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THE LEGEND OF THE GOLDEN
PRAYERS AND OTHER
POEMS.



THE LEGEND OF THE GOLDEN

PRAVERS

AND OTHER POEMS.

BY

C. F. ALEXANDER,

AUTHOR OF "MORAL SONGS," "VERSES FOR HOLY
SEASONS," ETC.



LONDON :

BELL AND DALDY, 186, FLEET STREET.

1859.

280. M. 11.



TO THE EARL OF WICKLOW,

In tender Remembrance and grateful Affection,

these Poems are respectfully

Inscribed.

CECIL FRANCES ALEXANDER.

***Fahan*, 1859.**



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. *Some of the above Poems were published in the Dublin
University Magazine.*



Tales and Legends.

THE LEGEND OF THE GOLDEN PRAYERS.*

I.

THE CASTLE.



N an ancient Lombard castle,
Knightly castle, bravely held,
Was a book with golden letters,
Treasured in the days of old.

* "A legend, I believe of Italian origin, of a lady of rank who vexed herself with the thought that her domestic interfered with her devotional duties. On one occasion when she had been called away from church, she found, on returning, that the pages that she had missed in her Breviary had been re-written in letters of gold, and that an angel had taken her place and prayed in her stead during her absence."—LORD LINDEAY'S *Christian Art*, vol. I. CCIV.

2 *The Legend of the Golden Prayers.*

Hoary missal, silver-claspen,
 Yellow with the touch of age ;
Dimly traced, the matin service
 Moulder'd on the parchment page.

None and compline dark and faded,
 Golden all the vesper prayer.
Hearken to the dainty legend
 How those lines transfigured were.

There's a censer full of odours
 On the sea of glass in Heaven ;
Prayers and cries that God's good angel
 Carries upward, morn and even.

Ah ! perchance some sighs he beareth,
 Voiceless, on the eternal stairs,
Some good work, in love's hot furnace,
 Molten into golden prayers.

From his castle by the forest
 Rides the princely Count to Rome,
And his bride, the fair Beata,
 Keeps her quiet state at home.

Noble, with a gentle presence,
 Moves the lady 'mid her train ;
Knight, and dame, and old retainer
 Fret not at her silken rein.

On the wall the warder paces,
 In the court the pages play,
And the small bell in the chapel
 Duly calls them forth to pray.

From her turret-chamber's lattice
 Looks the fair Beata forth,
Sees the sun-tinged white snow mountains
 Rosy in the distant north ;

Sees below the peasant's cottage,
 In its smoke-wreath blue and grey,
And the sea of the great forest
 Creeping many a mile away.

All the rich Italian summers
 Darkly green it swell'd and roll'd,
Then the Autumn came and mark'd it
 With his brand of red and gold.

4 *The Legend of the Golden Prayers.*

Full of song, and love, and gladness,
 Leaps her heart at every breeze,
Dances with the chequer'd sunlight,
 Laughs along the moving trees.

Yet it hath a downward yearning,
 And a woman's feeling true
For the cares that never touch'd her,
 For the pains she never knew.

Through those homes of painful serfdom,
 Like a charm she comes to move,
Tells them of a nobler freedom,
 Soothes them with a sweeter love.

In the stately castle chapel,
 Morn and eve, the prayers are said,
Where the rounded grey stone arches
 Stand about the mould'ring dead.

Rays of amethyst and purple
 Touch their tombstones on the floor,
And a sunset splendour floods them
 Through the open western door.

Morn and eve the lady Countess
Kneels below the altar-stair,
On her fringed crimson cushion,
With a face as grave and fair

As that lady in the chancel,
Kneeling ever, night and day,
With her parted lips of marble,
Frozen into prayers for aye.

Till, perchance, a stream of music
Sweepeth from the choir on high,
And her face grows bright a minute,
And the light behind her eye

Kindles every carven feature
With a flush of love and glory,
Like the sun in a stain'd window
Touching out some grand old story.

But the bells are ringing vespers,
And Beata is not there,—
Streams the sunlight down the arches,
Missing much that presence fair.

6 *The Legend of the Golden Prayers.*

And the angels on the columns
 Seem to listen for her tread,
With their white and eager faces,
 And their marble wings outspread.

“ Lay aside thy hood, O Countess,
 And thy mantle’s russet fold ;
It were late now in the forest,”
 Saith the waiting-lady old.

“ Take thy coif of pearls and velvet,
 Take thy veil of Flanders’ lace,
All the bells are ringing vespers,
 And ’tis time we were in place.”

“ Go to church, good Lady Bertha,
 Say thy prayers,” Beata said ;

“ But to-night I must say vespers
 By a dying sister’s bed.

“ From the blind old woodman’s cottage
 Came a token that I know ;
Sick to death his maiden lieth,
 On the forest verge below.

“ We shall pray when she, forgotten,
In her grave, grass-cover'd, lies ;
But she must not pass unpitied—
Love is more than sacrifice.

“ We shall pray when she is singing
At the foot of the great throne ;
Should she tell our Lord in Heaven
That we let her die alone ?”

So the lady took her gospel,
And she pinn'd the grey cloth hood,
And pass'd down the winding staircase,
Through the postern, to the wood,

With a half regretful feeling ;
For her heart was lingering there—
On the fringed crimson cushion
Just below the altar-stair.

Now the Priest is robed for service,
And the choristers draw near,
And the bells are ringing—ringing
In the Lady Bertha's ear.

II.

THE DEPARTURE.

BUT the lady treads the forest dark,
Where the twisted path is rough and red,
The huge tree trunks, with their knotted bark,
In and out, stand up on either side ;
Down below, their boughs are thin and wide,
But they mingle darkly overhead ;
Only sometimes where the jealous screen,
Broken, shows a glimpse of Heaven between,
And the light falls in a silver flood,
Grows alittle patch of purest green,
Where, when in the Spring the flowers unfold,
Lieth a long gleam of blue and gold
Hidden in the heart of the old wood.
And a wider space shows on the verge
Of the forest by a bright stream bound,
That keeps fresh a plot of open ground,
Whence the blind old woodman hears the surge
Of the sea of leaves that toss their foam
Of white blossoms round his lowly home,

Whose poor thatch, amid that living mass
Of rich verdure, lieth dark and brown,
Like a lark's nest, russet in the grass
Of a bare field on a breezy down.

In an inner chamber lay the girl,
Dying, as the Autumn day died out.
The low wind, that bore the leaves about,
Every now and then, with sudden whirl,
Through her casement made the curtain flap
With a weary sound upon the wall ;
Moved the linen lying on her lap ;
But she lay and heeded not at all,
With the brown hands folded close together,
And the cheek, all stain'd with toil and weather,
Fading underneath the squalid cap.
Turn, poor sufferer, give one dying look
To the forest over the clear brook,
For the sunset dim in thy low chamber
Touches it with emerald and amber,
Clasps its jewels in a golden setting—
Ah ! she doth not heed, she will not turn,
She but asks the rapture of forgetting,
Life has left her few delights to mourn.

