

**GEORGE
MEREDITH**

POEMS,
VOLUME 1

George Meredith
Poems. Volume 1

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George Meredith

Poems – Volume 1

CHILLIANWALLAH ¹

Chillanwallah, Chillanwallah!
Where our brothers fought and bled,
O thy name is natural music
And a dirge above the dead!
Though we have not been defeated,
Though we can't be overcome,
Still, whene'er thou art repeated,
I would fain that grief were dumb.

Chillianwallah, Chillianwallah!
'Tis a name so sad and strange,
Like a breeze through midnight harpstrings
Ringing many a mournful change;
But the wildness and the sorrow
Have a meaning of their own—
Oh, whereof no glad to-morrow
Can relieve the dismal tone!

Chillianwallah, Chillianwallah!
'Tis a village dark and low,
By the bloody Jhelum river
Bridged by the foreboding foe;
And across the wintry water
He is ready to retreat,
When the carnage and the slaughter
Shall have paid for his defeat.

Chillianwallah, Chillianwallah!
'Tis a wild and dreary plain,
Strewn with plots of thickest jungle,
Matted with the gory stain.
There the murder-mouthed artillery,
In the deadly ambushade,
Wrought the thunder of its treachery
On the skeleton brigade.

Chillianwallah, Chillianwallah!
When the night set in with rain,

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Came the savage plundering devils
To their work among the slain;
And the wounded and the dying
In cold blood did share the doom
Of their comrades round them lying,
Stiff in the dead skyless gloom.

Chillianwallah, Chillianwallah!
Thou wilt be a doleful chord,
And a mystic note of mourning
That will need no chiming word;
And that heart will leap with anguish
Who may understand thee best;
But the hopes of all will languish
Till thy memory is at rest.

THE DOE: A FRAGMENT (FROM 'WANDERING WILLIE')

And—'Yonder look! yoho! yoho!
Nancy is off!' the farmer cried,
Advancing by the river side,
Red-kerchieft and brown-coated;—'So,
My girl, who else could leap like that?
So neatly! like a lady! 'Zounds!
Look at her how she leads the hounds!
And waving his dusty beaver hat,
He cheered across the chase-filled water,
And clapt his arm about his daughter,
And gave to Joan a courteous hug,
And kiss that, like a stubborn plug
From generous vats in vastness rounded,
The inner wealth and spirit sounded:
Eagerly pointing South, where, lo,
The daintiest, fleetest-footed doe
Led o'er the fields and thro' the furze
Beyond: her lively delicate ears
Prickt up erect, and in her track
A dappled lengthy-striding pack.

Scarce had they cast eyes upon her,
When every heart was wagered on her,
And half in dread, and half delight,
They watched her lovely bounding flight;
As now across the flashing green,
And now beneath the stately trees,
And now far distant in the dene,
She headed on with graceful ease:
Hanging aloft with doubled knees,
At times athwart some hedge or gate;
And slackening pace by slow degrees,
As for the foremost foe to wait.
Renewing her outstripping rate
Whene'er the hot pursuers neared,
By garden wall and paled estate,
Where clambering gazers whooped and cheered.
Here winding under elm and oak,
And slanting up the sunny hill:
Splashing the water here like smoke
Among the mill-holms round the mill.

And—'Let her go; she shows her game,

My Nancy girl, my pet and treasure!
The farmer sighed: his eyes with pleasure
Brimming: 'Tis my daughter's name,
My second daughter lying yonder.'
And Willie's eye in search did wander,
And caught at once, with moist regard,
The white gleams of a grey churchyard.
'Three weeks before my girl had gone,
And while upon her pillows propped,
She lay at eve; the weakling fawn—
For still it seems a fawn just dropt
A se'nnight—to my Nancy's bed
I brought to make my girl a gift:
The mothers of them both were dead:
And both to bless it was my drift,
By giving each a friend; not thinking
How rapidly my girl was sinking.
And I remember how, to pat
Its neck, she stretched her hand so weak,
And its cold nose against her cheek
Pressed fondly: and I fetched the mat
To make it up a couch just by her,
Where in the lone dark hours to lie:
For neither dear old nurse nor I
Would any single wish deny her.
And there unto the last it lay;
And in the pastures cared to play
Little or nothing: there its meals
And milk I brought: and even now
The creature such affection feels
For that old room that, when and how,
'Tis strange to mark, it slinks and steals
To get there, and all day conceals.
And once when nurse who, since that time,
Keeps house for me, was very sick,
Waking upon the midnight chime,
And listening to the stair-clock's click,
I heard a rustling, half uncertain,
Close against the dark bed-curtain:
And while I thrust my leg to kick,
And feel the phantom with my feet,
A loving tongue began to lick
My left hand lying on the sheet;
And warm sweet breath upon me blew,
And that 'twas Nancy then I knew.
So, for her love, I had good cause
To have the creature "Nancy" christened.'

He paused, and in the moment's pause,

His eyes and Willie's strangely glistened.
Nearer came Joan, and Bessy hung
With face averted, near enough
To hear, and sob unheard; the young
And careless ones had scampered off
Meantime, and sought the loftiest place
To beacon the approaching chase.

'Daily upon the meads to browse,
Goes Nancy with those dairy cows
You see behind the clematis:
And such a favourite she is,
That when fatigued, and helter skelter,
Among them from her foes to shelter,
She dashes when the chase is over,
They'll close her in and give her cover,
And bend their horns against the hounds,
And low, and keep them out of bounds!
From the house dogs she dreads no harm,
And is good friends with all the farm,
Man, and bird, and beast, howbeit
Their natures seem so opposite.
And she is known for many a mile,
And noted for her splendid style,
For her clear leap and quick slight hoof;
Welcome she is in many a roof.
And if I say, I love her, man!
I say but little: her fine eyes full
Of memories of my girl, at Yule
And May-time, make her dearer than
Dumb brute to men has been, I think.
So dear I do not find her dumb.
I know her ways, her slightest wink,
So well; and to my hand she'll come,
Sidelong, for food or a caress,
Just like a loving human thing.
Nor can I help, I do confess,
Some touch of human sorrowing
To think there may be such a doubt
That from the next world she'll be shut out,
And parted from me! And well I mind
How, when my girl's last moments came,
Her soft eyes very soft and kind,
She joined her hands and prayed the same,
That she "might meet her father, mother,
Sister Bess, and each dear brother,
And with them, if it might be, one
Who was her last companion."
Meaning the fawn—the doe you mark—

For my bay mare was then a foal,
And time has passed since then:—but hark!

