

# COVENTRY PATMORE

THE ANGEL IN  
THE HOUSE

**Coventry Patmore**  
**The Angel in the House**

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*The Angel in the House:*

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# Coventry Patmore

## The Angel in the House

### Book I

#### THE PROLOGUE

##### 1

'Mine is no horse with wings, to gain  
The region of the spheral chime;  
He does but drag a rumbling wain,  
Cheer'd by the coupled bells of rhyme;  
And if at Fame's bewitching note  
My homely Pegasus pricks an ear,  
The world's cart-collar hugs his throat,  
And he's too wise to prance or rear.'

## 2

Thus ever answer'd Vaughan his Wife,  
Who, more than he, desired his fame;  
But, in his heart, his thoughts were rife  
How for her sake to earn a name.  
With bays poetic three times crown'd,  
And other college honours won,  
He, if he chose, might be renown'd,  
He had but little doubt, she none;  
And in a loftier phrase he talk'd  
With her, upon their Wedding-Day,  
(The eighth), while through the fields they walk'd,  
Their children shouting by the way.

## 3

'Not careless of the gift of song,  
Nor out of love with noble fame,  
I, meditating much and long  
What I should sing, how win a name,  
Considering well what theme unsung,  
What reason worth the cost of rhyme,  
Remains to loose the poet's tongue

In these last days, the dregs of time,  
Learn that to me, though born so late,  
There does, beyond desert, befall  
(May my great fortune make me great!)  
The first of themes, sung last of all.  
In green and undiscover'd ground,  
Yet near where many others sing,  
I have the very well-head found  
Whence gushes the Pierian Spring.'

#### 4

Then she: 'What is it, Dear? The Life  
Of Arthur, or Jerusalem's Fall?'  
'Neither: your gentle self, my Wife,  
And love, that grows from one to all.  
And if I faithfully proclaim  
Of these the exceeding worthiness,  
Surely the sweetest wreath of Fame  
Shall, to your hope, my brows caress;  
And if, by virtue of my choice  
Of this, the most heart-touching theme  
That ever tuned a poet's voice,  
I live, as I am bold to dream,  
To be delight to many days,  
And into silence only cease

When those are still, who shared their bays  
    With Laura and with Beatrice,  
Imagine, Love, how learned men  
    Will deep-conceiv'd devices find,  
Beyond my purpose and my ken,  
    An ancient bard of simple mind.  
You, Sweet, his Mistress, Wife, and Muse,  
    Were you for mortal woman meant?  
Your praises give a hundred clues  
    To mythological intent!  
And, severing thus the truth from trope,  
    In you the Commentators see  
Outlines occult of abstract scope,  
    A future for philosophy!  
Your arm's on mine! these are the meads  
    In which we pass our living days;  
There Avon runs, now hid with reeds,  
    Now brightly brimming pebbly bays;  
Those are our children's songs that come  
    With bells and bleatings of the sheep;  
And there, in yonder English home,  
    We thrive on mortal food and sleep!  
She laugh'd. How proud she always was  
    To feel how proud he was of her!  
But he had grown distraught, because  
    The Muse's mood began to stir.

His purpose with performance crown'd,  
He to his well-pleas'd Wife rehears'd,  
When next their Wedding-Day came round,  
His leisure's labour, 'Book the First.'

# **CANTO I**

## **The Cathedral Close**

### **PRELUDES**

#### **I**

#### **The Impossibility**

Lo, love's obey'd by all. 'Tis right  
That all should know what they obey,  
Lest erring conscience damp delight,  
And folly laugh our joys away.  
Thou Primal Love, who grantest wings  
And voices to the woodland birds,  
Grant me the power of saying things  
Too simple and too sweet for words!

## II

### Love's Really

I walk, I trust, with open eyes;  
I've travell'd half my worldly course;  
And in the way behind me lies  
Much vanity and some remorse;  
I've lived to feel how pride may part  
Spirits, tho' match'd like hand and glove;  
I've blush'd for love's abode, the heart;  
But have not disbelieved in love;  
Nor unto love, sole mortal thing  
Of worth immortal, done the wrong  
To count it, with the rest that sing,  
Unworthy of a serious song;  
And love is my reward; for now,  
When most of dead'ning time complain,  
The myrtle blooms upon my brow,  
Its odour quickens all my brain.

