Elect Convenience, as Reason masked,
Hears calmly cramped Humanity entreat;
Until a sentient world is overtasked,
And rouses Reason's fountain-self: she calls
On Nature; Nature answers: Share your guilt
In common when contention cracks the walls
Of the big house which not on me is built.

The Lady said as much as breath will bear;
To happier sisters inconceivable:
Contemptible to veterans of the fair,
Who show for a convolving pearly shell,
A treasure of the shore, their written book.
As much as woman's breath will bear and live
Shaped she to words beneath a knotted look,
That held as if for grain the summing sieve.
Her judge now brightened without pause, as wakes
Our homely daylight after dread of spells.
Lips sugared to let loose the little snakes
Of slimy lustres ringing elfin bells
About a story of the naked flesh,
Intending but to put some garment on,

Should learn, that in the subject they enmesh,
A traitor lurks and will be known anon.
Delusion heating pricks the torpid doubt,
Stationed for index down an ancient track:
And ware of it was he while she poured out
A broken moon on forest-waters black.

Though past the stage where midway men are skilled
To scan their senses wriggling under plough,
When yet to the charmed seed of speech distilled,
Their hearts are fallow, he, and witless how,
Loathing, had yielded, like bruised limb to leech,
Not handsomely; but now beholding bleed
Soul of the woman in her prostrate speech,
The valour of that rawness he could read.
Thence flashed it, as the crimson currents ran
From senses up to thoughts, how she had read
Maternally the warm remainder man
Beneath his crust, and Nature's pity shed,
In shedding dearer than heart's blood to light
His vision of the path mild Wisdom walks.
Therewith he could espy Confession's fright;
Her need of him: these flowers grow on stalks;
They suck from soil, and have their urgencies
Beside and with the lovely face mid leaves.
Veins of divergencies, convergencies,
Our botanist in womankind perceives;
And if he hugs no wound, the man can prize
That splendid consummation and sure proof

Of more than heart in her, who might despise,
Who drowns herself, for pity up aloof
To soar and be like Nature's pity: she
Instinctive of what virtue in young days
Had served him for his pilot-star on sea,
To trouble him in haven. Thus his gaze
Came out of rust, and more than the schooled tongue
Was gifted to encourage and assure.
He gave her of the deep well she had sprung;
And name it gratitude, the word is poor.
But name it gratitude, is aught as rare
From sex to sex? And let it have survived
Their conflict, comes the peace between the pair,
Unknown to thousands husbanded and wived:
Unknown to Passion, generous for prey:
Unknown to Love, too blissful in a truce.
Their tenderest of self did each one slay;
His cloak of dignity, her fleur de luce;
Her lily flower, and his abolla cloak,
Things living, slew they, and no artery bled.
A moment of some sacrificial smoke
They passed, and were the dearer for their dead.

He learnt how much we gain who make no claims.
A nightcap on his flicker of grey fire
Was thought of her sharp shudder in the flames,
Confessing; and its conjured image dire,
Of love, the torrent on the valley dashed;
The whirlwind swathing tremulous peaks; young force,

Visioned to hold corrected and abashed
Our senile emulous; which rolls its course
Proud to the shattering end; with these few last
Hot quintessential drops of bryony juice,
Squeezed out in anguish: all of that once vast!
And still, though having skin for man's abuse,
Though no more glorying in the beauteous wreath
Shot skyward from a blood at passionate jet,
Repenting but in words, that stand as teeth
Between the vivid lips; a vassal set;
And numb, of formal value. Are we true
In nature, never natural thing repents;
Albeit receiving punishment for due,
Among the group of this world's penitents;
Albeit remorsefully regretting, oft
Cravenly, while the scourge no shudder spares.

Our world believes it stabler if the soft
Are whipped to show the face repentance wears.
Then hear it, in a moan of atheist gloom,
Deplore the weedy growth of hypocrites;
Count Nature devilish, and accept for doom
The chasm between our passions and our wits!

Affecting lunar whiteness, patent snows,
It trembles at betrayal of a sore.
Hers is the glacier-conscience, to expose
Impurities for clearness at the core.

She to her hungered thundering in breast,
Ye shall not starve, not feebly designates
The world repressing as a life repressed,
Judged by the wasted martyrs it creates.
How Sin, amid the shades Cimmerian,
Repents, she points for sight: and she avers,
The hoofed half-angel in the Puritan
Nigh reads her when no brutish wrath deters.

Sin against immaturity, the sin
Of ravenous excess, what deed divides
Man from vitality; these bleed within;
Bleed in the crippled relic that abides.
Perpetually they bleed; a limb is lost,
A piece of life, the very spirit maimed.
But culprit who the law of man has crossed
With Nature's dubiously within is blamed;
Despite our cry at cutting of the whip,
Our shiver in the night when numbers frown,
We but bewail a broken fellowship,
A sting, an isolation, a fall'n crown.

Abject of sinners is that sensitive,
The flesh, amenable to stripes, miscalled
Incorrigible: such title do we give
To the poor shrinking stuff wherewith we are walled;
And, taking it for Nature, place in ban
Our Mother, as a Power wanton-willed,
The shame and baffler of the soul of man,

The recreant, reptilious. Do thou build
Thy mind on her foundations in earth's bed;
Behold man's mind the child of her keen rod,
For teaching how the wits and passions wed
To rear that temple of the credible God;
Sacred the letters of her laws, and plain,
Will shine, to guide thy feet and hold thee firm:
Then, as a pathway through a field of grain,
Man's laws appear the blind progressive worm,
That moves by touch, and thrust of linking rings
The which to endow with vision, lift from mud
To level of their nature's aims and springs,
Must those, the twain beside our vital flood,
Now on opposing banks, the twain at strife
(Whom the so rosy ferryman invites
To junction, and mid-channel over Life,
Unmasked to the ghostly, much asunder smites)
Instruct in deeper than Convenience,
In higher than the harvest of a year.
Only the rooted knowledge to high sense
Of heavenly can mount, and feel the spur
For fruitfulest advancement, eye a mark
Beyond the path with grain on either hand,
Help to the steering of our social Ark
Over the barbarous waters unto land.

