

LEGENDS AND LYRICS - SECOND SERIES

by Adelaide Ann Proctor

VERSE: A LEGEND OF PROVENCE

The lights extinguished, by the hearth I leant, Half weary with a listless discontent. The flickering giant-shadows, gathering near, Closed round me with a dim and silent fear. All dull, all dark; save when the leaping flame, Glancing, lit up a Picture's ancient frame. Above the hearth it hung. Perhaps the night, My foolish tremors, or the gleaming light, Lent power to that Portrait dark and quaint - A Portrait such as Rembrandt loved to paint - The likeness of a Nun. I seemed to trace A world of sorrow in the patient face, In the thin hands folded across her breast - Its own and the room's shadow hid the rest. I gazed and dreamed, and the dull embers stirred, Till an old legend that I once had heard Came back to me; linked to the mystic gloom Of that dark Picture in the ghostly room. In the far south, where clustering vines are hung; Where first the old chivalric lays were sung, Where earliest smiled that gracious child of France, Angel and knight and fairy, called Romance, I stood one day. The warm blue June was spread Upon the earth; blue summer overhead, Without a cloud to fleck its radiant glare, Without a breath to stir its sultry air. All still, all silent, save the sobbing rush Of rippling waves, that lapsed in silver hush Upon the beach; where, glittering towards the strand, The purple Mediterranean kissed the land.

All still, all peaceful; when a convent chime Broke on the mid-day silence for a time, Then trembling into quiet, seemed to cease, In deeper silence and more utter peace. So as I turned to gaze, where gleaming white, Half hid by shadowy trees from passers' sight, The Convent lay, one who had dwelt for long In that fair home of ancient tale and song, Who knew the story of each cave and hill, And every haunting fancy lingering still Within the land, spake thus to me, and told The Convent's treasured Legend, quaint and old:

Long years ago, a dense and flowering wood, Still more concealed where the white convent stood, Borne on its perfumed wings the title came:

"Our Lady of the Hawthorns" is its name. Then did that bell, which still rings out to-day, Bid all the country rise, or eat, or pray. Before that convent shrine, the haughty knight Passed the lone vigil of his perilous fight; For humbler cottage strife or village brawl, The Abbess listened, prayed, and settled all. Young hearts that came, weighed down by love or wrong, Left her kind presence comforted and strong. Each passing pilgrim, and each beggar's right Was food, and rest, and shelter for the night. But, more than this, the Nuns could well impart The deepest mysteries of the healing art; Their store of herbs and simples was renowned, And held in wondering faith for miles around. Thus strife, love, sorrow, good and evil fate, Found help and blessing at the convent gate.

Of all the nuns, no heart was half so light, No eyelids veiling glances half as bright, No step that glided with such noiseless feet, No face that looked so tender or so sweet, No voice that rose in choir so pure, so clear, No heart to all the others half so dear, So surely touched by others' pain or woe, (Guessing the grief her young life could not know,) No soul in childlike faith so undefiled, As Sister Angela's, the "Convent Child." For thus they loved to call her. She had known No home, no love, no kindred, save their own. An orphan, to their tender nursing given, Child, plaything, pupil, now the Bride of Heaven. And she it was who trimmed the lamp's red light That swung before the altar, day and night; Her hands it was whose patient skill could trace The finest broidery, weave the costliest lace; But most of all, her first and dearest care, The office she would never miss or share, Was every day to weave fresh garlands sweet, To place before the shrine at Mary's feet. Nature is bounteous in that region fair, For even winter has her blossoms there. Thus Angela loved to count each feast the best, By telling with what flowers the shrine was dressed. In pomp supreme the countless Roses passed, Battalion on battalion thronging fast, Each with a different banner, flaming bright, Damask, or striped, or crimson, pink, or white, Until they bowed before a newborn queen, And the pure virgin Lily rose serene. Though Angela always thought the Mother blest Must love the time of her own hawthorn best, Each evening through the year, with equal, care, She placed her flowers; then kneeling down in prayer, As their faint perfume rose before the shrine, So rose her

thoughts, as pure and as divine. She knelt until the shades grew dim without, Till one by one the altar lights shone out, Till one by one the Nuns, like shadows dim, Gathered around to chant their vesper hymn; Her voice then led the music's winged flight, And "Ave, Maris Stella" filled the night. But wherefore linger on those days of peace? When storms draw near, then quiet hours must cease. War, cruel war, defaced the land, and came So near the convent with its breath of flame, That, seeking shelter, frightened peasants fled, Sobbing out tales of coming fear and dread, Till after a fierce skirmish, down the road, One night came straggling soldiers, with their load Of wounded, dying comrades; and the band, Half pleading yet as if they could command, Summoned the trembling Sisters, craved their care, Then rode away, and left the wounded there. But soon compassion bade all fear depart. And bidding every Sister do her part, Some prepare simples, healing salves, or bands, The Abbess chose the more experienced hands, To dress the wounds needing most skilful care; Yet even the youngest Novice took her share. To Angela, who had but ready will And tender pity, yet no special skill, Was given the charge of a young foreign knight, Whose wounds were painful, but whose danger slight. Day after day she watched beside his bed, And first in hushed repose the hours fled: His feverish moans alone the silence stirred, Or her soft voice, uttering some pious word. At last the fever left him; day by day The hours, no longer silent, passed away. What could she speak of? First, to still his complaints, She told him legends of the martyred Saints; Described the pangs, which, through God's plenteous grace, Had gained their souls so high and bright a place. This pious artifice soon found success - Or so she fancied--for he murmured less. So she described the glorious pomp sublime, In which the chapel shone at Easter time, The Banners, Vestments, gold, and colours bright, Counted how many tapers gave their light; Then, in minute detail went on to say, How the High Altar looked on Christmas-day: The kings and shepherds, all in green and red, And a bright star of jewels overhead. Then told the sign by which they all had seen, How even nature loved to greet her Queen, For, when Our Lady's last procession went Down the long garden, every head was bent, And, rosary in hand, each Sister prayed; As the long floating banners were displayed,

They struck the hawthorn boughs, and showers and showers Of buds and blossoms strewed her way with flowers. The Knight unwearied listened; till at last, He too described the glories of his past; Tourney, and joust, and pageant bright and fair, And all the lovely ladies who were there. But half incredulous she heard. Could this - This be the world? this place of love and bliss! Where then was hid the strange and hideous charm, That never failed to bring the gazer harm? She crossed herself, yet asked, and listened still, And still the knight described with all his skill The glorious world of joy, all joys above, Transfigured in the golden mist of love. Spread, spread your wings, ye angel guardians bright, And shield these dazzling phantoms from her sight! But no; days passed, matins and vespers rang, And still the quiet Nuns toiled, prayed, and sang, And never guessed the fatal, coiling net Which every day drew near, and nearer yet, Around their darling; for she went and came About her duties, outwardly the same. The same? ah, no! even when she knelt to pray, Some charmed dream kept all her heart away. So days went on, until the convent gate Opened one night. Who durst go forth so late? Across the moonlit grass, with stealthy tread, Two silent, shrouded figures passed and fled. And all was silent, save the moaning seas, That sobbed and pleaded, and a wailing breeze That sighed among the perfumed hawthorn trees.

What need to tell that dream so bright and brief, Of joy unchequered by a dread of grief? What need to tell how all such dreams must fade, Before the slow, foreboding, dreaded shade, That floated nearer, until pomp and pride, Pleasure and wealth, were summoned to her side. To bid, at least, the noisy hours forget, And clamour down the whispers of regret. Still Angela strove to dream, and strove in vain; Awakened once, she could not sleep again. She saw, each day and hour, more worthless grown The heart for which she cast away her own; And her soul learnt, through bitterest inward strife, The slight, frail love for which she wrecked her life, The phantom for which all her hope was given, The cold bleak earth for which she bartered heaven! But all in vain; would even the tenderest heart Now stoop to take so poor an outcast's part?

Years fled, and she grew reckless more and more, Until the humblest peasant closed his door, And where she passed, fair dames, in scorn and

pride, Shuddered, and drew their rustling robes aside. At last a yearning seemed to fill her soul, A longing that was stronger than control: Once more, just once again, to see the place That knew her young and innocent; to retrace The long and weary southern path; to gaze Upon the haven of her childish days; Once more beneath the convent roof to lie; Once more to look upon her home--and die! Weary and worn--her comrades, chill remorse And black despair, yet a strange silent force Within her heart, that drew her more and more - Onward she crawled, and begged from door to door. Weighed down with weary days, her failing strength Grew less each hour, till one day's dawn at length, As first its rays flooded the world with light, Showed the broad waters, glittering blue and bright, And where, amid the leafy hawthorn wood, Just as of old the quiet cloister stood. Would any know her? Nay, no fear. Her face Had lost all trace of youth, of joy, of grace, Of the pure happy soul they used to know - The novice Angela--so long ago. She rang the convent bell. The well-known sound Smote on her heart, and bowed her to the ground, And she, who had not wept for long dry years, Felt the strange rush of unaccustomed tears; Terror and anguish seemed to check her breath, And stop her heart. Oh God! could this be death? Crouching against the iron gate, she laid Her weary head against the bars, and prayed: But nearer footsteps drew, then seemed to wait: And then she heard the opening of the grate, And saw the withered face, on which awoke Pity and sorrow, as the portress spoke, And asked the stranger's bidding: "Take me in," She faltered, "Sister Monica, from sin, And sorrow, and despair, that will not cease; Oh, take me in, and let me die in peace!" With soothing words the Sister bade her wait, Until she brought the key to unbar the gate. The beggar tried to thank her as she lay, And heard the echoing footsteps die away. But what soft voice was that which sounded near, And stirred strange trouble in her heart to hear? She raised her head; she saw--she seemed to know - A face that came from long, long years ago: Herself; yet not as when she fled away, The young and blooming novice, fair and gay, But a grave woman, gentle and serene: The outcast knew it--WHAT SHE MIGHT HAVE BEEN. But, as she gazed and gazed, a radiance bright Filled all the place with strange and sudden light; The Nun was there no longer, but instead, A figure with a

circle round its head, A ring of glory; and a face, so meek, So soft, so tender . . . Angela strove to speak, And stretched her hands out, crying, "Mary mild, Mother of mercy, help me!--help your child!" And Mary answered, "From thy bitter past, Welcome, my child! oh, welcome home at last! I filled thy place. Thy flight is known to none, For all thy daily duties I have done; Gathered thy flowers, and prayed, and sung, and slept; Didst thou not know, poor child, THY PLACE WAS KEPT? Kind hearts are here; yet would the tenderest one Have limits to its mercy: God has none. And man's forgiveness may be true and sweet, But yet he stoops to give it. More complete Is Love that lays forgiveness at thy feet, And pleads with thee to raise it. Only Heaven Means CROWNED, not VANQUISHED, when it says 'Forgiven!'" Back hurried Sister Monica; but where Was the poor beggar she left lying there? Gone; and she searched in vain, and sought the place For that wan woman with the piteous face: But only Angela at the gateway stood, Laden with hawthorn blossoms from the wood. And never did a day pass by again, But the old portress, with a sigh of pain, Would sorrow for her loitering: with a prayer That the poor beggar, in her wild despair, Might not have come to any ill; and when She ended, "God forgive her!" humbly then Did Angela bow her head, and say "Amen!" How pitiful her heart was! all could trace Something that dimmed the brightness of her face After that day, which none had seen before; Not trouble--but a shadow--nothing more.

Years passed away. Then, one dark day of dread Saw all the sisters kneeling round a bed, Where Angela lay dying; every breath Struggling beneath the heavy hand of death. But suddenly a flush lit up her cheek, She raised her wan right hand, and strove to speak. In sorrowing love they listened; not a sound Or sigh disturbed the utter silence round. The very tapers' flames were scarcely stirred, In such hushed awe the sisters knelt and heard. And through that silence Angela told her life: Her sin, her flight; the sorrow and the strife, And the return; and then clear, low and calm, "Praise God for me, my sisters;" and the psalm Rang up to heaven, far and clear and wide, Again and yet again, then sank and died; While her white face had such a smile of peace, They saw she never heard the music cease; And weeping sisters laid her in her tomb, Crowned with a wreath of

perfumed hawthorn bloom.

And thus the Legend ended. It may be Something is hidden in the mystery, Besides the lesson of God's pardon shown, Never enough believed, or asked, or known. Have we not all, amid life's petty strife, Some pure ideal of a noble life That once seemed possible? Did we not hear The flutter of its wings, and feel it near, And just within our reach? It was. And yet We lost it in this daily jar and fret, And now live idle in a vague regret. But still OUR PLACE IS KEPT, and it will wait, Ready for us to fill it, soon or late: No star is ever lost we once have seen, We always may be what we might have been. Since Good, though only thought, has life and breath, God's life--can always be redeemed from death; And evil, in its nature, is decay, And any hour can blot it all away; The hopes that lost in some far distance seem, May be the truer life, and this the dream.

VERSE: ENVY

He was the first always: Fortune Shone bright in his face. I fought for years; with no effort He conquered the place: We ran; my feet were all bleeding, But he won the race.

Spite of his many successes Men loved him the same; My one pale ray of good fortune Met scoffing and blame. When we erred, they gave him pity, But me--only shame.

My home was still in the shadow, His lay in the sun: I longed in vain: what he asked for It straightway was done. Once I staked all my heart's treasure, We played--and he won.

Yes; and just now I have seen him, Cold, smiling, and blest, Laid in his coffin. God help me! While he is at rest, I am cursed still to live:- even Death loved him the best.

VERSE: OVER THE MOUNTAIN

Like dreary prison walls The stern grey mountains rise, Until their topmost crags Touch the far gloomy skies: One steep and narrow path Winds up the mountain's crest, And from our valley leads Out to the golden West.

I dwell here in content, Thankful for tranquil days; And yet, my eyes grow dim, As still I gaze and gaze Upon that mountain pass, That leads--or so it seems - To some far happy land, Known in a world of dreams.

And as I watch that path Over the distant hill, A foolish longing comes My heart and soul to fill, A painful, strange desire To break some weary bond, A vague unuttered wish For what might lie beyond!

In that far world unknown, Over that distant hill, May dwell the loved and lost, Lost--yet beloved still; I have a yearning hope, Half longing, and half pain, That by that mountain pass They may return again.

