

COVENTRY PATMORE

THE VICTORIES
OF LOVE, AND
OTHER POEMS

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and Other Poems

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The Victories of Love, and Other Poems:

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INTRODUCTION

After the very cordial reception given to the poems of "The Angel in the House," which their author generously made accessible to the readers of these little books, it is evident that another volume from the same clear singer of the purity of household love requires no Introduction.

I have only, in the name of the readers, to thank Mr. Coventry Patmore for his liberality, and wish him—say, rather, assure him of—the best return he seeks in a wide influence for good.

H. M.

THE VICTORIES OF LOVE

BOOK I

I. FROM FREDERICK GRAHAM

Mother, I smile at your alarms!
I own, indeed, my Cousin's charms,
But, like all nursery maladies,
Love is not badly taken twice.
Have you forgotten Charlotte Hayes,
My playmate in the pleasant days
At Knatchley, and her sister, Anne,
The twins, so made on the same plan,
That one wore blue, the other white,
To mark them to their father's sight;
And how, at Knatchley harvesting,
You bade me kiss her in the ring,
Like Anne and all the others? You,
That never of my sickness knew,
Will laugh, yet had I the disease,
And gravely, if the signs are these:
 As, ere the Spring has any power,
The almond branch all turns to flower,

Though not a leaf is out, so she
The bloom of life provoked in me
And, hard till then and selfish, I
Was thenceforth nought but sanctity
And service: life was mere delight
In being wholly good and right,
As she was; just, without a slur;
Honouring myself no less than her;
Obeying, in the loneliest place,
Ev'n to the slightest gesture, grace,
Assured that one so fair, so true,
He only served that was so too.
For me, hence weak towards the weak,
No more the unnested blackbird's shriek
Startled the light-leaved wood; on high
Wander'd the gadding butterfly,
Unscared by my flung cap; the bee,
Rifling the hollyhock in glee,
Was no more trapp'd with his own flower,
And for his honey slain. Her power,
From great things even to the grass
Through which the unfenced footways pass,
Was law, and that which keeps the law,
Cherubic gaiety and awe;
Day was her doing, and the lark
Had reason for his song; the dark
In anagram innumerable spelt
Her name with stars that throb'd and felt;
'Twas the sad summit of delight

To wake and weep for her at night;
She turn'd to triumph or to shame
The strife of every childish game;
The heart would come into my throat
At rosebuds; howsoe'er remote,
In opposition or consent,
Each thing, or person, or event,
Or seeming neutral howsoe'er,
All, in the live, electric air,
Awoke, took aspect, and confess'd
In her a centre of unrest,
Yea, stocks and stones within me bred
Anxieties of joy and dread.

O, bright apocalyptic sky
O'erarching childhood! Far and nigh
Mystery and obscuration none,
Yet nowhere any moon or sun!
What reason for these sighs? What hope,
Daunting with its audacious scope
The disconcerted heart, affects
These ceremonies and respects?
Why stratagems in everything?
Why, why not kiss her in the ring?
'Tis nothing strange that warriors bold,
Whose fierce, forecasting eyes behold
The city they desire to sack,
Humbly begin their proud attack
By delving ditches two miles off,
Aware how the fair place would scoff

At hasty wooing; but, O child,
Why thus approach thy playmate mild?

One morning, when it flush'd my thought
That, what in me such wonder wrought
Was call'd, in men and women, love,
And, sick with vanity thereof,
I, saying loud, 'I love her,' told
My secret to myself, behold
A crisis in my mystery!
For, suddenly, I seem'd to be
Whirl'd round, and bound with showers of threads,
As when the furious spider sheds
Captivity upon the fly
To still his buzzing till he die;
Only, with me, the bonds that flew,
Enfolding, thrill'd me through and through
With bliss beyond aught heaven can have,
And pride to dream myself her slave.

A long, green slip of wilder'd land,
With Knatchley Wood on either hand,
Sunder'd our home from hers. This day
Glad was I as I went her way.
I stretch'd my arms to the sky, and sprang
O'er the elastic sod, and sang
'I love her, love her!' to an air
Which with the words came then and there;
And even now, when I would know
All was not always dull and low,
I mind me awhile of the sweet strain

Love taught me in that lonely lane.

Such glories fade, with no more mark
Than when the sunset dies to dark.
They pass, the rapture and the grace
Ineffable, their only trace
A heart which, having felt no less
Than pure and perfect happiness,
Is duly dainty of delight;
A patient, poignant appetite
For pleasures that exceed so much
The poor things which the world calls such.
That, when these lure it, then you may
The lion with a wisp of hay.

