

**Browning Elizabeth Barrett**

# **The Poetical Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Volume 2**



Elizabeth Browning

**The Poetical Works of Elizabeth  
Barrett Browning. Volume 2**

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# **Browning Elizabeth Barrett The Poetical Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Volume 2**

## **THE ROMAUNT OF MARGRET**

Can my affections find out nothing best,  
But still and still remove?

*Quarles.*

### **I**

I plant a tree whose leaf  
The yew-tree leaf will suit:  
But when its shade is o'er you laid,  
Turn round and pluck the fruit.  
Now reach my harp from off the wall  
Where shines the sun aslant;  
The sun may shine and we be cold!  
O hearken, loving hearts and bold,  
Unto my wild romaunt.  
Margret, Margret.

### **II**

Sitteth the fair ladye  
Close to the river side  
Which runneth on with a merry tone  
Her merry thoughts to guide:  
It runneth through the trees,  
It runneth by the hill,  
Nathless the lady's thoughts have found  
A way more pleasant still  
Margret, Margret.

### **III**

The night is in her hair

And giveth shade to shade,  
And the pale moonlight on her forehead white  
Like a spirit's hand is laid;  
Her lips part with a smile  
Instead of speakings done:  
I ween, she thinketh of a voice,  
Albeit uttering none.  
Margret, Margret.

#### IV

All little birds do sit  
With heads beneath their wings:  
Nature doth seem in a mystic dream,  
Absorbed from her living things:  
That dream by that ladye  
Is certes unpartook,  
For she looketh to the high cold stars  
With a tender human look  
Margret, Margret.

#### V

The lady's shadow lies  
Upon the running river;  
It lieth no less in its quietness,  
For that which resteth never:  
Most like a trusting heart  
Upon a passing faith,  
Or as upon the course of life  
The steadfast doom of death.  
Margret, Margret.

#### VI

The lady doth not move,  
The lady doth not dream,  
Yet she seeth her shade no longer laid  
In rest upon the stream:  
It shaketh without wind,  
It parteth from the tide,  
It standeth upright in the cleft moonlight,

It sitteth at her side.  
Margret, Margret.

## VII

Look in its face, ladye,  
And keep thee from thy swoond;  
With a spirit bold thy pulses hold  
And hear its voice's sound:  
For so will sound thy voice  
When thy face is to the wall,  
And such will be thy face, ladye,  
When the maidens work thy pall.  
Margret, Margret.

## VIII

"Am I not like to thee?"  
The voice was calm and low,  
And between each word you might have heard  
The silent forests grow;  
*"The like may sway the like;"*  
By which mysterious law  
Mine eyes from thine and my lips from thine  
The light and breath may draw.  
Margret, Margret.

## IX

"My lips do need thy breath,  
My lips do need thy smile,  
And my pallid eyne, that light in thine  
Which met the stars erewhile:  
Yet go with light and life  
If that thou lovest one  
In all the earth who loveth thee  
As truly as the sun,  
Margret, Margret."

## X

Her cheek had waxèd white  
Like cloud at fall of snow;  
Then like to one at set of sun,  
It waxèd red alsò;  
For love's name maketh bold  
As if the loved were near:  
And then she sighed the deep long sigh  
Which cometh after fear.  
Margret, Margret.

## XI

"Now, sooth, I fear thee not —  
Shall never fear thee now!"  
(And a noble sight was the sudden light  
Which lit her lifted brow.)  
"Can earth be dry of streams,  
Or hearts of love?" she said;  
"Who doubteth love, can know not love:  
He is already dead."  
Margret, Margret.

## XII

"I have" ... and here her lips  
Some word in pause did keep,  
And gave the while a quiet smile  
As if they paused in sleep, —  
"I have ... a brother dear,  
A knight of knightly fame!  
I broidered him a knightly scarf  
With letters of my name  
Margret, Margret.

## XIII

"I fed his grey goshawk,  
I kissed his fierce bloodhoùnd,

I sate at home when he might come  
And caught his horn's far sound:  
I sang him hunter's songs,  
I poured him the red wine,  
He looked across the cup and said,  
*I love thee, sister mine.*"  
Margret, Margret.

#### XIV

IT trembled on the grass  
With a low, shadowy laughter;  
The sounding river which rolled, for ever  
Stood dumb and stagnant after:  
"Brave knight thy brother is!  
But better loveth he  
Thy chaliced wine than thy chaunted song,  
And better both than thee,  
Margret, Margret."

#### XV

The lady did not heed  
The river's silence while  
Her own thoughts still ran at their will,  
And calm was still her smile.  
"My little sister wears  
The look our mother wore:  
I smooth her locks with a golden comb,  
I bless her evermore."  
Margret, Margret.

#### XVI

"I gave her my first bird  
When first my voice it knew;  
I made her share my posies rare  
And told her where they grew:  
I taught her God's dear name  
With prayer and praise to tell,  
She looked from heaven into my face  
And said, *I love thee well.*"

Margret, Margret.

## XVII

IT trembled on the grass  
With a low, shadowy laughter;  
You could see each bird as it woke and stared  
Through the shrivelled foliage after.  
"Fair child thy sister is!  
But better loveth she  
Thy golden comb than thy gathered flowers,  
And better both than thee,  
Margret, Margret."

## XVIII

Thy lady did not heed  
The withering on the bough;  
Still calm her smile albeit the while  
A little pale her brow:  
"I have a father old,  
The lord of ancient halls;  
An hundred friends are in his court  
Yet only me he calls.  
Margret, Margret.

## XIX

"An hundred knights are in his court  
Yet read I by his knee;  
And when forth they go to the tourney-show  
I rise not up to see:  
'T is a weary book to read,  
My tryst's at set of sun,  
But loving and dear beneath the stars  
Is his blessing when I've done."  
Margret, Margret.

## XX

IT trembled on the grass  
With a low, shadowy laughter;  
And moon and star though bright and far  
Did shrink and darken after.  
"High lord thy father is!  
But better loveth he  
His ancient halls than his hundred friends,  
His ancient halls, than thee,  
Margret, Margret."

## XXI

The lady did not heed  
That the far stars did fail;  
Still calm her smile, albeit the while ...  
Nay, but she is not pale!  
"I have more than a friend  
Across the mountains dim:  
No other's voice is soft to me,  
Unless it nameth *him*."  
Margret, Margret.

## XXII

"Though louder beats my heart,  
I know his tread again,  
And his fair plume aye, unless turned away,  
For the tears do blind me then:  
We brake no gold, a sign  
Of stronger faith to be,  
But I wear his last look in my soul,  
Which said, *I love but thee!*"  
Margret, Margret.

