

# Underwoods

**Robert Louis Stevenson**

## DEDICATION

THERE are men and classes of men that stand above the common herd: the soldier, the sailor and the shepherd not unfrequently; the artist rarely; rarely still, the clergyman; the physician almost as a rule. He is the flower (such as it is) of our civilisation; and when that stage of man is done with, and only remembered to be marvelled at in history, he will be thought to have shared as little as any in the defects of the period, and most notably exhibited the virtues of the race. Generosity he has, such as is possible to those who practise an art, never to those who drive a trade; discretion, tested by a hundred secrets; tact, tried in a thousand embarrassments; and what are more important, Heraclean cheerfulness and courage. So it is that he brings air and cheer into the sickroom, and often enough, though not so often as he wishes, brings healing.

Gratitude is but a lame sentiment; thanks, when they are expressed, are often more embarrassing than welcome; and yet I must set forth mine to a few out of many doctors who have brought me comfort and help: to Dr. Willey of San Francisco, whose kindness to a stranger it must be as grateful to him, as it is touching to me, to remember; to Dr. Karl Ruedi of Davos, the good genius of the English in his frosty mountains; to Dr. Herbert of Paris, whom I knew only for a week, and to Dr. Caissot of Montpellier, whom I knew only for ten days, and who have yet written their names deeply in my memory; to Dr. Brandt of Royat; to Dr. Wakefield of Nice; to Dr. Chepmell, whose visits make it a pleasure to be ill; to Dr. Horace Dobell, so wise in counsel; to Sir Andrew Clark, so unwearied in kindness and to that wise youth, my uncle, Dr. Balfour.

I forget as many as I remember; and I ask both to pardon me, these for silence, those for inadequate speech. But one name I have kept on purpose to the last, because it is a household word with me, and because if I had not received favours from so many hands and in so many quarters of the world, it should have stood upon this page alone: that of my friend Thomas Bodley Scott of Bournemouth. Will he accept this, although shared among so many, for a dedication to himself? and when next my ill-fortune (which has thus its pleasant side) brings him hurrying to me when

he would fain sit down to meat or lie down to rest, will he care to remember that he takes this trouble for one who is not fool enough to be ungrateful?

R. L. S.

# SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH.

## NOTE

THE human conscience has fled of late the troublesome domain of conduct for what I should have supposed to be the less congenial field of art: there she may now be said to rage, and with special severity in all that touches dialect; so that in every novel the letters of the alphabet are tortured, and the reader wearied, to commemorate shades of mispronunciation. Now spelling is an art of great difficulty in my eyes, and I am inclined to lean upon the printer, even in common practice, rather than to venture abroad upon new quests. And the Scots tongue has an orthography of its own, lacking neither "authority nor author." Yet the temptation is great to lend a little guidance to the bewildered Englishman. Some simple phonetic artifice might defend your verses from barbarous mishandling, and yet not injure any vested interest. So it seems at first; but there are rocks ahead. Thus, if I wish the diphthong OU to have its proper value, I may write OOR instead of OUR; many have done so and lived, and the pillars of the universe remained unshaken. But if I did so, and came presently to DOUN, which is the classical Scots spelling of the English DOWN, I should begin to feel uneasy; and if I went on a little farther, and came to a classical Scots word, like STOUR or DOUR or CLOUR, I should know precisely where I was - that is to say, that I was out of sight of land on those high seas of spelling reform in which so many strong swimmers have toiled vainly. To some the situation is exhilarating; as for me, I give one bubbling cry and sink. The compromise at which I have arrived is indefensible, and I have no thought of trying to defend it. As I have stuck for the most part to the proper spelling, I append a table of some common vowel sounds which no one need consult; and just to prove that I belong to my age and have in me the stuff of a reformer, I have used modification marks throughout. Thus I can tell myself, not without pride, that I have added a fresh stumbling-block for English readers, and to a page of print in my native tongue, have lent a new uncouthness. SED

NON NOBIS.

I note again, that among our new dialecticians, the local habitat of every dialect is given to the square mile. I could not emulate this nicety if I desired; for I simply wrote my Scots as well as I was able, not caring if it hailed from Lauderdale or Angus, from the Mearns or Galloway; if I had ever heard a good word, I used it without shame; and when Scots was lacking, or the rhyme jibbed, I was glad (like my betters) to fall back on English. For all that, I own to a friendly feeling for the tongue of Fergusson and of Sir Walter, both Edinburgh men; and I confess that Burns has always sounded in my ear like something partly foreign. And indeed I am from the Lothians myself; it is there I heard the language spoken about my childhood; and it is in the drawling Lothian voice that I repeat it to myself. Let the precisians call my speech that of the Lothians. And if it be not pure, alas! what matters it? The day draws near when this illustrious and malleable tongue shall be quite forgotten; and Burn's Ayrshire, and Dr. Macdonald's Aberdeen-awa', and Scott's brave, metropolitan utterance will be all equally the ghosts of speech. Till then I would love to have my hour as a native Maker, and be read by my own countryfolk in our own dying language: an ambition surely rather of the heart than of the head, so restricted as it is in prospect of endurance, so parochial in bounds of space.