That Charlotte, whom we scarcely knew
From Anne but by her ribbons blue,
Was loved, Anne less than look'd at, shows
That liking still by favour goes!
This Love is a Divinity,
And holds his high election free
Of human merit; or let's say,
A child by ladies call'd to play,
But careless of their becks and wiles,
Till, seeing one who sits and smiles
Like any else, yet only charms,
He cries to come into her arms.
Then, for my Cousins, fear me not!
None ever loved because he ought.
Fatal were else this graceful house,
So full of light from ladies' brows.

There's Mary; Heaven in her appears
Like sunshine through the shower's bright tears;
Mildred's of Earth, yet happier far
Than most men's thoughts of Heaven are;
But, for Honoria, Heaven and Earth
Seal'd amity in her sweet birth.
The noble Girl! With whom she talks
She knights first with her smile; she walks,
Stands, dances, to such sweet effect,
Alone she seems to move erect.
The brightest and the chastest brow
Rules o'er a cheek which seems to show
That love, as a mere vague suspense
Of apprehensive innocence,
Perturbs her heart; love without aim
Or object, like the sunlit flame
That in the Vestals' Temple glow'd,
Without the image of a god.
And this simplicity most pure
She sets off with no less allure
Of culture, subtly skill'd to raise
The power, the pride, and mutual praise
Of human personality
Above the common sort so high,
It makes such homely souls as mine
Marvel how brightly life may shine.
How you would love her! Even in dress
She makes the common mode express
New knowledge of what's fit so well

'Tis virtue gaily visible!

Nay, but her silken sash to me

Were more than all morality,

Had not the old, sweet, feverous ill

Left me the master of my will!

So, Mother, feel at rest, and please

To send my books on board. With these,

When I go hence, all idle hours

Shall help my pleasures and my powers.

I've time, you know, to fill my post,

And yet make up for schooling lost

Through young sea-service. They all speak

German with ease; and this, with Greek,

(Which Dr. Churchill thought I knew,)

And history, which I fail'd in too,

Will stop a gap I somewhat dread,

After the happy life I've led

With these my friends; and sweet 'twill be

To abridge the space from them to me.

II. FROM MRS. GRAHAM

My Child, Honoria Churchill sways

A double power through Charlotte Hayes.

In minds to first-love's memory pledged

The second Cupid's born full-fledged.

I saw, and trembled for the day

When you should see her beauty, gay
And pure as apple-blooms, that show
Outside a blush and inside snow,
Her high and touching elegance
Of order'd life as free as chance.
Ah, haste from her bewitching side,
No friend for you, far less a bride!
But, warning from a hope so wild,
I wrong you. Yet this know, my Child:
He that but once too nearly hears
The music of forefended spheres,
Is thenceforth lonely, and for all
His days like one who treads the Wall
Of China, and, on this hand, sees
Cities and their civilities,
And on the other, lions. Well,
(Your rash reply I thus foretell.)
Good is the knowledge of what's fair,
Though bought with temporal despair!
Yes, good for one, but not for two.
Will it content a wife that you
Should pine for love, in love's embrace,
Through having known a happier grace;
And break with inward sighs your rest,
Because, though good, she's not the best?
You would, you think, be just and kind,
And keep your counsel! You will find
You cannot such a secret keep;
'Twill out, like murder, in your sleep;

A touch will tell it, though, for pride,
She may her bitter knowledge hide;
And, while she accepts love's make-believe,
You'll twice despise what you'd deceive.

I send the books. Dear Child, adieu!
Tell me of all you are and do.
I know, thank God, whate'er it be,
'Twill need no veil 'twixt you and me.

III. FROM FREDERICK

The multitude of voices blithe
Of early day, the hissing scythe
Across the dew drawn and withdrawn,
The noisy peacock on the lawn,
These, and the sun's eye-gladdening gleam,
This morning, chased the sweetest dream
That e'er shed penitential grace
On life's forgetful commonplace;
Yet 'twas no sweeter than the spell
To which I woke to say farewell.

Noon finds me many a mile removed
From her who must not be beloved;
And us the waste sea soon shall part,
Heaving for aye, without a heart!
Mother, what need to warn me so?
I love Miss Churchill? Ah, no, no.

I view, enchanted, from afar,
And love her as I love a star.
For, not to speak of colder fear,
Which keeps my fancy calm, I hear,
Under her life's gay progress hurl'd.
The wheels of the preponderant world,
Set sharp with swords that fool to slay
Who blunders from a poor byway,
To covet beauty with a crown
Of earthly blessing added on;
And she's so much, it seems to me,
Beyond all women womanly,
I dread to think how he should fare
Who came so near as to despair.