## XXIII

IT trembled on the grass  
With a low, shadowy laughter;  
And the wind did toll, as a passing soul  
Were sped by church-bell after;  
And shadows, 'stead of light,  
Fell from the stars above,

In flakes of darkness on her face  
Still bright with trusting love.  
Margret, Margret.

#### XXIV

"He *loved* but only thee!  
*That* love is transient too.  
The wild hawk's bill doth dabble still  
I' the mouth that vowed thee true:  
Will he open his dull eyes  
When tears fall on his brow?  
Behold, the death-worm to his heart  
Is a nearer thing than *thou*,  
Margret, Margret."

#### XXV

Her face was on the ground —  
None saw the agony;  
But the men at sea did that night agree  
They heard a drowning cry:  
And when the morning brake,  
Fast rolled the river's tide,  
With the green trees waving overhead  
And a white corse laid beside.  
Margret, Margret.

#### XXVI

A knight's bloodhound and he  
The funeral watch did keep;  
With a thought o' the chase he stroked its face  
As it howled to see him weep.  
A fair child kissed the dead,  
But shrank before its cold.  
And alone yet proudly in his hall  
Did stand a baron old.  
Margret, Margret.

## XXVII

Hang up my harp again!  
I have no voice for song.  
Not song but wail, and mourners pale,  
Not bards, to love belong.  
O failing human love!  
O light, by darkness known!  
O false, the while thou treadest earth!  
O deaf beneath the stone!  
Margret, Margret.

## ISOBEL'S CHILD

– so find we profit,  
By losing of our prayers.

*Shakespeare.*

### I

To rest the weary nurse has gone:  
An eight-day watch had watchèd she,  
Still rocking beneath sun and moon  
The baby on her knee,  
Till Isobel its mother said  
"The fever waneth – wend to bed,  
For now the watch comes round to me."

### II

Then wearily the nurse did throw  
Her pallet in the darkest place  
Of that sick room, and slept and dreamed:  
For, as the gusty wind did blow  
The night-lamp's flare across her face,  
She saw or seemed to see, but dreamed,  
That the poplars tall on the opposite hill,  
The seven tall poplars on the hill,  
Did clasp the setting sun until  
His rays dropped from him, pined and still  
As blossoms in frost,  
Till he waned and paled, so weirdly crossed,  
To the colour of moonlight which doth pass  
Over the dank ridged churchyard grass.  
The poplars held the sun, and he  
The eyes of the nurse that they should not see  
– Not for a moment, the babe on her knee,  
Though she shuddered to feel that it grew to be  
Too chill, and lay too heavily.

### III

She only dreamed; for all the while  
'T was Lady Isobel that kept  
The little baby: and it slept  
Fast, warm, as if its mother's smile,  
Laden with love's dewy weight,  
And red as rose of Harpocrate  
Dropt upon its eyelids, pressed  
Lashes to cheek in a sealèd rest.

#### IV

And more and more smiled Isobel  
To see the baby sleep so well —  
She knew not that she smiled.  
Against the lattice, dull and wild  
Drive the heavy droning drops,  
Drop by drop, the sound being one;  
As momentarily time's segments fall  
On the ear of God, who hears through all  
Eternity's unbroken monotone:  
And more and more smiled Isobel  
To see the baby sleep so well —  
She knew not that she smiled.  
The wind in intermission stops  
Down in the beechen forest,  
Then cries aloud  
As one at the sorest,  
Self-stung, self-driven,  
And rises up to its very tops,  
Stiffening erect the branches bowed,  
Dilating with a tempest-soul  
The trees that with their dark hands break  
Through their own outline, and heavy roll  
Shadows as massive as clouds in heaven  
Across the castle lake  
And more and more smiled Isobel  
To see the baby sleep so well;  
She knew not that she smiled;  
She knew not that the storm was wild;  
Through the uproar drear she could not hear  
The castle clock which struck anear —  
She heard the low, light breathing of her child.

#### V

O sight for wondering look!  
While the external nature broke  
Into such abandonment,  
While the very mist, heart-rent  
By the lightning, seemed to eddy  
Against nature, with a din, —  
A sense of silence and of steady  
Natural calm appeared to come  
From things without, and enter in  
The human creature's room.

## VI

So motionless she sate,  
The babe asleep upon her knees,  
You might have dreamed their souls had gone  
Away to things inanimate,  
In such to live, in such to moan;  
And that their bodies had ta'en back,  
In mystic change, all silences  
That cross the sky in cloudy rack,  
Or dwell beneath the reedy ground  
In waters safe from their own sound:  
Only she wore  
The deepening smile I named before,  
And *that* a deepening love expressed;  
And who at once can love and rest?

## VII

In sooth the smile that then was keeping  
Watch upon the baby sleeping,  
Floated with its tender light  
Downward, from the drooping eyes,  
Upward, from the lips apart,  
Over cheeks which had grown white  
With an eight-day weeping:  
All smiles come in such a wise  
Where tears shall fall or have of old —  
Like northern lights that fill the heart  
Of heaven in sign of cold.

## VIII

Motionless she sate.  
Her hair had fallen by its weight  
On each side of her smile and lay  
Very blackly on the arm  
Where the baby nestled warm,  
Pale as baby carved in stone  
Seen by glimpses of the moon  
Up a dark cathedral aisle:  
But, through the storm, no moonbeam fell  
Upon the child of Isobel —  
Perhaps you saw it by the ray  
Alone of her still smile.

## IX

A solemn thing it is to me  
To look upon a babe that sleeps  
Wearing in its spirit-deeps  
The undeveloped mystery  
Of our Adam's taint and woe,  
Which, when they developed be,  
Will not let it slumber so;  
Lying new in life beneath  
The shadow of the coming death,  
With that soft, low, quiet breath,  
As if it felt the sun;  
Knowing all things by their blooms,  
Not their roots, yea, sun and sky  
Only by the warmth that comes  
Out of each, earth only by  
The pleasant hues that o'er it run,  
And human love by drops of sweet  
White nourishment still hanging round  
The little mouth so slumber-bound:  
All which broken sentiency  
And conclusion incomplete,  
Will gather and unite and climb  
To an immortality  
Good or evil, each sublime,  
Through life and death to life again.  
O little lids, now folded fast,  
Must ye learn to drop at last  
Our large and burning tears?

O warm quick body, must thou lie,  
When the time comes round to die,  
Still from all the whirl of years,  
Bare of all the joy and pain?  
O small frail being, wilt thou stand  
At God's right hand,  
Lifting up those sleeping eyes  
Dilated by great destinies,  
To an endless waking? thrones and seraphim.  
Through the long ranks of their solemnities,  
Sunning thee with calm looks of Heaven's surprise,  
But thine alone on Him?  
Or else, self-willed, to tread the Godless place,  
(God keep thy will!) feel thine own energies  
Cold, strong, objectless, like a dead man's clasp,  
The sleepless deathless life within thee grasp, —  
While myriad faces, like one changeless face,  
With woe *not love's*, shall glass thee everywhere  
And overcome thee with thine own despair?