For like the shrieking of a soul
Shut in a tomb, a darkened cry
Of inward-wailing agony
Surprised them, and all eyes on each
Fixed in the mute-appealing speech
Of self-reproachful apprehension:
Knowing not what to think or do:
But Joan, recovering first, broke through
The instantaneous suspension,
And knelt upon the ground, and guessed
The bitterness at a glance, and pressed
Into the comfort of her breast
The deep-throed quaking shape that drooped
In misery's wilful aggravation,
Before the farmer as he stooped,
Touched with accusing consternation:
Soothing her as she sobbed aloud:—
'Not me! not me! Oh, no, no, no!
Not me! God will not take me in!
Nothing can wipe away my sin!
I shall not see her: you will go;
You and all that she loves so:
Not me! not me! Oh, no, no, no!
Colourless, her long black hair,
Like seaweed in a tempest tossed
Tangling astray, to Joan's care
She yielded like a creature lost:
Yielded, drooping toward the ground,
As doth a shape one half-hour drowned,
And heaved from sea with mast and spar,
All dark of its immortal star.
And on that tender heart, inured
To flatter basest grief, and fight
Despair upon the brink of night,
She suffered herself to sink, assured
Of refuge; and her ear inclined
To comfort; and her thoughts resigned
To counsel; her wild hair let brush
From off her weeping brows; and shook
With many little sobs that took
Deeper-drawn breaths, till into sighs,
Long sighs, they sank; and to the 'hush!'
Of Joan's gentle chide, she sought
Childlike to check them as she ought,
Looking up at her infantwise.
And Willie, gazing on them both,

Shivered with bliss through blood and brain,
To see the darling of his troth
Like a maternal angel strain
The sinful and the sinless child
At once on either breast, and there
In peace and promise reconciled
Unite them: nor could Nature's care
With subtler sweet beneficence
Have fed the springs of penitence,
Still keeping true, though harshly tried,
The vital prop of human pride.

BEAUTY ROHTRAUT (*FROM MÖRICKE*)

What is the name of King Ringang's daughter?
Rohtraut, Beauty Rohtraut!
And what does she do the livelong day,
Since she dare not knit and spin away?
O hunting and fishing is ever her play!
And, heigh! that her huntsman I might be!
I'd hunt and fish right merrily!
Be silent, heart!

And it chanced that, after this some time,—
Rohtraut, Beauty Rohtraut,—
The boy in the Castle has gained access,
And a horse he has got and a huntsman's dress,
To hunt and to fish with the merry Princess;
And, O! that a king's son I might be!
Beauty Rohtraut I love so tenderly.
Hush! hush! my heart.

Under a grey old oak they sat,
Beauty, Beauty Rohtraut!
She laughs: 'Why look you so slyly at me?
If you have heart enough, come, kiss me.'
Cried the breathless boy, 'kiss thee?'
But he thinks, kind fortune has favoured my youth;
And thrice he has kissed Beauty Rohtraut's mouth.
Down! down! mad heart.

Then slowly and silently they rode home,—
Rohtraut, Beauty Rohtraut!
The boy was lost in his delight:
'And, wert thou Empress this very night,
I would not heed or feel the blight;
Ye thousand leaves of the wild wood wist
How Beauty Rohtraut's mouth I kiss'd.
Hush! hush! wild heart.'

THE OLIVE BRANCH

A dove flew with an Olive Branch;
It crossed the sea and reached the shore,
And on a ship about to launch
Dropped down the happy sign it bore.

'An omen' rang the glad acclaim!
The Captain stooped and picked it up,
'Be then the Olive Branch her name,'
Cried she who flung the christening cup.

The vessel took the laughing tides;
It was a joyous revelry
To see her dashing from her sides
The rough, salt kisses of the sea.

And forth into the bursting foam
She spread her sail and sped away,
The rolling surge her restless home,
Her incense wreaths the showering spray.

Far out, and where the riot waves
Run mingling in tumultuous throngs,
She danced above a thousand graves,
And heard a thousand briny songs.

Her mission with her manly crew,
Her flag unfurl'd, her title told,
She took the Old World to the New,
And brought the New World to the Old.

Secure of friendliest welcomings,
She swam the havens sheening fair;
Secure upon her glad white wings,
She fluttered on the ocean air.

To her no more the bastioned fort
Shot out its swarthy tongue of fire;
From bay to bay, from port to port,
Her coming was the world's desire.

And tho' the tempest lashed her oft,
And tho' the rocks had hungry teeth,
And lightnings split the masts aloft,
And thunders shook the planks beneath,

And tho' the storm, self-willed and blind,
Made tatters of her dauntless sail,
And all the wildness of the wind
Was loosed on her, she did not fail;

But gallantly she ploughed the main,
And gloriously her welcome pealed,
And grandly shone to sky and plain
The goodly bales her decks revealed;

Brought from the fruitful eastern glebes
Where blow the gusts of balm and spice,
Or where the black blockaded ribs
Are jammed 'mongst ghostly fleets of ice,

Or where upon the curling hills
Glow clusters of the bright-eyed grape,
Or where the hand of labour drills
The stubbornness of earth to shape;

Rich harvestings and wealthy germs,
And handicrafts and shapely wares,
And spinnings of the hermit worms,
And fruits that bloom by lions' lairs.

Come, read the meaning of the deep!
The use of winds and waters learn!
'Tis not to make the mother weep
For sons that never will return;

'Tis not to make the nations show
Contempt for all whom seas divide;
'Tis not to pamper war and woe,
Nor feed traditionary pride;

'Tis not to make the floating bulk
Mask death upon its slippery deck,
Itself in turn a shattered hulk,
A ghastly raft, a bleeding wreck.

It is to knit with loving lip
The interests of land to land;
To join in far-seen fellowship
The tropic and the polar strand.

It is to make that foaming Strength
Whose rebel forces wrestle still
Thro' all his boundaried breadth and length
Become a vassal to our will.

It is to make the various skies,
And all the various fruits they vaunt,
And all the dowers of earth we prize,
Subservient to our household want.

And more, for knowledge crowns the gain
Of intercourse with other souls,
And Wisdom travels not in vain
The plunging spaces of the poles.

The wild Atlantic's weltering gloom,
Earth-clasping seas of North and South,
The Baltic with its amber spume,
The Caspian with its frozen mouth;

The broad Pacific, basking bright,
And girdling lands of lustrous growth,
Vast continents and isles of light,
Dumb tracts of undiscovered sloth;

She visits these, traversing each;
They ripen to the common sun;
Thro' diverse forms and different speech,
The world's humanity is one.

O may her voice have power to say
How soon the wrecking discords cease,
When every wandering wave is gay
With golden argosies of peace!

Now when the ark of human fate,
Long baffled by the wayward wind,
Is drifting with its peopled freight,
Safe haven on the heights to find;

Safe haven from the drowning slime
Of evil deeds and Deluge wrath;—
To plant again the foot of Time
Upon a purer, firmer path;

'Tis now the hour to probe the ground,
To watch the Heavens, to speak the word,
The fathoms of the deep to sound,
And send abroad the missioned bird,

On strengthened wing for evermore,
Let Science, swiftly as she can,
Fly seaward on from shore to shore,

And bind the links of man to man;

And like that fair propitious Dove
Bless future fleets about to launch;
Make every freight a freight of love,
And every ship an Olive Branch.

SONG

Love within the lover's breast
Burns like Hesper in the west,
O'er the ashes of the sun,
Till the day and night are done;
Then when dawn drives up her car—
Lo! it is the morning star.

Love! thy love pours down on mine
As the sunlight on the vine,
As the snow-rill on the vale,
As the salt breeze in the sail;
As the song unto the bird,
On my lips thy name is heard.

As a dewdrop on the rose
In thy heart my passion glows,
As a skylark to the sky
Up into thy breast I fly;
As a sea-shell of the sea
Ever shall I sing of thee.