IV. FROM FREDERICK

Yonder the sombre vessel rides
Where my obscure condition hides.
Waves scud to shore against the wind
That flings the sprinkling surf behind;
In port the bickering pennons show
Which way the ships would gladly go;
Through Edgecumb Park the rooted trees
Are tossing, reckless, in the breeze;
On top of Edgecumb's firm-set tower,
As foils, not foibles, of its power,

The light vanes do themselves adjust
To every veering of the gust:
By me alone may nought be given
To guidance of the airs of heaven?
In battle or peace, in calm or storm,
Should I my daily task perform,
Better a thousand times for love,
Who should my secret soul reprove?

Beholding one like her, a man
Longs to lay down his life! How can
Aught to itself seem thus enough,
When I have so much need thereof?
Blest in her place, blissful is she;
And I, departing, seem to be
Like the strange waif that comes to run
A few days flaming near the sun,
And carries back, through boundless night,
Its lessening memory of light.

Oh, my dear Mother, I confess
To a deep grief of homelessness,
Unfelt, save once, before. 'Tis years
Since such a shower of girlish tears
Disgraced me! But this wretched Inn,
At Plymouth, is so full of din,
Talkings and trampings to and fro.
And then my ship, to which I go
To-night, is no more home. I dread,
As strange, the life I long have led;
And as, when first I went to school,

And found the horror of a rule
Which only ask'd to be obey'd,
I lay and wept, of dawn afraid,
And thought, with bursting heart, of one
Who, from her little, wayward son,
Required obedience, but above
Obedience still regarded love,
So change I that enchanting place,
The abode of innocence and grace
And gaiety without reproof,
For the black gun-deck's louring roof.
Blind and inevitable law
Which makes light duties burdens, awe
Which is not reverence, laughter gain'd
At cost of purities profaned,
And whatsoever most may stir
Remorseful passion towards her,
Whom to behold is to depart
From all defect of life and heart.

But, Mother, I shall go on shore,
And see my Cousin yet once more!
'Twere wild to hope for her, you say.
I've torn and cast those words away.
Surely there's hope! For life 'tis well
Love without hope's impossible;
So, if I love, it is that hope
Is not outside the outer scope
Of fancy. You speak truth: this hour
I must resist, or lose the power.

What! and, when some short months are o'er,
Be not much other than before?
Drop from the bright and virtuous sphere
In which I'm held but while she's dear?
For daily life's dull, senseless mood,
Slay the fine nerves of gratitude
And sweet allegiance, which I owe
Whether the debt be weal or woe?
Nay, Mother, I, forewarn'd, prefer
To want for all in wanting her.

For all? Love's best is not bereft
Ever from him to whom is left
The trust that God will not deceive
His creature, fashion'd to believe
The prophecies of pure desire.
Not loss, not death, my love shall tire.
A mystery does my heart foretell;
Nor do I press the oracle
For explanations. Leave me alone,
And let in me love's will be done.

V. FROM FREDERICK

Fashion'd by Heaven and by art
So is she, that she makes the heart
Ache and o'erflow with tears, that grace
So lovely fair should have for place,

(Deeming itself at home the while,)
The unworthy earth! To see her smile
Amid this waste of pain and sin,
As only knowing the heaven within,
Is sweet, and does for pity stir
Passion to be her minister:
Wherefore last night I lay awake,
And said, 'Ah, Lord, for Thy love's sake,
Give not this darling child of Thine
To care less reverent than mine!'
And, as true faith was in my word,
I trust, I trust that I was heard.

The waves, this morning, sped to land,
And shouted hoarse to touch the strand,
Where Spring, that goes not out to sea,
Lay laughing in her lovely glee;
And, so, my life was sunlit spray
And tumult, as, once more to-day,
For long farewell did I draw near
My Cousin, desperately dear.
Faint, fierce, the truth that hope was none
Gleam'd like the lightning in the sun;
Yet hope I had, and joy thereof.
The father of love is hope, (though love
Lives orphan'd on, when hope is dead,)
And, out of my immediate dread
And crisis of the coming hour,
Did hope itself draw sudden power.
So the still brooding storm, in Spring,

Makes all the birds begin to sing.

Mother, your foresight did not err:
I've lost the world, and not won her.
And yet, ah, laugh not, when you think
What cup of life I sought to drink!
The bold, said I, have climb'd to bliss
Absurd, impossible, as this,
With nought to help them but so great
A heart it fascinates their fate.
If ever Heaven heard man's desire,
Mine, being made of altar-fire,
Must come to pass, and it will be
That she will wait, when she shall see.
This evening, how I go to get,
By means unknown, I know not yet
Quite what, but ground whereon to stand,
And plead more plainly for her hand!

And so I raved, and cast in hope
A superstitious horoscope!
And still, though something in her face
Portended 'No!' with such a grace
It burthen'd me with thankfulness,
Nothing was credible but 'Yes.'
Therefore, through time's close pressure bold,
I praised myself, and boastful told
My deeds at Acre; strain'd the chance
I had of honour and advance
In war to come; and would not see
Sad silence meant, 'What's this to me?'