## X

More soft, less solemn images  
Drifted o'er the lady's heart  
Silently as snow.  
She had seen eight days depart  
Hour by hour, on bended knees,  
With pale-wrung hands and prayings low  
And broken, through which came the sound  
Of tears that fell against the ground,  
Making sad stops. — "Dear Lord, dear Lord!"  
She still had prayed, (the heavenly word  
Broken by an earthly sigh)  
— "Thou who didst not erst deny  
The mother-joy to Mary mild,  
Blessèd in the blessèd child  
Which hearkened in meek babyhood  
Her cradle-hymn, albeit used  
To all that music interfused  
In breasts of angels high and good!  
Oh, take not, Lord, my babe away —  
Oh, take not to thy songful heaven  
The pretty baby thou hast given,  
Or ere that I have seen him play  
Around his father's knees and known  
That *he* knew how my love has gone  
From all the world to him.

Think, God among the cherubim,  
How I shall shiver every day  
In thy June sunshine, knowing where  
The grave-grass keeps it from his fair  
Still cheeks: and feel, at every tread,  
His little body, which is dead  
And hidden in thy turfy fold,  
Doth make thy whole warm earth a-cold!  
O God, I am so young, so young —  
I am not used to tears at nights  
Instead of slumber – not to prayer  
With sobbing lips and hands out-wrung!  
Thou knowest all my prayings were  
'I bless thee, God, for past delights —  
Thank God!' I am not used to bear  
Hard thoughts of death; the earth doth cover  
No face from me of friend or lover:  
And must the first who teaches me  
The form of shrouds and funerals, be  
Mine own first-born belovèd? he  
Who taught me first this mother-love?  
Dear Lord who spreadest out above  
Thy loving, transpierced hands to meet  
All lifted hearts with blessing sweet, —  
Pierce not my heart, my tender heart  
Thou madest tender! Thou who art  
So happy in thy heaven alway,  
Take not mine only bliss away!"

## XI

She so had prayed: and God, who hears  
Through seraph-songs the sound of tears  
From that belovèd babe had ta'en  
The fever and the beating pain.  
And more and more smiled Isobel  
To see the baby sleep so well,  
(She knew not that she smiled, I wis)  
Until the pleasant gradual thought  
Which near her heart the smile enwrought,  
Now soft and slow, itself did seem  
To float along a happy dream,  
Beyond it into speech like this.

## XII

"I prayed for thee, my little child,  
And God has heard my prayer!  
And when thy babyhood is gone,  
We two together undefiled  
By men's repinings, will kneel down  
Upon His earth which will be fair  
(Not covering thee, sweet!) to us twain,  
And give Him thankful praise."

## XIII

Dully and wildly drives the rain:  
Against the lattices drives the rain.

## XIV

"I thank Him now, that I can think  
Of those same future days,  
Nor from the harmless image shrink  
Of what I there might see —  
Strange babies on their mothers' knee,  
Whose innocent soft faces might  
From off mine eyelids strike the light,  
With looks not meant for me!"

## XV

Gustily blows the wind through the rain,  
As against the lattices drives the rain.

## XVI

"But now, O baby mine, together,  
We turn this hope of ours again  
To many an hour of summer weather,  
When we shall sit and intertwine

Our spirits, and instruct each other  
In the pure loves of child and mother!  
Two human loves make one divine."

## XVII

The thunder tears through the wind and the rain,  
As full on the lattices drives the rain.

## XVIII

"My little child, what wilt thou choose?  
Now let me look at thee and ponder.  
What gladness, from the gladnesses  
Futurity is spreading under  
Thy gladsome sight? Beneath the trees  
Wilt thou lean all day, and lose  
Thy spirit with the river seen  
Intermittently between  
The winding beechen alleys, —  
Half in labour, half repose,  
Like a shepherd keeping sheep,  
Thou, with only thoughts to keep  
Which never a bound will overpass,  
And which are innocent as those  
That feed among Arcadian valleys  
Upon the dewy grass?"

## XIX

The large white owl that with age is blind,  
That hath sate for years in the old tree hollow,  
Is carried away in a gust of wind;  
His wings could beat him not as fast  
As he goeth now the lattice past;  
He is borne by the winds, the rains do follow  
His white wings to the blast outflowing,  
He hooteth in going,  
And still, in the lightnings, coldly glitter  
His round unblinking eyes

## XX

"Or, baby, wilt thou think it fitter  
To be eloquent and wise,  
One upon whose lips the air  
Turns to solemn verities  
For men to breathe anew, and win  
A deeper-seated life within?  
Wilt be a philosopher,  
By whose voice the earth and skies  
Shall speak to the unborn?  
Or a poet, broadly spreading  
The golden immortalities  
Of thy soul on natures lorn  
And poor of such, them all to guard  
From their decay, – beneath thy treading,  
Earth's flowers recovering hues of Eden, —  
And stars, drawn downward by thy looks,  
To shine ascendant in thy books?"

## XXI

The tame hawk in the castle-yard,  
How it screams to the lightning, with its wet  
Jagged plumes overhanging the parapet!  
And at the lady's door the hound  
Scratches with a crying sound.

## XXII

"But, O my babe, thy lids are laid  
Close, fast upon thy cheek,  
And not a dream of power and sheen  
Can make a passage up between;  
Thy heart is of thy mother's made,  
Thy looks are very meek,  
And it will be their chosen place  
To rest on some beloved face,  
As these on thine, and let the noise  
Of the whole world go on nor drown  
The tender silence of thy joys:  
Or when that silence shall have grown

Too tender for itself, the same  
Yearning for sound, – to look above  
And utter its one meaning, LOVE,  
That *He* may hear His name."

### XXIII

No wind, no rain, no thunder!  
The waters had trickled not slowly,  
The thunder was not spent  
Nor the wind near finishing;  
Who would have said that the storm was diminishing?  
No wind, no rain, no thunder!  
Their noises dropped asunder  
From the earth and the firmament,  
From the towers and the lattices,  
Abrupt and echoless  
As ripe fruits on the ground unshaken wholly  
As life in death.  
And sudden and solemn the silence fell,  
Startling the heart of Isobel  
As the tempest could not:  
Against the door went panting the breath  
Of the lady's hound whose cry was still,  
And she, constrained howe'er she would not,  
Lifted her eyes and saw the moon  
Looking out of heaven alone  
Upon the poplared hill, —  
A calm of God, made visible  
That men might bless it at their will.