# BOOK I. In English

## I - ENVOY

Go, little book, and wish to all Flowers in the garden, meat in the hall,  
A bin of wine, a spice of wit, A house with lawns enclosing it, A living  
river by the door, A nightingale in the sycamore!

## II - A SONG OF THE ROAD

**The gauger walked with willing foot, And aye the gauger played  
the flute; And what should Master Gauger play But OVER THE  
HILLS AND FAR AWAY?**

Whene'er I buckle on my pack And foot it gaily in the track, O  
pleasant gauger, long since dead, I hear you fluting on ahead.

You go with me the self-same way - The self-same air for me you play;  
For I do think and so do you It is the tune to travel to.

For who would gravely set his face To go to this or t'other place?  
There's nothing under Heav'n so blue That's fairly worth the travelling to.

On every hand the roads begin, And people walk with zeal therein; But  
wheresoe'er the highways tend, Be sure there's nothing at the end.

Then follow you, wherever hie The travelling mountains of the sky. Or  
let the streams in civil mode Direct your choice upon a road;

For one and all, or high or low, Will lead you where you wish to go;  
And one and all go night and day OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY!

Forest of Montargis, 1878

## III - THE CANOE SPEAKS

**On the great streams the ships may go About men's business to  
and fro. But I, the egg-shell pinnace, sleep On crystal waters ankle-**

deep: I, whose diminutive design, Of sweeter cedar, pithier pine, Is fashioned on so frail a mould, A hand may launch, a hand withhold: I, rather, with the leaping trout Wind, among lilies, in and out; I, the unnamed, inviolate, Green, rustic rivers, navigate; My dipping paddle scarcely shakes The berry in the bramble-brakes; Still forth on my green way I wend Beside the cottage garden-end; And by the nested angler fare, And take the lovers unaware. By willow wood and water-wheel Speedily fleets my touching keel; By all retired and shady spots Where prosper dim forget-me-nots; By meadows where at afternoon The growing maidens troop in June To loose their girdles on the grass. Ah! speedier than before the glass The backward toilet goes; and swift As swallows quiver, robe and shift And the rough country stockings lie Around each young divinity. When, following the recondite brook, Sudden upon this scene I look, And light with unfamiliar face On chaste Diana's bathing-place, Loud ring the hills about and all The shallows are abandoned. . . .

#### IV

**It is the season now to go About the country high and low, Among the lilacs hand in hand, And two by two in fairy land.**

The brooding boy, the sighing maid, Wholly fain and half afraid, Now meet along the hazel'd brook To pass and linger, pause and look.

A year ago, and blithely paired, Their rough-and-tumble play they shared; They kissed and quarrelled, laughed and cried, A year ago at Eastertide.

With bursting heart, with fiery face, She strove against him in the race; He unabashed her garter saw, That now would touch her skirts with awe.

Now by the stile ablaze she stops, And his demurer eyes he drops; Now they exchange averted sighs Or stand and marry silent eyes.

And he to her a hero is And sweeter she than primroses; Their common silence dearer far Than nightingale and mavis are.

Now when they sever wedded hands, Joy trembles in their bosom-strands And lovely laughter leaps and falls Upon their lips in madrigals.

## V - THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL

A NAKED HOUSE, A NAKED MOOR, A SHIVERING POOL  
BEFORE THE DOOR, A GARDEN BARE OF FLOWERS AND FRUIT  
AND POPLARS AT THE GARDEN FOOT: SUCH IS THE PLACE  
THAT I LIVE IN, BLEAK WITHOUT AND BARE WITHIN.

Yet shall your ragged moor receive The incomparable pomp of eve,  
And the cold glories of the dawn Behind your shivering trees be drawn;  
And when the wind front place to place Doth the unmoored cloud-galleons  
chase, Your garden gloom and gleam again, With leaping sun, with  
glancing rain. Here shall the wizard moon ascend The heavens, in the  
crimson end Of day's declining splendour; here The army of the stars  
appear. The neighbour hollows dry or wet, Spring shall with tender  
flowers beset; And oft the morning muser see Larks rising from the  
broomy lea, And every fairy wheel and thread Of cobweb dew-  
bediamonded. When daisies go, shall winter time Silver the simple grass  
with rime; Autumnal frosts enchant the pool And make the cart-ruts  
beautiful; And when snow-bright the moor expands, How shall your  
children clap their hands! To make this earth our hermitage, A cheerful and  
a changeful page, God's bright and intricate device Of days and seasons  
doth suffice.