### III

## The Poet's Confidence

The richest realm of all the earth  
Is counted still a heathen land:  
Lo, I, like Joshua, now go forth  
To give it into Israel's hand.  
I will not hearken blame or praise;  
For so should I dishonour do  
To that sweet Power by which these Lays  
Alone are lovely, good, and true;  
Nor credence to the world's cries give,  
Which ever preach and still prevent  
Pure passion's high prerogative  
To make, not follow, precedent.  
From love's abysmal ether rare  
If I to men have here made known  
New truths, they, like new stars, were there  
Before, though not yet written down.  
Moving but as the feelings move,  
I run, or loiter with delight,  
Or pause to mark where gentle Love  
Persuades the soul from height to height.  
Yet, know ye, though my words are gay

As David's dance, which Michal scorn'd.  
If kindly you receive the Lay,  
You shall be sweetly help'd and warn'd.

## THE CATHEDRAL CLOSE

### 1

Once more I came to Sarum Close,  
With joy half memory, half desire,  
And breathed the sunny wind that rose  
And blew the shadows o'er the Spire,  
And toss'd the lilac's scented plumes,  
And sway'd the chestnut's thousand cones,  
And fill'd my nostrils with perfumes,  
And shaped the clouds in waifs and zones,  
And wafted down the serious strain  
Of Sarum bells, when, true to time,  
I reach'd the Dean's, with heart and brain  
That trembled to the trembling chime.

'Twas half my home, six years ago.  
The six years had not alter'd it:  
Red-brick and ashlar, long and low,  
With dormers and with oriels lit.  
Geranium, lychnis, rose array'd  
The windows, all wide open thrown;  
And some one in the Study play'd  
The Wedding-March of Mendelssohn.  
And there it was I last took leave:  
'Twas Christmas: I remember'd now  
The cruel girls, who feign'd to grieve,  
Took down the evergreens; and how  
The holly into blazes woke  
The fire, lighting the large, low room,  
A dim, rich lustre of old oak  
And crimson velvet's glowing gloom.  
No change had touch'd Dean Churchill: kind,  
By widowhood more than winters bent,  
And settled in a cheerful mind,  
As still forecasting heaven's content.  
Well might his thoughts be fix'd on high,  
Now she was there! Within her face  
Humility and dignity  
Were met in a most sweet embrace.

She seem'd expressly sent below  
To teach our erring minds to see  
The rhythmic change of time's swift flow  
As part of still eternity.  
Her life, all honour, observed, with awe  
Which cross experience could not mar,  
The fiction of the Christian law  
That all men honourable are;  
And so her smile at once conferr'd  
High flattery and benign reproof;  
And I, a rude boy, strangely stirr'd,  
Grew courtly in my own behoof.  
The years, so far from doing her wrong,  
Anointed her with gracious balm,  
And made her brows more and more young  
With wreaths of amaranth and palm.

### 3

Was this her eldest, Honor; prude,  
Who would not let me pull the swing;  
Who, kiss'd at Christmas, call'd me rude,  
And, sobbing low, refused to sing?  
How changed! In shape no slender Grace,  
But Venus; milder than the dove;  
Her mother's air; her Norman face;

Her large sweet eyes, clear lakes of love.  
Mary I knew. In former time  
Ailing and pale, she thought that bliss  
Was only for a better clime,  
And, heavenly overmuch, scorn'd this.  
I, rash with theories of the right,  
Which stretch'd the tether of my Creed,  
But did not break it, held delight  
Half discipline. We disagreed.  
She told the Dean I wanted grace.  
Now she was kindest of the three,  
And soft wild roses deck'd her face.  
And, what, was this my Mildred, she  
To herself and all a sweet surprise?  
My Pet, who romp'd and roll'd a hoop?  
I wonder'd where those daisy eyes  
Had found their touching curve and droop.

#### 4

Unmannerly times! But now we sat  
Stranger than strangers; till I caught  
And answer'd Mildred's smile; and that  
Spread to the rest, and freedom brought.  
The Dean talk'd little, looking on,  
Of three such daughters justly vain.

What letters they had had from Bonn,  
Said Mildred, and what plums from Spain!  
By Honor I was kindly task'd  
To excuse my never coming down  
From Cambridge; Mary smiled and ask'd  
Were Kant and Goethe yet outgrown?  
And, pleased, we talk'd the old days o'er;  
And, parting, I for pleasure sigh'd.  
To be there as a friend, (since more),  
Seem'd then, seems still, excuse for pride;  
For something that abode endued  
With temple-like repose, an air  
Of life's kind purposes pursued  
With order'd freedom sweet and fair.  
A tent pitch'd in a world not right  
It seem'd, whose inmates, every one,  
On tranquil faces bore the light  
Of duties beautifully done,  
And humbly, though they had few peers,  
Kept their own laws, which seem'd to be  
The fair sum of six thousand years'  
Traditions of civility.