When half my precious hour was gone,
She rose to meet a Mr. Vaughan;
And, as the image of the moon
Breaks up, within some still lagoon
That feels the soft wind suddenly,
Or tide fresh flowing from the sea,
And turns to giddy flames that go
Over the water to and fro,
Thus, when he took her hand to-night,
Her lovely gravity of light
Was scatter'd into many smiles
And flatt'ning weakness. Hope beguiles
No more my heart, dear Mother. He,
By jealous looks, o'erhonour'd me.

With nought to do, and fondly fain
To hear her singing once again,
I stay'd, and turn'd her music o'er;
Then came she with me to the door.
'Dearest Honoria,' I said,
(By my despair familiar made,)
'Heaven bless you!' Oh, to have back then stepp'd
And fallen upon her neck, and wept,
And said, 'My friend, I owe you all
I am, and have, and hope for. Call
For some poor service; let me prove
To you, or him here whom you love,
My duty. Any solemn task,
For life's whole course, is all I ask!'
Then she must surely have wept too,

And said, 'My friend, what can you do!'
And I should have replied, 'I'll pray
'For you and him three times a-day,
And, all day, morning, noon, and night,
My life shall be so high and right
That never Saint yet scaled the stairs
Of heaven with more availing prayers!'
But this (and, as good God shall bless
Somehow my end, I'll do no less,)
I had no right to speak. Oh, shame,
So rich a love, so poor a claim!

My Mother, now my only friend,
Farewell. The school-books which you send
I shall not want, and so return.
Give them away, or sell, or burn.
I'll write from Malta. Would I might
But be your little Child to-night,
And feel your arms about me fold,
Against this loneliness and cold!

VI. FROM MRS. GRAHAM

The folly of young girls! They doff
Their pride to smooth success, and scoff
At far more noble fire and might
That woo them from the dust of fight
But, Frederick, now the storm is past,

Your sky should not remain o'ercast.
A sea-life's dull, and, oh, beware
Of nourishing, for zest, despair.
My Child, remember, you have twice
Heartily loved; then why not thrice,
Or ten times? But a wise man shuns
To cry 'All's over,' more than once.
I'll not say that a young man's soul
Is scarcely measure of the whole
Earthly and Heavenly universe,
To which he inveterately prefers
The one beloved woman. Best
Speak to the senses' interest,
Which brooks no mystery nor delay:
Frankly reflect, my Son, and say,
Was there no secret hour, of those
Pass'd at her side in Sarum Close,
When, to your spirit's sick alarm,
It seem'd that all her marvellous charm
Was marvellously fled? Her grace
Of voice, adornment, movement, face
Was what already heart and eye
Had ponder'd to satiety;
Amid so the good of life was o'er,
Until some laugh not heard before,
Some novel fashion in her hair,
Or style of putting back her chair,
Restored the heavens. Gather thence
The loss-consoling inference.

Yet blame not beauty, which beguiles,
With lovely motions and sweet smiles,
Which while they please us pass away,
The spirit to lofty thoughts that stay
And lift the whole of after-life,
Unless you take the vision to wife,
Which then seems lost, or serves to slake
Desire, as when a lovely lake
Far off scarce fills the exulting eye
Of one athirst, who comes thereby,
And inappreciably sips
The deep, with disappointed lips.
To fail is sorrow, yet confess
That love pays dearly for success!
No blame to beauty! Let's complain
Of the heart, which can so ill sustain
Delight. Our griefs declare our fall,
But how much more our joys! They pall
With plucking, and celestial mirth
Can find no footing on the earth,
More than the bird of paradise,
Which only lives the while it flies.

Think, also, how 'twould suit your pride
To have this woman for a bride.
Whate'er her faults, she's one of those
To whom the world's last polish owes
A novel grace, which all who aspire
To courtliest custom must acquire.
The world's the sphere she's made to charm,

Which you have shunn'd as if 'twere harm.
Oh, law perverse, that loneliness
Breeds love, society success!
Though young, 'twere now o'er late in life
To train yourself for such a wife;
So she would suit herself to you,
As women, when they marry, do.
For, since 'tis for our dignity
Our lords should sit like lords on high,
We willingly deteriorate
To a step below our rulers' state;
And 'tis the commonest of things
To see an angel, gay with wings,
Lean weakly on a mortal's arm!
Honor would put off the charm
Of lofty grace that caught your love,
For fear you should not seem above
Herself in fashion and degree,
As in true merit. Thus, you see,
'Twere little kindness, wisdom none,
To light your cot with such a sun.