For us the double conscience and its war,
The serving of two masters, false to both,
Until those twain, who spring the root and are

The knowledge in division, plight a troth
Of equal hands: nor longer circulate
A pious token for their current coin,
To growl at the exchange; they, mate and mate,
Fair feminine and masculine shall join
Upon an upper plane, still common mould,
Where stamped religion and reflective pace
A statelier measure, and the hoop of gold
Rounds to horizon for their soul's embrace.
Then shall those noblest of the earth and sun
Inmix unlike to waves on savage sea.
But not till Nature's laws and man's are one,
Can marriage of the man and woman be.

V

He passed her through the sermon's dull defile.
Down under billowy vapour-gorges heaved
The city and the vale and mountain-pile.
She felt strange push of shuttle-threads that weaved.

A new land in an old beneath her lay;
And forth to meet it did her spirit rush,
As bride who without shame has come to say,
Husband, in his dear face that caused her blush.

A natural woman's heart, not more than clad
By station and bright raiment, gathers heat
From nakedness in trusted hands: she had
The joy of those who feel the world's heart beat,
After long doubt of it as fire or ice;
Because one man had helped her to breathe free;
Surprised to faith in something of a price
Past the old charity in chivalry:—
Our first wild step to right the loaded scales
Displaying women shamefully outweighed.
The wisdom of humaneness best avails
For serving justice till that fraud is brayed.
Her buried body fed the life she drank.
And not another stripping of her wound!
The startled thought on black delirium sank,
While with her gentle surgeon she communed,
And woman's prospect of the yoke repelled.
Her buried body gave her flowers and food;
The peace, the homely skies, the springs that welled;
Love, the large love that folds the multitude.
Soul's chastity in honesty, and this
With beauty, made the dower to men refused.
And little do they know the prize they miss;
Which is their happy fortune! Thus he mused

For him, the cynic in the Sage had play
A hazy moment, by a breath dispersed;
To think, of all alive most wedded they,
Whom time disjoined! He needed her quick thirst

For renovated earth: on earth she gazed,
With humble aim to foot beside the wise.
Lo, where the eyelashes of night are raised
Yet lowly over morning's pure grey eyes.

‘LOVE IS WINGED FOR TWO’

Love is winged for two,
In the worst he weathers,
When their hearts are tied;
But if they divide,
O too true!
Cracks a globe, and feathers, feathers,
Feathers all the ground bestrew.

I was breast of morning sea,
Rosy plume on forest dun,
I the laugh in rainy fleeces,
While with me
She made one.
Now must we pick up our pieces,
For that then so winged were we.

‘ASK, IS LOVE DIVINE’

Ask, is Love divine,
Voices all are, ay.
Question for the sign,
There's a common sigh.
Would we, through our years,
Love forego,
Quit of scars and tears?
Ah, but no, no, no!

‘JOY IS FLEET’

Joy is fleet,
Sorrow slow.
Love, so sweet,
Sorrow will sow.
Love, that has flown
Ere day's decline,
Love to have known,
Sorrow, be mine!

THE LESSON OF GRIEF

Not ere the bitter herb we taste,
Which ages thought of happy times,
To plant us in a weeping waste,
Rings with our fellows this one heart
 Accordant chimes.

When I had shed my glad year's leaf,
I did believe I stood alone,
Till that great company of Grief
Taught me to know this craving heart
 For not my own.

WIND ON THE LYRE

That was the chirp of Ariel
You heard, as overhead it flew,
The farther going more to dwell,
And wing our green to wed our blue;
But whether note of joy or knell,
Not his own Father-singer knew;
Nor yet can any mortal tell,
Save only how it shivers through;
The breast of us a sounded shell,
The blood of us a lighted dew.

THE YOUTHFUL QUEST

His Lady queen of woods to meet,
He wanders day and night:
The leaves have whisperings discreet,
The mossy ways invite.

Across a lustrous ring of space,
By covert hoods and caves,
Is promise of her secret face
In film that onward waves.

For darkness is the light astrain,
Astrain for light the dark.
A grey moth down a larches' lane
Unwinds a ghostly spark.

Her lamp he sees, and young desire
Is fed while cloaked she flies.
She quivers shot of violet fire
To ash at look of eyes.

THE EMPTY PURSE

A SERMON TO OUR LATER PRODIGAL SON

Thou, run to the dry on this wayside bank,
Too plainly of all the propellers bereft!

Quenched youth, and is that thy purse?
Even such limp slough as the snake has left
Slack to the gale upon spikes of whin,
For cast-off coat of a life gone blank,
In its frame of a grin at the seeker, is thine;

And thine to crave and to curse

The sweet thing once within.

Accuse him: some devil committed the theft,
Which leaves of the portly a skin,
No more; of the weighty a whine.