Space may keep friends apart, Death has a mighty thrall; There is another gulf Harder to cross than all; Yet watching that far road, My heart beats full and fast - If they should come once more, If they should come at last!

See, down the mountain side The silver vapours creep; They hide the rocky cliffs. They hide the craggy steep, They hide the narrow path That comes across the hill - Oh, foolish longing, cease, Oh, beating Heart, be still!

VERSE: BEYOND

We must not doubt, or fear, or dread, that love for life is only given,
And that the calm and sainted dead will meet estranged and cold in
heaven:- Oh, Love were poor and vain indeed, based on so harsh and stern
a creed.

True that this earth must pass away, with all the starry worlds of light,
With all the glory of the day, and calmer tenderness of night; For, in that
radiant home can shine alone the immortal and divine.

Earth's lower things--her pride, her fame, her science, learning, wealth
and power - Slow growths that through long ages came, or fruits of some
convulsive hour, Whose very memory must decay--Heaven is too pure for
such as they.

They are complete: their work is done. So let them sleep in endless
rest. Love's life is only here begun, nor is, nor can be, fully blest; It has no
room to spread its wings, amid this crowd of meaner things.

Just for the very shadow thrown upon its sweetness here below, The
cross that it must bear alone, and bloody baptism of woe, Crowned and
completed through its pain, we know that it shall rise again.

So if its flame burn pure and bright, here, where our air is dark and
dense, And nothing in this world of night lives with a living so intense;
When it shall reach its home at length--how bright its light! how strong its
strength!

And while the vain weak loves of earth (for such base counterfeits
abound) Shall perish with what gave them birth--their graves are green
and fresh around, No funeral song shall need to rise, for the true Love that
never dies.

If in my heart I now could fear that, risen again, we should not know
What was our Life of Life when here--the hearts we loved so much below;
I would arise this very day, and cast so poor a thing away.

But Love is no such soulless clod: living, perfected it shall rise
Transfigured in the light of God, and giving glory to the skies: And that
which makes this life so sweet, shall render Heaven's joy complete.

VERSE: A WARNING

Place your hands in mine, dear, With their rose-leaf touch: If you heed
my warning, It will spare you much.

Ah! with just such smiling Unbelieving eyes, Years ago I heard it:-
You shall be more wise.

You have one great treasure Joy for all your life; Do not let it perish In
one reckless strife.

Do not venture all, child, In one frail, weak heart; So, through any
shipwreck, You may save a part.

Where your soul is tempted Most to trust your fate, There, with double
caution, Linger, fear, and wait.

Measure all you give--still Counting what you take; Love for love:
so placing Each an equal stake.

Treasure love; though ready Still to live without. In your fondest trust,
keep Just one thread of doubt.

Build on no to-morrow; Love has but to-day: If the links seem
slackening, Cut the bond away.

Trust no prayer nor promise; Words are grains of sand; To keep your
heart unbroken, Hold it in your hand.

That your love may finish Calm as it begun, Learn this lesson better,
Dear, than I have done.

Years hence, perhaps, this warning You shall give again, In just the
self-same words, dear, And--just as much--in vain.

VERSE: MAXIMUS

Many, if God should make them kings, Might not disgrace the throne
He gave; How few who could as well fulfil The holier office of a slave.

I hold him great who, for Love's sake Can give, with generous, earnest
will, - Yet he who takes for Love's sweet sake, I think I hold more
generous still.

I prize the instinct that can turn From vain pretence with proud disdain;
Yet more I prize a simple heart; Paying credulity with pain.

I bow before the noble mind That freely some great wrong forgives;
Yet nobler is the one forgiven, Who bears that burden well, and lives.

It may be hard to gain, and still To keep a lowly steadfast heart Yet he
who loses has to fill A harder and a truer part.

Glorious it is to wear the crown Of a deserved and pure success; - He
who knows how to fail has won A Crown whose lustre is not less.

Great may he be who can command And rule with just and tender
sway; Yet is diviner wisdom taught Better by him who can obey.

Blessed are those who die for God, And earn the Martyr's crown of
light - Yet he who lives for God may be A greater Conqueror in His sight.

VERSE: OPTIMUS

There is a deep and subtle snare Whose sure temptation hardly fails,
Which, just because it looks so fair, Only a noble heart assails.

So all the more we need be strong Against this false and seeming Right;
Which none the less is deadly wrong, Because it glitters clothed in light.

When duties unfulfilled remain, Or noble works are left unplanned, Or
when great deeds cry out in vain On coward heart and trembling hand, -

Then will a seeming Angel speak: - "The hours are fleeting--great
the need - If thou art strong and others weak, Thine be the effort and the
deed.

"Deaf are their ears who ought to hear; Idle their hands, and dull their
soul; While sloth, or ignorance, or fear, Fetters them with a blind control.

"Sort thou the tangled web aright; Take thou the toil--take thou the
pain: For fear the hour begin its flight, While Right and Duty plead in
vain."

And now it is I bid thee pause, Nor let this Tempter bend thy will:
There are diviner, truer laws That teach a nobler lesson still.

Learn that each duty makes its claim Upon one soul: not each on all.
How, if God speaks thy Brother's name, Dare thou make answer to the
call?

The greater peril in the strife, The less this evil should be done; For as
in battle, so in life, Danger and honour still are one.

Arouse him then:- this is thy part: Show him the claim; point out the
need; And nerve his arm, and cheer his heart; Then stand aside, and say
"God speed!"

Smooth thou his path ere it is trod; Burnish the arms that he must
wield; And pray, with all thy strength, that God May crown him Victor of
the field.

And then, I think, thy soul shall feel A nobler thrill of true content,
Than if presumptuous, eager zeal Had seized a crown for others meant.

And even that very deed shall shine In mystic sense, divine and true,
More wholly and more purely thine - Because it is another's too.

VERSE: A LOST CHORD

Seated one day at the Organ, I was weary and ill at ease, And my
fingers wandered idly Over the noisy keys.

I do not know what I was playing, Or what I was dreaming then; But I
struck one chord of music, Like the sound of a great Amen.

It flooded the crimson twilight Like the close of an Angel's Psalm, And
it lay on my fevered spirit With a touch of infinite calm.

It quieted pain and sorrow, Like love overcoming strife; It seemed the
harmonious echo From our discordant life.

It linked all perplexed meanings Into one perfect peace, And trembled
away into silence As if it were loth to cease.

I have sought, but I seek it vainly, That one lost chord divine, Which
came from the soul of the Organ, And entered into mine.

It may be that Death's bright angel Will speak in that chord again, - It
may be that only in Heaven I shall hear that grand Amen.

VERSE: TOO LATE

Hush! speak low; tread softly; Draw the sheet aside; - Yes, she does look peaceful; With that smile she died.

Yet stern want and sorrow Even now you trace On the wan, worn features Of the still white face.

Restless, helpless, hopeless, Was her bitter part; - Now--how still the Violets Lie upon her Heart!

She who toiled and laboured For her daily bread; See the velvet hangings Of this stately bed.

Yes, they did forgive her; Brought her home at last; Stroved to cover over Their relentless past.

Ah, they would have given Wealth, and home, and pride, To see her just look happy Once before she died!

They strove hard to please her, But, when death is near All you know is deadened, Hope, and joy, and fear.

And besides, one sorrow Deeper still--one pain Was beyond them: healing Came to-day--in vain!

If she had but lingered Just a few hours more; Or had this letter reached her Just one day before!

I can almost pity Even him to-day; Though he let this anguish Eat her heart away.

Yet she never blamed him:- One day you shall know How this sorrow happened; It was long ago.

I have read the letter: Many a weary year, For one word she hungered - There are thousands here.

If she could but hear it, Could but understand; See--I put the letter In her cold white hand.

Even these words, so longed for, Do not stir her rest; Well--I should not murmur, For God judges best.

She needs no more pity, - But I mourn his fate, When he hears his letter Came a day too late.

VERSE: THE REQUITAL

Loud roared the Tempest, Fast fell the sleet; A little Child Angel
Passed down the street, With trailing pinions, And weary feet.

The moon was hidden; No stars were bright; So she could not shelter
In heaven that night, For the Angels' ladders Are rays of light.

She beat her wings At each window pane, And pleaded for shelter, But
all in vain: - "Listen," they said, "To the pelting rain!"

She sobbed, as the laughter And mirth grew higher, "Give me rest and
shelter Beside your fire, And I will give you Your heart's desire."

The dreamer sat watching His embers gleam, While his heart was
floating Down hope's bright stream; . . . So he wove her wailing Into his
dream.

The worker toiled on, For his time was brief; The mourner was nursing
Her own pale grief: They heard not the promise That brought relief.

But fiercer the Tempest Rose than before, When the Angel paused At a
humble door, And asked for shelter And help once more.

A weary woman, Pale, worn, and thin, With the brand upon her Of
want and sin, Heard the Child Angel And took her in.

Took her in gently, And did her best To dry her pinions; And made her
rest With tender pity Upon her breast.

When the eastern morning Grew bright and red, Up the first sunbeam
The Angel fled; Having kissed the woman And left her--dead.

VERSE: RETURNED-- "MISSING" (FIVE YEARS AFTER)

Yes, I was sad and anxious, But now, dear, I am gay; I know that it is wisest To put all hope away:- Thank God that I have done so And can be calm to-day.

For hope deferred--you know it, Once made my heart so sick: Now, I expect no longer; It is but the old trick Of hope, that makes me tremble, And makes my heart beat quick.

All day I sit here calmly; Not as I did before, Watching for one whose footstep Comes never, never more . . . Hush! was that someone passing, Who paused beside the door?

For years I hung on chances, Longing for just one word; At last I feel it:- silence Will never more be stirred . . . Tell me once more that rumour, You fancied you had heard.

Life has more things to dwell on Than just one useless pain, Useless and past for ever; But noble things remain, And wait us all: . . . you too, dear, Do you think hope quite vain?

All others have forgotten, 'Tis right I should forget, Nor live on a keen longing Which shadows forth regret: . . . Are not the letters coming? The sun is almost set.

Now that my restless legion Of hopes and fears is fled, Reading is joy and comfort This very day I read, Oh, such a strange returning Of one whom all thought dead!

Not that I dream or fancy, You know all that is past; Earth has no hope to give me, And yet:- Time flies so fast That all but the impossible Might be brought back at last.

VERSE: IN THE WOOD

In the wood where shadows are deepest From the branches overhead,
Where the wild wood-strawberries cluster And the softest moss is spread, I
met to-day with a fairy, And I followed her where she led.

Some magical words she uttered, I alone could understand, For the sky
grew bluer and brighter; While there rose on either hand The cloudy walls
of a palace That was built in Fairy-land.

And I stood in a strange enchantment; I had known it all before: In my
heart of hearts was the magic Of days that will come no more, The manic
of joy departed, That Time can never restore.

That never, ah, never, never, Never again can be:- Shall I tell you what
powerful fairy Built up this palace for me? It was only a little white Violet
I found at the root of a tree.

VERSE: TWO WORLDS

God's world is bathed in beauty, God's world is steeped in light; It is the self-same glory That makes the day so bright, Which thrills the earth with music, Or hangs the stars in night.

Hid in earth's mines of silver, Floating on clouds above, - Ringing in Autumn's tempest, Murmured by every dove; One thought fills God's creation - His own great name of Love!

In God's world Strength is lovely, And so is Beauty strong, And Light--God's glorious shadow - To both great gifts belong; And they all melt into sweetness, And fill the earth with Song.

Above God's world bends Heaven, With day's kiss pure and bright, Or folds her still more fondly In the tender shade of night; And she casts back Heaven's sweetness, In fragrant love and light.

God's world has one great echo; Whether calm blue mists are curled, Or lingering dew-drops quiver, Or red storms are unfurled; The same deep love is throbbing Through the great heart of God's world.

Man's world is black and blighted, Steeped through with self and sin; And should his feeble purpose Some feeble good begin, The work is marred and tainted By Leprosy within.

Man's world is bleak and bitter; Wherever he has trod He spoils the tender beauty That blossoms on the sod, And blasts the loving Heaven Of the great, good world of God.

There Strength on coward weakness In cruel might will roll; Beauty and Joy are cankers That eat away the soul; And Love--Oh God, avenge it - The plague-spot of the whole.

Man's world is Pain and Terror; He found it pure and fair, And wove in nets of sorrow The golden summer air. Black, hideous, cold, and dreary, Man's curse, not God's, is there.

And yet God's world is speaking: Man will not hear it call; But listens where the echoes Of his own discords fall, Then clamours back to Heaven That God has done it all.

Oh God, man's heart is darkened, He will not understand! Show him

Thy cloud and fire; And, with Thine own right hand Then lead him
through his desert, Back to Thy Holy Land!

VERSE: A NEW MOTHER

I was with my lady when she died: I it was who guided her weak hand
For a blessing on each little head, Laid her baby by her on the bed, Heard
the words they could not understand.

And I drew them round my knee that night, Hushed their childish glee,
and made them say They would keep her words with loving tears, They
would not forget her dying fears Lest the thought of her should fade away.

I, who guessed what her last dread had been, Made a promise to that
still, cold face, That her children's hearts, at any cost, Should be with the
mother they had lost, When a stranger came to take her place.

And I knew so much! for I had lived With my lady since her childhood:
known What her young and happy days had been, And the grief no other
eyes had seen I had watched and sorrowed for alone.

Ah! she once had such a happy smile! I had known how sorely she
was tried: Six short years before, her eyes were bright As her little blue-
eyed May's that night, When she stood by her dead mother's side.

No--I will not say he was unkind; But she had been used to love and
praise. He was somewhat grave--perhaps, in truth, Could not weave her
joyous, smiling youth, Into all his stern and serious ways.

She, who should have reigned a blooming flower, First in pride and
honour, as in grace, - She, whose will had once ruled all around, Queen
and darling of us all--she found Change indeed in that cold, stately place.

Yet she would not blame him, even to me, Though she often sat and
wept alone; But she could not hide it near her death, When she said with
her last struggling breath, "Let my babies still remain my own!"

I it was who drew the sheet aside, When he saw his dead wife's face.
That test Seemed to strike right to his heart. He said, In a strange, low
whisper, to the dead, "God knows, love, I did it for the best!"