### XXIV

The moonshine on the baby's face  
Falleth clear and cold:  
The mother's looks have fallen back  
To the same place:  
Because no moon with silver rack,  
Nor broad sunrise in jasper skies  
Has power to hold  
Our loving eyes,  
Which still revert, as ever must  
Wonder and Hope, to gaze on the dust.

## XXV

The moonshine on the baby's face  
Cold and clear remaineth;  
The mother's looks do shrink away, —  
The mother's looks return to stay,  
As charmèd by what paineth:  
Is any glamour in the case?  
Is it dream, or is it sight?  
Hath the change upon the wild  
Elements that sign the night,  
Passed upon the child?  
It is not dream, but sight.

## XXVI

The babe has awakened from sleep  
And unto the gaze of its mother,  
Bent over it, lifted another —  
Not the baby-looks that go  
Unaimingly to and fro,  
But an earnest gazing deep  
Such as soul gives soul at length  
When by work and wail of years  
It winneth a solemn strength  
And mourneth as it wears.  
A strong man could not brook,  
With pulse unhurried by fears,  
To meet that baby's look  
O'er glazed by manhood's tears,  
The tears of a man full grown,  
With a power to wring our own,  
In the eyes all undefiled  
Of a little three-months' child —  
To see that babe-brow wrought  
By the witnessing of thought  
To judgment's prodigy,  
And the small soft mouth unweaned,  
By mother's kiss o'erleaned,  
(Putting the sound of loving  
Where no sound else was moving  
Except the speechless cry)  
Quickened to mind's expression,  
Shaped to articulation,  
Yea, uttering words, yea, naming woe,

In tones that with it strangely went  
Because so baby-innocent,  
As the child spake out to the mother, so: —

## XXVII

"O mother, mother, loose thy prayer!  
Christ's name hath made it strong.  
It bindeth me, it holdeth me  
With its most loving cruelty,  
From floating my new soul along  
The happy heavenly air.  
It bindeth me, it holdeth me  
In all this dark, upon this dull  
Low earth, by only weepers trod.  
It bindeth me, it holdeth me!  
Mine angel looketh sorrowful  
Upon the face of God.<sup>1</sup>

## XXVIII

"Mother, mother, can I dream  
Beneath your earthly trees?  
I had a vision and a gleam,  
I heard a sound more sweet than these  
When rippled by the wind:  
Did you see the Dove with wings  
Bathed in golden glisterings  
From a sunless light behind,  
Dropping on me from the sky,  
Soft as mother's kiss, until  
I seemed to leap and yet was still?  
Saw you how His love-large eye  
Looked upon me mystic calms,  
Till the power of His divine  
Vision was indrawn to mine?

## XXIX

"Oh, the dream within the dream!

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<sup>1</sup> For I say unto you that in Heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven —*Matt.* xviii, 10.

I saw celestial places even.  
Oh, the vistas of high palms  
Making finites of delight  
Through the heavenly infinite,  
Lifting up their green still tops  
To the heaven of heaven!  
Oh, the sweet life-tree that drops  
Shade like light across the river  
Glorified in its for-ever  
Flowing from the Throne!  
Oh, the shining holinesses  
Of the thousand, thousand faces  
God-sunned by the thronèd One,  
And made intense with such a love  
That, though I saw them turned above,  
Each loving seemed for also me!  
And, oh, the Unspeakable, the He,  
The manifest in secrecies  
Yet of mine own heart partaker  
With the overcoming look  
Of One who hath been once forsook  
And blesseth the forsaker!  
Mother, mother, let me go  
Toward the Face that looketh so!  
Through the mystic wingèd Four  
Whose are inward, outward eyes  
Dark with light of mysteries  
And the restless evermore  
'Holy, holy, holy,' – through  
The sevenfold Lamps that burn in view  
Of cherubim and seraphim, —  
Through the four-and-twenty crowned  
Stately elders white around,  
Suffer me to go to Him!

### XXX

"Is your wisdom very wise,  
Mother, on the narrow earth,  
Very happy, very worth  
That I should stay to learn?  
Are these air-corrupting sighs  
Fashioned by unlearnèd breath?  
Do the students' lamps that burn  
All night, illumine death?  
Mother, albeit this be so,  
Loose thy prayer and let me go

Where that bright chief angel stands  
Apart from all his brother bands,  
Too glad for smiling, having bent  
In angelic wilderment  
O'er the depths of God, and brought  
Reeling thence one only thought  
To fill his own eternity.  
He the teacher is for me —  
He can teach what I would know —  
Mother, mother, let me go!

### XXXI

"Can your poet make an Eden  
No winter will undo,  
And light a starry fire while heeding  
His hearth's is burning too?  
Drown in music the earth's din,  
And keep his own wild soul within  
The law of his own harmony?  
Mother, albeit this be so,  
Let me to my heaven go!  
A little harp me waits thereby,  
A harp whose strings are golden all  
And tuned to music spherical,  
Hanging on the green life-tree  
Where no willows ever be.  
Shall I miss that harp of mine?  
Mother, no! – the Eye divine  
Turned upon it, makes it shine;  
And when I touch it, poems sweet  
Like separate souls shall fly from it,  
Each to the immortal fytte.  
We shall all be poets there,  
Gazing on the chiefest Fair.

### XXXII

"Love! earth's love! and *can* we love  
Fixedly where all things move?  
Can the sinning love each other?  
Mother, mother,  
I tremble in thy close embrace,  
I feel thy tears adown my face,  
Thy prayers do keep me out of bliss —

O dreary earthly love!  
Loose thy prayer and let me go  
To the place which loving is  
Yet not sad; and when is given  
Escape to *thee* from this below,  
Thou shalt behold me that I wait  
For thee beside the happy Gate,  
And silence shall be up in heaven  
To hear our greeting kiss."

### XXXIII

The nurse awakes in the morning sun,  
And starts to see beside her bed  
The lady with a grandeur spread  
Like pathos o'er her face, as one  
God-satisfied and earth-undone;  
The babe upon her arm was dead:  
And the nurse could utter forth no cry, —  
She was awed by the calm in the mother's eye.

### XXXIV

"Wake, nurse!" the lady said;  
"*We* are waking – he and I —  
I, on earth, and he, in sky:  
And thou must help me to o'erlay  
With garment white this little clay  
Which needs no more our lullaby.

### XXXV

"I changed the cruel prayer I made,  
And bowed my meekened face, and prayed  
That God would do His will; and thus  
He did it, nurse! He parted us:  
And His sun shows victorious  
The dead calm face, – and *I* am calm,  
And Heaven is hearkening a new psalm.