Pursue him: and first, to be sure of his track,
Over devious ways that have led to this,

In the stream's consecutive line,

Let memory lead thee back

To where waves Morning her fleur-de-lys,
Unflushed at the front of the roseate door
Unopened yet: never shadow there
Of a Tartarus lighted by Dis

For souls whose cry is, alack!
An ivory cradle rocks, a peep
Through his eyelashes' laugh, a breathing pearl.
There the young chief of the animals wore
A likeness to heavenly hosts, unaware
Of his love of himself; with the hours at leap.
In a dingle away from a rutted highroad,
Around him the earliest throstle and merle,
Our human smile between milk and sleep,
Effervescent of Nature he crowed.
Fair was that season; furl over furl
The banners of blossom; a dancing floor
This earth; very angels the clouds; and fair
Thou on the tablets of forehead and breast:
Careless, a centre of vigilant care.
Thy mother kisses an infant curl.
The room of the toys was a boundless nest,
A kingdom the field of the games,
Till entered the craving for more,
And the worshipped small body had aims.
A good little idol, as records attest,
When they tell of him lightly appeased in a scream
By sweets and caresses: he gave but sign
That the heir of a purse-plumped dominant race,
Accustomed to plenty, not dumb would pine.
Almost magician, his earliest dream
Was lord of the unpossessed
For a look; himself and his chase,
As on puffs of a wind at whirl,

Made one in the wink of a gleam.
She kisses a locket curl,
She conjures to vision a cherub face,
When her butterfly counted his day
All meadow and flowers, mishap
Derided, and taken for play
The fling of an urchin's cap.
When her butterfly showed him an eaglet born,
For preying too heedlessly bred,
What a heart clapped in thee then!
With what fuller colours of morn!
And high to the uttermost heavens it flew,
Swift as on poet's pen.
It flew to be wedded, to wed
The mystery scented around:
Issue of flower and dew,
Issue of light and sound:
Thinner than either; a thread
Spun of the dream they threw
To kindle, allure, evade.
It ran the sea-wave, the garden's dance,
To the forest's dark heart down a dappled glade;
Led on by a perishing glance,
By a twinkle's eternal waylaid.
Woman, the name was, when she took form;
Sheaf of the wonders of life. She fled,
Close imaged; she neared, far seen. How she made
Palpitate earth of the living and dead!
Did she not show thee the world designed

Solely for loveliness? Nested warm,
The day was the morrow in flight. And for thee,
She muted the discords, tuned, refined;
Drowned sharp edges beneath her cloak.
Eye of the waters, and throb of the tree,
Sliding on radiance, winging from shade,
With her witch-whisper o'er ruins, in reeds,
She sang low the song of her promise delayed;
Beckoned and died, as a finger of smoke
Astream over woodland. And was not she
History's heroines white on storm?
Remember her summons to valorous deeds.
Shone she a lure of the honey-bag swarm,
Most was her beam on the knightly: she led
For the honours of manhood more than the prize;
 Waved her magnetical yoke
 Whither the warrior bled,
 Ere to the bower of sighs.
And shy of her secrets she was; under deeps
Plunged at the breath of a thirst that woke
The dream in the cave where the Dreaded sleeps.

Away over heaven the young heart flew,
And caught many lustres, till some one said
(Or was it the thought into hearing grew?),
 Not thou as commoner men!
Thy stature puffed and it swayed,
It stiffened to royal-erect;
A brassy trumpet brayed;

A whirling seized thy head;
The vision of beauty was flecked.
Note well the how and the when,
The thing that prompted and sped.
Thereanon the keen passions clapped wing,
Fixed eye, and the world was prey.
No simple world of thy greenblade Spring,
Nor world of thy flowerful prime
On the topmost Orient peak
Above a yet vaporous day.
Flesh was it, breast to beak:
A four-walled windowless world without ray,
Only darkening jets on a river of slime,
Where harsh over music as woodland jay,
A voice chants, Woe to the weak!
And along an insatiate feast,
Women and men are one
In the cup transforming to beast.
Magian worship they paid to their sun,
Lord of the Purse! Behold him climb.
Stalked ever such figure of fun
For monarch in great-grin pantomime?
See now the heart dwindle, the frame distend;
The soul to its anchorite cavern retreat,
From a life that reeks of the rotted end;
While he—is he pictureable? replete,
Gourd-like swells of the rank of the soil,
Hollow, more hollow at core.
And for him did the hundreds toil

Despised; in the cold and heat,
This image ridiculous bore
On their shoulders for morsels of meat!

Gross, with the fumes of incense full,
With parasites tickled, with slaves begirt,
He strutted, a cock, he bellowed, a bull,
 He rolled him, a dog, in dirt.
And dog, bull, cook, was he, fanged, horned, plumed;
Original man, as philosophers vouch;
Carnivorous, cannibal; length-long exhumed,
Frightfully living and armed to devour;
The primitive weapons of prey in his pouch;
 The bait, the line and the hook:
 To feed on his fellows intent.
 God of the Danaé shower,
 He had but to follow his bent.
He battened on fowl not safely hatched,
 On sheep astray from the crook;
 A lure for the foolish in fold:
To carrion turning what flesh he touched.
 And O the grace of his air,
 As he at the goblet sips,
 A centre of girdles loosed,
 With their grisly label, Sold!
Credulous hears the fidelity swear,
Which has roving eyes over yielded lips:
To-morrow will fancy himself the seduced,
 The stuck in a treacherous slough,

Because of his faith in a purchased pair,
False to a vinous vow.

In his glory of banquet strip him bare,
And what is the creature we view?
Our pursy Apollo Apollyon's tool;
A small one, still of the crew
By serpent Apollyon blest:
His plea in apology, blindfold Fool.
A fool surcharged, propelled, unwarned;
Not viler, you hear him protest:
Of a popular countenance not incorrect.
But deeds are the picture in essence, deeds
Paint him the hooved and homed,
Despite the poor pother he pleads,
And his look of a nation's elect.
We have him, our quarry confessed!
And scan him: the features inspect
Of that bestial multiform: cry,
Corroborate I, O Samian Sage!
The book of thy wisdom, proved
On me, its last hieroglyph page,
Alive in the horned and hooved?
Thou! will he make reply.

Thus has the plenary purse
Done often: to do will engage
Anew upon all of thy like, or worse.
And now is thy deepest regret

To be man, clean rescued from beast:
From the grip of the Sorcerer, Gold,
Celestially released.