# CANTO II

## Mary And Mildred

### PRELUDES

#### I

#### The Paragon

When I behold the skies aloft  
    Passing the pageantry of dreams,  
The cloud whose bosom, cygnet-soft,  
    A couch for nuptial Juno seems,  
The ocean broad, the mountains bright,  
    The shadowy vales with feeding herds,  
I from my lyre the music smite,  
    Nor want for justly matching words.  
All forces of the sea and air,  
    All interests of hill and plain,  
I so can sing, in seasons fair,  
    That who hath felt may feel again.

Elated oft by such free songs,  
I think with utterance free to raise  
That hymn for which the whole world longs,  
A worthy hymn in woman's praise;  
A hymn bright-noted like a bird's,  
Arousing these song-sleepy times  
With rhapsodies of perfect words,  
Ruled by returning kiss of rhymes.  
But when I look on her and hope  
To tell with joy what I admire,  
My thoughts lie cramp'd in narrow scope,  
Or in the feeble birth expire;  
No mystery of well-woven speech,  
No simplest phrase of tenderest fall,  
No liken'd excellence can reach  
Her, thee most excellent of all,  
The best half of creation's best,  
Its heart to feel, its eye to see,  
The crown and complex of the rest,  
Its aim and its epitome.  
Nay, might I utter my conceit,  
'Twere after all a vulgar song,  
For she's so simply, subtly sweet,  
My deepest rapture does her wrong.  
Yet is it now my chosen task  
To sing her worth as Maid and Wife;  
Nor happier post than this I ask,  
To live her laureate all my life.  
On wings of love uplifted free,

And by her gentleness made great,  
I'll teach how noble man should be  
    To match with such a lovely mate;  
And then in her may move the more  
    The woman's wish to be desired,  
(By praise increased), till both shall soar,  
    With blissful emulations fired.  
And, as geranium, pink, or rose  
    Is thrice itself through power of art,  
So may my happy skill disclose  
    New fairness even in her fair heart;  
Until that churl shall nowhere be  
    Who bends not, awed, before the throne  
Of her affecting majesty,  
    So meek, so far unlike our own;  
Until (for who may hope too much  
    From her who wields the powers of love?)  
Our lifted lives at last shall touch  
    That happy goal to which they move;  
Until we find, as darkness rolls  
    Away, and evil mists dissolve,  
That nuptial contrasts are the poles  
    On which the heavenly spheres revolve.

## II

### Love at Large

Whene'er I come where ladies are,  
    How sad soever I was before,  
Though like a ship frost-bound and far  
    Withheld in ice from the ocean's roar,  
Third-winter'd in that dreadful dock,  
    With stiffen'd cordage, sails decay'd,  
And crew that care for calm and shock  
    Alike, too dull to be dismay'd,  
Yet, if I come where ladies are,  
    How sad soever I was before,  
Then is my sadness banish'd far,  
    And I am like that ship no more;  
Or like that ship if the ice-field splits,  
    Burst by the sudden polar Spring,  
And all thank God with their warming wits,  
    And kiss each other and dance and sing,  
And hoist fresh sails, that make the breeze  
    Blow them along the liquid sea,  
Out of the North, where life did freeze,  
    Into the haven where they would be.

### III

#### Love and Duty

Anne lived so truly from above,  
She was so gentle and so good,  
That duty bade me fall in love,  
And 'but for that,' thought I, 'I should!'  
I worshipp'd Kate with all my will,  
In idle moods you seem to see  
A noble spirit in a hill,  
A human touch about a tree.

### IV

#### A Distinction

The lack of lovely pride, in her  
Who strives to please, my pleasure numbs,  
And still the maid I most prefer

Whose care to please with pleasing comes.

## MARY AND MILDRED

### 1

One morning, after Church, I walk'd  
Alone with Mary on the lawn,  
And felt myself, howe'er we talk'd,  
To grave themes delicately drawn.  
When she, delighted, found I knew  
More of her peace than she supposed,  
Our confidences heavenwards grew,  
Like fox-glove buds, in pairs disclosed.  
Our former faults did we confess,  
Our ancient feud was more than heal'd,  
And, with the woman's eagerness  
For amity full-sign'd and seal'd,  
She, offering up for sacrifice  
Her heart's reserve, brought out to show  
Some verses, made when she was ice  
To all but Heaven, six years ago;  
Since happier grown! I took and read  
The neat-writ lines. She, void of guile,  
Too late repenting, blush'd, and said,

I must not think about the style.