## VI - A VISIT FROM THE SEA

**Far from the loud sea beaches Where he goes fishing and crying,  
Here in the inland garden Why is the sea-gull flying?**

Here are no fish to dive for; Here is the corn and lea; Here are the  
green trees rustling. Hie away home to sea!

Fresh is the river water And quiet among the rushes; This is no home  
for the sea-gull But for the rooks and thrushes.

Pity the bird that has wandered! Pity the sailor ashore! Hurry him  
home to the ocean, Let him come here no more!



High on the sea-cliff ledges The white gulls are trooping and crying,  
Here among the rooks and roses, Why is the sea-gull flying?

## VII - TO A GARDENER

**Friend, in my mountain-side demesne My plain-beholding, rosy,  
green And linnet-haunted garden-ground, Let still the esculents  
abound. Let first the onion flourish there, Rose among roots, the  
maiden-fair, Wine-scented and poetic soul Of the capacious salad bowl.  
Let thyme the mountaineer (to dress The tinier birds) and wading  
cress, The lover of the shallow brook, From all my plots and borders  
look.**

Nor crisp and ruddy radish, nor Pease-cods for the child's pinafore Be  
lacking; nor of salad clan The last and least that ever ran About great  
nature's garden-beds. Nor thence be missed the speary heads Of artichoke;  
nor thence the bean That gathered innocent and green Outsavours the  
belauded pea.

These tend, I prithee; and for me, Thy most long-suffering master,  
bring In April, when the linnets sing And the days lengthen more and more  
At sundown to the garden door. And I, being provided thus. Shall, with  
superb asparagus, A book, a taper, and a cup Of country wine, divinely  
sup.

La Solitude, Hyeres

## VIII - TO MINNIE

**(With a hand-glass)**

A picture-frame for you to fill, A paltry setting for your face, A thing  
that has no worth until You lend it something of your grace

I send (unhappy I that sing Laid by awhile upon the shelf) Because I  
would not send a thing Less charming than you are yourself.

And happier than I, alas! (Dumb thing, I envy its delight) 'Twill wish  
you well, the looking-glass, And look you in the face to-night.

1869.

## IX - TO K. DE M.

**A lover, of the moorland bare And honest country winds, you  
were; The silver-skimming rain you took; And loved the floodings of  
the brook, Dew, frost and mountains, fire and seas, Tumultuary  
silences, Winds that in darkness fided a tune, And the high-riding,  
virgin moon.**

And as the berry, pale and sharp, Springs on some ditch's counterscarp  
In our ungenial, native north - You put your frosted wildings forth, And on  
the heath, afar from man, A strong and bitter virgin ran.

The berry ripened keeps the rude And racy flavour of the wood. And  
you that loved the empty plain All redolent of wind and rain, Around you  
still the curlew sings - The freshness of the weather clings - The maiden  
jewels of the rain Sit in your dabbled locks again.

## X - TO N. V. DE G. S.

The unfathomable sea, and time, and tears, The deeds of heroes and  
the crimes of kings Dispart us; and the river of events Has, for an age of  
years, to east and west More widely borne our cradles. Thou to me Art  
foreign, as when seamen at the dawn Descry a land far off and know not  
which. So I approach uncertain; so I cruise Round thy mysterious islet,  
and behold Surf and great mountains and loud river-bars, And from the  
shore hear inland voices call.

Strange is the seaman's heart; he hopes, he fears; Draws closer and  
sweeps wider from that coast; Last, his rent sail refits, and to the deep His  
shattered prow uncomforted puts back. Yet as he goes he ponders at the  
helm Of that bright island; where he feared to touch, His spirit  
readventures; and for years, Where by his wife he slumbers safe at home,  
Thoughts of that land revisit him; he sees The eternal mountains beckon,  
and awakes Yearning for that far home that might have been.

## XI - TO WILL. H. LOW

**Youth now flees on feathered foot Faint and fainter sounds the  
flute, Rarer songs of gods; and still Somewhere on the sunny hill, Or  
along the winding stream, Through the willows, flits a dream; Flits  
but shows a smiling face, Flees but with so quaint a grace, None can  
choose to stay at home, All must follow, all must roam.**

This is unborn beauty: she Now in air floats high and free, Takes the  
sun and breaks the blue; - Late with stooping pinion flew Raking  
hedgerow trees, and wet Her wing in silver streams, and set Shining foot  
on temple roof: Now again she flies aloof, Coasting mountain clouds and  
kiss't By the evening's amethyst.

In wet wood and miry lane, Still we pant and pound in vain; Still with  
leaden foot we chase Waning pinion, fainting face; Still with gray hair we  
stumble on, Till, behold, the vision gone!

Where hath fleeting beauty led? To the doorway of the dead. Life is  
over, life was gay: We have come the primrose way.