VII. FROM FREDERICK

Write not, my Mother, her dear name
With the least word or hint of blame.
Who else shall discommend her choice,

I giving it my hearty voice?
Wed me? Ah, never near her come
The knowledge of the narrow home!
Far fly from her dear face, that shows
The sunshine lovelier than the rose,
The sordid gravity they wear
Who poverty's base burthen bear!
(And all are poor who come to miss
Their custom, though a crown be this.)
My hope was, that the wheels of fate,
For my exceeding need, might wait,
And she, unseen amidst all eyes,
Move sightless, till I sought the prize,
With honour, in an equal field.
But then came Vaughan, to whom I yield
With grace as much as any man,
In such cause, to another can.
Had she been mine, it seems to me
That I had that integrity
And only joy in her delight—
But each is his own favourite
In love! The thought to bring me rest
Is that of us she takes the best.

'Twas but to see him to be sure
That choice for her remain'd no more!
His brow, so gaily clear of craft;
His wit, the timely truth that laugh'd
To find itself so well express'd;
His words, abundant yet the best;

His spirit, of such handsome show
You mark'd not that his looks were so;
His bearing, prospects, birth, all these
Might well, with small suit, greatly please;
How greatly, when she saw arise
The reflex sweetness of her eyes
In his, and every breath defer
Humbly its bated life to her;
Whilst power and kindness of command.
Which women can no more withstand
Than we their grace, were still unquell'd,
And force and flattery both compell'd
Her softness! Say I'm worthy. I
Grew, in her presence, cold and shy.
It awed me, as an angel's might
In raiment of reproachful light.
Her gay looks told my sombre mood
That what's not happy is not good;
And, just because 'twas life to please,
Death to repel her, truth and ease
Deserted me; I strove to talk,
And stammer'd foolishness; my walk
Was like a drunkard's; if she took
My arm, it stiffen'd, ached, and shook:
A likely wooer! Blame her not;
Nor ever say, dear Mother, aught
Against that perfectness which is
My strength, as once it was my bliss.
And do not chafe at social rules.

Leave that to charlatans and fools.
Clay grafts and clods conceive the rose,
So base still fathers best. Life owes
Itself to bread; enough thereof
And easy days condition love;
And, kindly train'd, love's roses thrive,
No more pale, scentless petals five,
Which moisten the considerate eye
To see what haste they make to die,
But heavens of colour and perfume,
Which, month by month, renew the bloom
Of art-born graces, when the year
In all the natural grove is sere.

Blame nought then! Bright let be the air
About my lonely cloud of care.

VIII. FROM FREDERICK

Religion, duty, books, work, friends,—
'Tis good advice, but there it ends.
I'm sick for what these have not got.
Send no more books: they help me not;
I do my work: the void's there still
Which carefullest duty cannot fill.
What though the inaugural hour of right
Comes ever with a keen delight?
Little relieves the labour's heat;

Disgust oft crowns it when complete;
And life, in fact, is not less dull
For being very dutiful.
'The stately homes of England,' lo,
'How beautiful they stand!' They owe
How much to nameless things like me
Their beauty of security!
But who can long a low toil mend
By looking to a lofty end?
And let me, since 'tis truth, confess
The void's not fill'd by godliness.
God is a tower without a stair,
And His perfection, love's despair.
'Tis He shall judge me when I die;
He suckles with the hissing fly
The spider; gazes calmly down.
Whilst rapine grips the helpless town.
His vast love holds all this and more.
In consternation I adore.
Nor can I ease this aching gulf
With friends, the pictures of myself.
Then marvel not that I recur
From each and all of these to her.
For more of heaven than her have I
No sensitive capacity.
Had I but her, ah, what the gain
Of owning aught but that domain!
Nay, heaven's extent, however much,
Cannot be more than many such;

And, she being mine, should God to me
Say 'Lo! my Child, I give to thee
'All heaven besides,' what could I then,
But, as a child, to Him complain
That whereas my dear Father gave
A little space for me to have
In His great garden, now, o'erblest,
I've that, indeed, but all the rest,
Which, somehow, makes it seem I've got
All but my only cared-for plot.
Enough was that for my weak hand
To tend, my heart to understand.

Oh, the sick fact, 'twixt her and me
There's naught, and half a world of sea.

IX. FROM FREDERICK

In two, in less than two hours more
I set my foot on English shore,
Two years untrod, and, strange to tell,
Nigh miss'd through last night's storm! There fell
A man from the shrouds, that roar'd to quench
Even the billows' blast and drench.
Besides me none was near to mark
His loud cry in the louder dark,
Dark, save when lightning show'd the deeps
Standing about in stony heaps.

No time for choice! A rope; a flash
That flamed as he rose; a dizzy splash;
A strange, inopportune delight
Of mounting with the billowy might,
And falling, with a thrill again
Of pleasure shot from feet to brain;
And both paced deck, ere any knew
Our peril. Round us press'd the crew,
With wonder in the eyes of most.
As if the man who had loved and lost
Honorias dared no more than that!