But now from his cavernous hold,
Free may thy soul be set,
As a child of the Death and the Life, to learn,
Refreshed by some bodily sweat,
The meaning of either in turn,
What issue may come of the two:—
A morn beyond mornings, beyond all reach
Of emotional arms at the stretch to enfold:
A firmament passing our visible blue.
To those having nought to reflect it, 'tis nought;
To those who are misty, 'tis mist on the beach
From the billow withdrawing; to those who see
Earth, our mother, in thought,
Her spirit it is, our key.

Ay, the Life and the Death are her words to us here,
Of one significance, pricking the blind.
This is thy gain now the surface is clear:
To read with a soul in the mirror of mind
Is man's chief lesson.—Thou smilest! I preach!
Acid smiling, my friend, reveals
Abysse within; frigid preaching a street
Paved unconcernedly smooth
For the lecturer straight on his heels,
Up and down a policeman's beat;

Bearing tonics not labelled to soothe.
Thou hast a disgust of the sermon in rhyme.
It is not attractive in being too chaste.
The popular tale of adventure and crime
Would equally sicken an overdone taste.
So, then, onward. Philosophy, thoughtless to soothe,
Lifts, if thou wilt, or there leaves thee supine.

Thy condition, good sooth, has no seeming of sweet;
It walks our first crags, it is flint for the tooth,
For the thirsts of our nature brine.
But manful has met it, manful will meet.
And think of thy privilege: supple with youth,
To have sight of the headlong swine,
Once fouling thee, jumping the dips!
As the coin of thy purse poured out:
An animal's holiday past:
And free of them thou, to begin a new bout;
To start a fresh hunt on a resolute blast:
No more an imp-ridden to bournes of eclipse:
Having knowledge to spur thee, a gift to compare;
Rubbing shoulder to shoulder, as only the book
Of the world can be read, by necessity urged.
For witness, what blinkers are they who look
From the state of the prince or the millionaire!
They see but the fish they attract,
The hungers on them converged;
And never the thought in the shell of the act,
Nor ever life's fangless mirth.

But first, that the poisonous of thee be purged,
Go into thyself, strike Earth.
She is there, she is felt in a blow struck hard.
Thou findest a pugilist countering quick,
Cunning at drives where thy shutters are barred;
Not, after the studied professional trick,
Blue-sealing; she brightens the sight. Strike Earth,
Antaeus, young giant, whom fortune trips!
And thou com'st on a saving fact,
To nourish thy planted worth.

Be it clay, flint, mud, or the rubble of chips,
Thy roots have grasp in the stern-exact:
The redemption of sinners deluded! the last
Dry handful, that bruises and saves.
To the common big heart are we bound right fast,
When our Mother admonishing nips
At the nakedness bare of a clout,
And we crave what the commonest craves.

This wealth was a fortress-wall,
Under which grew our grim little beast-god stout;
Self-worshipped, the foe, in division from all;
With crowds of illogical Christians, no doubt;
Till the rescuing earthquake cracked.
Thus are we man made firm;
Made warm by the numbers compact.
We follow no longer a trumpet-snout,
At a trot where the hog is tracked,

Nor wriggle the way of the worm.

Thou wilt spare us the cynical pout
At humanity: sign of a nature bechurled.
No stenchy anathemas cast
Upon Providence, women, the world.
Distinguish thy tempers and trim thy wits.
The purchased are things of the mart, not classed
Among resonant types that have freely grown.

Thy knowledge of women might be surpassed:
As any sad dog's of sweet flesh when he quits
The wayside wandering bone!
No revilings of comrades as ingrates: thee
The tempter, misleader, and criminal (screened
By laws yet barbarous) own.

If some one performed Fiend's deputy,
He was for awhile the Fiend.
Still, nursing a passion to speak,
As the punch-bowl does, in the moral vein,
When the ladle has finished its leak,
And the vessel is loquent of nature's inane,
Hie where the demagogues roar
Like a Phalaris bull, with the victim's force:
Hurrah to their jolly attack
On a City that smokes of the Plain;
A city of sin's death-dyes,
Holding revel of worms in a corse;

A city of malady sore,
Over-ripe for the big doom's crack:
A city of hymnical snore;
Connubial truths and lies
Demanding an instant divorce,
Clean as the bright from the black.
It were well for thy system to sermonize.
There are giants to slay, and they call for their Jack.

Then up stand thou in the midst:
Thy good grain out of thee thresh,
Hand upon heart: relate
What things thou legally didst
For the Archseducer of flesh.
Omitting the murmurs of women and fate,
Confess thee an instrument armed
To be snare of our wanton, our weak,
Of all by the sensual charmed.
For once shall repentance be done by the tongue:
Speak, though execrate, speak
A word on grandmotherly Laws
Giving rivers of gold to our young,
In the days of their hungers impure;
To furnish them beak and claws,
And make them a banquet's lure.

Thou the example, saved
Miraculously by this poor skin!
Thereat let the Purse be waved:

The snake-slough sick of the snaky sin:
A devil, if devil as devil behaved
Ever, thou knowest, look thou but in,
Where he shivers, a culprit fettered and shaved;
O a bird stripped of feather, a fish clipped of fin!

And commend for a washing the torrents of wrath,
Which hurl at the foe of the dearest men prize
Rough-rolling boulders and froth.

Gigantical enginery they can command,
For the crushing of enemies not of great size:

But hold to thy desperate stand.

Men's right of bequeathing their all to their own
(With little regard for the creatures they squeezed);
Their mill and mill-water and nether mill-stone
Tied fast to their infant; lo, this is the last
Of their hungers, by prudent devices appeased.
The law they decree is their ultimate slave;
Wherein we perceive old Voracity glassed.
It works from their dust, and it reeks of their grave.
Point them to greener, though Journals be guns;
To brotherly fields under fatherly skies;
Where the savage still primitive learns of a debt
He has owed since he drummed on his belly for war;
And how for his giving, the more will he get;
For trusting his fellows, leave friends round his sons:
Till they see, with the gape of a startled surprise,
Their adored tyrant-monster a brute to abhor,
The sun of their system a father of flies!