THE WILD ROSE AND THE SNOWDROP

The Snowdrop is the prophet of the flowers;
It lives and dies upon its bed of snows;
And like a thought of spring it comes and goes,
Hanging its head beside our leafless bowers.
The sun's betrothing kiss it never knows,
Nor all the glowing joy of golden showers;
But ever in a placid, pure repose,
More like a spirit with its look serene,
Droops its pale cheek veined thro' with infant green.

Queen of her sisters is the sweet Wild Rose,
Sprung from the earnest sun and ripe young June;
The year's own darling and the Summer's Queen!
Lustrous as the new-throned crescent moon.
Much of that early prophet look she shows,
Mixed with her fair espoused blush which glows,
As if the ethereal fairy blood were seen;
Like a soft evening over sunset snows,
Half twilight violet shade, half crimson sheen.

Twin-born are both in beauteousness, most fair
In all that glads the eye and charms the air;
In all that wakes emotions in the mind
And sows sweet sympathies for human kind.
Twin-born, albeit their seasons are apart,
They bloom together in the thoughtful heart;
Fair symbols of the marvels of our state,
Mute speakers of the oracles of fate!

For each, fulfilling nature's law, fulfils
Itself and its own aspirations pure;
Living and dying; letting faith ensure
New life when deathless Spring shall touch the hills.
Each perfect in its place; and each content
With that perfection which its being meant:
Divided not by months that intervene,
But linked by all the flowers that bud between.
Forever smiling thro' its season brief,
The one in glory and the one in grief:
Forever painting to our museful sight,
How lowlihead and loveliness unite.

Born from the first blind yearning of the earth
To be a mother and give happy birth,
Ere yet the northern sun such rapture brings,

Lo, from her virgin breast the Snowdrop springs;
And ere the snows have melted from the grass,
And not a strip of greensward doth appear,
Save the faint prophecy its cheeks declare,
Alone, unkissed, unloved, behold it pass!
While in the ripe enthronement of the year,
Whispering the breeze, and wedding the rich air
With her so sweet, delicious bridal breath,—
Odorous and exquisite beyond compare,
And starr'd with dews upon her forehead clear,
Fresh-hearted as a Maiden Queen should be
Who takes the land's devotion as her fee,—
The Wild Rose blooms, all summer for her dower,
Nature's most beautiful and perfect flower.

THE DEATH OF WINTER

When April with her wild blue eye
Comes dancing over the grass,
And all the crimson buds so shy
Peep out to see her pass;
As lightly she loosens her showery locks
And flutters her rainy wings;
Laughingly stoops
To the glass of the stream,
And loosens and loops
Her hair by the gleam,
While all the young villagers blithe as the flocks
Go frolicking round in rings;—
Then Winter, he who tamed the fly,
Turns on his back and prepares to die,
For he cannot live longer under the sky.

Down the valleys glittering green,
Down from the hills in snowy rills,
He melts between the border sheen
And leaps the flowery verges!
He cannot choose but brighten their hues,
And tho' he would creep, he fain must leap,
For the quick Spring spirit urges.
Down the vale and down the dale
He leaps and lights, till his moments fail,
Buried in blossoms red and pale,
While the sweet birds sing his dirges!

O Winter! I'd live that life of thine,
With a frosty brow and an icicle tongue,
And never a song my whole life long,—
Were such delicious burial mine!
To die and be buried, and so remain
A wandering brook in April's train,
Fixing my dying eyes for aye
On the dawning brows of maiden May.

SONG

The moon is alone in the sky
As thou in my soul;
The sea takes her image to lie
Where the white ripples roll
All night in a dream,
With the light of her beam,
Hushedly, mournfully, mistily up to the shore.
The pebbles speak low
In the ebb and the flow,
As I when thy voice came at intervals, tuned to adore:
Nought other stirred
Save my heart all unheard
Beating to bliss that is past evermore.

JOHN LACKLAND

A wicked man is bad enough on earth;
But O the baleful lustre of a chief
Once pledged in tyranny! O star of dearth
Darkly illumining a nation's grief!
How many men have worn thee on their brows!
Alas for them and us! God's precious gift
Of gracious dispensation got by theft—
The damning form of false unholy vows!
The thief of God and man must have his fee:
And thou, John Lackland, despicable prince—
Basest of England's banes before or since!
Thrice traitor, coward, thief! O thou shalt be
The historic warning, trampled and abhorr'd
Who dared to steal and stain the symbols of the Lord!

THE SLEEPING CITY

A Princess in the eastern tale
Paced thro' a marble city pale,
And saw in ghastly shapes of stone
The sculptured life she breathed alone;

Saw, where'er her eye might range,
Herself the only child of change;
And heard her echoed footfall chime
Between Oblivion and Time;

And in the squares where fountains played,
And up the spiral balustrade,
Along the drowsy corridors,
Even to the inmost sleeping floors,

Surveyed in wonder chilled with dread
The seemingness of Death, not dead;
Life's semblance but without its storm,
And silence frosting every form;

Crowned figures, cold and grouping slaves,
Like suddenly arrested waves
About to sink, about to rise,—
Strange meaning in their stricken eyes;

And cloths and couches live with flame
Of leopards fierce and lions tame,
And hunters in the jungle reed,
Thrown out by sombre glowing brede;

Dumb chambers hushed with fold on fold,
And cumbrous gorgeousness of gold;
White casements o'er embroidered seats,
Looking on solitudes of streets,—

On palaces and column'd towers,
Unconscious of the stony hours;
Harsh gateways startled at a sound,
With burning lamps all burnish'd round;—

Surveyed in awe this wealth and state,
Touched by the finger of a Fate,
And drew with slow-awakening fear
The sternness of the atmosphere;—

And gradually, with stealthier foot,
Became herself a thing as mute,
And listened,—while with swift alarm
Her alien heart shrank from the charm;

Yet as her thoughts dilating rose,
Took glory in the great repose,
And over every postured form
Spread lava-like and brooded warm,—

And fixed on every frozen face
Beheld the record of its race,
And in each chiselled feature knew
The stormy life that once blushed thro';—

The ever-present of the past
There written; all that lightened last,
Love, anguish, hope, disease, despair,
Beauty and rage, all written there;—

Enchanted Passions! whose pale doom
Is never flushed by blight or bloom,
But sentinelled by silent orbs,
Whose light the pallid scene absorbs.—

Like such a one I pace along
This City with its sleeping throng;
Like her with dread and awe, that turns
To rapture, and sublimely yearns;—

For now the quiet stars look down
On lights as quiet as their own;
The streets that groaned with traffic show
As if with silence paved below;

The latest revellers are at peace,
The signs of in-door tumult cease,
From gay saloon and low resort,
Comes not one murmur or report:

The clattering chariot rolls not by,
The windows show no waking eye,
The houses smoke not, and the air
Is clear, and all the midnight fair.

The centre of the striving world,
Round which the human fate is curled,
To which the future crieth wild,—
Is pillowed like a cradled child.

The palace roof that guards a crown,
The mansion swathed in dreamy down,
Hovel, court, and alley-shed,
Sleep in the calmness of the dead.