10 *The Legend of the Golden Prayers.*

Painful childhood without sport or laughter,
Cheerless growing up in toil and care,
Wanting sympathy to make life fair ;
Outward dulness, and an inward blight—
Doom of many that we read aright,
 Only in the light of the hereafter.

Now her life ebbs to a new beginning,
Not alone the end of toil and sinning,
Not alone the perfect loss of pain,
But the bursting of a life-long chain,
And a dark film passing from the eyes,
 The soul breaking into that full blaze
That in gleams, and thoughts, and fantasies
 Broke but rarely on her earthly days ;
For the shadow of the forest lay
 On the crush'd heart of the forest maid ;
Glorious sunshine, and the light of day,
 And the blue air of long summers play'd
Ever in the green tops of the trees :—
Down below were depths and mysteries,
 Dim perspectives, and a humid smell
Of decaying leaves and rotted cones ;
 While, far up, the wild bee rung her bell,

And the blossoms nodded on their thrones,
She, poor foundling at another's hearth,
She, the blind man's helper and his slave,
To whose thought the quiet of the grave
Hardly paid the drudgery of earth.

Till the lady found the forlorn creature,
And she told her all the marvellous story,
Divine love, and suffering, and glory,
That to her abused, neglected nature,
Slowly did a gleam of hope impart—
Gleam that never rose to light her feature,
But it burn'd into her blighted heart :
Gave a meaning to each sound that haunted
Arch on arch, the forest's depth of aisle,
Set to music every wind that chanted,
Made, it all a consecrated pile.
For the lady to the chapel stately,
Though the pages whisper'd in her train,
Though the Lady Bertha marvell'd greatly,
Led her once, and oft she came again.
'Neath the crimson window's blazonry,
There she saw the priest and people kneeling,
Trembled at the loud *Laudates* pealing,

Wept along the solemn Litany ;

Mark'd the Psalter's long majestic flow,
With brief pause of sudden *Glorias* riven,
Heard it warbling at the gates of Heaven,

Heard it wailing from the depths below.
But most won the Gospel strain her soul

When its one clear solitary tone,
After music, on the hush'd church stole.

Like a sweet bird that sings on alone
When the storm of harmony is done,
Or that voice the Prophet heard of old
When the tempest died upon the wold.

And a form divine, great, gentle, wise,
Slowly out of that grand picture grew,

Look'd into her soul with human eyes,
To His heart the desolate creature drew—
Tender heart that beat so kind and true

To her wants, and cares, and sympathies.
Never more His presence fair forsakes her,

To her weary solitude He follows,
Meets her in the forest depths and hollows,
By her rough and toil-worn hand He takes her,
Smiles upon her with His heavenly face,
Till the wood is an enchanted place.

When a beam in summer stray'd, perchance,
Through the boughs that darkly intertwine,
Comes to break a slender silver lance
On the brown trunk of some aged pine,
Falls in shivers on the dappled moss
That doth all its hoary roots emboss ;
She, uplooking to that glorious ray,
Saith : " It cometh from the throne of Christ,
Some good saint hath won the holy tryste,
And Heaven's gate is open wide to-day."
Or when o'er the April sky there pass'd
Clouds that made the forest darkness denser,
And the shadows, by the bare trunks cast,
Weirder, and the distant gloom intenser ;
When, as she sat listening, overhead
Came short silence, and a sound of drops,
And a tossing in the great tree tops,
And she saw across the broken arch
Fall the green tufts of the tassell'd larch,
And the white chestnut flowers, row on row,
And the pine-plumes dashing to and fro.
As the thunder cloud pass'd o'er, she said :
" Sure the saints are round about the King,
And I see the waving palms they bring."

14 *The Legend of the Golden Prayers.*

Fair Beata kneeleth at her side,
To her shrunken lip the cordial gives,
Tells her gently that her Saviour lives,
Gently tells her that her Saviour died.
“ Read, O Lady, read those words of sorrow,
Part of rapture, and of anguish part,
Which in presence of that awful morrow
Jesus spake—the dying to the dying,
When the dear one on His bosom lying,
Caught them breathing from His breaking heart.”
And the lady from her gospel olden
Read, while ebb'd the worn-out life away ;
Paused awhile the parting spirit, holden
By the exquisite beauty of the lay.
Ah, did ever poem tell so sweetly
To the saint the rapture of his rest ?
Ah, did requiem ever lull so meetly
Weary sinner on a Saviour's breast ?

But there comes a strange short quiver now,
Creeping darkly up from chin to brow—
Sweet Beata never look'd on death,
And she reads on with unabated breath.

But the blind man, sitting at the door,

Crieth: " Silence, for I hear a shout
In Heaven, and a rustling on the floor,
And the sound of something passing out,
And my hair is lifted with a rush
Of angels' wings. They have pass'd by me. Hush!"

III.

THE ANGEL.

NOW the bells have ceased to ring,
And the priest begins to pray,
And the loaded censers swing,
And the answers die away—
Wandering through those arches grey,
As the choir responsive sing.

Lady Bertha sweepeth in
With a sadly-troubled brow,
Velvet-robed from foot to chin,
And the points of delicate lace

16 *The Legend of the Golden Prayers.*

Laid about her wither'd face.
Serf and soldier all make room,
And the pages kneel in order
In the stately lady's train.
Dim the window's pictured pane,
Dim its deep-stain'd flowery border—
All the chancel lies in gloom ;
Lower down along the floor
Gleams of glorious radiance pour,
Not in rays of green or blue
From some old apostle's vest,
Not with light of warmer hue
Won from martyrs' crimson breast,
But the sunset's own soft gleaming
Through the western entrance streaming
Like a line of silver spears
Levell'd when the leader cheers.

Not a bell is ringing now,
But the priest is praying loud,
And the choir is answering,
And the people murmur low,
And the incense, like a cloud,
Curls along the chapel proud,

As the loaded censers swing.
Who is this that comes to pray?
Is it priest with stole of white,
In a silver amice dight,
Or a chorister gone astray,
With a bended golden head
Kneeling on the cushion red,
Where the lady knelt alway?
Stay, O priest, thy solemn tone;
A strange voice is join'd to thine:
O sweet Lady cut in stone,
Lift for once those marble eyes
From the gilded carven shrine
Where thy silent warrior lies
In the dim-lit chancel air;
Never, 'mid the kneeling throng
Come to share thy vigil long,
Was worshipper so rare.
Ah, fair saint! she looks not back,
And the priest unto a Higher
Than the whole angelic choir
Calleth; so he doth not slack.
But the people pause and stare,
Even the pages dare not wink,

18 *The Legend of the Golden Prayers.*

And the rustling ladies shrink,
And the women low are saying,
Each into a hooded face,
“ ’Tis a blessed angel praying
In our sainted lady’s place.”