And he wept--Oh yes, I will be just - When I brought the children to
him there - Wondering sorrow in their baby eyes; And he soothed them
with his fond replies, Bidding me give double love and care.

Ah, I loved them well for her dear sake: Little Arthur, with his serious

air; May, with all her mother's pretty ways, Blushing, and at any word of praise Shaking out her sunny golden hair.

And the little one of all--poor child! She had cost that dear and precious life. Once Sir Arthur spoke my lady's name, When the baby's gloomy christening came, And he called her "Olga--like my wife!"

Save that time, he never spoke of her; He grew graver, sterner, every day; And the children felt it, for they dropped Low their voices, and their laughter stopped While he stood and watched them at their play.

No, he never named their mother's name. But I told them of her: told them all She had been; so gentle, good, and bright; And I always took them every night Where her picture hung in the great hall.

There she stood: white daisies in her hand, And her red lips parted as to speak With a smile; the blue and sunny air Seemed to stir her floating golden hair, And to bring a faint blush on her cheek.

Well, so time passed on; a year was gone, And Sir Arthur had been much away. Then the news came! I shed many tears When I saw the truth of all my fears Rise before me on that bitter day.

Any one but her I could have borne! But my lady loved her as her friend. Through their childhood and their early youth, How she used to count upon the truth Of this friendship that would never end!

Older, graver than my lady was, Whose young, gentle heart on her relied, She would give advice, and praise, and blame, And my lady leant on Margaret's name, As her dearest comfort, help, and guide.

I had never liked her, and I think That my lady grew to doubt her too, Since her marriage; for she named her less, Never saw her, and I used to guess At some secret wrong I never knew.

That might be or not. But now, to hear She would come and reign here in her stead, With the pomp and splendour of a bride: Would no thought reproach her in her pride With the silent memory of the dead?

So, the day came, and the bells rang out, And I laid the children's black aside; And I held each little trembling hand, As I strove to make them understand They must greet their father's new-made bride.

Ah, Sir Arthur might look grave and stern, And his lady's eyes might well grow dim, When the children shrank in fear away, - Little Arthur hid

his face, and May Would not raise her eyes, or speak to him.

When Sir Arthur bade them greet their "mother," I was forced to chide,
yet proud to hear How my little loving May replied, With her mother's
pretty air of pride, - "Our dear mother has been dead a year!"

Ah, the lady's tears might well fall fast, As she kissed them, and then
turned away. She might strive to smile or to forget, But I think some
shadow of regret Must have risen to blight her wedding-day.

She had some strange touch of self-reproach; For she used to linger
day by day, By the nursery door, or garden gate, With a sad, calm, wistful
look, and wait Watching the three children at their play.

But they always shrank away from her When she strove to comfort
their alarms, And their grave, cold silence to beguile: Even little Olga's
baby-smile Quivered into tears when in her arms.

I could never chide them: for I saw How their mother's memory
grew more deep In their hearts. Each night I had to tell Stories of her
whom I loved so well When a child, to send them off to sleep.

But Sir Arthur--Oh, this was too hard! - He, who had been always
stern and sad In my lady's time, seemed to rejoice Each day more; and I
could hear his voice Even, sounding younger and more glad.

He might perhaps have blamed them, but his wife Never failed to take
the children's part: She would stay him with her pleading tone, Saying she
would strive, and strive alone, Till she gained each little wayward heart.

And she strove indeed, and seemed to be Always waiting for their love,
in vain; Yet, when May had most her mother's look, Then the lady's calm,
cold accents shook With some memory of reproachful pain.

Little May would never call her Mother: So, one day, the lady, bending
low, Kissed her golden curls, and softly said, "Sweet one, call me
Margaret, instead, - Your dear mother used to call me so."

She was gentle, kind, and patient too, Yet in vain: the children held
apart. Ah, their mother's gentle memory dwelt Near them, and her little
orphans felt She had the first claim upon their heart.

So three years passed; then the war broke out; And a rumour seemed to
spread and rise; First we guessed what sorrow must befall, Then all doubt
fled, for we read it all In the depths of her despairing eyes.

Yes; Sir Arthur had been called away To that scene of slaughter, fear,
and strife, - Now he seemed to know with double pain, The cold, bitter
gulf that must remain To divide his children from his wife.

Nearer came the day he was to sail, Deeper grew the coming woe and
fear, When, one night, the children at my knee Knelt to say their evening
prayer to me, I looked up and saw Sir Arthur near.

There they knelt with folded hands, and said Low, soft words in
stammering accents sweet; In the firelight shone their golden hair And
white robes: my darlings looked so fair, With their little bare and rosy
feet!

There he waited till their low "Amen;" Stopped the rosy lips raised for
"Good night!" - Drew them with a fond clasp, close and near, As he bade
them stay with him, and hear Something that would make his heart more
light.

Little Olga crept into his arms; Arthur leant upon his shoulder; May
Knelt beside him, with her earnest eyes Lifted up in patient, calm surprise
- I can almost hear his words to-day.

"Years ago, my children, years ago, When your mother was a child,
she came From her northern home, and here she met Love for love, and
comfort for regret, In one early friend,--you know her name.

"And this friend--a few years older--gave Such fond care, such love,
that day by day The new home grew happy, joy complete, Studies easier,
and play more sweet, While all childish sorrows passed away.

"And your mother--fragile, like my May - Leant on this deep love,--
nor leant in vain. For this friend (strong, generous, noble heart!) Gave the
sweet, and took the bitter part, - Brought her all the joy, and kept the pain.

"Years passed on, and then I saw them first: It was hard to say which
was most fair, Your sweet mother's bright and blushing face, Or the graver
Margaret's stately grace; Golden locks, or braided raven hair.

"Then it happened, by a strange, sad fate, One thought entered into
each young soul: Joy for one--if for the other pain; Loss for one--if for the
other gain: One must lose, and one possess the whole.

"And so this--this--what they cared for--came And belonged to
Margaret: was her own. But she laid the gift aside, to take Pain and

sorrow for your mother's sake, And none knew it but herself alone.

"Then she travelled far away, and none The strange mystery of her absence knew. Margaret's secret thought was never told: Even your mother thought her changed and cold, And for many years I thought so too.

"She was gone; and then your mother took That poor gift which Margaret laid aside: Flower, or toy, or trinket, matters not: What it was had better be forgot . . . It was just then she became my bride.

"Now, I think May knows the hope I have. Arthur, darling, can you guess the rest? Even my little Olga understands Great gifts can be given by little hands, Since of all gifts Love is still the best.

"Margaret is my dear and honoured wife, And I hold her so. But she can claim From your hearts, dear ones, a loving debt I can neither pay, nor yet forget: You can give it in your mother's name.

"Earth spoils even Love, and here a shade On the purest, noblest heart may fall: Now your mother dwells in perfect light, She will bless us, I believe, to-night, - She is happy now, and she knows all."

Next day was farewell--a day of tears; Yet Sir Arthur, as he rode away, And turned back to see his lady stand With the children clinging to her hand, Looked as if it were a happy day.

Ah, they loved her soon! The little one Crept into her arms as to a nest; Arthur always with her now; and May Growing nearer to her every day: - - Well, I loved my own dear lady best.

VERSE: GIVE PLACE

Starry Crowns of Heaven Set in azure night! Linger yet a little Ere you
hide your light:- - Nay; let Starlight fade away Herald the day!

Snowflakes pure and spotless, Still, oh, still remain, Binding dreary
winter, In your silver chain:- - Nay; but melt at once and bring Radiant
sunny Spring!

Blossoms, gentle blossoms, Do not wither yet; Still for you the sun
shines, Still the dews are wet: - - Nay; but fade and wither last, Fruit
must come at last!

Joy, so true and tender, Dare you not abide? Will you spread your
pinions, Must you leave our side? - Nay; an Angel's shining grace Waits to
fill your place!

VERSE: MY WILL

Since I have no lands or houses, And no hoarded golden store, What
can I leave those who love me When they see my face no more? Do not
smile; I am not jesting, Though my words sound gay and light, Listen to
me, dearest Alice, I will make my Will to-night.

First for Mabel--who will never Let the dust of future years Dim the
thought of me, but keep it Brighter still: perhaps with tears. In whose
eyes, whate'er I glance at, Touch, or praise, will always shine, Through a
strange and sacred radiance, By Love's Charter, wholly mine; She will
never lend to others Slenderest link of thought I claim, I will, therefore, to
her keeping Leave my memory and my name.

Bertha will do truer service To her kind than I have done, So I leave to
her young spirit The long Work I have begun. Well! the threads are tangled,
broken, And the colours do not blend, She will bend her earnest striving
Both to finish and amend: And, when it is all completed, Strong with care
and rich with skill, Just because my hands began it, She will love it better
still.

Ruth shall have my dearest token, The one link I dread to break, The
one duty that I live for, She, when I am gone, will take. Sacred is the trust
I leave her, Needing patience, prayer, and tears; I have striven to fulfil it,
As she knows--these many years. Sometimes hopeless, faint, and weary
Yet a blessing shall remain With the task, and Ruth will prize it For my
many hours of pain.

What must I leave you, my Alice? Nothing, Love, to do or bear,
Nothing that can dim your blue eyes With the slightest cloud of care. I will
leave my heart to love you, With the tender faith of old; Still to comfort,
warm, and light you, Should your life grow dark or cold. No one else, my
child, can claim it; Though you find old scars of pain, They were only
wounds, my darling, There is not, I trust, one stain.

Are my gifts indeed so worthless Now the slender sum is told? Well, I
know not: years may bless them With a nobler price than gold. Am I
poor? ah no, most wealthy, Not in these poor gifts you take, But in the true

hearts that tell me You will keep them for my sake.

VERSE: KING AND SLAVE

If in my soul, dear, An omen should dwell, Bidding me pause, ere I
love thee too well; If the whole circle, Of noble and wise, With stern
forebodings, Between us should rise.

I will tell THEM, dear, That Love reigns--a King, Where storms
cannot reach him, And words cannot sting; He counts it dishonour His
faith to recall; He trusts;--and for ever He gives--and gives all!

I will tell THEE, dear, That Love is--a Slave, Who dreads thought of
freedom, As life dreads the grave; And if doubt or peril Of change there
may be, Such fear would but drive him Still nearer to thee!

VERSE: A CHANT

"Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini."

I.

Who is the Angel that cometh? Life! Let us not question what he brings, Peace or Strife, Under the shade of his mighty wings, One by one, Are his secrets told; One by one, Lit by the rays of each morning sun, Shall a new flower its petals unfold, With the mystery hid in its heart of gold. We will arise and go forth to greet him, Singly, gladly, with one accord; - "Blessed is he that cometh In the name of the Lord!"

II.

Who is the Angel that cometh? Joy! Look at his glittering rainbow wings - No alloy Lies in the radiant gifts he brings; Tender and sweet, He is come to-day, Tender and sweet: While chains of love on his silver feet Will hold him in lingering fond delay. But greet him quickly, he will not stay, Soon he will leave us; but though for others All his brightest treasures are stored; - "Blessed is he that cometh In the name of the Lord!"

III.

Who is the Angel that cometh? Pain! Let us arise and go forth to greet him; Not in vain Is the summons come for us to meet him; He will stay, And darken our sun; He will stay A desolate night, a weary day. Since in that shadow our work is done, And in that shadow our crowns are won, Let us say still, while his bitter chalice Slowly into our hearts is poured, - "Blessed is he that cometh In the name of the Lord!"

IV.

Who is the Angel that cometh? Death! But do not shudder and do not fear; Hold your breath, For a kingly presence is drawing near. Cold and bright Is his flashing steel, Cold and bright The smile that comes like a starry light To calm the terror and grief we feel; He comes to help and to save and heal: Then let us, baring our hearts and kneeling, Sing, while we wait this Angel's sword, - "Blessed is he that cometh In the name of the Lord!"

VERSE: DREAM-LIFE

Listen, friend, and I will tell you Why I sometimes seem so glad, Then,
without a reason changing, Soon become so grave and sad.

Half my life I live a beggar, Ragged, helpless, and alone; But the other
half a monarch, With my courtiers round my throne.

Half my life is full of sorrow, Half of joy, still fresh and new; One of
these lives is a fancy, But the other one is true.

While I live and feast on gladness, Still I feel the thought remain, This
must soon end,--nearer, nearer Comes the life of grief and pain.

While I live a wretched beggar, One bright hope my lot can cheer;
Soon, soon, thou shalt have thy kingdom, Brighter hours are drawing near.

So you see my life is twofold, Half a pleasure, half a grief; Thus all joy
is somewhat tempered, And all sorrow finds relief.

Which, you ask me, is the real life, Which the Dream--the joy, or woe?
Hush, friend! it is little matter, And, indeed--I never know.

VERSE: REST

Spread, spread thy silver wings, oh Dove! And seek for rest by land and sea, And bring the tidings back to me For thee and me and those I love. Look how my Dove soars far away; Go with her, heart of mine, I pray; Go where her fluttering silver pinions Follow the track of the crimson day.

Is rest where cloudlets slowly creep, And sobbing winds forget to grieve, And quiet waters gently heave, As if they rocked the ship to sleep? Ah no! that southern vapour white Will bring a tempest ere the night, And thunder through the quiet Heaven, Lashing the sea in its angry might.

The battle-field lies still and cold, While stars that watch in silent light Gleam here and there on weapons bright, In weary sleepers' slackened hold; Nay, though they dream of no alarm, One bugle sound will stir that calm, And all the strength of two great nations, Eager for battle, will rise and arm.

Pause where the Pilgrim's day is done, Where scrip and staff aside are laid, And, resting in the silent shade, They watch the slowly sinking sun. Ah no! that worn and weary band Must journey long before they stand, With bleeding feet, and hearts rejoicing, Kissing the dust of the Holy Land.

Then find a soul who meets at last A noble prize but hard to gain, Or joy long pleaded for in vain, Now sweeter for a bitter past. Ah no! for Time can rob her yet, And even should cruel Time forget, Then Death will come, and, unrelenting, Brand her with sorrowful long regret.

Seek farther, farther yet, oh Dove! Beyond the Land, beyond the Sea, There shall be rest for thee and me, For thee and me and those I love. I heard a promise gently fall, I heard a far-off Shepherd call The weary and the broken-hearted, Promising rest unto each and all.