My days have else been stale and flat.
This life's at best, if justly scann'd,
A tedious walk by the other's strand,
With, here and there cast up, a piece
Of coral or of ambergris,
Which, boasted of abroad, we ignore
The burden of the barren shore.
I seldom write, for 'twould be still
Of how the nerves refuse to thrill;
How, throughout doubly-darken'd days,
I cannot recollect her face;
How to my heart her name to tell
Is beating on a broken bell;
And, to fill up the abhorrent gulf,
Scarce loving her, I hate myself.

Yet, latterly, with strange delight,
Rich tides have risen in the night,
And sweet dreams chased the fancies dense

Of waking life's dull somnolence.
I see her as I knew her, grace
Already glory in her face;
I move about, I cannot rest,
For the proud brain and joyful breast
I have of her. Or else I float,
The pilot of an idle boat,
Alone, alone with sky and sea,
And her, the third simplicity.
Or Mildred, to some question, cries,
(Her merry meaning in her eyes,)
'The Ball, oh, Frederick will go;
Honorina will be there! and, lo,
As moisture sweet my seeing blurs
To hear my name so link'd with hers,
A mirror joins, by guilty chance,
Either's averted, watchful glance!
Or with me, in the Ball-Room's blaze,
Her brilliant mildness threads the maze;
Our thoughts are lovely, and each word
Is music in the music heard,
And all things seem but parts to be
Of one persistent harmony,
By which I'm made divinely bold;
The secret, which she knows, is told;
And, laughing with a lofty bliss
Of innocent accord, we kiss:
About her neck my pleasure weeps;
Against my lip the silk vein leaps;

Then says an Angel, 'Day or night,
If yours you seek, not her delight,
Although by some strange witchery
It seems you kiss her, 'tis not she;
But, whilst you languish at the side
Of a fair-foul phantasmal bride,
Surely a dragon and strong tower
Guard the true lady in her bower.'
And I say, 'Dear my Lord. Amen!'
And the true lady kiss again.
Or else some wasteful malady
Devours her shape and dims her eye;
No charms are left, where all were rife,
Except her voice, which is her life,
Wherewith she, for her foolish fear,
Says trembling, 'Do you love me. Dear?'
And I reply, 'Sweetest, I vow
I never loved but half till now.'
She turns her face to the wall at this,
And says, 'Go, Love, 'tis too much bliss.'
And then a sudden pulse is sent
About the sounding firmament
In smittings as of silver bars;
The bright disorder of the stars
Is solved by music; far and near,
Through infinite distinctions clear,
Their twofold voices' deeper tone
Utters the Name which all things own,
And each ecstatic treble dwells

On one whereof none other tells;
And we, sublimed to song and fire,
Take order in the wheeling quire,
Till from the throbbing sphere I start,
Waked by the heaving of my heart.

Such dreams as these come night by night,
Disturbing day with their delight.
Portend they nothing? Who can tell!
God yet may do some miracle.
'Tis nigh two years, and she's not wed,
Or you would know! He may be dead,
Or mad, and loving some one else,
And she, much moved that nothing quells
My constancy, or, simply wroth
With such a wretch, accept my troth
To spite him; or her beauty's gone,
(And that's my dream!) and this man Vaughan
Takes her release: or tongues malign,
Confusing every ear but mine,
Have smirch'd her: ah, 'twould move her, sure,
To find I loved her all the more!
Nay, now I think, haply amiss
I read her words and looks, and his,
That night! Did not his jealousy
Show—Good my God, and can it be
That I, a modest fool, all blest,
Nothing of such a heaven guess'd?
Oh, chance too frail, yet frantic sweet,
To-morrow sees me at her feet!

Yonder, at last, the glad sea roars
Along the sacred English shores!
There lies the lovely land I know,
Where men and women lordliest grow;
There peep the roofs where more than kings
Postpone state cares to country things,
And many a gay queen simply tends
The babes on whom the world depends;
There curls the wanton cottage smoke
Of him that drives but bears no yoke;
There laughs the realm where low and high
Are lieges to society,
And life has all too wide a scope,
Too free a prospect for its hope,
For any private good or ill,
Except dishonour, quite to fill! ¹

—Mother, since this was penn'd, I've read
That 'Mr. Vaughan, on Tuesday, wed
The beautiful Miss Churchill.' So
That's over; and to-morrow I go
To take up my new post on board
The Wolf, my peace at last restored;
My lonely faith, like heart-of-oak,
Shock-season'd. Grief is now the cloak
I clasp about me to prevent
The deadly chill of a content
With any near or distant good,

¹ Written in 1856.