So, for such good hope, take their scourge unashamed;
'Tis the portion of them who civilize,
 Who speak the word novel and true:
How the brutish antique of our springs may be tamed,
Without loss of the strength that should push us to flower;
How the God of old time will act Satan of new,
If we keep him not straight at the higher God aimed;
For whose habitation within us we scour
This house of our life; where our bitterest pains
Are those to eject the Infernal, who heaps
Mire on the soul. Take stripes or chains;
 Grip at thy standard reviled.
And what if our body be dashed from the steps?
 Our spoken in protest remains.
 A young generation reaps.

The young generation! ah, there is the child
Of our souls down the Ages! to bleed for it, proof
That souls we have, with our senses filed,
 Our shuttles at thread of the woof.
 May it be braver than ours,
To encounter the rattle of hostile bolts,
To look on the rising of Stranger Powers.
May it know how the mind in expansion revolts
From a nursery Past with dead letters aloof,
And the piping to stupor of Precedents shun,
In a field where the forefather print of the hoof
Is not yet overgrassed by the watering hours,

And should prompt us to Change, as to promise of sun,
Till brain-rule splendidly towers.
For that large light we have laboured and tramped
Thorough forests and bogland, still to perceive
Our animate morning stamped
With the lines of a sombre eve.

A timorous thing ran the innocent hind,
When the wolf was the hypocrite fang under hood,
The snake a lithe lurker up sleeve,
And the lion effulgently ramped.
Then our forefather hoof did its work in the wood,
By right of the better in kind.
But now will it breed yon bestial brood
Three-fold thrice over, if bent to bind,
As the healthy in chains with the sick,
Unto despot usage our issuing mind.
It signifies battle or death's dull knell.
Precedents icily written on high
Challenge the Tentatives hot to rebel.
Our Mother, who speeds her bloomful quick
For the march, reads which the impediment well.
She smiles when of sapience is their boast.
O loose of the tug between blood run dry
And blood running flame may our offspring run!
May brain democratic be king of the host!
Less then shall the volumes of History tell
Of the stop in progression, the slip in relapse,
That counts us a sand-slack inch hard won

Beneath an oppressive incumbent perhaps.

Let the senile lords in a parchment sky,
And the generous turbulents drunken of morn,

 Their battle of instincts put by,

 A moment examine this field:

On a Roman street cast thoughtful eye,

Along to the mounts from the bog-forest weald.

It merits a glance at our history's maps,

To see across Britain's old shaggy unshorn,

Through the Parties in strife internecine, foot

The ruler's close-reckoned direct to the mark.

From the head ran the vanquisher's orderly route,

In the stride of his forts through the tangle and dark.

From the head runs the paved firm way for advance,

And we shoulder, we wrangle! The light on us shed

Shows dense beetle blackness in swarm, lurid Chance,

The Goddess of gamblers, above. From the head,

Then when it worked for the birth of a star

Fraternal with heaven's in beauty and ray,

Sprang the Acropolis. Ask what crown

Comes of our tides of the blood at war,

For men to bequeath generations down!

And ask what thou wast when the Purse was brimmed:

What high-bounding ball for the Gods at play:

A Conservative youth! who the cream-bowl skimmed,

Desiring affairs to be left as they are.

So, thou takest Youth's natural place in the fray,

As a Tentative, combating Peace,
Our lullaby word for decay.—
There will come an immediate decree
In thy mind for the opposite party's decease,
If he bends not an instant knee.
Expunge it: extinguishing counts poor gain.
And accept a mild word of police:—
Be mannerly, measured; refrain
From the puffings of him of the bagpipe cheeks.
Our political, even as the merchant main,
A temperate gale requires
For the ship that haven seeks;
Neither God of the winds nor his bellowsy squires.

Then observe the antagonist, con
His reasons for rocking the lullaby word.
You stand on a different stage of the stairs.
He fought certain battles, yon senile lord.
In the strength of thee, feel his bequest to his heirs.
We are now on his inches of ground hard won,
For a perch to a flight o'er his resting fence.

Does it knock too hard at thy head if I say,
That Time is both father and son?
Tough lesson, when senses are floods over sense!—
Discern the paternal of Now
As the Then of thy present tense.
You may pull as you will either way,
You can never be other than one.

So, be filial. Giants to slay
Demand knowing eyes in their Jack.

There are those whom we push from the path with respect.
Bow to that elder, though seeing him bow
To the backward as well, for a thunderous back
Upon thee. In his day he was not all wrong.
Unto some foundered zenith he strove, and was wrecked.
He scrambled to shore with a worship of shore.
The Future he sees as the slippery murk;
The Past as his doctrinal library lore.
He stands now the rock to the wave's wild wash.
Yet thy lumpish antagonist once did work
 Heroical, one of our strong.
His gold to retain and his dross reject,
Engage him, but humour, not aiming to quash.
 Detest the dead squat of the Turk,
 And suffice it to move him along.
 Drink of faith in the brains a full draught
 Before the oration: beware
 Lest rhetoric moonily waft
 Whither horrid activities snare.
 Rhetoric, juice for the mob
 Despising more luminous grape,
 Oft at its fount has it laughed
 In the cataracts rolling for rape
 Of a Reason left single to sob!

'Tis known how the permanent never is writ

In blood of the passions: mercurial they,
Shifty their issue: stir not that pit
 To the game our brutes best play.

But with rhetoric loose, can we check man's brute?
Assemblies of men on their legs invoke
Excitement for wholesome diversion: there shoot
Electrical sparks between their dry thatch
And thy waved torch, more to kindle than light.
'Tis instant between you: the trick of a catch
 (To match a Batrachian croak)
Will thump them a frenzy or fun in their veins.
Then may it be rather the well-worn joke
Thou repeatest, to stop conflagration, and write
Penance for rhetoric. Strange will it seem,
When thou readest that form of thy homage to brains!