Now while the many-motived heart
Lies hushed—fireside and busy mart,
And mortal pulses beat the tune
That charms the calm cold ear o' the moon

Whose yellowing crescent down the West
Leans listening, now when every breast
Its basest or its purest heaves,
The soul that joys, the soul that grieves;—

While Fame is crowning happy brows
That day will blindly scorn, while vows
Of anguished love, long hidden, speak
From faltering tongue and flushing cheek

The language only known to dreams,
Rich eloquence of rosy themes!
While on the Beauty's folded mouth
Disdain just wrinkles baby youth;

While Poverty dispenses alms
To outcasts, bread, and healing balms;
While old Mammon knows himself
The greatest beggar for his pelf;

While noble things in darkness grope,
The Statesman's aim, the Poet's hope;
The Patriot's impulse gathers fire,
And germs of future fruits aspire;—

Now while dumb nature owns its links,
And from one common fountain drinks,
Methinks in all around I see
This Picture in Eternity;—

A marbled City planted there
With all its pageants and despair;
A peopled hush, a Death not dead,
But stricken with Medusa's head;—

And in the Gorgon's glance for aye
The lifeless immortality
Reveals in sculptured calmness all

Its latest life beyond recall.

THE POETRY OF CHAUCER

Grey with all honours of age! but fresh-featured and ruddy
As dawn when the drowsy farm-yard has thrice heard Chaunticlere.
Tender to tearfulness—childlike, and manly, and motherly;
Here beats true English blood richest joyance on sweet English ground.

THE POETRY OF SPENSER

Lakes where the sunshen is mystic with splendour and softness;
Vales where sweet life is all Summer with golden romance:
Forests that glimmer with twilight round revel-bright palaces;
Here in our May-blood we wander, careering 'mongst ladies and
knights.

THE POETRY OF SHAKESPEARE

Picture some Isle smiling green 'mid the white-foaming ocean;—
Full of old woods, leafy wisdoms, and frolicsome fays;
Passions and pageants; sweet love singing bird-like above it;
Life in all shapes, aims, and fates, is there warm'd by one great human
heart.

THE POETRY OF MILTON

Like to some deep-chested organ whose grand inspiration,
Serenely majestic in utterance, lofty and calm,
Interprets to mortals with melody great as its burthen
The mystical harmonies chiming for ever throughout the bright spheres.

THE POETRY OF SOUTHEY

Keen as an eagle whose flight towards the dim empyréan
Fearless of toil or fatigue ever royally wends!
Vast in the cloud-coloured robes of the balm-breathing Orient
Lo! the grand Epic advances, unfolding the humanest truth.

THE POETRY OF COLERIDGE

A brook glancing under green leaves, self-delighting, exulting,
And full of a gurgling melody ever renewed—
Renewed thro' all changes of Heaven, unceasing in sunlight,
Unceasing in moonlight, but hushed in the beams of the holier orb.

THE POETRY OF SHELLEY

See'st thou a Skylark whose glistening winglets ascending
Quiver like pulses beneath the melodious dawn?
Deep in the heart-yearning distance of heaven it flutters—
Wisdom and beauty and love are the treasures it brings down at eve.

THE POETRY OF WORDSWORTH

A breath of the mountains, fresh born in the regions majestic,
That look with their eye-daring summits deep into the sky.
The voice of great Nature; sublime with her lofty conceptions,
Yet earnest and simple as any sweet child of the green lowly vale.

THE POETRY OF KEATS

The song of a nightingale sent thro' a slumbrous valley,
Low-lidded with twilight, and tranced with the dolorous sound,
Tranced with a tender enchantment; the yearning of passion
That wins immortality even while panting delirious with death.

VIOLETS

Violets, shy violets!
How many hearts with you compare!
Who hide themselves in thickest green,
And thence, unseen,
Ravish the enraptured air
With sweetness, dewy fresh and rare!

Violets, shy violets!
Human hearts to me shall be
Viewless violets in the grass,
And as I pass,
Odours and sweet imagery
Will wait on mine and gladden me!

ANGELIC LOVE

Angelic love that stoops with heavenly lips
To meet its earthly mate;
Heroic love that to its sphere's eclipse
Can dare to join its fate
With one beloved devoted human heart,
And share with it the passion and the smart,
The undying bliss
Of its most fleeting kiss;
The fading grace
Of its most sweet embrace:—
Angelic love, heroic love!
Whose birth can only be above,
Whose wandering must be on earth,
Whose haven where it first had birth!
Love that can part with all but its own worth,
And joy in every sacrifice
That beautifies its Paradise!
And gently, like a golden-fruited vine,
With earnest tenderness itself consign,
And creeping up deliriously entwine
Its dear delicious arms
Round the beloved being!
With fair unfolded charms,
All-trusting, and all-seeing,—
Grape-laden with full bunches of young wine!
While to the panting heart's dry yearning drouth
Buds the rich dewy mouth—
Tenderly uplifted,
Like two rose-leaves drifted
Down in a long warm sigh of the sweet South!
Such love, such love is thine,
Such heart is mine,
O thou of mortal visions most divine!

TWILIGHT MUSIC

Know you the low pervading breeze
That softly sings
In the trembling leaves of twilight trees,
As if the wind were dreaming on its wings?
And have you marked their still degrees
Of ebbing melody, like the strings
Of a silver harp swept by a spirit's hand
In some strange glimmering land,
'Mid gushing springs,
And glistenings
Of waters and of planets, wild and grand!
And have you marked in that still time
The chariots of those shining cars
Brighten upon the hushing dark,
And bent to hark
That Voice, amid the poplar and the lime,
Pause in the dilating lustre
Of the spheral cluster;
Pause but to renew its sweetness, deep
As dreams of heaven to souls that sleep!
And felt, despite earth's jarring wars,
When day is done
And dead the sun,
Still a voice divine can sing,
Still is there sympathy can bring
A whisper from the stars!
Ah, with this sentience quickly will you know
How like a tree I tremble to the tones
Of your sweet voice!
How keenly I rejoice
When in me with sweet motions slow
The spiritual music ebbs and moans—
Lives in the lustre of those heavenly eyes,
Dies in the light of its own paradise,—
Dies, and relives eternal from its death,
Immortal melodies in each deep breath;
Sweeps thro' my being, bearing up to thee
Myself, the weight of its eternity;
Till, nerved to life from its ordeal fire,
It marries music with the human lyre,
Blending divine delight with loveliest desire.

REQUIEM

Where faces are hueless, where eyelids are dewless,
Where passion is silent and hearts never crave;
Where thought hath no theme, and where sleep hath no dream,
In patience and peace thou art gone—to thy grave!
Gone where no warning can wake thee to morning,
Dead tho' a thousand hands stretch'd out to save.

Thou cam'st to us sighing, and singing and dying,
How could it be otherwise, fair as thou wert?
Placidly fading, and sinking and shading
At last to that shadow, the latest desert;
Wasting and waning, but still, still remaining.
Alas for the hand that could deal the death-hurt!

The Summer that brightens, the Winter that whitens,
The world and its voices, the sea and the sky,
The bloom of creation, the tie of relation,
All—all is a blank to thine ear and thine eye;
The ear may not listen, the eye may not glisten,
Nevermore waked by a smile or a sigh.

The tree that is rootless must ever be fruitless;
And thou art alone in thy death and thy birth;
No last loving token of wedded love broken,
No sign of thy singleness, sweetness and worth;
Lost as the flower that is drowned in the shower,
Fall'n like a snowflake to melt in the earth.