## XII - TO MRS. WILL. H. LOW

**Even in the bluest noonday of July, There could not run the  
smallest breath of wind But all the quarter sounded like a wood; And  
in the chequered silence and above The hum of city cabs that sought  
the Bois, Suburban ashes shivered into song. A patter and a chatter  
and a chirp And a long dying hiss - it was as though Starched old  
brocaded dames through all the house Had trailed a strident skirt, or  
the whole sky Even in a wink had over-brimmed in rain.**

Hark, in these shady parlours, how it talks Of the near Autumn, how  
the smitten ash Trembles and augurs floods! O not too long In these  
inconstant latitudes delay, O not too late from the unbeloved north Trim  
your escape! For soon shall this low roof Resound indeed with rain, soon  
shall your eyes Search the foul garden, search the darkened rooms, Nor

find one jewel but the blazing log.

12 Rue Vernier, Paris

### **XIII - TO H. F. BROWN**

**(Written during a dangerous sickness.)**

I sit and wait a pair of oars On cis-Elysian river-shores. Where the immortal dead have sate, `Tis mine to sit and meditate; To re-ascend life's rivulet, Without remorse, without regret; And sing my ALMA GENETRIX Among the willows of the Styx.

And lo, as my serener soul Did these unhappy shores patrol, And wait with an attentive ear The coming of the gondolier, Your fire-surviving roll I took, Your spirited and happy book; (1) Whereon, despite my frowning fate, It did my soul so recreate That all my fancies fled away On a Venetian holiday.

Now, thanks to your triumphant care, Your pages clear as April air, The sails, the bells, the birds, I know, And the far-off Friulan snow; The land and sea, the sun and shade, And the blue even lamp-inlaid. For this, for these, for all, O friend, For your whole book from end to end - For Paron Piero's muttonham - I your defaulting debtor am.

Perchance, reviving, yet may I To your sea-paven city hie, And in FELZE, some day yet Light at your pipe my cigarette.

(1) LIFE ON THE LAGOONS, by H. F. Brown, originally burned in the fire at Messrs. Kegan Paul, Trench. and Co.'s.

### **XIV - TO ANDREW LANG**

**Dear Andrew, with the brindled hair, Who glory to have thrown in air, High over arm, the trembling reed, By Ale and Kail, by Till and Tweed: An equal craft of band you show The pen to guide, the fly to throw: I count you happy starred; for God, When He with inkpot and with rod Endowed you, bade your fortune lead Forever by the crooks of Tweed, Forever by the woods of song And lands that to the Muse**

belong; Or if in peopled streets, or in The abhorred pedantic  
sanhedrim, It should be yours to wander, still Airs of the morn, airs of  
the hill, The plovery Forest and the seas That break about the  
Hebrides, Should follow over field and plain And find you at the  
window pane; And you again see hill and peel, And the bright springs  
gush at your heel. So went the fiat forth, and so Garrulous like a  
brook you go, With sound of happy mirth and sheen Of daylight -  
whether by the green You fare that moment, or the gray; Whether you  
dwell in March or May; Or whether treat of reels and rods Or of the  
old unhappy gods: Still like a brook your page has shone, And your  
ink sings of Helicon.

**XV - ET TU IN ARCADIA VIXISTI (TO R. A. M.  
S.)**

In ancient tales, O friend, thy spirit dwelt; There, from of old, thy  
childhood passed; and there High expectation, high delights and deeds,  
Thy fluttering heart with hope and terror moved. And thou hast  
heard of yore the Blatant Beast, And Roland's horn, and that war-  
scattering shout Of all-unarmed Achilles, aegis-crowned And perilous  
lands thou sawest, sounding shores And seas and forests drear, island  
and dale And mountain dark. For thou with Tristram rod'st Or  
Bedevere, in farthest Lyonesse.

Thou hadst a booth in Samarcand, whereat Side-looking Magians  
trafficked; thence, by night, An Afreet snatched thee, and with wings  
upbore Beyond the Aral mount; or, hoping gain, Thou, with a jar of money,  
didst embark, For Balsorah, by sea. But chiefly thou In that clear air  
took'st life; in Arcady The haunted, land of song; and by the wells Where  
most the gods frequent. There Chiron old, In the Pelethronian antre, taught  
thee lore: The plants, he taught, and by the shining stars In forests dim to  
steer. There hast thou seen Immortal Pan dance secret in a glade, And,  
dancing, roll his eyes; these, where they fell, Shed glee, and through the  
congregated oaks A flying horror winged; while all the earth To the god's

pregnant footing thrilled within. Or whiles, beside the sobbing stream, he  
breathed, In his clutched pipe unformed and wizard strains Divine yet  
brutal; which the forest heard, And thou, with awe; and far upon the plain  
The unthinking ploughman started and gave ear.