For the secret why demagogues fail,
Though they carry hot mobs to the red extreme,
 And knock out or knock in the nail
 (We will rank them as flatly sincere,
 Devoutly detesting a wrong,
Engines o'ercharged with our human steam),
Question thee, seething amid the throng.
And ask, whether Wisdom is born of blood-heat;
Or of other than Wisdom comes victory here;—
Aught more than the banquet and roundelay,
That is closed with a terrible terminal wail,
 A retributive black ding-dong?

And ask of thyself: This furious Yea

Of a speech I thump to repeat,

In the cause I would have prevail,

For seed of a nourishing wheat,

Is it accepted of Song?

Does it sound to the mind through the ear,

Right sober, pure sane? has it disciplined feet?

Thou wilt find it a test severe;

Unerring whatever the theme.

Rings it for Reason a melody clear,

We have bidden old Chaos retreat;

We have called on Creation to hear;

All forces that make us are one full stream.

Simple islander! thus may the spirit in verse,

Showing its practical value and weight,

Pipe to thee clear from the Empty Purse,

Lead thee aloft to that high estate.—

The test is conclusive, I deem:

It embraces or mortally bites.

We have then the key-note for debate:

A Senate that sits on the heights

Over discords, to shape and amend.

And no singer is needed to serve

The musical God, my friend.

Needs only his law on a sensible nerve:

A law that to Measure invites,

Forbidding the passions contend.

Is it accepted of Song?

And if then the blunt answer be Nay,
Dislink thee sharp from the ramping horde,
Slaves of the Goddess of hoar-old sway,
The Queen of delirious rites,
Queen of those issueless mobs, that rend
For frenzy the strings of a fruitful accord,
Pursuing insensate, seething in throng,
Their wild idea to its ashen end.
Off to their Phrygia, shriek and gong,
Shorn from their fellows, behold them wend!

But thou, should the answer ring Ay,
Hast warrant of seed for thy word:
The musical God is nigh
To inspirit and temper, tune it, and steer
Through the shoals: is it worthy of Song,
There are souls all woman to hear,
Woman to bear and renew.
For he is the Master of Measure, and weighs,
Broad as the arms of his blue,
Fine as the web of his rays,
Justice, whose voice is a melody clear,
The one sure life for the numbered long,
From him are the brutal and vain,
The vile, the excessive, out-thrust:
He points to the God on the upmost throne:
He is the saver of grain,
The sifter of spirit from dust.
He, Harmony, tells how to Measure pertain

The virilities: Measure alone
Has votaries rich in the male:
Fathers embracing no cloud,
Sowing no harvestless main:
Alike by the flesh and the spirit endowed
To create, to perpetuate; woo, win, wed;
Send progeny streaming, have earth for their own,
Over-run the insensates, disperse with a puff
Simulacra, though solid they sail,
And seem such imperial stuff:
Yes, the living divide off the dead.

Then thou with thy furies outgrown,
Not as Cybele's beast will thy head lash tail
So præter-determinedly thermonous,
Nor thy cause be an Attis far fled.
Thou under stress of the strife
Shalt hear for sustainment supreme
The cry of the conscience of Life:
*Keep the young generations in hail,
And bequeath them no tumbled house!*

There hast thou the sacred theme,
Therein the inveterate spur,
Of the Innermost. See her one blink
In vision past eyeballs. Not thee
She cares for, but us. Follow her.
Follow her, and thou wilt not sink.
With thy soul the Life espouse:

This Life of the visible, audible, ring
With thy love tight about; and no death will be;
 The name be an empty thing,
 And woe a forgotten old trick:
And battle will come as a challenge to drink;
As a warrior's wound each transient sting.
She leads to the Uppermost link by link;
Exacts but vision, desires not vows.
Above us the singular number to see;
The plural warm round us; ourself in the thick,
A dot or a stop: that is our task;
Her lesson in figured arithmetic,
For the letters of Life behind its mask;
Her flower-like look under fearful brows.

As for thy special case, O my friend, one must think
Massilia's victim, who held the carouse

 For the length of a carnival year,
Knew worse: but the wretch had his opening choice.
For thee, by our law, no alternatives were:
Thy fall was assured ere thou camest to a voice.

 He cancelled the ravaging Plague,
 With the roll of his fat off the cliff.
Do thou with thy lean as the weapon of ink,
Though they call thee an angler who fishes the vague
 And catches the not too pink,
Attack one as murderous, knowing thy cause
Is the cause of community. Iterate,
Iterate, iterate, harp on the trite:

Our preacher to win is the supple in stiff:
Yet always in measure, with bearing polite:
The manner of one that would expiate
 His share in grandmotherly Laws,
 Which do the dark thing to destroy,
Under aspect of water so guilelessly white
For the general use, by the devils befouled.

Enough, poor prodigal boy!
Thou hast listened with patience; another had howled.
Repentance is proved, forgiveness is earned.
And 'tis bony: denied thee thy succulent half
Of the parable's blessing, to swineherd returned:
A Sermon thy slice of the Scriptural calf!
 By my faith, there is feasting to come,
 Not the less, when our Earth we have seen
Beneath and on surface, her deeds and designs:
Who gives us the man-loving Nazarene,
The martyrs, the poets, the corn and the vines.
By my faith in the head, she has wonders in loom;
Revelations, delights. I can hear a faint crow
Of the cock of fresh mornings, far, far, yet distinct;
 As down the new shafting of mines,
 A cry of the metally gnome.
When our Earth we have seen, and have linked
With the home of the Spirit to whom we unfold,
Imprisoned humanity open will throw
Its fortress gates, and the rivers of gold
 For the congregate friendliness flow.