THE FLOWER OF THE RUINS

Take thy lute and sing
By the ruined castle walls,
Where the torrent-foam falls,
And long weeds wave:
Take thy lute and sing,
O'er the grey ancestral grave!
Daughter of a King,
Tune thy string.

Sing of happy hours,
In the roar of rushing time;
Till all the echoes chime
To the days gone by;
Sing of passing hours
To the ever-present sky;—
Weep—and let the showers
Wake thy flowers.

Sing of glories gone:—
No more the blazoned fold
From the banner is unrolled;
The gold sun is set.
Sing his glory gone,
For thy voice may charm him yet;
Daughter of the dawn,
He is gone!

Pour forth all thy grief!
Passionately sweep the chords,
Wed them quivering to thy words;
Wild words of wail!
Shed thy withered grief—
But hold not Autumn to thy bale;
The eddy of the leaf
Must be brief!

Sing up to the night:
Hard it is for streaming tears
To read the calmness of the spheres;
Coldly they shine;
Sing up to their light;
They have views thou may'st divine—
Gain prophetic sight
From their light!

On the windy hills
Lo, the little harebell leans
On the spire-grass that it queens,
With bonnet blue;
Trusting love instils
Love and subject reverence true;
Learn what love instils
On the hills!

By the bare wayside
Placid snowdrops hang their cheeks,
Softly touch'd with pale green streaks,
Soon, soon, to die;
On the clothed hedgeside
Bands of rosy beauties vie,
In their prophesied
Summer pride.

From the snowdrop learn;
Not in her pale life lives she,
But in her blushing prophecy.
Thus be thy hopes,
Living but to yearn
Upwards to the hidden scopes;—
Even within the urn
Let them burn!

Heroes of thy race—
Warriors with golden crowns,
Ghostly shapes with marbled frowns
Stare thee to stone;
Matrons of thy race
Pass before thee making moan;
Full of solemn grace
Is their pace.

Piteous their despair!
Piteous their looks forlorn!
Terrible their ghostly scorn!
Still hold thou fast;—
Heed not their despair!—
Thou art thy future, not thy past;
Let them glance and glare
Thro' the air.

Thou the ruin's bud,
Be not that moist rich-smelling weed
With its arras-sembled brede,
And ruin-haunting stalk;

Thou the ruin's bud,
Be still the rose that lights the walk,
Mix thy fragrant blood
With the flood!

THE RAPE OF AURORA

Never, O never,
 Since dewy sweet Flora
Was ravished by Zephyr,
 Was such a thing heard
 In the valleys so hollow!
Till rosy Aurora,
Uprising as ever,
 Bright Phosphor to follow,
Pale Phoebe to sever,
 Was caught like a bird
 To the breast of Apollo!

Wildly she flutters,
 And flushes all over
With passionate mutters
 Of shame to the hush
 Of his amorous whispers:
But O such a lover
Must win when he utters,
 Thro' rosy red lispers,
The pains that discover
 The wishes that gush
 From the torches of Hesperus.

One finger just touching
 The Orient chamber,
Unflooded the gushing
 Of light that illumed
 All her lustrous unveiling.
On clouds of glow amber,
Her limbs richly blushing,
 She lay sweetly wailing,
In odours that gloomed
 On the God as he bloomed
 O'er her loveliness paling.

Great Pan in his covert
 Beheld the rare glistening,
The cry of the love-hurt,
 The sigh and the kiss
 Of the latest close mingling;
But love, thought he, listening,
Will not do a dove hurt,
 I know,—and a tingling,
Latent with bliss,

Prickt thro' him, I wis,
For the Nymph he was singling.

SOUTH-WEST WIND IN THE WOODLAND

The silence of preluded song—
Æolian silence charms the woods;
Each tree a harp, whose foliaged strings
Are waiting for the master's touch
To sweep them into storms of joy,
Stands mute and whispers not; the birds
Brood dumb in their foreboding nests,
Save here and there a chirp or tweet,
That utters fear or anxious love,
Or when the ouzel sends a swift
Half warble, shrinking back again
His golden bill, or when aloud
The storm-cock warns the dusking hills
And villages and valleys round:
For lo, beneath those ragged clouds
That skirt the opening west, a stream
Of yellow light and windy flame
Spreads lengthening southward, and the sky
Begins to gloom, and o'er the ground
A moan of coming blasts creeps low
And rustles in the crisping grass;
Till suddenly with mighty arms
Outspread, that reach the horizon round,
The great South-West drives o'er the earth,
And loosens all his roaring robes
Behind him, over heath and moor.
He comes upon the neck of night,
Like one that leaps a fiery steed
Whose keen black haunches quivering shine
With eagerness and haste, that needs
No spur to make the dark leagues fly!
Whose eyes are meteors of speed;
Whose mane is as a flashing foam;
Whose hoofs are travelling thunder-shocks;—
He comes, and while his growing gusts,
Wild couriers of his reckless course,
Are whistling from the daggered gorse,
And hurrying over fern and broom,
Midway, far off, he feigns to halt
And gather in his streaming train.

Now, whirring like an eagle's wing
Preparing for a wide blue flight;
Now, flapping like a sail that tacks
And chides the wet bewildered mast;

Now, screaming like an anguish'd thing
Chased close by some down-breathing beak;
Now, wailing like a breaking heart,
That will not wholly break, but hopes
With hope that knows itself in vain;
Now, threatening like a storm-charged cloud;
Now, cooing like a woodland dove;
Now, up again in roar and wrath
High soaring and wide sweeping; now,
With sudden fury dashing down
Full-force on the awaiting woods.

Long waited there, for aspens frail
That tinkle with a silver bell,
To warn the Zephyr of their love,
When danger is at hand, and wake
The neighbouring boughs, surrendering all
Their prophet harmony of leaves,
Had caught his earliest windward thought,
And told it trembling; naked birk
Down showering her dishevelled hair,
And like a beauty yielding up
Her fate to all the elements,
Had swayed in answer; hazels close,
Thick brambles and dark brushwood tufts,
And briared brakes that line the dells
With shaggy beetling brows, had sung
Shrill music, while the tattered flaws
Tore over them, and now the whole
Tumultuous concords, seized at once
With savage inspiration,—pine,
And larch, and beech, and fir, and thorn,
And ash, and oak, and oakling, rave
And shriek, and shout, and whirl, and toss,
And stretch their arms, and split, and crack,
And bend their stems, and bow their heads,
And grind, and groan, and lion-like
Roar to the echo-peopled hills
And ravenous wilds, and crake-like cry
With harsh delight, and cave-like call
With hollow mouth, and harp-like thrill
With mighty melodies, sublime,
From clumps of column'd pines that wave
A lofty anthem to the sky,
Fit music for a prophet's soul—
And like an ocean gathering power,
And murmuring deep, while down below
Reigns calm profound;—not trembling now
The aspens, but like freshening waves

That fall upon a shingly beach;—
And round the oak a solemn roll
Of organ harmony ascends,
And in the upper foliage sounds
A symphony of distant seas.