**XXXVI**

"This earthly noise is too anear,  
Too loud, and will not let me hear  
The little harp. My death will soon  
Make silence."  
And a sense of tune,  
A satisfied love meanwhile  
Which nothing earthly could despoil,  
Sang on within her soul.

**XXXVII**

Oh you,  
Earth's tender and impassioned few,  
Take courage to entrust your love  
To Him so named who guards above  
Its ends and shall fulfil!  
Breaking the narrow prayers that may  
Befit your narrow hearts, away  
In His broad, loving will.

## THE ROMAUNT OF THE PAGE

### I

A knight of gallant deeds  
And a young page at his side,  
From the holy war in Palestine  
Did slow and thoughtful ride,  
As each were a palmer and told for beads  
The dews of the eventide.

### II

"O young page," said the knight,  
"A noble page art thou!  
Thou fearest not to steep in blood  
The curls upon thy brow;  
And once in the tent, and twice in the fight,  
Didst ward me a mortal blow."

### III

"O brave knight," said the page,  
"Or ere we hither came,  
We talked in tent, we talked in field,  
Of the bloody battle-game;  
But here, below this greenwood bough,  
I cannot speak the same.

### IV

"Our troop is far behind,  
The woodland calm is new;  
Our steeds, with slow grass-muffled hoofs,  
Tread deep the shadows through;  
And, in my mind, some blessing kind  
Is dropping with the dew.

## V

"The woodland calm is pure —  
I cannot choose but have  
A thought from these, o' the beechen-trees,  
Which in our England wave,  
And of the little finches fine  
Which sang there while in Palestine  
The warrior-hilt we drave.

## VI

"Methinks, a moment gone,  
I heard my mother pray!  
I heard, sir knight, the prayer for me  
Wherein she passed away;  
And I know the heavens are leaning down  
To hear what I shall say."

## VII

The page spake calm and high,  
As of no mean degree;  
Perhaps he felt in nature's broad  
Full heart, his own was free:  
And the knight looked up to his lifted eye,  
Then answered smilingly —

## VIII

"Sir page, I pray your grace!  
Certes, I meant not so  
To cross your pastoral mood, sir page,  
With the crook of the battle-bow;  
But a knight may speak of a lady's face,  
I ween, in any mood or place,  
If the grasses die or grow.

## IX

"And this I meant to say —  
My lady's face shall shine  
As ladies' faces use, to greet  
My page from Palestine;  
Or, speak she fair or prank she gay,  
She is no lady of mine.

## X

"And this I meant to fear —  
Her bower may suit thee ill;  
For, sooth, in that same field and tent,  
Thy *talk* was somewhat still:  
And fitter thy hand for my knightly spear  
Than thy tongue for my lady's will!"

## XI

Slowly and thankfully  
The young page bowed his head;  
His large eyes seemed to muse a smile,  
Until he blushed instead,  
And no lady in her bower, pardiè,  
Could blush more sudden red:  
"Sir Knight, – thy lady's bower to me  
Is suited well," he said.

## XII

*Beati, beati, mortui!*  
From the convent on the sea,  
One mile off, or scarce so nigh,  
Swells the dirge as clear and high  
As if that, over brake and lea,  
Bodily the wind did carry  
The great altar of Saint Mary,  
And the fifty tapers burning o'er it,  
And the lady Abbess dead before it,

And the chanting nuns whom yesterweek  
Her voice did charge and bless, —  
Chanting steady, chanting meek,  
Chanting with a solemn breath,  
Because that they are thinking less  
Upon the dead than upon death.  
*Beati, beati, mortui!*  
Now the vision in the sound  
Wheeeth on the wind around;  
Now it sweepeth back, away —  
The uplands will not let it stay  
To dark the western sun:  
*Mortui!*— away at last, —  
Or ere the page's blush is past!  
And the knight heard all, and the page heard none.

### XIII

"A boon, thou noble knight,  
If ever I servèd thee!  
Though thou art a knight and I am a page,  
Now grant a boon to me;  
And tell me sooth, if dark or bright,  
If little loved or loved aright  
Be the face of thy ladye."

### XIV

Gloomily looked the knight —  
"As a son thou hast servèd me,  
And would to none I had granted boon  
Except to only thee!  
For haply then I should love aright,  
For then I should know if dark or bright  
Were the face of my ladye.

### XV

"Yet it ill suits my knightly tongue  
To grudge that granted boon,  
That heavy price from heart and life  
I paid in silence down;

The hand that claimed it, cleared in fine  
My father's fame: I swear by mine,  
That price was nobly won!

## XVI

"Earl Walter was a brave old earl,  
He was my father's friend,  
And while I rode the lists at court  
And little guessed the end,  
My noble father in his shroud  
Against a slanderer lying loud,  
He rose up to defend.

## XVII

"Oh, calm below the marble grey  
My father's dust was strown!  
Oh, meek above the marble grey  
His image prayed alone!  
The slanderer lied: the wretch was brave —  
For, looking up the minster-nave,  
He saw my father's knightly glaive  
Was changed from steel to stone.

## XVIII

"Earl Walter's glaive was steel,  
With a brave old hand to wear it,  
And dashed the lie back in the mouth  
Which lied against the godly truth  
And against the knightly merit  
The slanderer, 'neath the avenger's heel,  
Struck up the dagger in appeal  
From stealthy lie to brutal force —  
And out upon the traitor's corse  
Was yielded the true spirit.

## XIX

"I would mine hand had fought that fight  
And justified my father!  
I would mine heart had caught that wound  
And slept beside him rather!  
I think it were a better thing  
Than murdered friend and marriage-ring  
Forced on my life together.

## XX

"Wail shook Earl Walter's house;  
His true wife shed no tear;  
She lay upon her bed as mute  
As the earl did on his bier:  
Till – 'Ride, ride fast,' she said at last,  
'And bring the avengèd's son anear!  
Ride fast, ride free, as a dart can flee,  
For white of blee with waiting for me  
Is the corse in the next chambère.'

## XXI

"I came, I knelt beside her bed;  
Her calm was worse than strife:  
'My husband, for thy father dear,  
Gave freely when thou wast not here  
His own and eke my life.  
A boon! Of that sweet child we make  
An orphan for thy father's sake,  
Make thou, for ours, a wife.'

## XXII

"I said, 'My steed neighs in the court,  
My bark rocks on the brine,  
And the warrior's vow I am under now  
To free the pilgrim's shrine;  
But fetch the ring and fetch the priest  
And call that daughter of thine,  
And rule she wide from my castle on Nyde  
While I am in Palestine.'