But not one of all the host
That beheld and wonder’d most,
After, could the semblance trace
Of that bright angelic creature ;
Though they look’d into his feature,
They but saw a bright face glowing,
Golden tresses like a crown,
And the white wings folded down,
And a silver vesture flowing ;
Like a dream of poet’s weaving,
Or some painter’s fond conceiving
Never to his canvas known ;
Or the sculptor’s warm ideal,
Never wrought into the real,
Cold, unbreathing stone.

But a little maiden saith :—
“ I have seen it on the day

When my tender mother lay
Struggling with the pangs of death ;
Such a creature came to stand
At the bed-side, palm in hand,
And a crown upon his wand,
Beckoning as he heavenward flew ;
Then she slept, and left me too."

" I have seen it," whispering loud,
Saith a mother in the crowd,
" When my christen'd babe did lie
Drest for death, and I sat by
In a trance of grief and pain :—
Cold the forehead without stain,
Dark the dimple and the eye
That was light and love to mine—
Faded every rosy line
Round the sweet mouth stiff and dumb—
He was there, I saw him come ;
Laid aside the coffin-lid
Where my broken flower lay hid,
And he took it to his breast,
In his two arms closely prest,
Upward—upward—through the blue,

20 *The Legend of the Golden Prayers.*

With a carol sweet and wild,
Bore my darling, and I knew
Christ had sent him for my child."

Still the angel saith his prayers,
Reading from Beata's book ;
Every time the pages shook
A most wondrous fragrance took
All the creeping chapel air,
Like the scent in woods below
When the limes are all a-blow.
He is gone—the prayers are over—
By the altar, on the stair,
Folded in its vellum cover,
He hath laid the missal rare ;
Every prayer the angel told
On its page had turn'd to gold.
Sweet Beata found it there
As the early morning gleam'd,
When she came to thank the Lord
For that weary soul redeem'd,
Trembling at the story quaint
Of her angel visitant.
And she saw each changèd word—

The Legend of the Golden Prayers. 21

Then she knew that through Heaven's door
Many a gift the angel bears,
And cast it on the crystal floor,
Where love-deeds are golden prayers.



THE GRAVEYARD IN THE HILLS.



T is the place of tombs," the maiden said ;
 " The graveyard where our fathers' ashes
 rest ;

A rude and lonely cradle have they here—
 God rest their souls." She crossed her brow and
 breast,

Then took her pitcher up, which she had set
 Down on the mountain side, to gaze awhile
 On the inquiring stranger, and pass'd on.
 Over the loose low wall the strange man stepp'd,
 And through grey tombstones bedded half in earth,
 And new-made mounds of green uneven turf,
 Till by the ruin'd chapel's western door
 He paused, reclining on a broad flat stone,
 Which some poor mourner, seeking sepulture
 For his beloved within that holiest place,
 From the old chancel pavement had uptorn.
 Here stay'd the stranger, nor with passive mien,

Nor eyes unlit with rapturous delight,
Look'd on the scene around ; for beautiful
The lonely spot those ancient peasants found,
Wherein to wear away their long repose ;
Perchance because they deem'd it sin and shame
That man should build no altar there to God,
Where earth had rear'd so eloquent a shrine
To praise Him in her rugged loveliness.
Perchance (for those were rude, uneasy times),
The fathers of the hamlet there had set
Their lowly temple, calling on those hills,
On those steep pathless heights, to guard the shrine
From rapine of the fierce marauding Dane.

The bounding river, like a broad blue belt
Encircled half that lone sepulchral mound,
And tall, dark mountains girded it about ;
Cold barren heights, whereon there never slept
The graceful shadow of the greenwood tree ;
And the rude wind that whisper'd there at even,
Had wander'd through no perfume-laden grove ;
But all was pasture bare, or purple heath,
With here and there perchance a darker patch,
Where, in its little plot of labour'd land,

The blue smoke curl'd from some poor peasant's
thatch.

North, east, and south the rugged barrier frown'd,
But in the narrow gorge to westward set,
Like a long gleam of silver light, the sea
Slept in the distance. He had never thought,
Who look'd in quiet on that narrow strip,
It were a portion of those restless waves
That bore of old the venturous Genoese,
When first he laugh'd to scorn the western wind
And bravely baffled, in his generous quest,
Unworthy scorn, and jealousy, and fear.
He had not deem'd that glittering drop a part,
Which like a blue gem slept between the hills,
A part of that immeasurable waste.
Thus man looks fondly on his passing life,
A narrow space within two limits bound,
Forgetting that he sees but one small drop
Of the immense eternity beyond.

Now slanting lay the sunbeams on the turf,
And the white clouds passed over the sun's face
Making strange shadows on the mountain side,
And the sea eagle wheel'd around the height,

And the goat bleated through the calm, still air ;
So still, you heard afar the clanking tread
Of laden horse, as upward from the glen
The mountain road precipitous he trod,
And, passing each poor wayside dwelling, waked
The angry clamour of the watchful cur.

There are who love to look on Nature's face,
But have no heart to worship at her shrine.
Fair in her teeming fruitfulness she is
To them, but dead, a thing without a soul.
They hear no praises in her wild bird's song,
They scent no incense rising from her flowers,
The winds of heaven are voiceless unto them,
The ancient hills are not green altars rear'd
To Him who piled them ; in His open hand
They see no bounty, in His wise decree
No wisdom and no order, nor perceive
In yon blue sky the open gate of heaven.
Such and so ignorant of joy's chief spring
Was he who linger'd by the poor man's grave,
And look'd along the valley ; he was one
On whom high culture, feelings, powers of mind,
Like seed upon the barren rock had been

Scatter'd, and bore no fruit; yet was his mind
Polish'd, and of fine thought susceptible.
The calm of nature, and the wild bird's note,
And the sweet voice of song; these on his ear
Fell like a charm, and soothed his weary soul,
And made his spirit drunk with harmony.
Albeit the utterances that had come
To visit him in childhood, by that stream
And from those mountain gorges, long had ceased
To haunt him with their holy whisperings,
Who had forgotten God; and in his ways
And in his heart set up the idol, self.
Yet it was pleasure thus to sit, and have
All senses moulded into sympathy
With the sweet silence of that summer even.
The radiant sun declining touch'd with gold
The silver sea, when through the tombs there
came
One toward the Solitary, with firm step
That loiter'd yet, and paused anon to gaze
Down the broad vale, to court the merry breeze
That, as he raised his hat in courtesy,
From his high brow blew back the clustering locks,
Where time had laid no hand. They greeted then

As though the meeting were of each foreseen ;
And soon the Pastor by the stranger sate :
For, of the wild rude flock that scatter'd dwelt
Amid those rugged mountain fastnesses,
He was the shepherd and the minister.