2

‘Day after day, until to-day,  
Imaged the others gone before,  
The same dull task, the weary way,  
The weakness pardon’d o’er and o’er,  
‘The thwarted thirst, too faintly felt,  
For joy’s well-nigh forgotten life,  
The restless heart, which, when I knelt,  
Made of my worship barren strife.  
‘Ah, whence to-day’s so sweet release,  
This clearance light of all my care,  
This conscience free, this fertile peace,  
These softly folded wings of prayer,  
‘This calm and more than conquering love,  
With which nought evil dares to cope,  
This joy that lifts no glance above,  
For faith too sure, too sweet for hope?  
‘O, happy time, too happy change,  
It will not live, though fondly nurst!  
Full soon the sun will seem as strange  
As now the cloud which seems dispersed.’

### 3

She from a rose-tree shook the blight;  
And well she knew that I knew well  
Her grace with silence to requite;  
And, answering now the luncheon bell,  
I laugh'd at Mildred's laugh, which made  
All melancholy wrong, its mood  
Such sweet self-confidence display'd,  
So glad a sense of present good.

### 4

I laugh'd and sigh'd: for I confess  
I never went to Ball, or Fête,  
Or Show, but in pursuit express  
Of my predestinated mate;  
And thus to me, who had in sight  
The happy chance upon the cards,  
Each beauty blossom'd in the light  
Of tender personal regards;  
And, in the records of my breast,  
Red-letter'd, eminently fair,  
Stood sixteen, who, beyond the rest,

By turns till then had been my care:  
At Berlin three, one at St. Cloud,  
At Chatteris, near Cambridge, one,  
At Ely four, in London two,  
Two at Bowness, in Paris none,  
And, last and best, in Sarum three;  
But dearest of the whole fair troop,  
In judgment of the moment, she  
Whose daisy eyes had learn'd to droop.  
Her very faults my fancy fired;  
My loving will, so thwarted, grew;  
And, bent on worship, I admired  
Whate'er she was, with partial view.  
And yet when, as to-day, her smile  
Was prettiest, I could not but note  
Honorina, less admired the while,  
Was lovelier, though from love remote.

# CANTO III

## Honorina

### PRELUDES

#### I

#### The Lover

He meets, by heavenly chance express,  
The destined maid; some hidden hand  
Unveils to him that loveliness  
Which others cannot understand.  
His merits in her presence grow,  
To match the promise in her eyes,  
And round her happy footsteps blow  
The authentic airs of Paradise.  
For joy of her he cannot sleep;  
Her beauty haunts him all the night;  
It melts his heart, it makes him weep  
For wonder, worship, and delight.

O, paradox of love, he longs,  
Most humble when he most aspires,  
To suffer scorn and cruel wrongs  
From her he honours and desires.  
Her graces make him rich, and ask  
No guerdon; this imperial style  
Affronts him; he disdains to bask,  
The pensioner of her priceless smile.  
He prays for some hard thing to do,  
Some work of fame and labour immense,  
To stretch the languid bulk and thew  
Of love's fresh-born magnipotence.  
No smallest boon were bought too dear,  
Though barter'd for his love-sick life;  
Yet trusts he, with undaunted cheer,  
To vanquish heaven, and call her Wife  
He notes how queens of sweetness still  
Neglect their crowns, and stoop to mate;  
How, self-consign'd with lavish will,  
They ask but love proportionate;  
How swift pursuit by small degrees,  
Love's tactic, works like miracle;  
How valour, clothed in courtesies,  
Brings down the haughtiest citadel;  
And therefore, though he merits not  
To kiss the braid upon her skirt,  
His hope, discouraged ne'er a jot,  
Out-soars all possible desert.

## II

### Love a Virtue

Strong passions mean weak will, and he  
Who truly knows the strength and bliss  
Which are in love, will own with me  
No passion but a virtue 'tis.  
Few hear my word; it soars above  
The subtlest senses of the swarm  
Of wretched things which know not love,  
Their Psyche still a wingless worm.  
Ice-cold seems heaven's noble glow  
To spirits whose vital heat is hell;  
And to corrupt hearts even so  
The songs I sing, the tale I tell.  
These cannot see the robes of white  
In which I sing of love. Alack,  
But darkness shows in heavenly light,  
Though whiteness, in the dark, is black!

### III

## The Attainment

You love? That's high as you shall go;  
For 'tis as true as Gospel text,  
Not noble then is never so,  
Either in this world or the next.