It is not marred by outward strife, It is not lost in calm repose, It heedeth neither joys nor woes, Is not disturbed by death or life; Through, and beyond them, lies our Rest: Then cease, oh Heart, thy longing quest! And thou, my Dove, with silver pinions Flutter again to thy quiet nest!

VERSE: THE TYRANT AND THE CAPTIVE

It was midnight when I listened, And I heard two Voices speak; One was harsh, and stern, and cruel, And the other soft and weak: Yet I saw no Vision enter, And I heard no steps depart, Of this Tyrant and his Captive, . . . FATE it might be and a HEART.

Thus the stern Voice spake in triumph:- "I have shut your life away From the radiant world of nature, And the perfumed light of day. You, who loved to steep your spirit In the charm of Earth's delight, See no glory of the daytime, And no sweetness of the night."

But the soft Voice answered calmly: "Nay, for when the March winds bring Just a whisper to my window, I can dream the rest of Spring; And to-day I saw a Swallow Flitting past my prison bars, And my cell has just one corner Whence at night I see the stars."

But its bitter taunt repeating, Cried the harsh Voice: --"Where are they - All the friends of former hours, Who forget your name to-day? All the links of love are shattered, Which you thought so strong before; And your very heart is lonely, And alone since loved no more."

But the low Voice spoke still lower: - "Nay, I know the golden chain Of my love is purer, stronger, For the cruel fire of pain: They remember me no longer, But I, grieving here alone, Bind their souls to me for ever By the love within their own."

But the Voice cried:- "Once remember You devoted soul and mind To the welfare of your brethren, And the service of your kind. Now, what sorrow can you comfort? You, who lie in helpless pain, With an impotent compassion Fretting out your life in vain."

"Nay;" and then the gentle answer Rose more loud, and full, and clear: "For the sake of all my brethren I thank God that I am here! Poor had been my Life's best efforts, Now I waste no thought or breath - For the prayer of those who suffer Has the strength of Love and Death."

VERSE: THE CARVER'S LESSON

Trust me, no mere skill of subtle tracery, No mere practice of a dexterous hand, Will suffice, without a hidden spirit, That we may, or may not, understand.

And those quaint old fragments that are left us Have their power in this,--the Carver brought Earnest care, and reverent patience, only Worthily to clothe some noble thought.

Shut then in the petals of the flowers, Round the stems of all the lilies twine, Hide beneath each bird's or angel's pinion, Some wise meaning or some thought divine.

Place in stony hands that pray for ever Tender words of peace, and strive to wind Round the leafy scrolls and fretted niches Some true, loving message to your kind.

Some will praise, some blame, and, soon forgetting, Come and go, nor even pause to gaze; Only now and then a passing stranger Just may loiter with a word of praise.

But I think, when years have floated onward, And the stone is grey, and dim, and old, And the hand forgotten that has carved it, And the heart that dreamt it still and cold;

There may come some weary soul, o'erladen With perplexed struggle in his brain, Or, it may be, fretted with life's turmoil, Or made sore with some perpetual pain.

Then, I think those stony hands will open, And the gentle lilies overflow, With the blessing and the loving token That you hid there many years ago.

And the tendrils will unroll, and teach him How to solve the problem of his pain; And the birds' and angels' wings shake downward On his heart a sweet and tender rain.

While he marvels at his fancy, reading Meaning in that quaint and ancient scroll, Little guessing that the loving Carver Left a message for his

weary soul.

VERSE: THREE ROSES

Just when the red June Roses blow She gave me one,--a year ago. A
Rose whose crimson breath revealed The secret that its heart concealed,
And whose half shy, half tender grace Blushed back upon the giver's face.
A year ago--a year ago - To hope was not to know.

Just when the red June Roses blow I plucked her one,--a month ago:
Its half-blown crimson to eclipse, I laid it on her smiling lips; The balmy
fragrance of the south Drew sweetness from her sweeter mouth. Swiftly do
golden hours creep, - To hold is not to keep.

The red June Roses now are past, This very day I broke the last - And
now its perfumed breath is hid, With her, beneath a coffin-lid; There will
its petals fall apart, And wither on her icy heart:- At three red Roses' cost
My world was gained and lost.

VERSE: MY PICTURE GALLERY

I.

You write and think of me, my friend, with pity; While you are
basking in the light of Rome, Shut up within the heart of this great city,
Too busy and too poor to leave my home.

II.

You think my life debarred all rest or pleasure, Chained all day to my
ledger and my pen; Too sickly even to use my little leisure To bear me
from the strife and din of men.

III.

Well, it is true; yet, now the days are longer, At sunset I can lay my
writing down, And slowly crawl (summer has made me stronger) Just to
the nearest outskirt of the town.

IV.

There a wide Common, blackened though and dreary With factory
smoke, spreads outward to the West; I lie down on the parched-up grass, if
weary, Or lean against a broken wall to rest.

V.

So might a King, turning to Art's rich treasure, At evening, when the
cares of state were done, Enter his royal gallery, drinking pleasure Slowly
from each great picture, one by one.

VI.

Towards the West I turn my weary spirit, And watch my pictures:
one each night is mine. Earth and my soul, sick of day's toil, inherit A
portion of that luminous peace divine.

VII.

There I have seen a sunset's crimson glory, Burn as if earth were one
great Altar's blaze; Or, like the closing of a piteous story, Light up the
misty world with dying rays.

VIII.

There I have seen the Clouds, in pomp and splendour, Their gold and
purple banners all unfurl; There I have watched colours, more faint and
tender Than pure and delicate tints upon a pearl.

IX.

Skies strewn with roses fading, fading slowly, While one star
trembling watched the daylight die; Or deep in gloom a sunset, hidden
wholly, Save through gold rents torn in a violet sky.

X.

Or parted clouds, as if asunder riven By some great angel--and beyond
a space Of far-off tranquil light; the gates of Heaven Will lead us grandly
to as calm a place.

XI.

Or stern dark walls of cloudy mountain ranges Hid all the wonders that
we knew must be; While, far on high, some little white clouds changes'
Revealed the glory they alone could see.

XII.

Or in wild wrath the affrighted clouds lay shattered, Like treasures of
the lost Hesperides, All in a wealth of ruined splendour scattered, Save one
strange light on distant silver seas.

XIII.

What land or time can claim the Master Painter, Whose art could teach
him half such gorgeous dyes? Or skill so rare, but purer hues and fainter
Melt every evening in my western skies.

XIV.

So there I wait, until the shade has lengthened, And night's blue misty
curtain floated down; Then, with my heart calmed, and my spirit
strengthened, I crawl once more back to the sultry town.

XV.

What Monarch, then, has nobler recreations Than mine? Or where
the great and classic Land Whose wealth of Art delights the gathered
nations That owns a Picture Gallery half as grand?

VERSE: SENT TO HEAVEN

I had a Message to send her, To her whom my soul loved best; But I had my task to finish. And she was gone home to rest.

To rest in the far bright heaven: Oh, so far away from here, It was vain to speak to my darling, For I knew she could not hear!

I had a message to send her. So tender, and true, and sweet, I longed for an Angel to bear it, And lay it down at her feet.

I placed it, one summer evening, On a Cloudlet's fleecy breast; But it faded in golden splendour, And died in the crimson west.

I gave it the Lark next morning, And I watched it soar and soar; But its pinions grew faint and weary, And it fluttered to earth once more.

To the heart of a Rose I told it; And the perfume, sweet and rare, Growing faint on the blue bright ether, Was lost in the balmy air.

I laid it upon a Censer, And I saw the incense rise; But its clouds of rolling silver Could not reach the far blue skies.

I cried, in my passionate longing:- "Has the earth no Angel-friend Who will carry my love the message That my heart desires to send?"

Then I heard a strain of music, So mighty, so pure, so clear, That my very sorrow was silent, And my heart stood still to hear.

And I felt, in my soul's deep yearning, At last the sure answer stir:- "The music will go up to Heaven, And carry my thought to her."

It rose in harmonious rushing Of mingled voices and strings. And I tenderly laid my message On the Music's outspread wings.

I heard it float farther and farther, In sound more perfect than speech; Farther than sight can follow. Farther than soul can reach.

And I know that at last my message Has passed through the golden gate: So my heart is no longer restless, And I am content to wait.

VERSE: NEVER AGAIN

"Never again!" vow hearts when reunited, "Never again shall Love be cast aside; For ever now the shadow has departed; Nor bitter sorrow, veiled in scornful pride, Shall feign indifference, or affect disdain, - Never, oh Love, again, never again!"

"Never again!" so sobs, in broken accents, A soul laid prostrate at a holy shrine, - "Once more, once more forgive, oh Lord, and pardon, My wayward life shall bend to love divine; And never more shall sin its whiteness stain, - Never, oh God, again, never again!"

"Never again!" so speaketh one forsaken, In the blank desolate passion of despair, - "Never again shall the bright dream I cherished Delude my heart, for bitter truth is there, - The angel, Hope, shall still thy cruel pain Never again, my heart, never again!"

"Never again!" so speaks the sudden silence, When round the hearth gathers each well-known face, - But one is missing, and no future presence, However dear, can fill that vacant place; For ever shall the burning thought remain, - "Never, beloved, again! never again!"

"Never again!" so--but beyond our hearing - Ring out far voices fading up the sky; Never again shall earthly care and sorrow Weigh down the wings that bear those souls on high; Listen, oh earth, and hear that glorious strain, - "Never, never again! never again!"

VERSE: LISTENING ANGELS

Blue against the bluer Heavens Stood the mountain, calm and still,
Two white Angels, bending earthward, Leant upon the hill.

Listening leant those silent Angels, And I also longed to hear What
sweet strain of earthly music Thus could charm their ear.

I heard the sound of many trumpets In a warlike march draw nigh;
Solemnly a mighty army Passed in order by.

But the clang had ceased; the echoes Soon had faded from the hill;
While the Angels, calm and earnest, Leant and listened still.

Then I heard a fainter clamour, Forge and wheel were clashing near
And the Reapers in the meadow Singing loud and clear.

When the sunset came in glory, And the toil of day was o'er, Still the
Angels leant in silence, Listening as before.

Then, as daylight slowly vanished, And the evening mists grew dim,
Solemnly from distant voices Rose a vesper hymn.

When the chant was done, and lingering Died upon the evening air,
From the hill the radiant Angels Still were listening there.

Silent came the gathering darkness, Bringing with it sleep and rest;
Save a little bird was singing Near her leafy nest.

Through the sounds of war and labour She had warbled all day long,
While the Angels leant and listened Only to her song.

But the starry night was coming; When she ceased her little lay From
the mountain top the Angels Slowly passed away.

VERSE: GOLDEN DAYS

Golden days--where are they? Pilgrims east and west Cry; if we could find them We would pause and rest: We would pause and rest a little From our long and weary ways:- Where are they, then, where are they - Golden days?

Golden days--where are they? Ask of childhood's years, Still untouched by sorrow, Still undimmed by tears: Ah, they seek a phantom Future, Crowned with brighter, starry rays; - Where are they, then, where are they - Golden days?

Golden days--where are they? Has Love learnt the spell That will charm them hither, Near our hearth to dwell? Insecure are all her treasures, Restless is her anxious gaze:- Where are they, then, where are they - Golden days?

Golden days--where are they? Farther up the hill I can hear the echo Faintly calling still: Faintly calling, faintly dying, In a far-off misty haze:- Where are they, then, where are they - Golden days?

VERSE: PHILIP AND MILDRED

Lingering fade the rays of daylight, and the listening air is chilly;
Voice of bird and forest murmur, insect hum and quivering spray Stir not
in that quiet hour: through the valley, calm and stilly, All in hushed and
loving silence watch the slow departing Day.

Till the last faint western cloudlet, faint and rosy, ceases blushing, And
the blue grows deep and deeper where one trembling planet shines, And
the day has gone for ever--then, like some great ocean rushing, The sad
night wind wails lamenting, sobbing through the moaning pines.

Such, of all day's changing hours, is the fittest and the meetest For a
farewell hour--and parting looks less bitter and more blest; Earth seems
like a shrine for sorrow, Nature's mother voice is sweetest, And her hand
seems laid in chiding on the unquiet throbbing breast.

Words are lower, for the twilight seems rebuking sad repining, And
wild murmur and rebellion, as all childish and in vain; Breaking through
dark future hours clustering starry hopes seem shining, Then the calm and
tender midnight folds her shadow round the pain.

So they paced the shady lime-walk in that twilight dim and holy, Still
the last farewell deferring, she could hear or he should say; Every word,
weighed down by sorrow, fell more tenderly and slowly - This, which now
beheld their parting, should have been their wedding-day.

Should have been: her dreams of childhood, never straying, never
faltering, Still had needed Philip's image to make future life complete;
Philip's young hopes of ambition, ever changing, ever altering, Needed
Mildred's gentle presence even to make successes sweet.

This day should have seen their marriage; the calm crowning and
assurance Of two hearts, fulfilling rather, and not changing, either life:
Now they must be rent asunder, and her heart must learn endurance, For
he leaves their home, and enters on a world of work and strife.

But her gentle spirit long had learnt, unquestioning, submitting, To

revere his youthful longings, and to marvel at the fate That gave such a humble office, all unworthy and unfitting, To the genius of the village, who was born for something great.

When the learned Traveller came there who had gained renown at college, Whose abstruse research had won him even European fame, Questioned Philip, praised his genius, marvelled at his self-taught knowledge, Could she murmur if he called him up to London and to fame?

Could she waver when he bade her take the burden of decision, Since his troth to her was plighted, and his life was now her own? Could she doom him to inaction? could she, when a newborn vision Rose in glory for his future, check it for her sake alone?

So her little trembling fingers, that had toiled with such fond pleasure, Paused, and laid aside, and folded the unfinished wedding gown; Faltering earnestly assurance, that she too could, in her measure, Prize for him the present honour, and the future's sure renown.

Now they pace the shady lime-walk, now the last words must be spoken, Words of trust, for neither dreaded more than waiting and delay; Was not love still called eternal--could a plighted vow be broken? - See the crimson light of sunset fades in purple mist away.

"Yes, my Mildred," Philip told her, "one calm thought of joy and blessing, Like a guardian spirit by me, through the world's tumultuous stir, Still will spread its wings above me, and now urging, now repressing, With my Mildred's voice will murmur thoughts of home, and love, and her.