### XXIII

"In the dark chambère, if the bride was fair,  
Ye wis, I could not see,  
But the steed thrice neighed, and the priest fast prayed,  
And wedded fast were we.  
Her mother smiled upon her bed  
As at its side we knelt to wed,  
And the bride rose from her knee  
And kissed the smile of her mother dead,  
Or ever she kissed me.

### XXIV

"My page, my page, what grieves thee so,  
That the tears run down thy face?" —  
"Alas, alas! mine own sistèr  
Was in thy lady's case:  
But *she* laid down the silks she wore  
And followed him she wed before,  
Disguised as his true servitor,  
To the very battle-place."

### XXV

And wept the page, but laughed the knight,  
A careless laugh laughed he:  
"Well done it were for thy sistèr,  
But not for my ladye!  
My love, so please you, shall requite  
No woman, whether dark or bright,  
Unwomaned if she be."

### XXVI

The page stopped weeping and smiled cold —  
"Your wisdom may declare  
That womanhood is proved the best  
By golden brooch and glossy vest  
The mincing ladies wear;

Yet is it proved, and was of old,  
Anear as well, I dare to hold,  
By truth, or by despair."

## XXVII

He smiled no more, he wept no more,  
But passionate he spake —  
"Oh, womanly she prayed in tent,  
When none beside did wake!  
Oh, womanly she paled in fight,  
For one belovèd's sake! —  
And her little hand, defiled with blood,  
Her tender tears of womanhood  
Most woman-pure did make!"

## XXVIII

– "Well done it were for thy sistèr,  
Thou tellest well her tale!  
But for my lady, she shall pray  
I' the kirk of Nydesdale.  
Not dread for me but love for me  
Shall make my lady pale;  
No casque shall hide her woman's tear —  
It shall have room to trickle clear  
Behind her woman's veil."

## XXIX

– "But what if she mistook thy mind  
And followed thee to strife,  
Then kneeling did entreat thy love  
As Paynims ask for life?"  
– "I would forgive, and evermore  
Would love her as my servitor,  
But little as my wife.

## XXX

"Look up – there is a small bright cloud  
Alone amid the skies!  
So high, so pure, and so apart,  
A woman's honour lies."  
The page looked up – the cloud was sheen —  
A sadder cloud did rush, I ween,  
Betwixt it and his eyes.

### XXXI

Then dimly dropped his eyes away  
From welkin unto hill —  
Ha! who rides there? – the page is 'ware,  
Though the cry at his heart is still:  
And the page seeth all and the knight seeth none,  
Though banner and spear do fleck the sun,  
And the Saracens ride at will.

### XXXII

He speaketh calm, he speaketh low, —  
"Ride fast, my master, ride,  
Or ere within the broadening dark  
The narrow shadows hide."  
"Yea, fast, my page, I will do so,  
And keep thou at my side."

### XXXIII

"Now nay, now nay, ride on thy way,  
Thy faithful page precede.  
For I must loose on saddle-bow  
My battle-casque that galls, I trow,  
The shoulder of my steed;  
And I must pray, as I did vow,  
For one in bitter need.

### XXXIV

"Ere night I shall be near to thee, —

Now ride, my master, ride!  
Ere night, as parted spirits cleave  
To mortals too beloved to leave,  
I shall be at thy side."  
The knight smiled free at the fantasy,  
And adown the dell did ride.

### XXXV

Had the knight looked up to the page's face,  
No smile the word had won;  
Had the knight looked up to the page's face,  
I ween he had never gone:  
Had the knight looked back to the page's geste,  
I ween he had turned anon,  
For dread was the woe in the face so young,  
And wild was the silent geste that flung  
Casque, sword to earth, as the boy down-sprung  
And stood – alone, alone.

### XXXVI

He clenched his hands as if to hold  
His soul's great agony —  
"Have I renounced my womanhood,  
For wifhood unto *thee*,  
And is this the last, last look of thine  
That ever I shall see?

### XXXVII

"Yet God thee save, and mayst thou have  
A lady to thy mind,  
More woman-proud and half as true  
As one thou leav'st behind!  
And God me take with Him to dwell —  
For Him I cannot love too well,  
As I have loved my kind."

### XXXVIII

She looketh up, in earth's despair,  
The hopeful heavens to seek;  
That little cloud still floateth there,  
Whereof her loved did speak:  
How bright the little cloud appears!  
Her eyelids fall upon the tears,  
And the tears down either cheek.

### XXXIX

The tramp of hoof, the flash of steel —  
The Paynims round her coming!  
The sound and sight have made her calm, —  
False page, but truthful woman;  
She stands amid them all unmoved:  
A heart once broken by the loved  
Is strong to meet the foeman.

### XL

"Ho, Christian page! art keeping sheep,  
From pouring wine-cups resting?" —  
"I keep my master's noble name,  
For warring, not for feasting;  
And if that here Sir Hubert were,  
My master brave, my master dear,  
Ye would not stay the questing."

### XLI

"Where is thy master, scornful page,  
That we may slay or bind him?" —  
"Now search the lea and search the wood,  
And see if ye can find him!  
Nathless, as hath been often tried,  
Your Paynim heroes faster ride  
Before him than behind him."

## XLII

"Give smoother answers, lying page,  
Or perish in the lying!" —  
"I trow that if the warrior brand  
Beside my foot, were in my hand,  
'T were better at replying!"  
They cursed her deep, they smote her low,  
They cleft her golden ringlets through;  
The Loving is the Dying.

## XLIII

She felt the scimitar gleam down,  
And met it from beneath  
With smile more bright in victory  
Than any sword from sheath, —  
Which flashed across her lip serene,  
Most like the spirit-light between  
The darks of life and death.

## XLIV

*Ingemisco, ingemisco!*  
From the convent on the sea,  
Now it sweepeth solemnly,  
As over wood and over lea  
Bodily the wind did carry  
The great altar of St. Mary,  
And the fifty tapers paling o'er it,  
And the Lady Abbess stark before it,  
And the weary nuns with hearts that faintly  
Beat along their voices saintly —  
*Ingemisco, ingemisco!*  
Dirge for abbess laid in shroud  
Sweepeth o'er the shroudless dead,  
Page or lady, as we said,  
With the dews upon her head,  
All as sad if not as loud.  
*Ingemisco, ingemisco!*  
Is ever a lament begun  
By any mourner under sun,

Which, ere it endeth, suits but *one*?

# THE LAY OF THE BROWN ROSARY

## FIRST PART

### I

"Onora, Onora," – her mother is calling,  
She sits at the lattice and hears the dew falling  
Drop after drop from the sycamores laden  
With dew as with blossom, and calls home the maiden,  
"Night cometh, Onora."