## HONORIA

### 1

Grown weary with a week's exile  
From those fair friends, I rode to see  
The church-restorings; lounged awhile,  
And met the Dean; was ask'd to tea,  
And found their cousin, Frederick Graham  
At Honor's side. Was I concern'd,  
If, when she sang, his colour came,  
That mine, as with a buffet, burn'd?

A man to please a girl! thought I,  
Retorting his forced smiles, the shrouds  
Of wrath, so hid as she was by,  
Sweet moon between her lighted clouds!

## 2

Whether this Cousin was the cause  
I know not, but I seem'd to see,  
The first time then, how fair she was,  
How much the fairest of the three.  
Each stopp'd to let the other go;  
But, time-bound, he arose the first.  
Stay'd he in Sarum long? If so  
I hoped to see him at the Hurst.  
No: he had call'd here, on his way  
To Portsmouth, where the Arrogant,  
His ship, was; he should leave next day,  
For two years' cruise in the Levant.

## 3

Had love in her yet struck its germs?  
I watch'd. Her farewell show'd me plain

She loved, on the majestic terms  
That she should not be loved again;  
And so her cousin, parting, felt.  
Hope in his voice and eye was dead.  
Compassion did my malice melt;  
Then went I home to a restless bed.  
I, who admired her too, could see  
His infinite remorse at this  
Great mystery, that she should be  
So beautiful, yet not be his,  
And, pitying, long'd to plead his part;  
But scarce could tell, so strange my whim,  
Whether the weight upon my heart  
Was sorrow for myself or him.

#### 4

She was all mildness; yet 'twas writ  
In all her grace, most legibly,  
'He that's for heaven itself unfit,  
Let him not hope to merit me.'  
And such a challenge, quite apart  
From thoughts of love, humbled, and thus  
To sweet repentance moved my heart,  
And made me more magnanimous,  
And led me to review my life,

Inquiring where in aught the least,  
If question were of her for wife,  
    Ill might be mended, hope increas'd.  
Not that I soar'd so far above  
    Myself, as this great hope to dare;  
And yet I well foresaw that love  
    Might hope where reason must despair;  
And, half-resenting the sweet pride  
    Which would not ask me to admire,  
'Oh,' to my secret heart I sigh'd,  
    'That I were worthy to desire!'

## 5

As drowsiness my brain reliev'd,  
    A shrill defiance of all to arms,  
Shriek'd by the stable-cock, receiv'd  
    An angry answer from three farms.  
And, then, I dream'd that I, her knight,  
    A clarion's haughty pathos heard,  
And rode securely to the fight,  
    Cased in the scarf she had conferr'd;  
And there, the bristling lists behind,  
    Saw many, and vanquish'd all I saw  
Of her unnumber'd cousin-kind,  
    In Navy, Army, Church, and Law;

Smitten, the warriors somehow turn'd  
To Sarum choristers, whose song,  
Mix'd with celestial sorrow, yearn'd  
With joy no memory can prolong;  
And phantasms as absurd and sweet  
Merged each in each in endless chace,  
And everywhere I seem'd to meet  
The haunting fairness of her face.

# CANTO IV

## The Morning Call

### PRELUDES

#### I

#### The Rose of the World

Lo, when the Lord made North and South  
And sun and moon ordained, He,  
Forthbringing each by word of mouth  
In order of its dignity,  
Did man from the crude clay express  
By sequence, and, all else decreed,  
He form'd the woman; nor might less  
Than Sabbath such a work succeed.  
And still with favour singled out,  
Marr'd less than man by mortal fall,  
Her disposition is devout,  
Her countenance angelical;

The best things that the best believe  
Are in her face so kindly writ  
The faithless, seeing her, conceive  
Not only heaven, but hope of it;  
No idle thought her instinct shrouds,  
But fancy chequers settled sense,  
Like alteration of the clouds  
On noonday's azure permanence;  
Pure dignity, composure, ease  
Declare affections nobly fix'd,  
And impulse sprung from due degrees  
Of sense and spirit sweetly mix'd.  
Her modesty, her chiefest grace,  
The cestus clasping Venus' side,  
How potent to deject the face  
Of him who would affront its pride!  
Wrong dares not in her presence speak,  
Nor spotted thought its taint disclose  
Under the protest of a cheek  
Outbragging Nature's boast the rose.  
In mind and manners how discreet;  
How artless in her very art;  
How candid in discourse; how sweet  
The concord of her lips and heart;  
How simple and how circumspect;  
How subtle and how fancy-free;  
Though sacred to her love, how deck'd  
With unexclusive courtesy;  
How quick in talk to see from far

The way to vanquish or evade;  
How able her persuasions are  
To prove, her reasons to persuade;  
How (not to call true instinct's bent  
And woman's very nature, harm),  
How amiable and innocent  
Her pleasure in her power to charm;  
How humbly careful to attract,  
Though crown'd with all the soul desires,  
Connubial aptitude exact,  
Diversity that never tires.