Four rude white walls are in the valley set,
Down by the river ; to the eastward turn'd
One pointed window ; on the bare slate roof
Nor tower, nor spire, nor even time-honour'd cross
Points up to heaven ; but one lone bell is hung,
That, when the wind sweeps down the mountain
gorge,
Shakes fitfully above the empty shrine—
That is the temple of his ministry.
And yon low dwelling—where the blue smoke curls
From verdant clumps of newly planted trees,
Where the small garden blushes to the sun,
Where the green turf is trimm'd, and through the
sward
Spring daisies white, and daffodils in spring,
And violets—his pastoral abode.

Blue lakes there are hid far within the wilds

Of the new world ; bright solitary lakes
Where never the keen fisher's net was spread,
Nor the swift oar has ruffled the smooth wave ;
But fair green islands sleep upon the tide,
And graceful trees dip in their drooping boughs.
In depth of the untraversed waste they lie.
The clamorous wild duck shelters there her brood,
The green moss grows luxuriant on the bank,
And the waves rippling for a moment break
The heaven reflected in their azure depths.
Thus was it with the Pastor of the vale ;
Lowly, and placid, and beneficent,
He look'd to heaven from that sequester'd place,
And caught its impress : for the good man's life
Is like a mirror wherein others see,
Though broken oftentimes, many times obscure,
An image of that thing they ought to be.

Nor had he come to dwell a hermit here,
Of the world wearied, by the world contemn'd.
But in the strength and vigour of his days,
Ere yet the crown was wither'd on his brow,
Which in the throng of academic courts
His youth in eager conflict had borne off.

Duty, stern summoner, had hither called ;
He heard and came—not passively alone,
But gladly ; as he deemed it honour high
To labour in the loneliest, lowest spot
Of his great Master's vineyard ; there he brought
The energy, the patience, the strong mind
That in the world had won for him high place,
And honour, and esteem, and gentle cares,
And graceful condescension ; for in him
The intellectual current that flow'd on,
Deep in the soul, was calm as powerful,
And with an even wave bore gently up
The flowers of love, and cheerfulness, and peace,
That lay like lilies floating on the tide.

“ 'Tis marvellous,” the stranger said, “ how
much

We love familiar scenes ; this mountain view
Needs some relief of woodland green to break
The outline of its rugged majesty ;
And yet, methinks, I would not see displaced
One purple heath-flower on the mountain side.
That hollow in the hills were fairer far
Did twisted trunks and spreading branches shade

Its narrow glen ; and that broad river's course,
How lovely were it winding amid banks
Where silver birch should wave, or willow bough
Droop o'er it ; yet I would not see it changed.
But for thy portion of this desert glen
Thou wilt not tell me thou dost wish unchanged
The dwellers in this lonely wilderness ?”

“ The people,” said the Pastor, “ like the place,
Are cultureless and rugged, needing much
Of ornament, and discipline, and care ;
Yet are there features in their character—
Shadows, and lights, and passing gleams, whereon
The eye, as thine on yonder hill to-night,
Delights to linger and should grieve to lose.
But in the hamlets that so thickly stud
This populous valley, many souls there be
Who own me not, but him their shepherd name,
Who for their sins, in that time-honour'd tongue
Of them unknown, unutter'd, pours the prayer
Within those walls that proudly arrogate
(Shame on the coward hearts that yielded it)
The white cross gleaming in the western ray.
Yet even they have wrecks of better things ;

Some pearls there are, yet cast upon the shore
Amid the weeds that error's wave flings up,
Relics of purer times, sweet simple rites,
Which when I meet I cannot choose but love."

"It may be so," his friend rejoined; "for me,
I love not to uplift the graceful veil
That fancy flings round the external things
Of this too real world; I would not delve
Into the bosom of the earth for gold
While on its surface spring so many flowers.
Yon hamlet-dwelling, where the curling smoke
Hangs in blue wreaths around the open door,
How meetly mingle with the mountain hues
The stains on its thatch'd roof; how softly falls
The passing sunbeam on that silver mist;
But thou wilt lift the latch and enter in,
And poverty shall greet thee, discontent,
Disease, and discord, haply lawless guilt,
And crouching superstition, worse than all.
I would not follow thee so far, to pluck
The roses from my garland, to dispel
The charm of distance and of ignorance."

The Pastor answered, "There are things in life

That for the very roughness of their truth
Pierce through the veil of graceful poetry ;
But not for this should charity forbear
To enter in and soothe the rugged part :
He is no mariner who courts the wave
In the calm sunshine, and when tempests lour,
A trembling coward, hides his face and flees.
And Duty wears a halo of her own ;
There is a borrow'd light in her calm eye
That sheds around all rude and common things
A chasten'd charm proud Fancy never knew.
Much that thou fearest, many things perchance
That thou conceivest not, in daily walks
And visits to this people have I met—
Wrongs unredress'd, and sorrows unassuaged,
And patient industry that toil'd in vain,
By want attended. Circumstance and time
And numbers are against them, and have sway'd
Their spirits with an evil influence.
Dwellers are here too many for the soil ;
Their soul is broken ; poverty and need
Have press'd too hardly on them, and have made
Each to his fellow harsh and cold of heart ;
They have lost trust ; suspicion, and deceit,

And crouching guile that fears to be betray'd,
And pride are theirs, and darkest ignorance.
The mean oppress the meaner; and the fires
Of ancient hates and feudal jealousies
Sleep in their hearts, till wrath or injury
Rouse the fierce flames: yet in the darksome web
Are many goodly golden threads entwined.
Love have I met, deep feelings brave and true,
And meek content; and to the will of God,
In want, submission, fortitude in grief,
And natural affection's lively flow,
And charity that round the peasant's hearth
Sprang freely as the heath-flower on his hills,
And piety, and rev'rent duty, whence
The fierceness of their superstitious zeal,
As though even virtue's self had run to seed
And brought forth vice.

“ We are set here below,
Each in his place to work the will of heaven
In faith and quietness; we shall not see
The current of man's evil nature change,
And earth grow new beneath our charmed touch;
But silently, as coming of the spring,

God's purpose slowly worketh on within ;
 And all man's righteous efforts, like the dew,
 The sap in the sweet flowers, the gentle breeze,
 Shall operate conjointly with His will
 The glorious spring-time of a world renew'd."