"It will charm my peaceful leisure, sanctify my daily toiling, With a right none else possesses, touching my heart's inmost string; And to keep its pure wings spotless I shall fly the world's touch, soiling Even in thought this Angel Guardian of my Mildred's Wedding Ring.

"Take it, dear; this little circlet is the first link, strong and holy, Of a life-long chain, and holds me from all other love apart; Till the day when you may wear it as my wife--my own--mine wholly - Let me know it rests for ever near the beating of your heart."

Dawn of day saw Philip speeding on his road to the Great City, Thinking how the stars gazed downward just with Mildred's patient eyes;

Dreams of work, and fame, and honour struggling with a tender pity, Till the loving Past receding saw the conquering Future rise.

Daybreak still found Mildred watching, with the wonder of first sorrow, How the outward world unaltered shone the same this very day; How unpitying and relentless busy life met this new morrow, Earth, and sky, and man unheeding that her joy had passed away.

Then the round of weary duties, cold and formal, came to meet her, With the life within departed that had given them each a soul; And her sick heart even slighted gentle words that came to greet her; For Grief spread its shadowy pinions, like a blight, upon the whole.

Jar one chord, the harp is silent; move one stone, the arch is shattered; One small clarion-cry of sorrow bids an armed host awake; One dark cloud can hide the sunlight; loose one string, the pearls are scattered; Think one thought, a soul may perish; say one word, a heart may break!

Life went on, the two lives running side by side; the outward seeming, And the truer and diviner hidden in the heart and brain; Dreams grow holy, put in action; work grows fair through starry dreaming; But where each flows on unmingling, both are fruitless and in vain.

Such was Mildred's life; her dreaming lay in some far-distant region, All the fairer, all the brighter, that its glories were but guessed; And the daily round of duties seemed an unreal, airy legion - Nothing true save Philip's letters and the ring upon her breast.

Letters telling how he struggled, for some plan or vision aiming, And at last how he just grasped it as a fresh one spread its wings; How the honour or the learning, once the climax, now were claiming, Only more and more, becoming merely steps to higher things.

Telling her of foreign countries: little store had she of learning, So her earnest, simple spirit answered as he touched the string; Day by day, to these bright fancies all her silent thoughts were turning, Seeing every radiant picture framed within her golden Ring.

Oh, poor heart--love, if thou willest; but, thine own soul still possessing, Live thy life: not a reflection or a shadow of his own: Lean as fondly, as completely, as thou willest--but confessing That thy strength is God's, and therefore can, if need be, stand alone.

Little means were there around her to make farther, wider ranges,
Where her loving gentle spirit could try any stronger flight; And she
turned aside, half fearing that fresh thoughts were fickle changes - That
she MUST stay as he left her on that farewell summer night.

Love should still be guide and leader, like a herald should have risen,
Lighting up the long dark vistas, conquering all opposing fates; But new
claims, new thoughts, new duties found her heart a silent prison, And
found Love, with folded pinions, like a jailer by the gates.

Yet why blame her? it had needed greater strength than she was given
To have gone against the current that so calmly flowed along; Nothing
fresh came near the village save the rain and dew of heaven, And her
nature was too passive, and her love perhaps too strong.

The great world of thought, that rushes down the years, and onward
sweeping Bears upon its mighty billows in its progress each and all,
Flowed so far away, its murmur did not rouse them from their sleeping;
Life and Time and Truth were speaking, but they did not hear their call.

Years flowed on; and every morning heard her prayer grow lower,
deeper, As she called all blessings on him, and bade every ill depart, And
each night when the cold moonlight shone upon that quiet sleeper, It
would show her ring that glittered with each throbbing of her heart.

Years passed on. Fame came for Philip in a full, o'erflowing measure;
He was spoken of and honoured through the breadth of many lands, And
he wrote it all to Mildred, as if praise were only pleasure, As if fame were
only honour, when he laid them in her hands.

Mildred heard it without wonder, as a sure result expected, For how
could it fail, since merit and renown go side by side: And the neighbours
who first fancied genius ought to be suspected, Might at last give up their
caution, and could own him now with pride.

Years flowed on. These empty honours led to others they called
better, He had saved some slender fortune, and might claim his bride at
last: Mildred, grown so used to waiting, felt half startled by the letter That
now made her future certain, and would consecrate her past.

And he came: grown sterner, older--changed indeed: a grave
reliance Had replaced his eager manner, and the quick short speech of old:

He had gone forth with a spirit half of hope and half defiance; He returned with proud assurance half disdainful and half cold.

Yet his old self seemed returning while he stood sometimes, and listened To her calm soft voice, relating all the thoughts of these long years; And if Mildred's heart was heavy, and at times her blue eyes glistened, Still in thought she would not whisper aught of sorrow or of fears.

Autumn with its golden corn-fields, autumn with its storms and showers, Had been there to greet his coming with its forests gold and brown; And the last leaves still were falling, fading still the year's last flowers, When he left the quiet village, and took back his bride to town.

Home--the home that she had pictured many a time in twilight, dwelling On that tender gentle fancy, folded round with loving care; Here was home--the end, the haven; and what spirit voice seemed telling, That she only held the casket, with the gem no longer there?

Sad it may be to be longing, with a patience faint and weary, For a hope deferred--and sadder still to see it fade and fall; Yet to grasp the thing we long for, and, with sorrow sick and dreary, THEN to find how it can fail us, is the saddest pain of all.

What was wanting? He was gentle, kind, and generous still, deferring To her wishes always; nothing seemed to mar their tranquil life: There are skies so calm and leaden that we long for storm-winds stirring, There is peace so cold and bitter, that we almost welcome strife.

Darker grew the clouds above her, and the slow conviction clearer, That he gave her home and pity, but that heart, and soul, and mind Were beyond her now; he loved her, and in youth he had been near her, But he now had gone far onward, and had left her there behind.

Yes, beyond her: yes, quick-hearted, her Love helped her in revealing It was worthless, while so mighty; was too weak, although so strong; There were courts she could not enter; depths she could not sound; yet feeling It was vain to strive or struggle, vainer still to mourn or long.

He would give her words of kindness, he would talk of home, but seeming With an absent look, forgetting if he held or dropped her hand; And then turn with eager pleasure to his writing, reading, dreaming, Or to

speak of things with others that she could not understand.

He had paid, and paid most nobly, all he owed; no need of blaming; It had cost him something, may be, that no future could restore: In her heart of hearts she knew it; Love and Sorrow, not complaining, Only suffered all the deeper, only loved him all the more.

Sometimes then a stronger anguish, and more cruel, weighed upon her, That through all those years of waiting, he had slowly learnt the truth; He had known himself mistaken, but that, bound to her in honour, He renounced his life, to pay her for the patience of her youth.

But a star was slowly rising from that mist of grief, and brighter Grew her eyes, for each slow hour surer comfort seemed to bring; And she watched with strange sad smiling, how her trembling hands grew slighter, And how thin her slender finger, and how large her wedding-ring.

And the tears dropped slowly on it, as she kissed that golden token With a deeper love, it may be, than was in the far-off past; And remembering Philip's fancy, that so long ago was spoken, Thought her Ring's bright angel guardian had stayed near her to the last.

Grieving sorely, grieving truly, with a tender care and sorrow, Philip watched the slow, sure fading of his gentle, patient wife; Could he guess with what a yearning she was longing for the morrow, Could he guess the bitter knowledge that had wearied her of life?

Now with violets strewn upon her, Mildred lies in peaceful sleeping; All unbound her long, bright tresses, and her throbbing heart at rest, And the cold, blue rays of moonlight, through the open casement creeping, Show the ring upon her finger, and her hands crossed on her breast.

Peace at last. Of peace eternal is her calm sweet smile a token. Has some angel lingering near her let a radiant promise fall? Has he told her Heaven unites again the links that Earth has broken? For on Earth so much is needed, but in Heaven Love is all!

VERSE: BORROWED THOUGHTS

I. FROM "LAVATER."

Trust him little who doth raise To one height both great and small, And
sets the sacred crown of praise, Smiling, on the head of all.

Trust him less who looks around To censure all with scornful eyes,
And in everything has found Something that he dare despise.

But for one who stands apart, Stirred by nought that can befall, With a
cold indifferent heart, - Trust him least and last of all.

II. FROM "PHANTASTES."

I have a bitter Thought, a Snake That used to sting my life to pain. I
strove to cast it far away, But every night and every day It crawled back to
my heart again.

It was in vain to live or strive, To think or sleep, to work or pray; At
last I bade this thine accursed Gnaw at my heart, and do its worst, And so I
let it have its way.

Thus said I, "I shall never fall Into a false and dreaming peace, And
then awake, with sudden start, To feel it biting at my heart, For now the
pain can never cease."

But I gained more; for I have found That such a snake's envenomed
charm Must always, always find a part, Deep in the centre of my heart,
Which it can never wound or harm.

It is coiled round my heart to-day. It sleeps at times, this cruel snake,
And while it sleeps it never stings:- Hush! let us talk of other things, Lest
it should hear me and awake.

III. FROM "LOST ALICE."

Yes, dear, our Love is slain; In the cold grave for evermore it lies,
Never to wake again, Or light our sorrow with its starry eyes; And so--
regret is vain.

One hour of pain and dread, We killed our Love, we took its life away
With the false words we said; And so we watch it, since that cruel day,
Silent, and cold, and dead.

We should have seen it shine Long years beside us. Time and Death
might try To touch that life divine, Whose strength could every other
stroke defy Save only thine and mine.

No longing can restore Our dead again. Vain are the tears we weep,
And vainly we deplore Our buried Love: its grave lies dark and deep
Between us evermore.

IV. FROM * * *

Within the kingdom of my Soul I bid you enter, Love, to-day; Submit
my life to your control, And give my Heart up to your sway.

My Past, whose light and life is flown, Shall live through memory for
you still; Take all my Present for your own, And mould my Future to your
will.

One only thought remains apart, And will for ever so remain; There is
one Chamber in my heart Where even you might knock in vain.

A haunted Chamber:- long ago I closed it, and I cast the key Where
deep and bitter waters flow, Into a vast and silent sea.

Dear, it is haunted. All the rest Is yours; but I have shut that door For
ever now. 'Tis even best That I should enter it no more.

No more. It is not well to stay With ghosts; their very look would
scare Your joyous, loving smile away - So never try to enter there.

Check, if you love me, all regret That this one thought remains apart:-
Now let us smile, dear, and forget The haunted Chamber in my Heart.

VERSE: LIGHT AND SHADE

Thou hast done well to kneel and say, "Since He who gave can take away, And bid me suffer, I obey."

And also well to tell thy heart That good lies in the bitterest part, And thou wilt profit by her smart.

But bitter hours come to all: When even truths like these will pall, Sick hearts for humbler comfort call.

Then I would have thee strive to see That good and evil come to thee, As one of a great family.

And as material life is planned, That even the loneliest one must stand Dependent on his brother's hand;

So links more subtle and more fine Bind every other soul to thine In one great brotherhood divine.

Nor with thy share of work be vexed; Though incomplete, and even perplex, It fits exactly to the next.

What seems so dark to thy dim sight May be a shadow, seen aright, Making some brightness doubly bright.

The flash that struck thy tree,--no more To shelter thee,--lets Heaven's blue floor Shine where it never shone before.

Thy life that has been dropped aside Into Time's stream, may stir the tide, In rippled circles spreading wide.

The cry wrung from thy spirit's pain May echo on some far-off plain, And guide a wanderer home again.

Fail--yet rejoice; because no less The failure that makes thy distress May teach another full success.

It may be that in some great need Thy life's poor fragments are decreed To help build up a lofty deed.

Thy heart should throb in vast content, Thus knowing that it was but meant As chord in one great instrument;

That even the discord in thy soul May make completer music roll From out the great harmonious whole.

It may be, that when all is light, Deep set within that deep delight Will

be to know WHY all was right;

To hear life's perfect music rise, And while it floods the happy skies,
Thy feeble voice to recognise.

Then strive more gladly to fulfil Thy little part. This darkness still Is
light to every loving will.

And trust,--as if already plain, How just thy share of loss and pain Is
for another fuller gain.

I dare not limit time or place Touched by thy life: nor dare I trace Its
far vibrations into space.

ONE only knows. Yet if the fret Of thy weak heart, in weak regret
Needs a more tender comfort yet:

Then thou mayst take thy loneliest fears, The bitterest drops of all thy
tears, The dreariest hours of all thy years;

And through thy anguish there outspread, May ask that God's great
love would shed Blessings on one beloved head.

And thus thy soul shall learn to draw Sweetness from out that loving
law That sees no failure and no flaw,

Where all is good. And life is good, Were the one lesson understood
Of its most sacred brotherhood.

VERSE: A CHANGELING

A little changeling spirit Crept to my arms one day: I had no heart or courage To drive the child away.

So all day long I soothed her, And hushed her on my breast; And all night long her wailing Would never let me rest.

I dug a grave to hold her, A grave both dark and deep; I covered her with violets, And laid her there to sleep.

I used to go and watch there, Both night and morning too:- It was my tears, I fancy, That kept the violets blue.

I took her up: and once more I felt the clinging hold, And heard the ceaseless wailing That wearied me of old.

I wandered, and I wandered, With my burden on my breast, Till I saw a church-door open, And entered in to rest.

In the dim, dying daylight, Set in a flowery shrine, I saw the Virgin Mother Holding her Child divine.

I knelt down there in silence, And on the Altar-stone I laid my wailing burden, And came away--alone.

And now that little spirit, That sobbed so all day long, Is grown a shining Angel, With wings both wide and strong.

She watches me from Heaven, With loving, tender care, And one day she has promised That I shall find her there.

VERSE: DISCOURAGED

Where the little babbling streamlet First springs forth to light,
Trickling through soft velvet mosses, Almost hid from sight; Vowed I with
delight, - "River, I will follow thee, Through thy wanderings to the Sea!"

Gleaming 'mid the purple heather, Downward then it sped, Glancing
through the mountain gorges, Like a silver thread, As it quicker fled,
Louder music in its flow, Dashing to the Vale below.