## II

### The Tribute

Boon Nature to the woman bows;  
She walks in earth's whole glory clad,  
And, chiefest far herself of shows,  
All others help her, and are glad:  
No splendour 'neath the sky's proud dome  
But serves for her familiar wear;  
The far-fetch'd diamond finds its home  
Flashing and smouldering in her hair;  
For her the seas their pearls reveal;

Art and strange lands her pomp supply  
With purple, chrome, and cochineal,  
Ochre, and lapis lazuli;  
The worm its golden woof presents;  
Whatever runs, flies, dives, or delves,  
All doff for her their ornaments,  
Which suit her better than themselves;  
And all, by this their power to give,  
Proving her right to take, proclaim  
Her beauty's clear prerogative  
To profit so by Eden's blame.

### III

## Compensation

That nothing here may want its praise,  
Know, she who in her dress reveals  
A fine and modest taste, displays  
More loveliness than she conceals.

# THE MORNING CALL

## 1

'By meekness charm'd, or proud to allow  
A queenly claim to live admired,  
Full many a lady has ere now  
My apprehensive fancy fired,  
And woven many a transient chain;  
But never lady like to this,  
Who holds me as the weather-vane  
Is held by yonder clematis.  
She seems the life of nature's powers;  
Her beauty is the genial thought  
Which makes the sunshine bright; the flowers,  
But for their hint of her, were nought.'

## 2

A voice, the sweeter for the grace  
Of suddenness, while thus I dream'd,  
'Good morning!' said or sang. Her face

The mirror of the morning seem'd.  
Her sisters in the garden walk'd,  
And would I come? Across the Hall  
She led me; and we laugh'd and talk'd,  
And praised the Flower-show and the Ball;  
And Mildred's pinks had gain'd the Prize;  
And, stepping like the light-foot fawn,  
She brought me 'Wiltshire Butterflies,'  
The Prize-book; then we paced the lawn,  
Close-cut, and with geranium-plots,  
A rival glow of green and red;  
Than counted sixty apricots  
On one small tree; the gold-fish fed;  
And watch'd where, black with scarlet tans,  
Proud Psyche stood and flash'd like flame,  
Showing and shutting splendid fans;  
And in the prize we found its name.

### 3

The sweet hour lapsed, and left my breast  
A load of joy and tender care;  
And this delight, which life oppress'd,  
To fix'd aims grew, that ask'd for pray'r.  
I rode home slowly; whip-in-hand  
And soil'd bank-notes all ready, stood

The Farmer who farm'd all my land,  
    Except the little Park and Wood;  
And with the accustom'd compliment  
    Of talk, and beef, and frothing beer,  
I, my own steward, took my rent,  
    Three hundred pounds for half the year;  
Our witnesses the Cook and Groom,  
    We sign'd the lease for seven years more,  
And bade Good-day; then to my room  
    I went, and closed and lock'd the door,  
And cast myself down on my bed,  
    And there, with many a blissful tear,  
I vow'd to love and pray'd to wed  
    The maiden who had grown so dear;  
Thank'd God who had set her in my path;  
    And promised, as I hoped to win,  
That I would never dim my faith  
    By the least selfishness or sin;  
Whatever in her sight I'd seem  
    I'd truly be; I'd never blend  
With my delight in her a dream  
    'Twould change her cheek to comprehend;  
And, if she wish'd it, I'd prefer  
    Another's to my own success;  
And always seek the best for her  
    With unofficious tenderness.

Rising, I breathed a brighter clime,  
And found myself all self above,  
And, with a charity sublime,  
Contemn'd not those who did not love:  
And I could not but feel that then  
I shone with something of her grace,  
And went forth to my fellow men  
My commendation in my face.