He finish'd, and the stranger had not framed
 His careless answer, when there came a sound
 Like the low plashing of the summer sea
 Along its pebbly margin, or the stir
 Of whispering winds among the leafless trees.
 Both started and look'd round : " I know it," the
 The Pastor said, " it is that woman's voice :
 Each night she sits upon yon new-made grave ;
 Dost thou not mark it by the western wall,
 Deck'd with rude crosses twined with garlands
 white,—

A southern rite ? She is not of this land—
 That mournful woman. Scarce three days are gone
 Since here I heard the funeral note of woe,
 And saw the train wind up the mountain path.
 Four peasants, for the love of charity,
 (That seed that in the Irish poor man's breast
 Springs so abundant,) bore the coffin bare ;

She and some women following alone.
They told me he was a poor travelling man,
Who had laid down and died in Owen's hut,
Of want or weariness ; they knew not how
Nor whence he came : that woman was his wife."
The stranger said, " Ye must have many such
In this o'er-peopled land, who on its face
Die shelterless, unown'd." The Priest replied,
" Let us go down and seek to comfort her."

She sat upon the grave, and to and fro
Rock'd her slight form, wrapp'd in the mantle red,
That from her brow hung backward to the ground ;
Nor lack'd that face, albeit colourless
And stain'd with want and sorrow, token fair
Of beauty that had lit the dark blue eye,
And hung in smiles around the red curved lip ;
And youth extreme (for soon they knit the bond
That binds the maiden to her peasant lord).

" There is no hope for me," the woman said—
" My hearth is black ; the sunshine from my heart
Has past away ; I have no husband now ;
The lip, whose harshest word than flattery

Of other men was sweeter far, is mute ;
The eye is closed whose coldest look was love.
Vein of my heart, what voice shall comfort me ?
Light of my eyes, who now shall smile on me ?
I am alone ; I have no hope, no help."

" He is the resurrection, and the life,
Who hung thereon for thee," the Pastor spake,
And touch'd the white cross rudely garlanded :
" Daughter, the widow's God will comfort thee."

" Now the Lord's blessing be on thee," she said,
" Whoe'er thou art, for by that word I know
Thee good and kind, who thus hast solaced me.
Yes, He can hear and help ; yet is it hard,
Hard for the poor, the ignorant, the lone,
So to forget their fate, and look beyond
This cold dead clay ; and yet I know He hears
The voice of woman for His mother's sake."

" Then turn thee unto Him," the Pastor said ;
And he sat down, and with the mourner held
Communion in her grief ; and like the flow
Of mingling waters, on her sorrowing soul

Fell from his pitying eye and soothing lip
Compassion, and concern, and sympathy.
He spake of judgments that seem'd dark and stern,
And said they were sweet Mercy's messengers,
To lead the wanderer home. He spake of One
Self-named the Father of the fatherless,
The widow's stay. Then gently her poor soul
From that cold sod, this dim, deserted earth,
He lifted up, and show'd angelic homes,
And holy counsel mingled in his speech ;
And all with such a touching eloquence,
The stranger hearken'd mute, and the still air
Around seem'd perfumed with the good man's words :
And the pale mourner wept, and bow'd her head
Down to the unconscious earth, and own'd them true.
And when he ceased, she bless'd his pious care,
And then, for simple sorrow deems the load
She shares with pitying hearts is lighten'd half,
She lifted up her voice, and told her tale :—

“ Far in the South my father's house was set,
'Mid those wild hills where Glendalough's deep wave
Heaves to the echoes of her seven shrines,
And the clear Avon's ancient waters glide

Around Ierne's ruin'd capital.
And I was nursed amid those relics hoar,
And fed upon the haunted airs that rock'd
That wondrous tower whereof no legends tell.
My knee had bent within our Lady's shrine,
My foot had climb'd to stern St. Kevin's bed,
And my young eye had dizzily look'd down
On the dark waters where his Cathleen sank.
There was no lighter step in all the glen,
No heart more heedless till young Alick came ;
A dying mother's heavy sin to shrive,
From the black North, a weary pilgrimage,
He came to seek our Lady of the Glen,
And there amid those holy hills perform
A station for her soul's eternal weal.
What boots to tell how I was woo'd and won ;
How by the lake where never skylark sings
He pour'd a song far sweeter to mine ear ;
How through the young green woods of Derrybaw
We roam'd together, when the harvest-moon
Was on the waterfall, and Brocklagh's height
And Comaderry heard his whisper'd vows,
And dark Lugduff.

“ Thus did he lure my steps
From kindred, and from friends, and maiden cares,
And from my childhood’s beautiful wild home ;
And still I thought there was no place on earth
So cold and dull but there our mutual love
Should light some sparks of quiet happiness.
I did not err : four pleasant summer years,
Four winters drear we dwelt in bliss together ;
The tears I shed upon my father’s neck
Were dried full soon. My mother’s weeping face
Haunted my dreams no more ; there only dwelt
The memory of their blessings and their prayers
Enshrined within my heart. A pleasant scene
Was the broad vale beneath us, fair to see
From the grey hill-side where our cabin stood ;
The Morne, like glittering serpent, roll’d his length
O’er his rough bed around Strabane’s white wall,
And gently, like a bride, the silver Finn
Came through her meadows, wandering to meet
His bounding wave by Lifford’s silent tower.
And it was beautiful to trace their course,
Standing together by the threshold lone
Of our poor dwelling, when sweet twilight brought
Short respite to our toil ; for all the day

He labour'd at the weary loom within,
Winning scant pittance for my babes and me,
And I beside him, winding the long thread,
Rock'd with my foot the cradle of our boy,
While our young daughter, climbing round my knee,
With pretty prattle chided the long hours,
Till he would sometimes lay his shuttle down
And laugh with us. I was the happiest wife,
The proudest mother then : ah me ! those days
How fast they fled. Our fifth winter came,
And with it a third child ; in evil hour
Of sickness and danger came he forth ;
And it was long ere health or strength return'd
To my wan wither'd cheek and weaken'd frame.
The season too was hard ; the poor man's loom
Stood idle now, or wrung a gain so small,
So trivial, 'twas a mockery to toil.
And yet he labour'd on ; no more at even
I sate, my hand in his : the regular fall
Of the dull shuttle sounded in my ear
Half through the weary night ; and still the sound
Of his dear voice rose o'er it cheerily,
And still he bade me hope, and when his cheek
Faded, he smiled, and told me all was well.

“ In the young spring-time, when the days grew long,

Late labouring and early, we had set
With our own hands the precious roots whereon
Our babes might feed, within a narrow spot,
Rough and uneven, by our mountain home ;
Now their green tops were blacken'd, and the spade
Was ready made to cast our treasure forth.
Stern was the man, and hard of heart, alas !
Of whom we held our dwelling. They whose veins
Hold gentle blood are gentle-hearted ever :
But this poor churl was mean as we ; his heart
No pity had, no patience ; for the rent
Of those four walls he seized our sustenance ;
It was our life, our all ; we had but it ;
I look'd on my poor children, and despair'd,
And he whose steady soul had ever smiled
Through all our trials, making sorrow wear
The hue of his courageous cheerfulness,
Like trees by moonlight whose dark, different dyes
Are changed to silver white—his heart, too, sank
With aspect of our hopeless misery.