Then its voice grew lower, gentler, And its pace less fleet, Just as
though it loved to linger Round the rushes' feet, As they stooped to meet
Their clear images below, Broken by the ripples' flow.

Purple Willow-herb bent over To her shadow fair; Meadow-sweet, in
feathery clusters, Perfumed all the air; Silver-weed was there, And in one
calm, grassy spot, Starry, blue Forget-me-not.

Tangled weeds, below the waters, Still seemed drawn away; Yet the
current, floating onward, Was less strong than they; - Sunbeams watched
their play, With a flickering light and shade, Through the screen the Alders
made.

Broader grew the flowing River; To its grassy brink Slowly, in the
slanting sun-rays, Cattle trooped to drink: The blue sky, I think, Was no
bluer than that stream, Slipping onward, like a dream.

Quicker, deeper then it hurried, Rushing fierce and free; But I said, "It
should grow calmer Ere it meets the Sea, The wide purple Sea, Which I
weary for in vain, Wasting all my toil and pain."

But it rushed still quicker, fiercer, In its rocky bed, Hard and stony was
the pathway To my tired tread; "I despair," I said, "Of that wide and
glorious Sea That was promised unto me."

So I turned aside, and wandered Through green meadows near, Far
away, among the daisies, Far away, for fear Lest I still should hear The
loud murmur of its song, As the River flowed along.

Now I hear it not:- I loiter Gaily as before; Yet I sometimes think,--and
thinking Makes my heart so sore, - Just a few steps more, And there might
have shone for me, Blue and infinite, the Sea.

VERSE: IF THOU COULDST KNOW

I think if thou couldst know, Oh soul that will complain, What lies concealed below Our burden and our pain; How just our anguish brings Nearer those longed-for things We seek for now in vain, - I think thou wouldst rejoice, and not complain.

I think if thou couldst see, With thy dim mortal sight, How meanings, dark to thee, Are shadows hiding light; Truth's efforts crossed and vexed, Life's purpose all perplexed, - If thou couldst see them right, I think that they would seem all clear, and wise, and bright.

And yet thou canst not know, And yet thou canst not see; Wisdom and sight are slow In poor humanity. If thou couldst TRUST, poor soul, In Him who rules the whole, Thou wouldst find peace and rest: Wisdom and sight are well, but Trust is best.

VERSE: THE WARRIOR TO HIS DEAD BRIDE

If in the fight my arm was strong, And forced my foes to yield, If conquering and unhurt I came Back from the battle-field - It is because thy prayers have been My safeguard and my shield.

My comrades smile to see my arm Spare or protect a foe, They think thy gentle pleading voice Was silenced long ago; But pity and compassion, love, Were taught me first by woe.

Thy heart, my own, still beats in Heaven With the same love divine That made thee stoop to such a soul, So hard, so stern, as mine - My eyes have learnt to weep, beloved, Since last they looked on thine.

I hear thee murmur words of peace Through the dim midnight air, And a calm falls from the angel stars And soothes my great despair - The Heavens themselves look brighter, love, Since thy sweet soul is there.

And if my heart is once more calm, My step is once more free, It is because each hour I feel Thou prayest still for me; Because no fate or change can come Between my soul and thee.

It is because my heart is stilled. Not broken by despair, Because I see the grave is bright, And death itself is fair - I dread no more the wrath of Heaven - I have an angel there!

VERSE: A LETTER

Dear, I tried to write you such a letter As would tell you all my heart to-day. Written Love is poor; one word were better; Easier, too, a thousand times, to say.

I can tell you all: fears, doubts unheeding, While I can be near you, hold your hand, Looking right into your eyes, and reading Reassurance that you understand.

Yet I wrote it through, then lingered, thinking Of its reaching you,-- what hour, what day; Till I felt my heart and courage sinking With a strange, new, wondering dismay.

"Will my letter fall," I wondered sadly, "On her mood like some discordant tone, Or be welcomed tenderly and gladly? Will she be with others, or alone?

"It may find her too absorbed to read it, Save with hurried glance and careless air: Sad and weary, she may scarcely heed it; Gay and happy, she may hardly care.

"Shall I--dare I--risk the chances?" slowly Something,--was it shyness, love, or pride? - Chilled my heart, and checked my courage wholly; So I laid it wistfully aside.

Then I leant against the casement, turning Tearful eyes towards the far-off west, Where the golden evening light was burning, Till my heart throbbed back again to rest.

And I thought: "Love's soul is not in fetters, Neither space nor time keep souls apart; Since I cannot--dare not--send my letters, Through the silence I will send my heart.

"If, perhaps now, while my tears are falling, She is dreaming quietly alone, She will hear my Love's far echo calling, Feel my spirit drawing near her own.

"She will hear, while twilight shades enfold her, All the gathered Love she knows so well - Deepest Love my words have ever told her, Deeper still--all I could never tell.

"Wondering at the strange mysterious power That has touched her

heart, then she will say:- 'Some one whom I love, this very hour, Thinks of me, and loves me, far away.'

"If, as well may be, to-night has found her Full of other thoughts, with others by, Through the words and claims that gather round her She will hear just one, half-smothered sigh;

"Or will marvel why, without her seeking, Suddenly the thought of me recurs; Or, while listening to another speaking, Fancy that my hand is holding hers."

So I dreamed, and watched the stars' far splendour Glimmering on the azure darkness, start, - While the star of trust rose bright and tender, Through the twilight shadows of my heart.

VERSE: A COMFORTER

I.

Will she come to me, little Effie, Will she come in my arms to rest,
And nestle her head on my shoulder, While the sun goes down in the
west?

II.

"I and Effie will sit together, All alone, in this great arm-chair:- Is it
silly to mind it, darling, When Life is so hard to bear?

III.

"No one comforts me like my Effie, Just I think that she does not try, -
Only looks with a wistful wonder Why grown people should ever cry;

IV.

"While her little soft arms close tighter Round my neck in their
clinging hold:- Well, I must not cry on your hair, dear, For my tears might
tarnish the gold.

V.

"I am tired of trying to read, dear; It is worse to talk and seem gay:
There are some kinds of sorrow, Effie, It is useless to thrust away.

VI.

"Ah, advice may be wise, my darling, But one always knows it before;

And the reasoning down one's sorrow Seems to make one suffer the more.

VII.

"But my Effie won't reason, will she? Or endeavour to understand;
Only holds up her mouth to kiss me, As she strokes my face with her hand.

VIII.

"If you break your plaything yourself, dear, Don't you cry for it all the
same? I don't think it is such a comfort, One has only oneself to blame.

IX.

"People say things cannot be helped, dear, But then that is the reason
why; For if things could be helped or altered, One would never sit down to
cry:

X.

"They say, too, that tears are quite useless To undo, amend, or restore,
- When I think HOW useless, my Effie, Then my tears only fall the more.

XI.

"All to-day I struggled against it; But that does not make sorrow cease;
And now, dear, it is such a comfort To be able to cry in peace.

XII.

"Though wise people would call that folly, And remonstrate with grave
surprise; We won't mind what they say, my Effie; - We never professed to
be wise.

"But my comforter knows a lesson Wiser, truer than all the rest:- That
to help and to heal a sorrow, Love and silence are always best.

XIV.

"Well, who is my comforter--tell me? Effie smiles, but she will not speak; Or look up through the long curled lashes That are shading her rosy cheek.

XV.

"Is she thinking of talking fishes, The blue bird, or magical tree? Perhaps I am thinking, my darling, Of something that never can be.

XVI.

"You long--don't you, dear?--for the Genii, Who were slaves of lamps and of rings; And I--I am sometimes afraid, dear, - I want as impossible things.

XVII.

"But hark! there is Nurse calling Effie! It is bedtime, so run away; And I must go back, or the others Will be wondering why I stay.

XVIII.

"So good-night to my darling Effie; Keep happy, sweetheart, and grow wise:- There's one kiss for her golden tresses, And two for her sleepy eyes."

VERSE: UNSEEN

There are more things in Heaven and Earth, than we Can dream of, or
than nature understands; We learn not through our poor philosophy What
hidden chords are touched by unseen hands.

The present hour repeats upon its strings Echoes of some vague dream
we have forgot; Dim voices whisper half-remembered things, And when
we pause to listen,--answer not.

Forebodings come: we know not how, or whence, Shadowing a
nameless fear upon the soul, And stir within our hearts a subtler sense,
Than light may read, or wisdom may control.

And who can tell what secret links of thought Bind heart to heart?
Unspoken things are heard, As if within our deepest selves was brought
The soul, perhaps, of some unuttered word.

But, though a veil of shadow hangs between That hidden life, and what
we see and hear, Let us revere the power of the Unseen, And know a world
of mystery is near.

VERSE: A REMEMBRANCE OF AUTUMN

Nothing stirs the sunny silence, - Save the drowsy humming of the bees
Round the rich, ripe peaches on the wall, And the south wind sighing
in the trees, And the dead leaves rustling as they fall: While the swallows,
one by one, are gathering, All impatient to be on the wing, And to wander
from us, seeking Their beloved Spring!

Cloudless rise the azure heavens! Only vaporous wreaths of snowy
white Nestle in the grey hill's rugged side; And the golden woods are
bathed in light, Dying, if they must, with kingly pride: While the swallows
in the blue air wheeling, Circle now an eager fluttering band, Ready to
depart and leave us For a brighter land!

But a voice is sounding sadly, Telling of a glory that has been; Of a
day that faded all too fast - See afar through the blue air serene, Where the
swallows wing their way at last, And our hearts perchance, as sadly
wandering, Vainly seeking for a long-lost day, While we watch the far-off
swallows, Flee with them away!

VERSE: THREE EVENINGS IN A LIFE

I.

Yes, it looked dark and dreary, That long and narrow street: Only the
sound of the rain, And the tramp of passing feet, The duller glow of the
fire, And gathering mists of night To mark how slow and weary The long
day's cheerless flight!

II.

Watching the sullen fire, Hearing the dismal rain, Drop after drop, run
down On the darkening window-pane: Chill was the heart of Alice, Chill
as that winter day, - For the star of her life had risen Only to fade away.

III.

The voice that had been so strong To bid the snare depart, The true and
earnest will, The calm and steadfast heart, Were now weighed down by
sorrow, Were quivering now with pain; The clear path now seemed
clouded, And all her grief in vain.

IV.

Duty, Right, Truth, who promised To help and save their own, Seemed
spreading wide their pinions To leave her there alone. So, turning from the
Present To well-known days of yore, She called on them to strengthen And
guard her soul once more.

V.

She thought how in her girlhood Her life was given away, The solemn promise spoken She kept so well to-day; How to her brother Herbert She had been help and guide, And how his artist nature On her calm strength relied.

VI.

How through life's fret and turmoil The passion and fire of art In him was soothed and quickened By her true sister heart; How future hopes had always Been for his sake alone; And now,--what strange new feeling Possessed her as its own?

VII.

Her home--each flower that breathed there, The wind's sigh, soft and low, Each trembling spray of ivy, The river's murmuring flow, The shadow of the forest, Sunset, or twilight dim - Dear as they were, were dearer By leaving them for him.

VIII.

And each year as it found her In the dull, feverish town, Saw self still more forgotten, And selfish care kept down By the calm joy of evening That brought him to her side, To warn him with wise counsel, Or praise with tender pride.

IX.

Her heart, her life, her future, Her genius, only meant Another thing to give him, And be therewith content. To-day, what words had stirred her, Her soul could not forget? What dream had filled her spirit With strange and wild regret?

X.

To leave him for another, - Could it indeed be so? Could it have cost
such anguish To bid this vision go? Was this her faith? Was Herbert The
second in her heart? Did it need all this struggle To bid a dream depart?

XI.

And yet, within her spirit A far-off land was seen, A home, which
might have held her, A love, which might have been. And Life--not the
mere being Of daily ebb and flow, But Life itself had claimed her, And she
had let it go!

XII.

Within her heart there echoed Again the well-known tone That
promised this bright future, And asked her for her own: Then words of
sorrow, broken By half-reproachful pain; And then a farewell spoken In
words of cold disdain.

XIII.

Where now was the stern purpose That nerved her soul so long?
Whence came the words she uttered, So hard, so cold, so strong? What
right had she to banish A hope that God had given? Why must she choose
earth's portion, And turn aside from Heaven?

XIV.

To-day! Was it this morning? If this long, fearful strife Was but the
work of hours, What would be years of life? Why did a cruel Heaven For
such great suffering call? And why--Oh, still more cruel! - Must her own
words do all?

XV.

Did she repent? Oh Sorrow! Why do we linger still To take thy
loving message, And do thy gentle will? See, her tears fall more slowly,
The passionate murmurs cease, And back upon her spirit Flow strength,
and love, and peace.

XVI.

The fire burns more brightly, The rain has passed away, Herbert will
see no shadow Upon his home to-day; Only that Alice greets him With
doubly tender care, Kissing a fonder blessing Down on his golden hair.

II

I.

The studio is deserted, Palette and brush laid by, The sketch rests on the easel, The paint is scarcely dry; And Silence--who seems always Within her depths to bear The next sound that will utter - Now holds a dumb despair.

II.

So Alice feels it: listening With breathless, stony fear, Waiting the dreadful summons Each minute brings more near: When the young life, now ebbing, Shall fail, and pass away Into that mighty shadow Who shrouds the house to-day.

III.

But why--when the sick chamber Is on the upper floor - Why dares not Alice enter Within the close--shut door? If he--her all--her Brother, Lies dying in that gloom, What strange mysterious power Has sent her from the room?

IV.

It is not one week's anguish That can have changed her so; Joy has not died here lately, Struck down by one quick blow; But cruel months have needed Their long relentless chain, To teach that shrinking manner Of helpless, hopeless pain.

V.

The struggle was scarce over Last Christmas Eve had brought: The

fibres still were quivering Of the one wounded thought, When Herbert--
who, unconscious, Had guessed no inward strife - Bade her, in pride and
pleasure, Welcome his fair young wife.

VI.

Bade her rejoice, and smiling, Although his eyes were dim, Thanked
God he thus could pay her The care she gave to him. This fresh bright life
would bring her A new and joyous fate - Oh, Alice, check the murmur
That cries, "Too late! too late!"

VII.

Too late! Could she have known it A few short weeks before, That
his life was completed, And needing hers no more, She might--Oh sad
repining! What "might have been," forget; "It was not," should suffice us
To stifle vain regret.