Then the meaning of Earth in her children behold:
Glad eyes, frank hands, and a fellowship real:
And laughter on lips, as the birds' outburst
At the flooding of light. No robbery then
The feast, nor a robber's abode the home,
For a furnished model of our first den!
Nor Life as a stationed wheel;
Nor History written in blood or in foam,
For vendetta of Parties in cursing accursed.
The God in the conscience of multitudes feel,
And we feel deep to Earth at her heart,
We have her communion with men,
New ground, new skies for appeal.
Yield into harness thy best and thy worst;
Away on the trot of thy servitude start,
Through the rigours and joys and sustainments of air.
If courage should falter, 'tis wholesome to kneel.
Remember that well, for the secret with some,
Who pray for no gift, but have cleansing in prayer,
And free from impurities tower-like stand.
I promise not more, save that feasting will come
To a mind and a body no longer inversed:
The sense of large charity over the land,
Earth's wheaten of wisdom dispensed in the rough,
And a bell ringing thanks for a sustenance meal
Through the active machine: lean fare,
But it carries a sparkle! And now enough,
And part we as comrades part,
To meet again never or some day or soon.

Our season of drought is reminder rude:—

No later than yesternoon,
I looked on the horse of a cart,
By the wayside water-trough.

How at every draught of his bride of thirst
His nostrils widened! The sight was good:

Food for us, food, such as first
Drew our thoughts to earth's lowly for food.

TO THE COMIC SPIRIT

Sword of Common Sense!—
Our surest gift: the sacred chain
Of man to man: firm earth for trust
In structures vowed to permanence:—
Thou guardian issue of the harvest brain!
Implacable perforce of just;
With that good treasure in defence,
Which is our gold crushed out of joy and pain
Since first men planted foot and hand was king:
Bright, nimble of the marrow-nerve
To wield thy double edge, retort
Or hold the deadlier reserve,
And through thy victim's weapon sting:
Thine is the service, thine the sport
This shifty heart of ours to hunt
Across its webs and round the many a ring
Where fox it is, or snake, or mingled seeds
Occasion heats to shape, or the poor smoke
Struck from a puff-ball, or the troughster's grunt;—
Once lion of our desert's trodden weeds;
And but for thy straight finger at the yoke,
Again to be the lordly paw,
Naming his appetites his needs,
Behind a decorative cloak:

Thou, of the highest, the unwritten Law
We read upon that building's architrave
In the mind's firmament, by men upraised
With sweat of blood when they had quitted cave
For fellowship, and rearward looked amazed,
Where the prime motive gapes a lurid jaw,
Thou, soul of wakened heads, art armed to warn,
Restrain, lest we backslide on whence we sprang,
Scarce better than our dwarf beginning shoot,
Of every gathered pearl and blossom shorn;
Through thee, in novel wiles to win disguise,
Seen are the pits of the disruptor, seen
His rebel agitation at our root:
Thou hast him out of hawking eyes;
Nor ever morning of the clang
Young Echo sped on hill from horn
In forest blown when scent was keen
Off earthy dews besprinkling blades
Of covert grass more merrily rang
The yelp of chase down alleys green,
Forth of the headlong-pouring glades,
Over the dappled fallows wild away,
Than thy fine unaccented scorn
At sight of man's old secret brute,
Devout for pasture on his prey,
Advancing, yawning to devour;
With step of deer, with voice of flute,
Haply with visage of the lily flower.

Let the cock crow and ruddy morn
His handmaiden appear! Youth claims his hour.
The generously ludicrous
Espouses it. But see we sons of day,
Off whom Life leans for guidance in our fight,
Accept the throb for lord of us;
For lord, for the main central light
That gives direction, not the eclipse;
Or dost thou look where niggard Age,
Demanding reverence for wrinkles, whips
A tumbled top to grind a wolf's worn tooth;—
Hoar despot on our final stage,
In dotage of a stunted Youth;—
Or it may be some venerable sage,
Not having thee awake in him, compact
Of wisdom else, the breast's old tempter trips;
Or see we ceremonial state,
Robing the gilded beast, exact
Abjection, while the crackskull name of Fate
Is used to stamp and hallow printed fact;
A cruel corner lengthens up thy lips;
These are thy game wherever men engage:
These and, majestic in a borrowed shape,
The major and the minor potentate,
Creative of their various ape;—
The tiptoe mortals triumphing to write
Upon a perishable page
An inch above their fellows' height;—
The criers of foregone wisdom, who impose

Its slough on live conditions, much for the greed
Of our first hungry figure wide agape;—
Call up thy hounds of laughter to their run.
These, that would have men still of men be foes,
Eternal fox to prowl and pike to feed;
Would keep our life the whirly pool
Of turbid stuff dishonouring History;
The herd the drover's herd, the fool the fool,
Ourselves our slavish self's infernal sun:
These are the children of the heart untaught
By thy quick founts to beat abroad, by thee
Untamed to tone its passions under thought,
The rich humaneness reading in thy fun.
Of them a world of coltish heels for school
We have; a world with driving wrecks bestrewn.

'Tis written of the Gods of human mould,
Those Nectar Gods, of glorious stature hewn
To quicken hymns, that they did hear, incensed,
Satiric comments overbold,
From one whose part was by decree
The jester's; but they boiled to feel him bite.
Better for them had they with Reason fenced
Or smiled corrected! They in the great Gods' might
Their prober crushed, as fingers flea.
Crumbled Olympus when the sovereign sire
His fatal kick to Momus gave, albeit
Men could behold the sacred Mount aspire,
The Satirist pass by on limping feet.