### II

She looks down the garden-walk caverned with trees,  
To the limes at the end where the green arbour is —  
"Some sweet thought or other may keep where it found her,  
While, forgot or unseen in the dreamlight around her,  
Night cometh – Onora!"

### III

She looks up the forest whose alleys shoot on  
Like the mute minster-aisles when the anthem is done  
And the choristers sitting with faces aslant  
Feel the silence to consecrate more than the chant —  
"Onora, Onora!"

### IV

And forward she looketh across the brown heath —  
"Onora, art coming?" – what is it she seeth?  
Nought, nought but the grey border-stone that is wist  
To dilate and assume a wild shape in the mist —  
"My daughter!" Then over

## V

The casement she leaneth, and as she doth so  
She is 'ware of her little son playing below:  
"Now where is Onora?" He hung down his head  
And spake not, then answering blushed scarlet-red, —  
"At the tryst with her lover."

## VI

But his mother was wroth: in a sternness quoth she,  
"As thou play'st at the ball art thou playing with me?  
When we know that her lover to battle is gone,  
And the saints know above that she loveth but one  
And will ne'er wed another?"

## VII

Then the boy wept aloud; 't was a fair sight yet sad  
To see the tears run down the sweet blooms he had:  
He stamped with his foot, said – "The saints know I lied  
Because truth that is wicked is fittest to hide:  
Must I utter it, mother?"

## VIII

In his vehement childhood he hurried within  
And knelt at her feet as in prayer against sin,  
But a child at a prayer never sobbeth as he —  
"Oh! she sits with the nun of the brown rosary,  
At nights in the ruin —

## IX

"The old convent ruin the ivy rots off,  
Where the owl hoots by day and the toad is sun-proof,  
Where no singing-birds build and the trees gaunt and grey  
As in stormy sea-coasts appear blasted one way —

But is *this* the wind's doing?

## X

"A nun in the east wall was buried alive  
Who mocked at the priest when he called her to shrive,  
And shrieked such a curse, as the stone took her breath,  
The old abbess fell backwards and swooned unto death  
With an Ave half-spoken.

## XI

"I tried once to pass it, myself and my hound,  
Till, as fearing the lash, down he shivered to ground —  
A brave hound, my mother! a brave hound, ye wot!  
And the wolf thought the same with his fangs at her throat  
In the pass of the Brocken.

## XII

"At dawn and at eve, mother, who sitteth there  
With the brown rosary never used for a prayer?  
Stoop low, mother, low! If we went there to see,  
What an ugly great hole in that east wall must be  
At dawn and at even!

## XIII

"Who meet there, my mother, at dawn and at even?  
Who meet by that wall, never looking to heaven?  
O sweetest my sister, what doeth with *thee*  
The ghost of a nun with a brown rosary  
And a face turned from heaven?

## XIV

"Saint Agnes o'erwatcheth my dreams and erewhile  
I have felt through mine eyelids the warmth of her smile;

But last night, as a sadness like pity came o'er her,  
She whispered – 'Say *two* prayers at dawn for Onora:  
The Tempted is sinning.'

## XV

"Onora, Onora!" they heard her not coming,  
Not a step on the grass, not a voice through the gloaming;  
But her mother looked up, and she stood on the floor  
Fair and still as the moonlight that came there before,  
And a smile just beginning:

## XVI

It touches her lips but it dares not arise  
To the height of the mystical sphere of her eyes,  
And the large musing eyes, neither joyous nor sorry  
Sing on like the angels in separate glory  
Between clouds of amber;

## XVII

For the hair droops in clouds amber-coloured till stirred  
Into gold by the gesture that comes with a word;  
While – O soft! – her speaking is so interwound  
Of the dim and the sweet, 't is a twilight of sound  
And floats through the chamber.

## XVIII

"Since thou shrivest my brother, fair mother," said she  
"I count on thy priesthood for marrying of me,  
And I know by the hills that the battle is done.  
That my lover rides on, will be here with the sun,  
'Neath the eyes that behold thee."

## XIX

Her mother sat silent – too tender, I wis,  
Of the smile her dead father smiled dying to kiss:  
But the boy started up pale with tears, passion-wrought —  
"O wicked fair sister, the hills utter nought!  
If he cometh, who told thee?"

## XX

"I know by the hills," she resumed calm and clear,  
"By the beauty upon them, that HE is anear:  
Did they ever look *so* since he bade me adieu?  
Oh, love in the waking, sweet brother, is true,  
As Saint Agnes in sleeping!"

## XXI

Half-ashamed and half-softened the boy did not speak,  
And the blush met the lashes which fell on his cheek:  
She bowed down to kiss him: dear saints, did he see  
Or feel on her bosom the BROWN ROSARY,  
That he shrank away weeping?

## SECOND PART

*A bed. Onora, sleeping. Angels, but not near*

### First Angel

Must we stand so far, and she  
So very fair?

### Second Angel

As bodies be.

### First Angel

And she so mild?

### Second Angel

As spirits when  
They meeken, not to God, but men.

### First Angel

And she so young, that I who bring  
Good dreams for saintly children, might  
Mistake that small soft face to-night,  
And fetch her such a blessed thing  
That at her waking she would weep  
For childhood lost anew in sleep.  
How hath she sinned?

### **Second Angel**

In bartering love;  
God's love for man's.

### **First Angel**

We may reprove  
The world for this, not only her:  
Let me approach to breathe away  
This dust o' the heart with holy air.

### **Second Angel**

Stand off! She sleeps, and did not pray.

### **First Angel**

Did none pray for her?

### **Second Angel**

Ay, a child, —  
Who never, praying, wept before:  
While, in a mother undefiled,  
Prayer goeth on in sleep, as true  
And pauseless as the pulses do.

### **First Angel**

Then I approach.

**Second Angel**

It is not WILLED.

**First Angel**

One word: is she redeemed?

**Second Angel**

No more!  
The place is filled.

*[Angels vanish]*

**Evil Spirit (in a Nun's garb by the bed)**

Forbear that dream – forbear that dream! too near to heaven it leaned.

**Onora (in sleep)**

Nay, leave me this – but only this! 't is but a dream, sweet fiend!

**Evil Spirit**

It is a *thought*.

**Onora (in sleep)**

A sleeping thought – most innocent of good:  
It doth the Devil no harm, sweet fiend! it cannot if it would.  
I say in it no holy hymn, I do no holy work,  
I scarcely hear the sabbath-bell that chimeth from the kirk.

### **Evil Spirit**

Forbear that dream – forbear that dream!

### **Onora (in sleep)**

Nay, let me dream at least.  
That far-off bell, it may be took for viol at a feast:  
I only walk among the fields, beneath the autumn-sun,  
With my dead father, hand in hand, as I have often done.