# CANTO V

## The Violets

### PRELUDES

#### I

#### The Comparison

Where she succeeds with cloudless brow,  
    In common and in holy course,  
He fails, in spite of prayer and vow  
    And agonies of faith and force;  
Or, if his suit with Heaven prevails  
    To righteous life, his virtuous deeds  
Lack beauty, virtue's badge; she fails  
    More graciously than he succeeds.  
Her spirit, compact of gentleness,  
    If Heaven postpones or grants her pray'r,  
Conceives no pride in its success,  
    And in its failure no despair;

But his, enamour'd of its hurt,  
    Baffled, blasphemes, or, not denied,  
Crows from the dunghill of desert,  
    And wags its ugly wings for pride.  
He's never young nor ripe; she grows  
    More infantine, auroral, mild,  
And still the more she lives and knows  
    The lovelier she's express'd a child.  
Say that she wants the will of man  
    To conquer fame, not check'd by cross,  
Nor moved when others bless or ban;  
    She wants but what to have were loss.  
Or say she wants the patient brain  
    To track shy truth; her facile wit  
At that which he hunts down with pain  
    Flies straight, and does exactly hit.  
Were she but half of what she is,  
    He twice himself, mere love alone,  
Her special crown, as truth is his,  
    Gives title to the worthier throne;  
For love is substance, truth the form;  
    Truth without love were less than nought;  
But blindest love is sweet and warm,  
    And full of truth not shaped by thought,  
And therefore in herself she stands  
    Adorn'd with undeficient grace,  
Her happy virtues taking hands,  
    Each smiling in another's face.  
So, dancing round the Tree of Life,

They make an Eden in her breast,  
While his, disjointed and at strife,  
Proud-thoughted, do not bring him rest.

## II

### Love in Tears

If fate Love's dear ambition mar,  
And load his breast with hopeless pain,  
And seem to blot out sun and star,  
Love, won or lost, is countless gain;  
His sorrow boasts a secret bliss  
Which sorrow of itself beguiles,  
And Love in tears too noble is  
For pity, save of Love in smiles.  
But, looking backward through his tears,  
With vision of maturer scope,  
How often one dead joy appears  
The platform of some better hope!  
And, let us own, the sharpest smart  
Which human patience may endure  
Pays light for that which leaves the heart  
More generous, dignified, and pure.

### III

#### Prospective Faith

They safely walk in darkest ways  
Whose youth is lighted from above,  
Where, through the senses' silvery haze,  
Dawns the veil'd moon of nuptial love.  
Who is the happy husband? He  
Who, scanning his unwedded life,  
Thanks Heaven, with a conscience free,  
'Twas faithful to his future wife.

### IV

#### Venus Victrix

Fatal in force, yet gentle in will,  
Defeats, from her, are tender pacts,  
For, like the kindly lodestone, still

She's drawn herself by what she attracts.

## THE VIOLETS

### 1

I went not to the Dean's unbid:  
I would not have my mystery,  
From her so delicately hid,  
The guess of gossips at their tea.  
A long, long week, and not once there,  
Had made my spirit sick and faint,  
And lack-love, foul as love is fair,  
Perverted all things to complaint.  
How vain the world had grown to be!  
How mean all people and their ways,  
How ignorant their sympathy,  
And how impertinent their praise;  
What they for virtuousness esteem'd,  
How far removed from heavenly right;  
What pettiness their trouble seem'd,  
How undelightful their delight;  
To my necessity how strange  
The sunshine and the song of birds;  
How dull the clouds' continual change,

How foolishly content the herds;  
How unaccountable the law  
Which bade me sit in blindness here,  
While she, the sun by which I saw,  
Shed splendour in an idle sphere!  
And then I kiss'd her stolen glove,  
And sigh'd to reckon and define  
The modes of martyrdom in love,  
And how far each one might be mine.  
I thought how love, whose vast estate  
Is earth and air and sun and sea,  
Encounters oft the beggar's fate,  
Despised on score of poverty;  
How Heaven, inscrutable in this,  
Lets the gross general make or mar  
The destiny of love, which is  
So tender and particular;  
How nature, as unnatural  
And contradicting nature's source,  
Which is but love, seems most of all  
Well-pleas'd to harry true love's course;  
How, many times, it comes to pass  
That trifling shades of temperament,  
Affecting only one, alas,  
Not love, but love's success prevent;  
How manners often falsely paint  
The man; how passionate respect,  
Hid by itself, may bear the taint  
Of coldness and a dull neglect;

And how a little outward dust  
Can a clear merit quite o'ercloud,  
And make her fatally unjust,  
And him desire a darker shroud;  
How senseless opportunity  
Gives baser men the better chance;  
How powers, adverse else, agree  
To cheat her in her ignorance;  
How Heaven its very self conspires  
With man and nature against love,  
As pleased to couple cross desires,  
And cross where they themselves approve.  
Wretched were life, if the end were now!  
But this gives tears to dry despair,  
Faith shall be blest, we know not how,  
And love fulfill'd, we know not where.