The voice of nature is abroad
This night; she fills the air with balm;
Her mystery is o'er the land;
And who that hears her now and yields
His being to her yearning tones,
And seats his soul upon her wings,
And broadens o'er the wind-swept world
With her, will gather in the flight
More knowledge of her secret, more
Delight in her beneficence,
Than hours of musing, or the lore
That lives with men could ever give!
Nor will it pass away when morn
Shall look upon the lulling leaves,
And woodland sunshine, Eden-sweet,
Dreams o'er the paths of peaceful shade;—
For every elemental power
Is kindred to our hearts, and once
Acknowledged, wedded, once embraced,
Once taken to the unfettered sense,
Once claspt into the naked life,
The union is eternal.

WILL O' THE WISP

Follow me, follow me,
Over brake and under tree,
Thro' the bosky tanglery,
 Brushwood and bramble!
Follow me, follow me,
 Laugh and leap and scramble!
Follow, follow,
Hill and hollow,
Fosse and burrow,
Fen and furrow,
Down into the bulrush beds,
'Midst the reeds and osier heads,
In the rushy soaking damps,
Where the vapours pitch their camps,
 Follow me, follow me,
 For a midnight ramble!
O! what a mighty fog,
What a merry night O ho!
Follow, follow, nigher, nigher—
Over bank, and pond, and briar,
Down into the croaking ditches,
 Rotten log,
 Spotted frog,
 Beetle bright
 With crawling light,
 What a joy O ho!
Deep into the purple bog—
 What a joy O ho!
Where like hosts of puckered witches
All the shivering agues sit
Warming hands and chafing feet,
By the blue marsh-hovering oils:
O the fools for all their moans!
Not a forest mad with fire
Could still their teeth, or warm their bones,
Or loose them from their chilly coils.
 What a clatter,
 How they chatter!
 Shrink and huddle,
 All a muddle!
 What a joy O ho!
Down we go, down we go,
 What a joy O ho!
Soon shall I be down below,
Plunging with a grey fat friar,

Hither, thither, to and fro,
Breathing mists and whisking lamps,
Plashing in the shiny swamps;
While my cousin Lantern Jack,
With cook ears and cunning eyes,
Turns him round upon his back,
Daubs him oozy green and black,
Sits upon his rolling size,
Where he lies, where he lies,
Groaning full of sack—
Staring with his great round eyes!
What a joy O ho!
Sits upon him in the swamps
Breathing mists and whisking lamps!
 What a joy O ho!
Such a lad is Lantern Jack,
 When he rides the black nightmare
Through the fens, and puts a glare
In the friar's track.
Such a frolic lad, good lack!
To turn a friar on his back,
Trip him, clip him, whip him, nip him.
Lay him sprawling, smack!
Such a lad is Lantern Jack!
Such a tricky lad, good lack!
 What a joy O ho!
 Follow me, follow me,
Where he sits, and you shall see!

SONG

Fair and false! No dawn will greet
Thy waking beauty as of old;
The little flower beneath thy feet
Is alien to thy smile so cold;
The merry bird flown up to meet
Young morning from his nest i' the wheat
Scatters his joy to wood and wold,
But scorns the arrogance of gold.

False and fair! I scarce know why,
But standing in the lonely air,
And underneath the blessed sky,
I plead for thee in my despair;—
For thee cut off, both heart and eye
From living truth; thy spring quite dry;
For thee, that heaven my thought may share,
Forget—how false! and think—how fair!

SONG

Two wedded lovers watched the rising moon,
That with her strange mysterious beauty glowing,
Over misty hills and waters flowing,
Crowned the long twilight loveliness of June:
And thus in me, and thus in me, they spake,
The solemn secret of first love did wake.

Above the hills the blushing orb arose;
Her shape encircled by a radiant bower,
In which the nightingale with charmed power
Poured forth enchantment o'er the dark repose:
And thus in me, and thus in me, they said,
Earth's mists did with the sweet new spirit wed.

Far up the sky with ever purer beam,
Upon the throne of night the moon was seated,
And down the valley glens the shades retreated,
And silver light was on the open stream.
And thus in me, and thus in me, they sighed,
Aspiring Love has hallowed Passion's tide.

SONG

I cannot lose thee for a day,
But like a bird with restless wing
My heart will find thee far away,
And on thy bosom fall and sing,
My nest is here, my rest is here;—
And in the lull of wind and rain,
Fresh voices make a sweet refrain,
'His rest is there, his nest is there.'

With thee the wind and sky are fair,
But parted, both are strange and dark;
And treacherous the quiet air
That holds me singing like a lark,
O shield my love, strong arm above!
Till in the hush of wind and rain,
Fresh voices make a rich refrain,
'The arm above will shield thy love.'

DAPHNE

Musing on the fate of Daphne,
Many feelings urged my breast,
For the God so keen desiring,
And the Nymph so deep distrest.

Never flashed thro' sylvan valley
Visions so divinely fair!
He with early ardour glowing,
She with rosy anguish rare.

Only still more sweet and lovely
For those terrors on her brows,
Those swift glances wild and brilliant,
Those delicious panting vows.

Timidly the timid shoulders
Shrinking from the fervid hand!
Dark the tide of hair back-flowing
From the blue-veined temples bland!

Lovely, too, divine Apollo
In the speed of his pursuit;
With his eye an azure lustre,
And his voice a summer lute!

Looking like some burnished eagle
Hovering o'er a fluttered bird;
Not unseen of silver Naiad,
And of wistful Dryad heard!

Many a morn the naked beauty
Saw her bright reflection drown
In the flowing smooth-faced river,
While the god came sheening down.

Down from Pindus bright Peneus
Tells its muse-melodious source;
Sacred is its fountained birthplace,
And the Orient floods its course.

Many a morn the sunny darling
Saw the rising chariot-rays,
From the winding river-reaches,
Mellowing in amber haze.

Thro' the flaming mountain gorges
Lo, the River leaps the plain;
Like a wild god-stridden courser,
Tossing high its foamy mane.

Then he swims thro' laurelled sunlight,
Full of all sensations sweet,
Misty with his morning incense,
To the mirrored maiden's feet!

Wet and bright the dinting pebbles
Shine where oft she paused and stood;
All her dreamy warmth revolving,
While the chilly waters wooed.

Like to rosy-born Aurora,
Glowing freshly into view,
When her doubtful foot she ventures
On the first cold morning blue.

White as that Thessalian lily,
Fairest Tempe's fairest flower,
Lo, the tall Peneian virgin
Stands beneath her bathing bower.

There the laurel'd wreaths o'erarching
Crown'd the dainty shuddering maid;
There the dark prophetic laurel
Kiss'd her with its sister shade.

There the young green glistening leaflets
Hush'd with love their breezy peal;
There the little opening flowerets
Blush'd beneath her vermeil heel!

There among the conscious arbours
Sounds of soft tumultuous wail,
Mysteries of love, melodious,
Came upon the lyric gale!

Breathings of a deep enchantment,
Effluence of immortal grace,
Flitted round her faltering footstep,
Spread a balm about her face!

Witless of the enamour'd presence,
Like a dreamy lotus bud
From its drowsy stem down-drooping,
Gazed she in the glowing flood.

Softly sweet with fluttering presage,
Felt she that ethereal sense,
Drinking charms of love delirious,
Reaping bliss of love intense!

All the air was thrill'd with sunrise,
Birds made music of her name,
And the god-impregnate water
Claspt her image ere she came.