VIII.

He needed her no longer, Each day it grew more plain; First with a
startled wonder, Then with a wondering pain. Love: why, his wife best
gave it; Comfort: durst Alice speak, Or counsel, when resentment
Flushed on the young wife's cheek?

IX.

No more long talks by firelight Of childish times long past, And
dreams of future greatness Which he must reach at last; Dreams, where her
purer instinct With truth unerring told, Where was the worthless gilding,
And where refined gold.

X.

Slowly, but surely ever, Dora's poor jealous pride, Which she called

love for Herbert, Drove Alice from his side; And, spite of nervous effort
To share their altered life, She felt a check to Herbert, A burden to his
wife.

XI.

This was the least; for Alice Feared, dreaded, KNEW at length How
much his nature owed her Of truth, and power, and strength; And watched
the daily failing Of all his nobler part: Low aims, weak purpose, telling In
lower, weaker art.

XII.

And now, when he is dying, The last words she could hear Must not be
hers, but given The bride of one short year. The last care is another's; The
last prayer must not be The one they learnt together Beside their mother's
knee.

XIII.

Summoned at last: she kisses The clay-cold stiffening hand; And,
reading pleading efforts To make her understand, Answers, with solemn
promise, In clear but trembling tone, To Dora's life henceforward She will
devote her own.

XIV.

Now all is over. Alice Dares not remain to weep, But soothes the
frightened Dora Into a sobbing sleep. The poor weak child will need
her: . . . Oh, who can dare complain, When God sends a new Duty To
comfort each new Pain!

III.

I.

The House is all deserted, In the dim evening gloom, Only one figure passes Slowly from room to room; And, pausing at each doorway, Seems gathering up again Within her heart the relics Of bygone joy and pain.

II.

There is an earnest longing In those who onward gaze, Looking with weary patience Towards the coming days. There is a deeper longing, More sad, more strong, more keen: Those know it who look backward, And yearn for what has been.

III.

At every hearth she pauses, Touches each well-known chair; Gazes from every window, Lingers on every stair. What have these months brought Alice Now one more year is past? This Christmas Eve shall tell us, The third one and the last.

IV.

The wilful, wayward Dora, In those first weeks of grief, Could seek and find in Alice Strength, soothing, and relief; And Alice--last sad comfort True woman-heart can take - Had something still to suffer And bear for Herbert's sake.

V.

Spring, with her western breezes, From Indian islands bore To Alice news that Leonard Would seek his home once more. What was it--joy, or

sorrow? What were they--hopes, or fears? That flushed her cheeks with crimson, And filled her eyes with tears?

VI.

He came. And who so kindly Could ask and hear her tell Herbert's last hours; for Leonard Had known and loved him well. Daily he came; and Alice, Poor weary heart, at length, Weighed down by others' weakness, Could lean upon his strength.

VII.

Yet not the voice of Leonard Could her true care beguile, That turned to watch, rejoicing Dora's reviving smile. So, from that little household The worst gloom passed away, The one bright hour of evening Lit up the livelong day.

VIII.

Days passed. The golden summer In sudden heat bore down Its blue, bright, glowing sweetness Upon the scorching town. And sighs and sounds of country Came in the warm soft tune Sung by the honeyed breezes Borne on the wings of June.

IX.

One twilight hour, but earlier Than usual, Alice thought She knew the fresh sweet fragrance Of flowers that Leonard brought; Through opened doors and windows It stole up through the gloom, And with appealing sweetness Drew Alice from her room.

X.

Yes, he was there; and pausing Just near the opened door, To check her heart's quick beating, She heard--and paused still more - His low voice--

Dora's answers - His pleading--Yes, she knew The tone--the words--the accents: She once had heard them too.

XI.

"Would Alice blame her?" Leonard's Low, tender answer came; -
"Alice was far too noble To think or dream of blame." "And was he sure
he loved her?" "Yes, with the one love given Once in a lifetime only, With
one soul and one heaven!"

XII.

Then came a plaintive murmur, - "Dora had once been told That he
and Alice"--"Dearest, Alice is far too cold To love; and I, my Dora, If once
I fancied so, It was a brief delusion, And over,--long ago."

XIII.

Between the Past and Present, On that bleak moment's height, She
stood. As some lost traveller By a quick flash of light Seeing a gulf
before him, With dizzy, sick despair, Reels backward, but to find it A
deeper chasm there.

XIV.

The twilight grew still darker, The fragrant flowers more sweet, The
stars shone out in heaven, The lamps gleamed down the street; And hours
passed in dreaming Over their new-found fate, Ere they could think of
wondering Why Alice was so late.

XV.

She came, and calmly listened; In vain they strove to trace If Herbert's
memory shadowed In grief upon her face. No blame, no wonder showed
there, No feeling could be told; Her voice was not less steady, Her manner

not more cold.

XVI.

They could not hear the anguish That broke in words of pain Through
the calm summer midnight, - "My Herbert--mine again!" Yes, they have
once been parted, But this day shall restore The long lost one: she claims
him: "My Herbert--mine once more!"

XVII.

Now Christmas Eve returning, Saw Alice stand beside The altar,
greeting Dora, Again a smiling bride; And now the gloomy evening Sees
Alice pale and worn, Leaving the house for ever, To wander out forlorn.

XVIII.

Forlorn--nay, not so. Anguish Shall do its work at length; Her soul,
passed through the fire, Shall gain still purer strength. Somewhere there
waits for Alice An earnest noble part; And, meanwhile God is with her, -
God, and her own true heart!

VERSE: THE WIND

The wind went forth o'er land and sea Loud and free; Foaming waves leapt up to meet it, Stately pines bowed down to greet it; While the wailing sea And the forest's murmured sigh Joined the cry Of the wind that swept o'er land and sea.

The wind that blew upon the sea Fierce and free, Cast the bark upon the shore, Whence it sailed the night before Full of hope and glee; And the cry of pain and death Was but a breath, Through the wind that roared upon the sea.

The wind was whispering on the lea Tenderly; But the white rose felt it pass, And the fragile stalks of grass Shook with fear to see All her trembling petals shed, As it fled, So gently by,--the wind upon the lea.

Blow, thou wind, upon the sea Fierce and free, And a gentler message send, Where frail flowers and grasses bend, On the sunny lea; For thy bidding still is one, Be it done In tenderness or wrath, on land or sea!

VERSE: EXPECTATION

The King's three daughters stood on the terrace, The hanging terrace,
so broad and green, Which keeps the sea from the marble Palace, There
was Princess May, and Princess Alice, And the youngest Princess,
Gwendoline.

Sighed Princess May, "Will it last much longer, Time throbs so slow
and my Heart so quick; And oh, how long is the day in dying; Weary am I
of waiting and sighing, For Hope deferred makes the spirit sick."

But Princess Gwendoline smiled and kissed her:- "Am I not sadder
than you, my Sister? Expecting joy is a happy pain. The Future's
fathomless mine of treasures, All countless hordes of possible pleasures,
Might bring their store to my feet in vain."

Sighed Princess Alice as night grew nearer:- "So soon, so soon, is the
daylight fled! And oh, how fast comes the dark to-morrow, Who hides,
perhaps in her veil of sorrow, The terrible hour I wait and dread!"

But Princess Gwendoline kissed her, sighing, - "It is only Life that can
fear dying; Possible loss means possible gain. Those who still dread, are
not quite forsaken; But not to fear, because all is taken, Is the loneliest
depth of human pain."

VERSE: AN IDEAL

While the grey mists of early dawn Were lingering round the hill, And
the dew was still upon the flowers, And the earth lay calm and still, A
winged Spirit came to me Noble, and radiant, and free.

Folding his blue and shining wings, He laid his hand on mine. I know
not if I felt, or heard The mystic word divine, Which woke the trembling
air to sighs, And shone from out his starry eyes.

The word he spoke, within my heart Stirred life unknown before, And
cast a spell upon my soul To chain it evermore; Making the cold dull earth
look bright, And skies flame out in sapphire light.

When noon ruled from the heavens, and man Through busy day toiled
on, My Spirit drooped his shining wings; His radiant smile was gone; His
voice had ceased, his grace had flown, His hand grew cold within my own.

Bitter, oh bitter tears, I wept, Yet still I held his hand, Hoping with
vague unreasoning hope: I would not understand That this pale Spirit
never more Could be what he had been before.

Could it be so? My heart stood still. Yet he was by my side. I strove;
but my despair was vain; Vain, too, was love and pride. Could he have
changed to me so soon? My day was only at its noon.

Now stars are rising one by one, Through the dim evening air; Near
me a household Spirit waits, With tender loving care; He speaks and
smiles, but never sings, Long since he lost his shining wings.

With thankful, true content, I know This is the better way; Is not a
faithful spirit mine - Mine still--at close of day? . . . Yet will my foolish
heart repine For that bright morning dream of mine.

VERSE: OUR DEAD

Nothing is our own: we hold our pleasures Just a little while, ere
they are fled: One by one life robs us of our treasures; Nothing is our own
except our Dead.

They are ours, and hold in faithful keeping Safe for ever, all they took
away. Cruel life can never stir that sleeping, Cruel time can never seize
that prey.

Justice pales; truth fades; stars fall from Heaven; Human are the great
whom we revere: No true crown of honour can be given, Till we place it
on a funeral bier.

How the Children leave us: and no traces Linger of that smiling
angel band; Gone, for ever gone; and in their places, Weary men and
anxious women stand.

Yet we have some little ones, still ours; They have kept the baby smile
we know, Which we kissed one day and hid with flowers, On their dead
white faces, long ago.

When our Joy is lost--and life will take it - Then no memory of the
past remains; Save with some strange, cruel sting, to make it Bitterness
beyond all present pains.

Death, more tender-hearted, leaves to sorrow Still the radiant shadow,
fond regret: We shall find, in some far, bright to-morrow, Joy that he has
taken, living yet.

Is Love ours, and do we dream we know it, Bound with all our heart-
strings, all our own? Any cold and cruel dawn may show it, Shattered,
desecrated, overthrown.

Only the dead Hearts forsake us never; Death's last kiss has been the
mystic sign Consecrating Love our own for ever, Crowning it eternal and
divine.

So when Fate would fain besiege our city, Dim our gold, or make our
flowers fall, Death the Angel, comes in love and pity, And to save our
treasures, claims them all.

VERSE: A WOMAN'S ANSWER

I will not let you say a Woman's part Must be to give exclusive love alone; Dearest, although I love you so, my heart Answers a thousand claims beside your own.

I love--what do I not love? earth and air Find space within my heart, and myriad things You would not deign to heed, are cherished there, And vibrate on its very inmost strings.

I love the summer with her ebb and flow Of light, and warmth, and music that have nurst Her tender buds to blossoms . . . and you know It was in summer that I saw you first.

I love the winter dearly too, . . . but then I owe it so much; on a winter's day, Bleak, cold, and stormy, you returned again, When you had been those weary months away.

I love the Stars like friends; so many nights I gazed at them, when you were far from me, Till I grew blind with tears . . . those far-off lights Could watch you, whom I longed in vain to see.

I love the Flowers; happy hours lie Shut up within their petals close and fast: You have forgotten, dear: but they and I Keep every fragment of the golden Past.

I love, too, to be loved; all loving praise Seems like a crown upon my Life,--to make It better worth the giving, and to raise Still nearer to your own the heart you take.

I love all good and noble souls;--I heard One speak of you but lately, and for days Only to think of it, my soul was stirred In tender memory of such generous praise.

I love all those who love you; all who owe Comfort to you: and I can find regret Even for those poorer hearts who once could know, And once could love you, and can now forget.

Well, is my heart so narrow--I, who spare Love for all these? Do I not even hold My favourite books in special tender care, And prize them as a miser does his gold?

The Poets that you used to read to me While summer twilights faded in

the sky; But most of all I think Aurora Leigh, Because--because--do you remember why?

Will you be jealous? Did you guess before I loved so many things?--
Still you the best:- Dearest, remember that I love you more, Oh, more a
thousand times than all the rest!

VERSE: THE STORY OF THE FAITHFUL SOUL

FOUNDED ON AN OLD FRENCH LEGEND

The fettered Spirits linger In purgatorial pain, With penal fires effacing
Their last faint earthly stain, Which Life's imperfect sorrow Had tried to
cleanse in vain.

Yet on each feast of Mary Their sorrow finds release, For the Great
Archangel Michael Comes down and bids it cease; And the name of these
brief respites Is called "Our Lady's Peace."

Yet once--so runs the Legend - When the Archangel came And all
these holy spirits Rejoiced at Mary's name; One voice alone was wailing,
Still wailing on the same.

And though a great Te Deum The happy echoes woke, This one
discordant wailing Through the sweet voices broke; So when St. Michael
questioned, Thus the poor spirit spoke:-

"I am not cold or thankless, Although I still complain; I prize our
Lady's blessing Although it comes in vain To still my bitter anguish, Or
quench my ceaseless pain.

"On earth a heart that loved me, Still lives and mourns me there, And
the shadow of his anguish Is more than I can bear; All the torment that I
suffer Is the thought of his despair.

"The evening of my bridal Death took my Life away; Not all Love's
passionate pleading Could gain an hour's delay. And he I left has suffered
A whole year since that day.

"If I could only see him, - If I could only go And speak one word of
comfort And solace,--then, I know He would endure with patience, And
strive against his woe."

Thus the Archangel answered:- "Your time of pain is brief, And soon
the peace of Heaven Will give you full relief; Yet if his earthly comfort So
much outweighs your grief,

"Then, through a special mercy I offer you this grace, - You may seek

him who mourns you And look upon his face, And speak to him of
comfort For one short minute's space.

"But when that time is ended, Return here, and remain A thousand
years in torment, A thousand years in pain: Thus dearly must you purchase
The comfort he will gain."

* * *

The Lime-trees' shade at evening Is spreading broad and wide;
Beneath their fragrant arches, Pace slowly, side by side, In low and tender
converse, A Bridegroom and his Bride.

The night is calm and stilly, No other sound is there Except their
happy voices: What is that cold bleak air That passes through the Lime-
trees And stirs the Bridegroom's hair?

While one low cry of anguish, Like the last dying wail Of some dumb,
hunted creature, Is borne upon the gale:- Why does the Bridegroom
shudder And turn so deathly pale?