Except the exact beatitude
Which love has shown to my desire.
Talk not of 'other joys and higher,'
I hate and disavow all bliss
As none for me which is not this.
Think not I blasphemously cope
With God's decrees, and cast off hope.
How, when, and where can mine succeed?

I'll trust He knows who made my need.

Baseness of men! Pursuit being o'er,
Doubtless her Husband feels no more
The heaven of heavens of such a Bride,
But, lounging, lets her please his pride
With fondness, guerdons her caress
With little names, and turns a tress
Round idle fingers. If 'tis so,
Why then I'm happier of the two!
Better, for lofty loss, high pain,
Than low content with lofty gain.
Poor, foolish Dove, to trust from me
Her happiness and dignity!

X. FROM FREDERICK

I thought the worst had brought me balm:
'Twas but the tempest's central calm.

Vague sinkings of the heart aver
That dreadful wrong is come to her,
And o'er this dream I brood and dote,
And learn its agonies by rote.
As if I loved it, early and late
I make familiar with my fate,
And feed, with fascinated will,
On very dregs of finish'd ill.
I think, she's near him now, alone,
With wardship and protection none;
Alone, perhaps, in the hindering stress
Of airs that clasp him with her dress,
They wander whispering by the wave;
And haply now, in some sea-cave,
Where the ribb'd sand is rarely trod,
They laugh, they kiss, Oh, God! oh, God!
There comes a smile acutely sweet
Out of the picturing dark; I meet
The ancient frankness of her gaze,
That soft and heart-surprising blaze
Of great goodwill and innocence.
And perfect joy proceeding thence!
Ah! made for earth's delight, yet such
The mid-sea air's too gross to touch.
At thought of which, the soul in me
Is as the bird that bites a bee,
And darts abroad on frantic wing,
Tasting the honey and the sting;
And, moaning where all round me sleep

Amidst the moaning of the deep,
I start at midnight from my bed—
And have no right to strike him dead.

What world is this that I am in,
Where chance turns sanctity to sin!
'Tis crime henceforward to desire
The only good; the sacred fire
That sunn'd the universe is hell!
I hear a Voice which argues well:
'The Heaven hard has scorn'd your cry;
Fall down and worship me, and I
Will give you peace; go and profane
This pangful love, so pure, so vain.
And thereby win forgetfulness
And pardon of the spirit's excess,
Which soar'd too nigh that jealous Heaven
Ever, save thus, to be forgiven.
No Gospel has come down that cures
With better gain a loss like yours.
Be pious! Give the beggar pelf,
And love your neighbour as yourself!
You, who yet love, though all is o'er,
And she'll ne'er be your neighbour more,
With soul which can in pity smile
That aught with such a measure vile
As self should be at all named "love!"
Your sanctity the priests reprove;
Your case of grief they wholly miss;
The Man of Sorrows names not this.

The years, they say, graft love divine
On the lopp'd stock of love like thine;
The wild tree dies not, but converts.
So be it; but the lopping hurts,
The graft takes tardily! Men stanch
Meantime with earth the bleeding branch.
There's nothing heals one woman's loss,
And lightens life's eternal cross
With intermission of sound rest,
Like lying in another's breast.
The cure is, to your thinking, low!
Is not life all, henceforward, so?

Ill Voice, at least thou calm'st my mood:
I'll sleep! But, as I thus conclude,
The intrusions of her grace dispel
The comfortable glooms of hell.

A wonder! Ere these lines were dried,
Vaughan and my Love, his three-days' Bride,
Became my guests. I look'd, and, lo,
In beauty soft as is the snow
And powerful as the avalanche,
She lit the deck. The Heav'n-sent chance!
She smiled, surprised. They came to see
The ship, not thinking to meet me.

At infinite distance she's my day:
What then to him? Howbeit they say
'Tis not so sunny in the sun
But men might live cool lives thereon!

All's well; for I have seen arise

That reflex sweetness of her eyes
In his, and watch'd his breath defer
Humbly its bated life to her,
His *wife*. My Love, she's safe in his
Devotion! What ask'd I but this?

They bade adieu; I saw them go
Across the sea; and now I know
The ultimate hope I rested on,
The hope beyond the grave, is gone,
The hope that, in the heavens high,
At last it should appear that I
Loved most, and so, by claim divine,
Should have her, in the heavens, for mine,
According to such nuptial sort
As may subsist in the holy court,
Where, if there are all kinds of joys
To exhaust the multitude of choice
In many mansions, then there are
Loves personal and particular,
Conspicuous in the glorious sky
Of universal charity,
As Phosphor in the sunrise. Now
I've seen them, I believe their vow
Immortal; and the dreadful thought,
That he less honour'd than he ought
Her sanctity, is laid to rest,
And blessing them I too am blest.
My goodwill, as a springing air,
Unclouds a beauty in despair;