“ It was a dark December even ; the sleet

Beat coldly on our narrow window pane ;
We sat and look'd into each other's eyes,
And spake no word of comfort ; bit nor sup
Had broken his fast or mine that weary day.
I rock'd the sickly infant on my knee,
And, as it wail'd, the wan fire's flickering light
Fell on my wasted form : he turn'd away,
And took up his fair boy to make him sport,
But the child look'd up in his father's face
And ásk'd for food. Then was the measure full ;
The brimming cup of aggravated woe
Ran o'er at last. ' God help me, Rose,' he said,
' I cannot see them starve.' Then quick caught up
The basket and the shovel, and was gone.
It was the longest hour in all my life
Till Alick came again ; not empty,
But laden with full store ; for he had been
To our oppressor's field, and from the pit
Had taken a part ; he said it was his own,
But well I knew the specious plea was false,
And even as he spoke the flush of shame,
Of dark dishonest shame, the first that ever
Mine eye had seen on that broad manly brow,
Rose to his face. He stay'd with me that night,

But ere the morning dawn he fled away.
Oh ! but the rich are happy ; they are not
Goaded to guilt by misery extreme,
Nor till her bosom have been wrung like his,
Let Innocence inexorably judge,
'Mid all her gifts, the madness of that hour.

“ They sought him like a felon through the land,
And I had died of penury the while,
But for that lady sweet, compassionate,
(God, when she dieth, make her bed in Heaven !)
Who sought me in my need and succour'd me.
Three weeks he came not, three long weary weeks
I sat alone beside my widow'd hearth,
And started when perchance the hollow wind
Howl'd through the mountain passes, or the dog
Stirr'd in his slumber ; for I surely thought
It was his footfall on the snowy path,
And many times I rose, and would look forth ;
Alas ! the pale moon lighted the cold waste,
And I could almost chide her that she look'd
As bright upon my lonely woe, as when
She lit our loves by Glaneola's brook.
And those two rushing rivers, that had been

The mirrors of our happiness, were there,
In their broad beauty ; only I was changed.
At length he came : his tremulous finger touch'd
The window pane ; the murmur of his voice
Thrill'd to my heart ; I bounded to unlatch
The fragile door, and we were one again.

“ That very night across the heather height,
Two exiled pilgrims, we fled forth together,
He bearing our two children, I the babe ;
Houseless and poor and desolate we went,
Hoping alone in God and in each other.
Long time we wander'd ; six times the broad moon
Won her full height, and six times waned again,
And still we sat beside another's fire.
All day we roam'd, and nightly made our bed
Where we found shelter : hardship, hunger, cold,
Such as ye know not, were our portion then,
And we had grief : the sickly babe died first ;
Oh ! it was hard to lay the burden down .
That I had ever borne upon my breast,
In the cold clay. They told me the good God
Had taken home the bark that was too frail
To breast the storm ; and my fair other boy

Was there to comfort me ; but we love most
That which has cost us most of toil and pain,
And I wept wildly for my white-hair'd boy.
Blind was I then, and of my future fate
Most ignorant, who, when my foot first touch'd
The waters of affliction, stood and moan'd,
Nor saw how high the billows rose around
To whelm my soul ; and yet I might have known,
Because there hung a cloud o'er those bright eyes
That were my sun and star ; even from the night
When first he stain'd the honest purity
Of his good name with that dishonest deed.
The memory of that one evil act
Clung to his soul through all our sufferings,
Like weight on some poor drowning mariner
That drags him down below ; and he would say,
' I might have waited : God then in his love
Had seen our honest truth and sent relief.
I was too hasty ; in my grief I sinn'd.'
And day by day he wither'd from my side,
And yet I would not see ; like frighten'd child
That, in his nightly chamber laid alone,
Shuts up his eyes, and deems there cannot be
A danger that he doth not look upon.

“ But wherefore linger ? He was failing l
A kinsman dwelling in yon distant glen
Took the two children while we wended hithe
For we had heard there was a holy well
By this old chapel, in whose sainted wave
There dwelt a healing virtue for the frame
Decay had smitten ; to this ruin'd shrine
After long travel we drew nigh ; and here
He found indeed what he had sought—relief,
A quiet bed, and for his weary frame
A peaceful lying-down. Poor sufferer,
These healing waters wrought for thee no cure
Whose sickness was a broken heart ; thy bed
Is made with the cold earth-worm for a mate.
How shall I turn and go away without thee ?
And when thy children meet me by the way,
And ask me for their father, and look up
And lisp thy name, what shall I answer them ?”

Then ceased the mourner's tale ; but not with it
Her voice of lamentation ; that burst forth
In that deep cry most wild, most musical,
That speaks of hopeless anguish for the dead.
It mingled with the murmur of the tide,

It mingled with the merry mountain breeze,
And down the valley fell that single voice
With a strange power, as when the moaning wind
Sighs through the forest, and men think they hear
The mingling of a human voice, and start,
And pause to listen.

“ Said I not aright,”
The Pastor of the stranger then inquired,
“ Amid the strife of powers untrain'd within
And hard external pressure, which the mind
Lacks principle and courage to withstand,
That beautiful and holy things there are?”
He spoke, and to the mourner pointed out,
Down the green glen, his homely hermitage,
And bade her claim the hospitable aid
Which never the poor tired traveller
Had sought in vain, or wanderer wanted, there.



THE LEGEND OF STUMPIE'S BRAE.*



HEARD ye no' tell of the Stumpie's Brae?

Sit down, sit down, young friend,

I'll make your flesh to creep to-day,

And your hair to stan' on end.

Young man, it's hard to strive wi' sin,

And the hardest strife of a',

Is where the greed o' gain creeps in,

And drives God's grace awa'.

Oh, it's quick to do, but it's lang to rue,

When the punishment comes at last,

And we would give the world to undo

The deed that's done and past.

* This ballad embodies an actual legend attached to a lonely spot on the border of the county of Donegal. The *language* of the ballad is the peculiar semi-Scottish dialect spoken in the north of Ireland.

Over yon strip of meadow land,
And over the burnie bright,
Dinna ye mark the fir-trees stand,
Around yon gable white?

I mind it weel, in my younger days
The story yet was rife :
There dwelt within that lonely place
A farmer man and his wife.

They sat together, all alone,
One blessed Autumn night,
When the trees without, and hedge, and stone,
Were white in the sweet moonlight.

The boys and girls were gone down all
A wee to the blacksmith's wake ;
There pass'd ane on by the window small,
And guv the door a shake.

The man he up and open'd the door—
When he had spoken a bit,
A pedlar man stepp'd into the floor,
Down he tumbled the pack he bore,
Right heavy pack was it.

50 *The Legend of Stumpie's Brae.*

“ Gude save us a’,” says the wife, wi’ a smile
 “ But yours is a thrivin’ trade.”—
“ Ay, ay, I’ve wander’d mony a mile,
 And plenty have I made.”