Those Gods who saw the ejected laugh alight
Below had then their last of airy glee;
They in the cup sought Laughter's drownèd sprite,
Fed to dire fatness off uncurbed conceit.
Eyes under saw them waddle on their Mount,
And drew them down; to flattest earth they rolled.
This know we veritable. O Sage of Mirth!
Can it be true, the story men recount
Of the fall'n plight of the great Gods on earth?
How they being deathless, though of human mould,
With human cravings, undecaying frames,
Must labour for subsistence; are a band
Whom a loose-cheeked, wide-lipped gay cripple leads
At haunts of holiday on summer sand:
And lightly he will hint to one that heeds
Names in pained designation of them, names
Ensphered on blue skies and on black, which twirl
Our hearing madly from our seeing dazed,
Add Bacchus unto both; and he entreats
(His baby dimples in maternal chaps
Running wild labyrinths of line and curl)
Compassion for his masterful Trombone,
Whose thunder is the brass of how he blazed
Of old: for him of the mountain-muscle feats,
Who guts a drum to fetch a snappish groan:
For his fierce bugler horning onset, whom
A truncheon-battered helmet caps . . .
The creature is of earnest mien
To plead a sorrow darker than the tomb.

His Harp and Triangle, in tone subdued,
He names; they are a rayless red and white;
The dawn-hued libertine, the gibbous prude.
And, if we recognize his Tambourine,
He asks; exhausted names her: she has become
A globe in cupolas; the blowziest queen
Of overflowing dome on dome;
Redundancy contending with the tight,
Leaping the dam! He fondly calls, his girl,
The buxom tripper with the goblet-smile,
Refreshful. O but now his brows are dun,
Bunched are his lips, as when distilling guile,
To drop his venomous: the Dame of dames,
Flower of the world, that honey one,
She of the earthly rose in the sea-pearl,
To whom the world ran ocean for her kiss;
He names her, as a worshipper he names,
And indicates with a contemptuous thumb.
The lady meanwhile lures the mob, alike
Ogles the bursters of the horn and drum.
Curtain her close! her open arms
Have suckers for beholders: she to this?
For that she could not, save in fury, hear
A sharp corrective utterance flick
Her idle manners, for the laugh to strike
Beauty so breeding beauty, without peer
Above the snows, among the flowers? She reaps
This mouldy garner of the fatal kick?
Gross with the sacrifice of Circe-swarms,

Astarte of vile sweets that slay, malign,
From Greek resplendent to Phoenician foul,
The trader in attractions sinks, all brine
To thoughts of taste; is 't love?—bark, dog! hoot, owl!
And she is blushless: ancient worship weeps.
Suicide Graces dangle down the charms
Sprawling like gourds on outer garden-heaps.
She stands in her unholy oily leer
A statue losing feature, weather-sick
Mid draggled creepers of twined ivy sere.
The curtain cried for magnifies to see!—
We cannot quench our one corrupting glance:
The vision of the rumour will not flee.
Doth the Boy own such Mother?—shoot his dart
To bring her, countless as the crested deeps,
Her subjects of the uncorrected heart?
False is that vision, shrieks the devotee;
Incredible, we echo; and anew
Like a far growling lightning-cloud it leaps.
Low humourist this leader seems; perchance
Pitched from his University career,
Adept at classic fooling. Yet of mould
Human those Gods were: deathless too:
On high they not as meditatives paced:
Prodigiously they did the deeds of flesh:
Descending, they would touch the lowest here:
And she, that lighted form of blue and gold,
Whom the seas gave, all earth, all earth embraced;
Exulting in the great hauls of her mesh;

Desired and hated, desperately dear;
Most human of them was. No more pursue!
Enough that the black story can be told.
It preaches to the eminently placed:
For whom disastrous wreckage is nigh due,
Paints omen. Truly they our throbbler had;
The passions plumping, passions playing leech,
Cunning to trick us for the day's good cheer.
Our uncorrected human heart will swell
To notions monstrous, doings mad
As billows on a foam-lashed beach;
Borne on the tides of alternating heats,
Will drug the brain, will doom the soul as well;
Call the closed mouth of that harsh final Power
To speak in judgement: Nemesis, the fell:
Of those bright Gods assembled, offspring sour;
The last surviving on the upper seats;
As with men Reason when their hearts rebel.

Ah, what a fruitless breeder is this heart,
Full of the mingled seeds, each eating each.
Not wiser of our mark than at the start,
It surges like the wrath-faced father Sea
To countering winds; a force blind-eyed,
On endless rounds of aimless reach;
Emotion for the source of pride,
The grounds of faith in fixity
Above our flesh; its cravings urging speech,
Inspiring prayer; by turns a lump

Swung on a time-piece, and by turns
A quivering energy to jump
For seats angelical: it shrinks, it yearns,
Loves, loathes; is flame or cinders; lastly cloud
Capping a sullen crater: and mankind
We see cloud-capped, an army of the dark,
Because of thy straight leadership declined;
At heels of this or that delusive spark:
Now when the multitudinous races press
Elbow to elbow hourly more,
A thickened host; when now we hear aloud
Life for the very life implore
A signal of a visioned mark;
Light of the mind, the mind's discourse,
The rational in graciousness,
Thee by acknowledgement enthroned,
To tame and lead that blind-eyed force
In harmony of harness with the crowd,
For payment of their dues; as yet disowned,
Save where some dutiful lone creature, vowed
To holy work, deems it the heart's intent;
Or where a silken circle views it cowed,
The seeming figure of concordance, bent
On satiating tyrant lust
Or barren fits of sentiment.

Thou wilt not have our paths befouled
By simulation; are we vile to view,
The heavens shall see us clean of our own dust,

Beneath thy breezy flitting wing:
They make their mirror upon faces true;
And where they win reflection, lucid heave
The under tides of this hot heart seen through.
Beneficently wilt thou clip
All oversteppings of the plumed,
The puffed, and bid the masker strip,
And into the crowned windbag thrust,
Tearing the mortal from the vital thing,
A lightning o'er the half-illumed,
Who to base brute-dominion cleave,
Yet mark effects, and shun the flash,
Till their drowsed wits a beam conceive,

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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