Now things there are that, upon him who sees, A strong vocation lay;  
and strains there are That whoso hears shall hear for evermore. For  
evermore thou hear'st immortal Pan And those melodious godheads, ever  
young And ever quiring, on the mountains old.

What was this earth, child of the gods, to thee? Forth from thy  
dreamland thou, a dreamer, cam'st And in thine ears the olden music rang,  
And in thy mind the doings of the dead, And those heroic ages long forgot.  
To a so fallen earth, alas! too late, Alas! in evil days, thy steps return, To  
list at noon for nightingales, to grow A dweller on the beach till Argo  
come That came long since, a lingerer by the pool Where that desired  
angel bathes no more.

As when the Indian to Dakota comes, Or farthest Idaho, and where he  
dwelt, He with his clan, a humming city finds; Thereon awhile, amazed,  
he stares, and then To right and leftward, like a questing dog, Seeks first  
the ancestral altars, then the hearth Long cold with rains, and where old  
terror lodged, And where the dead. So thee undying Hope, With all her  
pack, hunts screaming through the years: Here, there, thou fleest; but nor  
here nor there The pleasant gods abide, the glory dwells.

That, that was not Apollo, not the god. This was not Venus, though she  
Venus seemed A moment. And though fair yon river move, She, all the  
way, from disenchanted fount To seas unhallowed runs; the gods forsook  
Long since her trembling rushes; from her plains Disconsolate, long since  
adventure fled; And now although the inviting river flows, And every  
poplared cape, and every bend Or willowy islet, win upon thy soul And to  
thy hopeful shallop whisper speed; Yet hope not thou at all; hope is no  
more; And O, long since the golden groves are dead The faery cities  
vanished from the land!

## XVI - TO W. E. HENLEY

The year runs through her phases; rain and sun, Springtime and summer pass; winter succeeds; But one pale season rules the house of death. Cold falls the imprisoned daylight; fell disease By each lean pallet squats, and pain and sleep Toss gaping on the pillows. But O thou! Uprise and take thy pipe. Bid music flow, Strains by good thoughts attended, like the spring The swallows follow over land and sea. Pain sleeps at once; at once, with open eyes, Dozing despair awakes. The shepherd sees His flock come bleating home; the seaman hears Once more the cordage rattle. Airs of home! Youth, love and roses blossom; the gaunt ward Dislimns and disappears, and, opening out, Shows brooks and forests, and the blue beyond Of mountains. Small the pipe; but oh! do thou, Peak-faced and suffering piper, blow therein The dirge of heroes dead; and to these sick, These dying, sound the triumph over death. Behold! each greatly breathes; each tastes a joy Unknown before, in dying; for each knows A hero dies with him - though unfulfilled, Yet conquering truly - and not dies in vain

So is pain cheered, death comforted; the house Of sorrow smiles to listen. Once again - O thou, Orpheus and Heracles, the bard And the deliverer, touch the stops again!

## XVII - HENRY JAMES

Who comes to-night? We ope the doors in vain. Who comes? My bursting walls, can you contain The presences that now together throng Your narrow entry, as with flowers and song, As with the air of life, the breath of talk? Lo, how these fair immaculate women walk Behind their jocund maker; and we see Slighted DE MAUVES, and that far different she, GRESSIE, the trivial sphynx; and to our feast DAISY and BARB and CHANCELLOR (she not least!) With all their silken, all their airy kin, Do like unbidden angels enter in. But he,

**attended by these shining names, Comes (best of all) himself - our  
welcome James.**

## **XVIII - THE MIRROR SPEAKS**

**Where the bells peal far at sea Cunning fingers fashioned me.  
There on palace walls I hung While that Consuelo sung; But I heard,  
though I listened well, Never a note, never a trill, Never a beat of the  
chiming bell. There I hung and looked, and there In my gray face,  
faces fair Shone from under shining hair. Well I saw the poisoning head,  
But the lips moved and nothing said; And when lights were in the hall,  
Silent moved the dancers all.**

So awhile I glowed, and then Fell on dusty days and men; Long I  
slumbered packed in straw, Long I none but dealers saw; Till before my  
silent eye One that sees came passing by.

Now with an outlandish grace, To the sparkling fire I face In the blue  
room at Skerryvore; Where I wait until the door Open, and the Prince of  
Men, Henry James, shall come again.

## **XIX - KATHARINE**

We see you as we see a face That trembles in a forest place Upon the  
mirror of a pool Forever quiet, clear and cool; And in the wayward glass,  
appears To hover between smiles and tears, Elfin and human, airy and true,  
And backed by the reflected blue.

## **XX- TO F. J. S.**

I read, dear friend, in your dear face Your life's tale told with perfect  
grace; The river of your life, I trace Up the sun-chequered, devious bed To  
the far-distant fountain-head.