The man sat on by the dull fire flame,
 When the pedlar went to rest ;
Close to his ear the Devil came,
 And slipp’d intil his breast.

He look’d at his wife by the dim fire light,
 And she was as bad as he—
“ Could we no’ murder thon man the night ?
 “ Ay could we, ready,” quo’ she.

He took the pickaxe without a word,
 Whence it stood, ahint the door ;
As he pass’d in, the sleeper stirr’d,
 That never waken’d more.

“ He’s dead !” says the auld man, coming back
 “ What o’ the corp, my dear ?”
“ We’ll bury him snug in his ain bit pack,
Never ye mind for the loss of the sack,
 I’ve ta’en out a’ the gear.”

“ The pack’s owre short by twa gude span,
What ’ll we do ? ” quo’ he—

“ Ou, you’re a doited, unthoughtfu’ man,
We’ll cut him off at the knee.”

They shorten’d the corp, and they pack’d him tight,
Wi’ his legs in a pickle hay ;
Over the burn, in the sweet moonlight,
They carried him till this brae.

They shovell’d a hole right speedily,
They laid him in on his back—

“ A right pair are ye,” quo’ the PEDLAR, quo’ he,
Sitting bolt upright in the pack.

“ Ye think ye’ve laid me snugly here,
And none shall know my station ;
But I’ll hant ye far, and I’ll hant ye near,
Father and son, wi’ terror and fear,
To the nineteenth generation.”

The twa were sittin’ the vera next night,
When the dog began to cower,
And they knew, by the pale blue fire light,
That the Evil One had power.

52 *The Legend of Stumpie's Brae.*

It had stricken nine, just nine o' the clock—
The hour when the man lay dead ;
There came to the outer door a knock,
And a heavy, heavy tread.

The old man's head swam round and round,
The woman's blood 'gan freeze,
For it was not like a natural sound,
But like some one stumping o'er the ground
On the banes of his twa bare knees.

And through the door, like a sough of air,
And stump, stump, round the twa,
Wi' his bloody head, and his knee banes bare—
They'd maist ha'e died of awe !

The wife's black locks ere morn grew white,
They say, as the mountain snaws ;
The man was as straight as a staff that night,
But he stoop'd when the morning rose.

Still, year and day, as the clock struck NINE,
The hour when they did the sin,
The wee bit dog began to whine,
And the ghaist came clattering in.

Ae night there was a fearful flood—
Three days the skies had pour'd ;
And white wi' foam, and black wi' mud,
The burn in fury roar'd.

Quo' she—" Gude man, ye need na turn
Sae pale in the dim fire light ;
The Stumpie canna cross the burn,
He'll no' be here the night.

" For it's o'er the bank, and it's o'er the linn,
And it's up to the meadow ridge—"
" Ay," quo' the Stumpie hirpling in,
And he gied the wife a slap on the chin,
" But *I cam' round by the bridge!*"*

And stump, stump, stump, to his plays again,
And o'er the stools and chairs ;
Ye'd surely hae thought ten women and men
Were dancing there in pairs.

They sold their gear, and over the sea
To a foreign land they went,

* So in the legend.

54 *The Legend of Stumpie's Brae.*

Over the sea—but wha can flee
His appointed punishment ?

The ship swam over the water clear,
Wi' the help o' the eastern breeze ;
But the vera first sound in guilty fear,
O'er the wide, smooth deck, that fell on their ear
Was the tapping o' them twa knees.

In the woods of wild America
Their weary feet they set ;
But Stumpie was there the first, they say,
And he haunted them on to their dying day,
And he follows their children yet.

I haud ye, never the voice of blood
Call'd from the earth in vain ;
And never has crime won worldly good,
But it brought its after-pain.

This is the story o' Stumpie's Brae,
And the murderers' fearfu' fate :
Young man, your face is turn'd that way,
Ye'll be ganging the night that gate.

Ye'll ken it weel, through the few fir trees,
The house where they wont to dwell ;
Gin ye meet ane there, as daylight flees,
Stumping about on the banes of his knees,
It 'll jist be Stumpie himsel'.



THE CHILD OF THE RHINE.

I.



Hedwelleth where the waters shine
 Of that broad stream, the German's
 hoast,
 Where, night and day, the lordly Rhine
 Goes singing by his castled coast.

Though on his ear the murmurs fall,
 He cannot see the blue waves glide
 By Ehrenbreitstein's storied wall
 To meet the Mosel's silver tide.

On garden green and vine-clad hill,
 Round Coblentz fair the sunlight streams,
 Through all his frame he feels the thrill
 Of warmth and gladness in its beams.

But not for him the shadows fade,
 Or deepen on the mountain grey ;
 He never watch'd the ripple, made
 By the light oars, sink slow away.

All real things of shape and size
In his child's spirit have no place,
For never on his sealèd eyes
Hath outward object left a trace.

Still Nature wears a form and hue
By his own thoughtful soul imprint ;
He walks with things he never knew,
In darkness, yet the child is blest.

The quiet soul, so gentle, frames
No wish for that great good, unknown ;
He treasures up men's words and names,
And gives them colours of his own.

He laugheth loud in childish glee,
His mother singeth some old strain,
He creepeth softly to her knee,
And makes her sing it o'er again.

He feeleth with his little hand
O'er all the face he loves so well,
And, listening, doth not understand
The tale he wins her still to tell.

'Tis sad to watch those eyes uplift
Their fair lids, fringed with golden hair,
Yet know that God's most precious gift,
Bright power of vision, dwells not there.

But underneath God's glorious heaven
I ween there is a sadder sight—
It is when God's good gifts are given
And men misuse the precious right.

The earth is green, the Rhine is blue,
Yet here are eyes that stream or flower
Hath never charm'd ; and God is true,
Yet here are hearts that mock His power.

The blind of soul, the blind of sense,
They dwell beneath the same roof-tree,
She darker of intelligence
Than, in his natural blindness, he.

For dull and dim, as mists that fold
The Drachenfel's broad summit bare,
To her, bright Truth, the strong and bold,
Doth veils, and clouds, and shadows wear.

Poor earth's inventions—tales and dreams—

 These to her blind child she has taught,
And he, cut off from sights and gleams
 And pictured forms, nor knowing aught

Of images that minister

 Unto her wandering fancy's need,
Perchance doth not so widely err,
 And holds in thought a purer creed.

She leads him to the old church pile,

 What time they sing the solemn mass—
He stands within the pillar'd aisle,
 He feels the glowing incense pass ;

He sees no gorgeous windows dim,

 No vested priests around him bend ;
He only hears the chanted hymn,
 The prayer he cannot comprehend.

To " Father, Spirit, Son," they sung

 Those strains that, lingering, swell and faint ;
He cannot tell that foreign tongue,
 He kneeleth to his mother's saint.