### **Evil Spirit**

Forbear that dream – forbear that dream!

### **Onora (in sleep)**

Nay, sweet fiend, let me go:  
I never more can walk with *him*, oh, never more but so!  
For they have tied my father's feet beneath the kirk-yard stone,  
Oh, deep and straight! oh, very straight! they move at nights alone:  
And then he calleth through my dreams, he calleth tenderly,  
"Come forth, my daughter, my beloved, and walk the fields with me!"

### **Evil Spirit**

Forbear that dream, or else disprove its pureness by a sign.

### **Onora (in sleep)**

Speak on, thou shalt be satisfied, my word shall answer thine.  
I heard a bird which used to sing when I a child was praying,  
I see the poppies in the corn I used to sport away in:  
What shall I do – tread down the dew and pull the blossoms blowing?  
Or clap my wicked hands to fright the finches from the rowan?

### **Evil Spirit**

Thou shalt do something harder still. Stand up where thou dost stand  
Among the fields of Dreamland with thy father hand in hand,  
And clear and slow repeat the vow, declare its cause and kind,  
Which not to break, in sleep or wake thou bearest on thy mind.

### **Onora (in sleep)**

I bear a vow of sinful kind, a vow for mournful cause;  
I vowed it deep, I vowed it strong, the spirits laughed applause:  
The spirits trailed along the pines low laughter like a breeze,  
While, high atween their swinging tops, the stars appeared to freeze.

### **Evil Spirit**

More calm and free, speak out to me why such a vow was made.

### **Onora (in sleep)**

Because that God decreed my death and I shrank back afraid.  
Have patience, O dead father mine! I did not fear to die —  
I wish I were a young dead child and had thy company!  
I wish I lay beside thy feet, a buried three-year child,  
And wearing only a kiss of thine upon my lips that smiled!  
The linden-tree that covers thee might so have shadowed twain,  
For death itself I did not fear – 't is love that makes the pain:  
Love feareth death. I was no child, I was betrothed that day;  
I wore a troth-kiss on my lips I could not give away.  
How could I bear to lie content and still beneath a stone,  
And feel mine own betrothed go by – alas! no more mine own —  
Go leading by in wedding pomp some lovely lady brave,  
With cheeks that blushed as red as rose, while mine were white in  
grave?  
How could I bear to sit in heaven, on e'er so high a throne,  
And hear him say to her – to *her*! that else he loveth none?  
Though e'er so high I sate above, though e'er so low he spake,  
As clear as thunder I should hear the new oath he might take,  
That hers, forsooth, were heavenly eyes – ah me, while very dim

Some heavenly eyes (indeed of heaven!) would darken down to *him*!

### **Evil Spirit**

Who told thee thou wast called to death?

### **Onora (in sleep)**

I sate all night beside thee:  
The grey owl on the ruined wall shut both his eyes to hide thee,  
And ever he flapped his heavy wing all brokenly and weak,  
And the long grass waved against the sky, around his gasping beak.  
I sate beside thee all the night, while the moonlight lay forlorn  
Strewn round us like a dead world's shroud in ghastly fragments torn:  
And through the night, and through the hush, and over the flapping  
wing,  
We heard beside the Heavenly Gate the angels murmuring:  
We heard them say, "Put day to day, and count the days to seven,  
And God will draw Onora up the golden stairs of heaven.  
And yet the Evil ones have leave that purpose to defer,  
For if she has no need of Him, He has no need of her."

### **Evil Spirit**

Speak out to me, speak bold and free.

### **Onora (in sleep)**

And then I heard thee say —  
"I count upon my rosary brown the hours thou hast to stay!  
Yet God permits us Evil ones to put by that decree,  
Since if thou hast no need of Him, He has no need of thee:  
And if thou wilt forgo the sight of angels, verily  
Thy true love gazing on thy face shall guess what angels be;  
Nor bride shall pass, save thee" ... Alas! — my father's hand's a-cold,  
The meadows seem ...

### Evil Spirit

Forbear the dream, or let the vow be told.

### Onora (in sleep)

I vowed upon thy rosary brown, this string of antique beads,  
By charnel lichens overgrown, and dank among the weeds,  
This rosary brown which is thine own, – lost soul of buried nun!  
Who, lost by vow, wouldst render now all souls alike undone, —  
I vowed upon thy rosary brown, – and, till such vow should break,  
A pledge always of living days 't was hung around my neck —  
I vowed to thee on rosary (dead father, look not so!),  
*I would not thank God in my weal, nor seek God in my woe.*

### Evil Spirit

And canst thou prove ...

### Onora (in sleep)

O love, my love! I felt him near again!  
I saw his steed on mountain-head, I heard it on the plain!  
Was this no weal for me to feel? Is greater weal than this?  
Yet when he came, I wept his name – and the angels heard but *his*.

### Evil Spirit

Well done, well done!

### Onora (in sleep)

Ah me, the sun! the dreamlight 'gins to pine, —  
Ah me, how dread can look the Dead! Aroint thee, father mine!

She starteth from slumber, she sitteth upright,  
And her breath comes in sobs, while she stares through the night;  
There is nought; the great willow, her lattice before,  
Large-drawn in the moon, lieth calm on the floor:  
But her hands tremble fast as their pulses and, free  
From the death-clasp, close over – the BROWN ROSARY.

## THIRD PART

### I

'Tis a morn for a bridal; the merry bride-bell  
Rings clear through the green-wood that skirts the chapelle,  
And the priest at the altar awaiteth the bride,  
And the sacristans slyly are jesting aside  
At the work shall be doing;

### II

While down through the wood rides that fair company,  
The youths with the courtship, the maids with the glee,  
Till the chapel-cross opens to sight, and at once  
All the maids sigh demurely and think for the nonce,  
"And so endeth a wooing!"

### III

And the bride and the bridegroom are leading the way,  
With his hand on her rein, and a word yet to say;  
Her dropt eyelids suggest the soft answers beneath,  
And the little quick smiles come and go with her breath  
When she sigheth or speaketh.

### IV

And the tender bride-mother breaks off unaware  
From an Ave, to think that her daughter is fair,  
Till in nearing the chapel and glancing before,  
She seeth her little son stand at the door:  
Is it play that he seeketh?

### V

Is it play, when his eyes wander innocent-wild  
And sublimed with a sadness unfitting a child?  
He trembles not, weeps not; the passion is done,  
And calmly he kneels in their midst, with the sun  
On his head like a glory.

## VI

"O fair-featured maids, ye are many!" he cried,  
"But in fairness and vileness who matcheth the bride?  
O brave-hearted youths, ye are many! but whom

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

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