Not one quick beat of your warm heart, Nor thought that came to you



apart, Pleasure nor pity, love nor pain Nor sorrow, has gone by in vain;

But as some lone, wood-wandering child Brings home with him at evening mild  
The thorns and flowers of all the wild, From your whole life,  
O fair and true Your flowers and thorns you bring with you!

## **XXI - REQUIEM**

**Under the wide and starry sky, Dig the grave and let me lie. Glad  
did I live and gladly die, And I laid me down with a will.**

This be the verse you grave for me: HERE HE LIES WHERE HE  
LONGED TO BE; HOME IS THE SAILOR, HOME FROM SEA, AND  
THE HUNTER HOME FROM THE HILL.

## **XXII - THE CELESTIAL SURGEON**

**If I have faltered more or less In my great task of happiness; If I  
have moved among my race And shown no glorious morning face; If  
beams from happy human eyes Have moved me not; if morning skies,  
Books, and my food, and summer rain Knocked on my sullen heart in  
vain:- Lord, thy most pointed pleasure take And stab my spirit broad  
awake; Or, Lord, if too obdurate I, Choose thou, before that spirit die,  
A piercing pain, a killing sin, And to my dead heart run them in!**

## **XXIII - OUR LADY OF THE SNOWS**

**Out of the sun, out of the blast, Out of the world, alone I passed  
Across the moor and through the wood To where the monastery stood.  
There neither lute nor breathing fife, Nor rumour of the world of life,  
Nor confidences low and dear, Shall strike the meditative ear. Aloof,  
unhelpful, and unkind, The prisoners of the iron mind, Where nothing  
speaks except the hell The unfraternal brothers dwell.**

Poor passionate men, still clothed afresh With agonising folds of flesh;

Whom the clear eyes solicit still To some bold output of the will, While  
fairy Fancy far before And musing Memory-Hold-the-door Now to heroic  
death invite And now uncurtain fresh delight: O, little boots it thus to  
dwell On the remote unneighbour'd hill!

O to be up and doing, O Unfearing and unshamed to go In all the  
uproar and the press About my human business! My undissuaded heart I  
hear Whisper courage in my ear. With voiceless calls, the ancient earth  
Summons me to a daily birth.

Thou, O my love, ye, O my friends - The gist of life, the end of ends -  
To laugh, to love, to live, to die, Ye call me by the ear and eye!

Forth from the casemate, on the plain Where honour has the world to  
gain, Pour forth and bravely do your part, O knights of the unshielded  
heart! Forth and forever forward! - out From prudent turret and redoubt,  
And in the mellay charge amain, To fall but yet to rise again! Captive? ah,  
still, to honour bright, A captive soldier of the right! Or free and fighting,  
good with ill? Unconquering but unconquered still!

And ye, O brethren, what if God, When from Heav'n's top he spies  
abroad, And sees on this tormented stage The noble war of mankind rage:  
What if his vivifying eye, O monks, should pass your corner by? For still  
the Lord is Lord of might; In deeds, in deeds, he takes delight; The plough,  
the spear, the laden barks, The field, the founded city, marks; He marks the  
smiler of the streets, The singer upon garden seats; He sees the climber in  
the rocks: To him, the shepherd folds his flocks. For those he loves that  
underprop With daily virtues Heaven's top, And bear the falling sky with  
ease, Unfrowning caryatides. Those he approves that ply the trade, That  
rock the child, that wed the maid, That with weak virtues, weaker hands,  
Sow gladness on the peopled lands, And still with laughter, song and shout,  
Spin the great wheel of earth about.

But ye? - O ye who linger still Here in your fortress on the hill, With  
placid face, with tranquil breath, The unsought volunteers of death, Our  
cheerful General on high With careless looks may pass you by.

## XXIV

**Not yet, my soul, these friendly fields desert, Where thou with  
grass, and rivers, and the breeze, And the bright face of day, thy  
dalliance hadst; Where to thine ear first sang the enraptured birds;  
Where love and thou that lasting bargain made. The ship rides  
trimmed, and from the eternal shore Thou hearest airy voices; but not  
yet Depart, my soul, not yet awhile depart.**

Freedom is far, rest far. Thou art with life Too closely woven, nerve  
with nerve intertwined; Service still craving service, love for love, Love for  
dear love, still suppliant with tears. Alas, not yet thy human task is done!  
A bond at birth is forged; a debt doth lie Immortal on mortality. It grows -  
By vast rebound it grows, unceasing growth; Gift upon gift, alms upon  
alms, upreared, From man, from God, from nature, till the soul At that so  
huge indulgence stands amazed.

Leave not, my soul, the unfoughten field, nor leave Thy debts  
dishonoured, nor thy place desert Without due service rendered. For thy  
life, Up, spirit, and defend that fort of clay, Thy body, now beleaguered;  
whether soon Or late she fall; whether to-day thy friends Bewail thee dead,  
or, after years, a man Grown old in honour and the friend of peace.  
Contend, my soul, for moments and for hours; Each is with service  
pregnant; each reclaimed Is as a kingdom conquered, where to reign.