I stand beneath the sky's pure cope
Unburthen'd even by a hope;
And peace unspeakable, a joy
Which hope would deaden and destroy,
Like sunshine fills the airy gulf
Left by the vanishing of self.
That I have known her; that she moves
Somewhere all-graceful; that she loves,
And is belov'd, and that she's so
Most happy, and to heaven will go,
Where I may meet with her, (yet this
I count but accidental bliss,)
And that the full, celestial weal
Of all shall sensitively feel
The partnership and work of each,
And thus my love and labour reach
Her region, there the more to bless
Her last, consummate happiness,
Is guerdon up to the degree
Of that alone true loyalty
Which, sacrificing, is not nice
About the terms of sacrifice,
But offers all, with smiles that say,
'Tis little, but it is for aye!

XI. FROM MRS. GRAHAM

You wanted her, my Son, for wife,
With the fierce need of life in life.
That nobler passion of an hour
Was rather prophecy than power;
And nature, from such stress unbent,
Rekurs to deep discouragement.
Trust not such peace yet; easy breath,
In hot diseases, argues death;
And tastelessness within the mouth
Worse fever shows than heat or drouth.
Wherefore take, Frederick, timely fear
Against a different danger near:
Wed not one woman, oh, my Child,
Because another has not smiled!
Oft, with a disappointed man,
The first who cares to win him can;
For, after love's heroic strain,
Which tired the heart and brought no gain.
He feels consoled, relieved, and eased
To meet with her who can be pleased
To proffer kindness, amid compute
His acquiescence for pursuit;
Who troubles not his lonely mood;
And asks for love mere gratitude.
Ah, desperate folly! Yet, we know,
Who wed through love wed mostly so.

At least, my Son, when wed you do,
See that the woman equals you,
Nor rush, from having loved too high,

Into a worse humility.
A poor estate's a foolish plea
For marrying to a base degree.
A woman grown cannot be train'd,
Or, if she could, no love were gain'd;
For, never was a man's heart caught
By graces he himself had taught.
And fancy not 'tis in the might
Of man to do without delight;
For, should you in her nothing find
To exhilarate the higher mind,
Your soul would deaden useless wings
With wickedness of lawful things,
And vampire pleasure swift destroy
Even the memory of joy.
So let no man, in desperate mood,
Wed a dull girl because she's good.
All virtues in his wife soon dim,
Except the power of pleasing him,
Which may small virtue be, or none!

I know my just and tender Son,
To whom the dangerous grace is given
That scorns a good which is not heaven;
My Child, who used to sit and sigh
Under the bright, ideal sky,
And pass, to spare the farmer's wheat,
The poppy and the meadow-sweet!
He would not let his wife's heart ache
For what was mainly his mistake;

But, having err'd so, all his force
Would fix upon the hard, right course.

She's graceless, say, yet good and true,
And therefore inly fair, and, through
The veils which inward beauty fold,
Faith can her loveliness behold.

Ah, that's soon tired; faith falls away
Without the ceremonial stay
Of outward loveliness and awe.

The weightier matters of the law
She pays: mere mint and cummin not;
And, in the road that she was taught,
She treads, and takes for granted still
Nature's immedicable ill;

So never wears within her eyes

A false report of paradise,

Nor ever modulates her mirth

With vain compassion of the earth,

Which made a certain happier face

Affecting, and a gayer grace

With pathos delicately edged!

Yet, though she be not privileged

To unlock for you your heart's delight,

(Her keys being gold, but not the right,)

On lower levels she may do!

Her joy is more in loving you

Than being loved, and she commands

All tenderness she understands.

It is but when you proffer more

The yoke weighs heavy and chafes sore.
It's weary work enforcing love
On one who has enough thereof,
And honour on the lowlihead
Of ignorance! Besides, you dread,
In Leah's arms, to meet the eyes
Of Rachel, somewhere in the skies,
And both return, alike relieved,
To life less loftily conceived.
Alas, alas!

Then wait the mood
In which a woman may be woo'd
Whose thoughts and habits are too high
For honour to be flattery,
And who would surely not allow
The suit that you could proffer now.
Her equal yoke would sit with ease;
It might, with wearing, even please,
(Not with a better word to move
The loyal wrath of present love);
She would not mope when you were gay,
For want of knowing aught to say;
Nor vex you with unhandsome waste
Of thoughts ill-timed and words ill-placed;
Nor reckon small things duties small,
And your fine sense fantastical;
Nor would she bring you up a brood
Of strangers bound to you by blood,
Boys of a meaner moral race,

Girls with their mother's evil grace.
But not her chance to sometimes find
Her critic past his judgment kind;
Nor, unaccustom'd to respect,
Which men, where 'tis not claim'd, neglect,

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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