## 2

While thus I grieved, and kiss'd her glove,  
My man brought in her note to say,  
Papa had hid her send his love,  
And would I dine with them next day?  
They had learn'd and practised Purcell's glee,  
To sing it by to-morrow night.  
The Postscript was: Her sisters and she

Inclosed some violets, blue and white;  
She and her sisters found them where  
I wager'd once no violets grew;  
So they had won the gloves. And there  
The violets lay, two white, one blue.

# CANTO VI

## The Dean

### PRELUDES

#### I

#### Perfect Love rare

Most rare is still most noble found,  
Most noble still most incomplete;  
Sad law, which leaves King Love uncrown'd  
In this obscure, terrestrial seat!  
With bale more sweet than others' bliss,  
And bliss more wise than others' bale,  
The secrets of the world are his.  
And freedom without let or pale.  
O, zealous good, O, virtuous glee,  
Religious, and without alloy,  
O, privilege high, which none but he  
Who highly merits can enjoy;

O, Love, who art that fabled sun  
Which all the world with bounty loads,  
Without respect of realms, save one,  
And gilds with double lustre Rhodes;  
A day of whose delicious life,  
Though full of terrors, full of tears,  
Is better than of other life  
A hundred thousand million years;  
Thy heavenly splendour magnifies  
The least commixture of earth's mould,  
Cheapens thyself in thine own eyes,  
And makes the foolish mocker bold.

## II

### Love Justified

What if my pole-star of respect  
Be dim to others? Shall their 'Nay,'  
Presumably their own defect,  
Invalidate my heart's strong 'Yea'?  
And can they rightly me condemn,  
If I, with partial love, prefer?  
I am not more unjust to them,  
But only not unjust to her.

Leave us alone! After awhile,  
This pool of private charity  
Shall make its continent an isle,  
And roll, a world-embracing sea;  
This foolish zeal of lip for lip,  
This fond, self-sanction'd, wilful zest,  
Is that elect relationship  
Which forms and sanctions all the rest;  
This little germ of nuptial love,  
Which springs so simply from the sod,  
The root is, as my song shall prove,  
Of all our love to man and God.

### III

## Love Serviceable

What measure Fate to him shall mete  
Is not the noble Lover's care;  
He's heart-sick with a longing sweet  
To make her happy as she's fair.  
Oh, misery, should she him refuse,  
And so her dearest good mistake!  
His own success he thus pursues  
With frantic zeal for her sole sake.

To lose her were his life to blight,  
    Being loss to hers; to make her his,  
Except as helping her delight,  
    He calls but incidental bliss;  
And holding life as so much pelf  
    To buy her posies, learns this lore:  
He does not rightly love himself  
    Who does not love another more.

## IV

### **A Riddle Solved**

Kind souls, you wonder why, love you,  
    When you, you wonder why, love none.  
We love, Fool, for the good we do,  
    Not that which unto us is done!

# THE DEAN

## 1

The Ladies rose. I held the door,  
And sigh'd, as her departing grace  
Assured me that she always wore  
A heart as happy as her face;  
And, jealous of the winds that blew,  
I dreaded, o'er the tasteless wine,  
What fortune momentarily might do  
To hurt the hope that she'd be mine.

## 2

Towards my mark the Dean's talk set:  
He praised my 'Notes on Abury,'  
Read when the Association met  
At Sarum; he was pleased to see  
I had not stopp'd, as some men had,  
At Wrangler and Prize Poet; last,  
He hoped the business was not bad

I came about: then the wine pass'd.

### 3

A full glass prefaced my reply:

I loved his daughter, Honor; I told  
My estate and prospects; might I try  
To win her? At my words so bold  
My sick heart sank. Then he: He gave  
His glad consent, if I could get  
Her love. A dear, good Girl! she'd have  
Only three thousand pounds as yet;  
More bye and bye. Yes, his good will  
Should go with me; he would not stir;  
He and my father in old time still  
Wish'd I should one day marry her;  
But God so seldom lets us take  
Our chosen pathway, when it lies  
In steps that either mar or make  
Or alter others' destinies,  
That, though his blessing and his pray'r  
Had help'd, should help, my suit, yet he  
Left all to me, his passive share  
Consent and opportunity.  
My chance, he hoped, was good: I'd won  
Some name already; friends and place

Appear'd within my reach, but none  
Her mind and manners would not grace.  
Girls love to see the men in whom  
They invest their vanities admired;  
Besides, where goodness is, there room  
For good to work will be desired.  
'Twas so with one now pass'd away;  
And what she was at twenty-two,  
Honor was now; and he might say  
Mine was a choice I could not rue.

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