As when a captain rallies to the fight His scattered legions, and beats  
ruin back, He, on the field, encamps, well pleased in mind. Yet surely him  
shall fortune overtake, Him smite in turn, headlong his ensigns drive; And  
that dear land, now safe, to-morrow fall. But he, unthinking, in the present  
good Solely delights, and all the camps rejoice.

## XXV

**It is not yours, O mother, to complain, Not, mother, yours to weep,  
Though nevermore your son again Shall to your bosom creep, Though  
nevermore again you watch your baby sleep.**

Though in the greener paths of earth, Mother and child, no more We  
wander; and no more the birth Of me whom once you bore, Seems still the  
brave reward that once it seemed of yore;

Though as all passes, day and night, The seasons and the years, From  
you, O mother, this delight, This also disappears - Some profit yet survives  
of all your pangs and tears.

The child, the seed, the grain of corn, The acorn on the hill, Each for  
some separate end is born In season fit, and still Each must in strength  
arise to work the almighty will.

So from the hearth the children flee, By that almighty hand Austerely  
led; so one by sea Goes forth, and one by land; Nor aught of all man's sons  
escapes from that command

So from the sally each obeys The unseen almighty nod; So till the  
ending all their ways Blindfolded loth have trod: Nor knew their task at all,  
but were the tools of God.

And as the fervent smith of yore Beat out the glowing blade, Nor  
wielded in the front of war The weapons that he made, But in the tower at  
home still plied his ringing trade;

So like a sword the son shall roam On nobler missions sent; And as the  
smith remained at home In peaceful turret pent, So sits the while at home  
the mother well content.

## XXVI - THE SICK CHILD

**CHILD. O Mother, lay your hand on my brow! O mother, mother,  
where am I now? Why is the room so gaunt and great? Why am I  
lying awake so late?**

MOTHER. Fear not at all: the night is still. Nothing is here that means  
you ill - Nothing but lamps the whole town through, And never a child  
awake but you.

CHILD. Mother, mother, speak low in my ear, Some of the things are  
so great and near, Some are so small and far away, I have a fear that I  
cannot say, What have I done, and what do I fear, And why are you crying,  
mother dear?

MOTHER. Out in the city, sounds begin  
Thank the kind God, the carts  
come in! An hour or two more, and God is so kind,  
The day shall be blue  
in the window-blind,  
Then shall my child go sweetly asleep,  
And dream of  
the birds and the hills of sheep.

## XXVII - IN MEMORIAM F. A. S.

**Yet, O stricken heart, remember, O remember  
How of human  
days he lived the better part. April came to bloom and never dim  
December  
Breathed its killing chills upon the head or heart.**

Doomed to know not Winter, only Spring, a being  
Trode the flowery  
April blithely for a while, Took his fill of music, joy of thought and seeing,  
Came and stayed and went, nor ever ceased to smile.

Came and stayed and went, and now when all is finished, You alone  
have crossed the melancholy stream, Yours the pang, but his, O his, the  
undiminished Undecaying gladness, undeparted dream.

All that life contains of torture, toil, and treason, Shame, dishonour,  
death, to him were but a name. Here, a boy, he dwelt through all the  
singing season And ere the day of sorrow departed as he came.

DAVOS, 1881.

## XXVIII - TO MY FATHER

**Peace and her huge invasion to these shores Puts daily home;  
innumerable sails Dawn on the far horizon and draw near;  
Innumerable loves, uncounted hopes To our wild coasts, not darkling  
now, approach: Not now obscure, since thou and thine are there, And  
bright on the lone isle, the foundered reef, The long, resounding  
foreland, Pharos stands.**

These are thy works, O father, these thy crown; Whether on high the  
air be pure, they shine Along the yellowing sunset, and all night Among  
the unnumbered stars of God they shine;

Or whether fogs arise and far and wide The low sea-level drown - each

finds a tongue And all night long the tolling bell resounds: So shine, so toll,  
till night be overpast, Till the stars vanish, till the sun return, And in the  
haven rides the fleet secure.

In the first hour, the seaman in his skiff Moves through the unmoving  
bay, to where the town Its earliest smoke into the air upbreathes And the  
rough hazels climb along the beach. To the tugg'd oar the distant echo  
speaks. The ship lies resting, where by reef and roost Thou and thy lights  
have led her like a child.

This hast thou done, and I - can I be base? I must arise, O father, and  
to port Some lost, complaining seaman pilot home.

## XXIX - IN THE STATES

**With half a heart I wander here As from an age gone by A  
brother - yet though young in years. An elder brother, I.**

You speak another tongue than mine, Though both were English born.  
I towards the night of time decline, You mount into the morn.

Youth shall grow great and strong and free, But age must still decay:  
To-morrow for the States - for me, England and Yesterday.