Richer for that glance unconscious!
Dearer for that soft dismay!
And the sudden self-possession!
And the smile as bright as day!

Plunging 'mid her scattered tresses,
With her blue invoking eyes;
See her like a star descending!
Like a rosebud see her rise!

Like a rosebud in the morning
Dashing off its jewell'd dew,
Ere unfolding all its fragrance
It is gathered by the muse!

Beauteous in the foamy laughter
Bubbling round her shrinking waist,
Lo! from locks and lips and eyelids
Rain the glittering pearl-drops chaste!

And about the maiden rapture
Still the ruddy ripples play'd,
Ebbing round in startled circlets
When her arms began to wade;

Flowing in like tides attracted
To the glowing crescent shine!
Clasping her ambrosial whiteness
Like an Autumn-tinted vine!

Sinking low with love's emotion!
Levying with look and tone
All love's rosy arts to mimic
Cytherea's magic zone!

Trembling up with adoration
To the crimson daisy tip
Budding from the snowy bosom—

Fainter than the rose-red lip!

Rising in a storm of wavelets,
That for shelter, feigning fright,
Prest to those twin-heaving havens,
Harbour'd there beneath her light;

Gleaming in a whirl of eddies
Round her lucid throat and neck;
Eddying in a gleam of dimples
Up against her bloomy cheek;

Bribing all the breezy water
With rich warmth, the nymph to keep
In a self-imprison'd plaisance,
Tempting her from deep to deep.

Till at last delirious passion
Thrill'd the god to wild excess,
And the fervour of a moment
Made divinity confess;

And he stood in all his glory!
But so radiant, being near,
That her eyes were frozen on him
In a fascinated fear!

All with orient splendour shining,
All with roseate birth aglow,
Gleam'd the golden god before her,
With his golden crescent bow.

Soon the dazzled light subsided,
And he seem'd a beauteous youth,
Form'd to gain the maiden's murmurs,
And to pledge the vows of truth.

Ah! that thus he had continued!
O, that such for her had been!
Graceful with all godlike beauty,
But so humanly serene!

Cheeks, and mouth, and mellow ringlets,
Bounteous as the mid-day beam;
Pleading looks and wistful tremour,
Tender as a maiden's dream!

Palms that like a bird's throbb'd bosom
Palpitate with eagerness,

Lips, the bridals of the roses,
Dewy sweet from the caress!

Lips and limbs, and eyes and ringlets,
Swaying, praying to one prayer,
Like a lyre, swept by a spirit,
In the still, enraptur'd air.

Like a lyre in some far valley,
Uttering ravishments divine!
All its strings to viewless fingers
Yearning, modulations fine!

Yearning with melodious fervour!
Like a beauteous maiden flower,
When the young beloved three paces
Hovers from the bridal bower.

Throbbing thro' the dawning stillness!
As a heart within a breast,
When the young beloved is stepping
Radiant to the nuptial nest.

O for Daphne! gentle Daphne
Ever warmer by degrees
Whispers full of hopes and visions
Throng her ears like honey bees!

Never yet was lonely blossom
Woo'd with such delicious voice!
Never since hath mortal maiden
Dwelt on such celestial choice!

Love-suffused she quivers, falters—
Falters, sighs, but never speaks,
All her rosy blood up-gushing
Overflows her ripe young cheeks.

Blushing, sweet with virgin blushes,
All her loveliness a-flame,
Stands she in the orient waters,
Stricken o'er with speechless shame!

Ah! but lovelier, ever lovelier,
As more deep the colour glows,
And the honey-laden lily
Changes to the fragrant rose.

While the god with meek embraces,

Whispering all his sacred charms,
Softly folds her, gently holds her,
In his white encircling arms!

But, O Dian! veil not wholly
Thy pale crescent from the morn!
Vanish not, O virgin goddess,
With that look of pallid scorn!

Still thy pure protecting influence
Shed from those fair watchful eyes!—
Lo! her angry orb has vanished,
And the bright sun thrones the skies!

Voicelessly the forest Virgin
Vanished! but one look she gave—
Keen as Niobe's arrow
Thro' the maiden's heart it drove.

Thus toward that throning bosom
Where all earth is warmed,—each spot
Nourished with autumnal blessings—
Icy chill was Daphne caught.

Icy chill! but swift revulsion
All her gentler self renewed,
Even as icy Winter quickens
With bud-opening warmth imbued.

Even as a torpid brooklet,
That to the night-gleaming moon
Flashed in turn the frozen glances,
Melts upon the breast of noon.

But no more—O never, never,
Turns she to that bosom bright,
Swiftly all her senses counsel,
All her nerves are strung to flight.

O'er the brows of radiant Pindus
Rolls a shadow dark and cold,
And a sound of lamentation
Issues from its mournful fold.

Voice of the far-sighted Muses!
Cry of keen foreboding song!
Every cleft of startled Tempe
Tingles with it sharp and long.

Over bourn and bosk and dingle,
Over rivers, over rills,
Runs the sad subservient Echo
Toward the dim blue distant hills!

And another and another!
'Tis a cry more wild than all;
And the hills with muffled voices
Answer 'Daphne!' to the call.

And another and another!
'Tis a cry so wildly sweet,
That her charmed heart turns rebel
To the instinct of her feet;

And she pauses for an instant;
But his arms have scarcely slid
Round her waist in cestian girdles,
And his low voluptuous lid

Lifted pleading, and the honey
Of his mouth for hers athirst,
Ruby glistening, raised for moisture—
Like a bud that waits to burst

In the sweet espousing showers—
And his tongue has scarce begun
With its inarticulate burthen,
And the clouds scarce show the sun

As it pierces thro' a crevice
Of the mass that closed it o'er,
When again the horror flashes—
And she turns to flight once more!

And again o'er radiant Pindus
Rolls the shadow dark and cold,
And the sound of lamentation
Issues from its sable fold!

And again the light winds chide her
As she darts from his embrace—
And again the far-voiced echoes
Speak their tidings of the chase.

Loudly now as swiftly, swiftly,
O'er the glimmering sands she speeds;
Wildly now as in the furzes
From the piercing spikes she bleeds.

Deeply and with direful anguish,
As above each crimson drop
Passion checks the god Apollo,
And love bids him weep and stop.—

He above each drop of crimson
Shadowing—like the laurel leaf
That above himself will shadow—
Sheds a fadeless look of grief.

Then with love's remorseful discord,
With its own desire at war,
Sighing turns, while dimly fleeting
Daphne flies the chase afar.

But all nature is against her!
Pan, with all his sylvan troop,
Thro' the vista'd woodland valleys
Blocks her course with cry and whoop!

In the twilights of the thickets
Trees bend down their gnarled boughs,
Wild green leaves and low curved branches
Hold her hair and beat her brows.

Many a brake of brushwood covert,
Where cold darkness slumbers mute,
Slips a shrub to thwart her passage,
Slides a hand to clutch her foot.

Glens and glades of lushest verdure
Toil her in their tawny mesh,
Wilder-woofed ways and alleys
Lock her struggling limbs in leash.

Feathery grasses, flowery mosses,
Knot themselves to make her trip;
Sprays and stubborn sprigs outstretching
Put a bridle on her lip;

Many a winding lane betrays her,
Many a sudden bosky shoot,
And her knee makes many a stumble
O'er some hidden damp old root,

Whose quaint face peers green and dusky
'Mongst the matted growth of plants,
While she rises wild and weltering,

Speeding on with many pants.