* * *

Near Purgatory's entrance The radiant Angels wait; It was the great St.
Michael Who closed that gloomy gate, When the poor wandering spirit
Came back to meet her fate.

* * *

"Pass on," thus spoke the Angel: Heaven's joy is deep and vast; Pass
on, pass on, poor Spirit, For Heaven is yours at last; In that one minute's
anguish Your thousand years have passed."

VERSE: A CONTRAST

Can you open that ebony Casket? Look, this is the key: but stay,
Those are only a few old letters Which I keep,--to burn some day.

Yes, that Locket is quaint and ancient; But leave it, dear, with the ring,
And give me the little Portrait Which hangs by a crimson string.

I have never opened that Casket Since, many long years ago, It was
sent me back in anger By one whom I used to know.

But I want you to see the Portrait: I wonder if you can trace A look of
that smiling creature Left now in my faded face.

It was like me once; but remember The weary relentless years, And
Life, with its fierce, brief Tempests, And its long, long rain of tears.

Is it strange to call it my Portrait? Nay, smile, dear, for well you may,
To think of that radiant Vision And of what I am to-day.

With restless, yet confident longing How those blue eyes seem to gaze
Into deep and exhaustless Treasures, All hid in the coming days.

With that trust which leans on the Future, And counts on her promised
store, Until she has taught us to tremble And hope,--but to trust no more.

How that young, light heart would have pitied Me now--if her dreams
had shown A quiet and weary woman With all her illusions flown.

Yet I--who shall soon be resting, And have passed the hardest part,
Can look back with a deeper pity On that young unconscious heart.

It is strange; but Life's currents drift us So surely and swiftly on, That
we scarcely notice the changes, And how many things are gone:

And forget, while to-day absorbs us, How old mysteries are unsealed;
How the old, old ties are loosened, And the old, old wounds are healed.

And we say that our Life is fleeting Like a story that Time has told;
But we fancy that we--we only Are just what we were of old.

So now and then it is wisdom To gaze, as I do to-day, At a half-
forgotten relic Of a Time that is passed away.

The very look of that Portrait, The Perfume that seems to cling To
those fragile and faded letters, And the Locket, and the Ring,

If they only stirred in my spirit Forgotten pleasure and pain, - Why,

memory is often bitter, And almost always in vain;

But the contrast of bygone hours Comes to rend a veil away, - And I
marvel to see the stranger Who is living in me to-day.

VERSE: THE BRIDE'S DREAM

The stars are gleaming; The maiden sleeps - What is she dreaming?
For see--she weeps. By her side is an Angel With folded wings; While the
Maiden slumbers The Angel sings: He sings of a Bridal, Of Love, of Pain,
Of a heart to be given, - And all in vain; (See, her cheek is flushing, As if
with pain;) He telleth of sorrow, Regrets and fears, And the few vain
pleasures We buy with tears; And the bitter lesson We learn from years.

The stars are gleaming Upon her brow: What is she dreaming So
calmly now? By her side is the Angel With folded wings; She smiles in her
slumber The while he sings. He sings of a Bridal, Of Love divine; Of a
heart to be laid On a sacred shrine; Of a crown of glory, Where seraphs
shine; Of the deep, long rapture The chosen know Who forsake for
Heaven Vain joys below, Who desire no pleasure, And fear no woe.

The Bells are ringing, The sun shines clear, The Choir is singing, The
guests are here. Before the High Altar Behold the Bride; And a mournful
Angel Is by her side. She smiles, all content With her chosen lot, - (Is her
last night's dreaming So soon forgot?) And oh, may the Angel Forsake her
not! For on her small hand There glitters plain The first sad link Of a life-
long chain; - And she needs his guiding Through paths of pain.

VERSE: THE ANGEL'S BIDDING

Not a sound is heard in the Convent; The Vesper Chant is sung, The sick have all been tended, The poor nun's toils are ended Till the Matin bell has rung. All is still, save the Clock, that is ticking So loud in the frosty air, And the soft snow, falling as gently As an answer to a prayer. But an Angel whispers, "Oh, Sister, You must rise from your bed to pray; In the silent, deserted chapel, You must kneel till the dawn of day; For, far on the desolate moorland, So dreary, and bleak, and white, There is one, all alone and helpless, In peril of death to-night.

"No sound on the moorland to guide him, No star in the murky air; And he thinks of his home and his loved ones With the tenderness of despair; He has wandered for hours in the snow-drift, And he strives to stand in vain, And so lies down to dream of his children And never to rise again. Then kneel in the silent chapel Till the dawn of to-morrow's sun, And ask of the Lord you worship For the life of that desolate one; And the smiling eyes of his children Will gladden his heart again, And the grateful tears of God's poor ones Will fall on your soul like rain! -

"Yet, leave him alone to perish, And the grace of your God implore, With all the strength of your spirit, For one who needs it more. Far away, in the gleaming city, Amid perfume, and song, and light, A soul that Jesus has ransomed Is in peril of sin to-night.

"The Tempter is close beside him, And his danger is all forgot, And the far-off voices of childhood Call aloud, but he hears them not; He sayeth no prayer, and his mother - He thinks not of her to-day, And he will not look up to Heaven, And his Angel is turning away.

"Then pray for a soul in peril, A soul for which Jesus died; Ask, by the cross that bore Him, And by her who stood beside; And the Angels of God will thank you, And bend from their thrones of light, To tell you that Heaven rejoices At the deed you have done to-night."

VERSE: SPRING

Hark! the Hours are softly calling, Bidding Spring arise, To listen to the raindrops falling From the cloudy skies, To listen to Earth's weary voices, Louder every day, Bidding her no longer linger On her charmed way; But hasten to her task of beauty Scarcely yet begun; By the first bright day of summer It should all be done. She has yet to loose the fountain From its iron chain; And to make the barren mountain Green and bright again; She must clear the snow that lingers Round the stalks away And let the snowdrop's trembling whiteness See the light of day. She must watch, and warm, and cherish Every blade of green; Till the tender grass appearing From the earth is seen; She must bring the golden crocus From her hidden store; She must spread broad showers of daisies Each day more and more. In each hedgerow she must hasten Cowslips sweet to set; Primroses in rich profusion, With bright dewdrops wet, And under every leaf, in shadow Hide a Violet! Every tree within the forest Must be decked anew And the tender buds of promise Should be peeping through, Folded deep, and almost hidden, Leaf by leaf beside, What will make the Summer's glory, And the Autumn's pride. She must weave the loveliest carpets, Chequered sun and shade, Every wood must have such pathways Laid in every glade; She must hang laburnum branches On each arched bough; - And the white and purple lilac Should be waving now; She must breathe, and cold winds vanish At her breath away; And then load the air around her With the scent of May! Listen then, Oh Spring! nor linger On thy charmed way; Have pity on thy prisoned flowers Wearying for the day. Listen to the raindrops falling From the cloudy skies; Listen to the hours calling Bidding thee arise.

VERSE: EVENING HYMN

The shadows of the evening hours Fall from the darkening sky; Upon the fragrance of the flowers The dews of evening lie: Before Thy throne, O Lord of Heaven, We kneel at close of day; Look on Thy children from on high, And hear us while we pray.

The sorrows of Thy Servants, Lord, Oh, do not Thou despise; But let the incense of our prayers Before Thy mercy rise; The brightness of the coming night Upon the darkness rolls: With hopes of future glory chase The shadows on our souls.

Slowly the rays of daylight fade; So fade within our heart, The hopes in earthly love and joy, That one by one depart: Slowly the bright stars, one by one, Within the Heavens shine; - Give us, Oh, Lord, fresh hopes in Heaven, And trust in things divine.

Let peace, Oh Lord, Thy peace, Oh God, Upon our souls descend; From midnight fears and perils, Thou Our trembling hearts defend; Give us a respite from our toil, Calm and subdue our woes; Through the long day we suffer, Lord, Oh, give us now repose!

VERSE: THE INNER CHAMBER

In the outer Court I was singing, Was singing the whole day long;
From the inner chamber were ringing Echoes repeating my song.

And I sang till it grew immortal; For that very song of mine, When re-
echoed behind the Portal, Was filled with a life divine.

Was the Chamber a silver round Of arches, whose magical art Drew in
coils of musical sound, And cast them back on my heart?

Was there hidden within a lyre Which, as air breathed over its strings,
Filled my song with a soul of fire, And sent back my words with wings?

Was some seraph imprisoned there, Whose voice made my song
complete, And whose lingering, soft despair, Made the echo so faint and
sweet?

Long I trembled and paused--then parted The curtains with heavy
fringe; And, half fearing, yet eager-hearted Turned the door on its golden
hinge.

Now I sing in the court once more, I sing and I weep all day, As I
kneel by the close-shut door, For I know what the echoes say.

Yet I sing not the song of old, Ere I knew whence the echo came, Ere I
opened the door of gold; But the music sounds just the same.

Then take warning, and turn away Do not ask of that hidden thing, Do
not guess what the echoes say, Or the meaning of what I sing.

VERSE: HEARTS

I.

A trinket made like a Heart, dear, Of red gold, bright and fine, Was given to me for a keepsake, Given to me for mine.

And another heart, warm and tender, As true as a heart could be; And every throb that stirred it Was always and all for me.

Sailing over the waters, Watching the far blue land, I dropped my golden heart, dear, Dropped it out of my hand!

It lies in the cold blue waters, Fathoms and fathoms deep, The golden heart which I promised, Promised to prize and keep.

Gazing at Life's bright visions, So false, and fair, and new, I forgot the other heart, dear, Forgot it and lost it too!

I might seek that heart for ever, I might seek and seek in vain; - And for one short, careless hour, I pay with a life of pain.

II.

The Heart?--Yes I wore it As sign and as token Of a love that once gave it, A vow that was spoken; But a love, and a vow, and a heart Can be broken.

The Love?--Life and Death Are crushed into a day, So what wonder that Love Should as soon pass away - What wonder I saw it Fade, fail, and decay.

The Vow?--why what was it, It snapped like a thread: Who cares for the corpse When the spirit is fled? Then I said, "Let the Dead rise And bury its dead,

"While the true, living future Grows pure, wise, and strong" So I cast the gold heart, I had worn for so long, In the Lake, and bound on it A Stone--and a Wrong!

III.

Look, this little golden Heart Was a true-love shrine For a tress of hair;
I held them, Heart and tress, as mine, Like the Love which gave the token
See to-day the Heart is broken!

Broken is the golden heart, Lost the tress of hair; Ah, the shrine is
empty, vacant, Desolate, and bare! So the token should depart, When Love
dies within the heart.

Fast and deep the river floweth, Floweth to the west; I will cast the
golden trinket In its cold dark breast, - Flow, oh river, deep and fast, Over
all the buried past!

VERSE: TWO LOVES

Deep within my heart of hearts, dear, Bound with all its strings, Two Loves are together reigning Both are crowned like Kings; While my life, still uncomplaining, Rests beneath their wings.

So they both will rule my heart, dear, Till it cease to beat; No sway can be deeper, stronger, Truer, more complete; Growing, as it lasts the longer, Sweeter, and more sweet.

One all life and time transfigures, Piercing through and through Meaner things with magic splendour, Old, yet ever new: This,--so strong and yet so tender, - Is . . . my Love for you.

Should it fail,--forgive my doubting In this world of pain, - Yet my other Love would ever Steadfastly remain; And I know that I could never Turn to that in vain.

Though its radiance may be fainter, Yet its task is wide; For it lives to comfort sorrows, Strengthen, calm, and guide, And from Trust and Honour borrows All its peace and pride.

Will you blame my dreaming even If the first were flown? Ah, I would not live without it, It is all your own: And the other--can you doubt it? - Yours, and yours alone.

VERSE: A WOMAN'S LAST WORD

Well--the links are broken, All is past; This farewell, when spoken, Is the last. I have tried and striven All in vain; Such bonds must be riven, Spite of pain, And never, never, never Knit again.

So I tell you plainly, It must be: I shall try, not vainly, To be free; Truer, happier chances Wait me yet, While you, through fresh fancies, Can forget; - And life has nobler uses Than Regret.

All past words retracing, One by one, Does not help effacing What is done. Let it be. Oh, stronger Links can break! Had we dreamed still longer We could wake, - Yet let us part in kindness For Love's sake.

Bitterness and sorrow Will at last, In some bright to-morrow, Heal their past; But future hearts will never Be as true As mine was--is ever, Dear, for you Then must we part, when loving As we do?

VERSE: PAST AND PRESENT

"Linger," I cried, "oh radiant Time! thy power Has nothing more to give; life is complete: Let but the perfect Present, hour by hour, Itself remember and itself repeat.

"And Love,--the future can but mar its splendour, Change can but dim the glory of its youth; Time has no star more faithful or more tender, To crown its constancy or light its truth."

But Time passed on in spite of prayer or pleading, Through storm and peril; but that life might gain A Peace through strife all other peace exceeding, Fresh joy from sorrow, and new hope from pain.

And since Love lived when all save Love was dying, And, passed through fire, grew stronger than before:- Dear, you know why, in double faith relying, I prize the Past much, but the Present more.

VERSE: FOR THE FUTURE

I wonder did you ever count The value of one human fate; Or sum the infinite amount Of one heart's treasures, and the weight Of Life's one venture, and the whole concentrate purpose of a soul.

And if you ever paused to think That all this in your hands I laid Without a fear:- did you not shrink From such a burthen? half afraid, Half wishing that you could divide the risk, or cast it all aside.

While Love has daily perils, such As none foresee and none control; And hearts are strung so that one touch, Careless or rough, may jar the whole, You well might feel afraid to reign with absolute power of joy and pain.

You well might fear--if Love's sole claim Were to be happy: but true Love Takes joy as solace, not as aim, And looks beyond, and looks above; And sometimes through the bitterest strife first learns to live her highest life.

Earth forges joy into a chain Till fettered Love forgets its strength, Its purpose, and its end;--but Pain Restores its heritage at length, And bids Love rise again and be eternal, mighty, pure, and free.

If then your future life should need A strength my Love can only gain Through suffering, or my heart be freed Only by sorrow, from some stain - Then you shall give, and I will take, this Crown of fire for Love's dear sake.

Sept. 8th, 1860.