SAN FRANCISCO.

## XXX - A PORTRAIT

**I am a kind of farthing dip, Unfriendly to the nose and eyes; A  
blue-behinded ape, I skip Upon the trees of Paradise.**

At mankind's feast, I take my place In solemn, sanctimonious state,  
And have the air of saying grace While I defile the dinner plate.

I am "the smiler with the knife," The battener upon garbage, I - Dear  
Heaven, with such a rancid life, Were it not better far to die?

Yet still, about the human pale, I love to scamper, love to race, To  
swing by my irreverent tail All over the most holy place;

And when at length, some golden day, The unfailing sportsman,  
aiming at, Shall bag, me - all the world shall say: THANK GOD, AND

THERE'S AN END OF THAT!

### **XXXI**

**Sing clearer, Muse, or evermore be still, Sing truer or no longer  
sing! No more the voice of melancholy Jacques To wake a weeping  
echo in the hill; But as the boy, the pirate of the spring, From the  
green elm a living linnet takes, One natural verse recapture - then be  
still.**

### **XXXII - A CAMP (1)**

**The bed was made, the room was fit, By punctual eve the stars  
were lit; The air was still, the water ran, No need was there for maid  
or man, When we put up, my ass and I, At God's green caravanserai.**

**(1) From TRAVELS WITH A DONKEY**

### **XXXIII - THE COUNTRY OF THE CAMISARDS**

**(1)**

**We travelled in the print of olden wars, Yet all the land was green,  
And love we found, and peace, Where fire and war had been.**

**They pass and smile, the children of the sword - No more the sword  
they wield; And O, how deep the corn Along the battlefield!**

**(1) From TRAVELS WITH A DONKEY**

### **XXXIV - SKERRYVORE**

**For love of lovely words, and for the sake Of those, my kinsmen  
and my countrymen, Who early and late in the windy ocean toiled To**

plant a star for seamen, where was then The surfy haunt of seals and  
cormorants: I, on the lintel of this cot, inscribe The name of a strong  
tower.

### **XXXV - SKERRYVORE: THE PARALLEL**

Here all is sunny, and when the truant gull Skims the green level  
of the lawn, his wing Dispetals roses; here the house is framed Of  
kneaded brick and the plumed mountain pine, Such clay as artists  
fashion and such wood As the tree-climbing urchin breaks. But there  
Eternal granite hewn from the living isle And dowelled with brute  
iron, rears a tower That from its wet foundation to its crown Of  
glittering glass, stands, in the sweep of winds, Immovable, immortal,  
eminent.

### **XXXVI**

MY HOUSE, I say. But hark to the sunny doves That make my  
roof the arena of their loves, That gyre about the gable all day long  
And fill the chimneys with their murmurous song: OUR HOUSE, they  
say; and MINE, the cat declares And spreads his golden fleece upon  
the chairs; And MINE the dog, and rises stiff with wrath If any alien  
foot profane the path. So too the buck that trimmed my terraces, Our  
whilome gardener, called the garden his; Who now, deposed, surveys  
my plain abode And his late kingdom, only from the road.

### **XXXVII**

My body which my dungeon is, And yet my parks and palaces:-  
Which is so great that there I go All the day long to and fro, And when  
the night begins to fall Throw down my bed and sleep, while all The  
building hums with wakefulness - Even as a child of savages When



**evening takes her on her way, (She having roamed a summer's day  
Along the mountain-sides and scalp) Sleeps in an antre of that alp:-  
Which is so broad and high that there, As in the topless fields of air,  
My fancy soars like to a kite**

And faints in the blue infinite:- Which is so strong, my strongest throes  
And the rough world's besieging blows Not break it, and so weak withal,  
Death ebbs and flows in its loose wall As the green sea in fishers' nets,  
And tops its topmost parapets:- Which is so wholly mine that I Can wield  
its whole artillery, And mine so little, that my soul Dwells in perpetual  
control, And I but think and speak and do As my dead fathers move me  
to:- If this born body of my bones The beggared soul so barely owns,  
What money passed from hand to hand, What creeping custom of the land,  
What deed of author or assign, Can make a house a thing of mine?

### **XXXVIII**

Say not of me that weakly I declined The labours of my sires, and  
fled the sea, The towers we founded and the lamps we lit, To play at some  
with paper like a child. But rather say: IN THE AFTERNOON OF TIME  
A STRENUOUS FAMILY DUSTED FROM ITS HANDS THE SAND  
OF GRANITE, AND BEHOLDING FAR ALONG THE SOUNDING  
COAST ITS PYRAMIDS AND TALL MEMORIALS CATCH THE  
DYING SUN, SMILED WELL CONTENT, AND TO THIS CHILDISH  
TASK AROUND THE FIRE ADDRESSED ITS EVENING HOURS.