Tangles of the wild red strawberry
Spread their freckled trammels frail;
In the pathway creeping brambles
Catch her in their thorny trail.

All the widely sweeping greensward
Shifts and swims from knoll to knoll;
Grey rough-fingered oak and elm wood
Push her by from bole to bole.

Groves of lemon, groves of citron,
Tall high-foliaged plane and palm,
Bloomy myrtle, light-blue olive,
Wave her back with gusts of balm.

Languid jasmine, scrambling briony,
Walls of close-festooning braid,
Fling themselves about her, mingling
With her wafted looks, waylaid.

Twisting bindweed, honey'd woodbine,
Cling to her, while, red and blue,
On her rounded form ripe berries
Dash and die in gory dew.

Running ivies dark and lingering
Round her light limbs drag and twine;
Round her waist with languorous tendrils
Reels and wreathes the juicy vine;

Reining in the flying creature
With its arms about her mouth;
Bursting all its mellowing bunches
To seduce her husky drouth;

Crowning her with amorous clusters;
Pouring down her sloping back
Fresh-born wines in glittering rillets,
Following her in crimson track.

Buried, drenched in dewy foliage,
Thus she glimmers from the dawn,
Watched by every forest creature,
Fleet-foot Oread, frolic Faun.

Silver-sandalled Arethusa
Not more swiftly fled the sands,

Fled the plains and fled the sunlights,
Fled the murmuring ocean strands.

O, that now the earth would open!
O, that now the shades would hide!
O, that now the gods would shelter!
Caverns lead and seas divide!

Not more faint soft-lowing Io
Panted in those starry eyes,
When the sleepless midnight meadows
Piteously implored the skies!

Still her breathless flight she urges
By the sanctuary stream,
And the god with golden swiftness
Follows like an eastern beam.

Her the close bewildering greenery
Darkens with its duskiest green,—
Him each little leaflet welcomes,
Flushing with an orient sheen.

Thus he nears, and now all Tempe
Rings with his melodious cry,
Avenues and blue expanses
Beam in his large lustrous eye!

All the branches start to music!
As if from a secret spring
Thousands of sweet bills are bubbling
In the nest and on the wing.

Gleams and shines the glassy river
And rich valleys every one;
But of all the throbbing beauty
Brightest! singled by the sun!

Ivy round her glimmering ankle,
Vine about her glowing brow,
Never sure was bride so beautiful,
Daphne, chosen nymph, as thou!

Thus he nears! and now she feels him
Breathing hot on every limb;
And he hears her own quick pantings—
Ah! that they might be for him.

O, that like the flower he tramples,

Bending from his golden tread,
Full of fair celestial ardours,
She would bow her bridal head.

O, that like the flower she presses,
Nodding from her lily touch,
Light as in the harmless breezes,
She would know the god for such!

See! the golden arms are round her—
To the air she grasps and clings!
See! his glowing arms have wound her—
To the sky she shrieks and springs!

See! the flushing chace of Tempe
Trembles with Olympian air—
See! green sprigs and buds are shooting
From those white raised arms of prayer!

In the earth her feet are rooting!—
Breasts and limbs and lifted eyes,
Hair and lips and stretching fingers,
Fade away—and fadeless rise.

And the god whose fervent rapture
Clasps her finds his close embrace
Full of palpitating branches,
And new leaves that bud apace,

Bound his wonder-stricken forehead;—
While in ebbing measures slow
Sounds of softly dying pulses
Pause and quiver, pause and go;

Go, and come again, and flutter
On the verge of life,—then flee!
All the white ambrosial beauty
Is a lustrous Laurel Tree!

Still with the great panting love-chase
All its running sap is warmed;—
But from head to foot the virgin
Is transfigured and transformed.

Changed!—yet the green Dryad nature
Is instinct with human ties,
And above its anguish'd lover
Breathes pathetic sympathies;

Sympathies of love and sorrow;
Joy in her divine escape;
Breathing through her bursting foliage
Comfort to his bending shape.

Vainly now the floating Naiads
Seek to pierce the laurel maze,
Nought but laurel meets their glances,
Laurel glistens as they gaze.

Nought but bright prophetic laurel!
Laurel over eyes and brows,
Over limbs and over bosom,
Laurel leaves and laurel boughs!

And in vain the listening Dryad
Shells her hand against her ear!—
All is silence—save the echo
Travelling in the distance drear.

LONDON BY LAMPLIGHT

There stands a singer in the street,
He has an audience motley and meet;
Above him lowers the London night,
And around the lamps are flaring bright.

His minstrelsy may be unchaste—
'Tis much unto that motley taste,
And loud the laughter he provokes
From those sad slaves of obscene jokes.

But woe is many a passer by
Who as he goes turns half an eye,
To see the human form divine
Thus Circe-wise changed into swine!

Make up the sum of either sex
That all our human hopes perplex,
With those unhappy shapes that know
The silent streets and pale cock-crow.

And can I trace in such dull eyes
Of fireside peace or country skies?
And could those haggard cheeks presume
To memories of a May-tide bloom?

Those violated forms have been
The pride of many a flowering green;
And still the virgin bosom heaves
With daisy meads and dewy leaves.

But stygian darkness reigns within
The river of death from the founts of sin;
And one prophetic water rolls
Its gas-lit surface for their souls.

I will not hide the tragic sight—
Those drown'd black locks, those dead lips white,
Will rise from out the slimy flood,
And cry before God's throne for blood!

Those stiffened limbs, that swollen face,—
Pollution's last and best embrace,
Will call, as such a picture can,
For retribution upon man.

Hark! how their feeble laughter rings,
While still the ballad-monger sings,
And flatters their unhappy breasts
With poisonous words and pungent jests.

O how would every daisy blush
To see them 'mid that earthy crush!
O dumb would be the evening thrush,
And hoary look the hawthorn bush!

The meadows of their infancy
Would shrink from them, and every tree,
And every little laughing spot,
Would hush itself and know them not.

Precursor to what black despairs
Was that child's face which once was theirs!
And O to what a world of guile
Was herald that young angel smile!

That face which to a father's eye
Was balm for all anxiety;
That smile which to a mother's heart
Went swifter than the swallow's dart!

O happy homes! that still they know
At intervals, with what a woe
Would ye look on them, dim and strange,
Suffering worse than winter change!

And yet could I transplant them there,
To breathe again the innocent air
Of youth, and once more reconcile
Their outcast looks with nature's smile;

Could I but give them one clear day
Of this delicious loving May,
Release their souls from anguish dark,
And stand them underneath the lark;—

I think that Nature would have power
To graft again her blighted flower
Upon the broken stem, renew
Some portion of its early hue;—

The heavy flood of tears unlock,
More precious than the Scriptured rock;
At least instil a happier mood,
And bring them back to womanhood.

Alas! how many lost ones claim
This refuge from despair and shame!
How many, longing for the light,
Sink deeper in the abyss this night!

O, crying sin! O, blushing thought!
Not only unto those that wrought
The misery and deadly blight;
But those that outcast them this night!

O, agony of grief! for who
Less dainty than his race, will do
Such battle for their human right,

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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