Seldom he speaks to Him who erst
Himself to mortal needs drew near,
Nor sent the little children first,
To servant loved, or mother dear.

Yet leave the child his simple thought
Of one great Being throned above,
His sense of power that bows to nought,
His faith in all-pervading love.

Leave him his own dream-haunted night,
His meek content, his thoughtless bliss,
Nor tell him that strange power of sight,
Unknown, unsought, may yet be his.

Go, tread to-day the rose in dust,
To-morrow brings a flower as fair,
But he that tramples childhood's trust
Shall find no second blossom there.

II.

The vines are bending to the ground
Beneath their summer burden bright,
Through all the Rhine-land goes a sound,
The murmur of a strange delight.

Full fifty years the holy vest
Has lain in sacred mystery seal'd,—
Come forth, ye troubled, and find rest,
Come forth, ye sickly, and be heal'd.

The mother whispers of strange things,
And wonders wrought for faithful men ;
In the child's soul a dream upsprings
Of the bright world beyond his ken.

A voice from old imperial Trèves,
Responsive thousands catch the cry ;
Long pilgrim hosts, like swelling waves,
Pour on to that cathedral high.

From many a vine-wreath'd hut and hall
Where Danube's troubled waters ride,
From shores that hear the murmuring fall
Of that fair sea without a tide ;

From citron-groves where Spaniards roam,
That weary pilgrimage they take,
And Gaul's gay peasants leave their home,
And Erin's island echoes wake.

The church is crowded, choir and nave ;
From altar screen to open door
Fresh thousands still a blessing crave,
Fresh thousands thronging still adore.

Within the Lady Chapel fair,
Aloft the awful relic stands,
The grey old Bishop sitteth there,
And blesseth all with lifted hands.

Round the High Altar slow they came
To kiss that honour'd vest divine :
Where was His honour to whose name
Men rear'd of old that costly shrine ?

Round the High Altar, two by two,
They pass'd without a word or strain,
Then, turning round in order due,
They pass'd it, silent, back again.

Yet here the sick man came for health,
And here the sinner came for aid,
And here the rich man brought his wealth,
And here the earnest-minded pray'd.

Not unto Him of old who wore
Such humble garb in Jewish land ;
The prayers, the vows, the tears they pour
To mouldering work of human hand.

III.

She leaves behind the murmuring waves,
Fair Coblentz, round thy pleasant homes ;
With lingering step to lordly Trèves
The mother and her blind child comes.

His little hands across his breast
The child has folded piously,
And ever cries : “ O holy vest,
O vest most holy, pity me !”

A sunbeam, breaking through the trees,
Falls on his cheek so warm and bright,
The poor child almost thinks he sees
And knows the ecstasy of light.

“ O mother, mother, linger not !”
He strains her weary hand and cries ;
“ I die to kneel on that blest spot,
And learn to know thee with mine eyes.

“ I yearn to see this pleasant heat,
To watch old father Rhine ride by,
I hear the trampling of his feet,
I know his hoarse and hollow cry.

“ How could he bear our little boat,
I felt no arms encircling me?
O holy coat, most holy coat,
Make me to know what others see!”

They wander on by hill and bower,
He hears no voices whispering round,
One strange bright hope absorbs all power
Of grateful scent, or pleasant sound.

And still across his little breast
His hands are folded ; piteously
He crieth out: “ O holy vest,
Have mercy on my misery !”

There's many an angel carved in white
On the tall pillars' chapters,
And blue-eyed boys as fair as light
Are singing with the choristers.

But not one form of sculptured grace,
Nor breathing boy in that fair choir,
Is beautiful as he, whose face
Pales with its own intense desire.

She leads him round the altar high ;
With trembling limb, with quivering throat,
And up-raised face and straining eye,
He kneeleth to the holy coat.

IV.

The Rhine runs gladly, as before,
By castled crag and vine-wreath'd cot,
The child beside his low-roof'd door
Sits once again, and sees him not.

The stream is broad and bright as ever,
But the child's heart is glad no more ;
His short sweet laughter minglenth never,
Now with the water's sullen roar.

The sleep that was so full of dreams,
His wakeful, joyous, tranquil night

Is clouded over, and it seems
No more its fancied forms are bright.

One glorious gleam flash'd through his brain,
Wherein each other light wax'd dim ;
'Tis vanish'd now, but ne'er again
His own old stars shall shine for him.

He loved so much in forest bowers
The rustle of the soft green leaves ;
He loved to listen when long hours
The home-birds twitter'd in the eaves.

The music of the murmuring wave,
The wild-bee's hum, the whispering rain,
Tones that yet dearer transport gave,
Sing as of old—but sing in vain.

Then bitterer feelings wring the breast—
Whom should he love, or whom believe,
If all who said they loved caress'd
His weakness only to deceive ?

The torturing dread—the chilling doubt—
The hollow hopelessness—begin,

Worse, worse than changeless night without,
The gathering vacancy within.*

And that fond faith of childish years,
That meekly trusted and obey'd—
That held no doubts, that had no fears,
How is its simpleness betray'd!

O mother, was it meet to guide
The heart thou couldst have taught to cling
Close to His own Redeemer's side,
And leave it with that powerless thing?

And when thy false words urged him on,
And lured him down the devious track,
Was there no deeper, dearer tone
To call the cheated wanderer back?

Where was her warning, sweet and stern,
The mother of his second birth?
Ah! she has stain'd her own pure urn
With the polluted streams of earth.

* I may be allowed to record with mournful pleasure that this verse was added by the late Professor W. Archer Butler, upon reading this poem in manuscript.

In many an old religious land
Her once true notes are false and vain,
And she has forged with her own hand,
And rivets still her children's chain.

Dear church, along our English dells,
Still pure as in thine earliest years,
Thy sweet voice, echoed by church-bells,
Comes floating down to peasant ears !

Still round thy shrines thy poor bereaved
In Christ's own presence meet to pray,
And, none rejected, none deceived,
Bear all His choicest gifts away.

Oh, if one, wandering from thy fold,
Hath in *her* pictured paths found pleasure,
Who singeth the good strains of old,
But sings them to another measure ;

If he have touch'd enchanted ground,
And love to roam and linger there,
Oh, lure him back with the sweet sound
Of thy pure creed and simple prayer ;

And with the spirit, stern and strong,
That fill'd thy martyrs' souls undaunted,
And with the sympathies that throng
Round thine old churches, angel-haunted !

And if thy pleas in vain be said,
Then show the doubt, the grief, the gloom,
The soul untrain'd, the heart misled—
The blind child's solitary doom.





The Valley of the Shadow of Death.

EUTHANASIA.

I.

THE PARTING.



GO—the night-lamp flickers
In crystal socket deep,
As throbbing to the murmurs
Of thy short, restless sleep.

On thy pale brow the shadows
Of the closed curtains fall,
I watch the long dark figures
They cast on the cold wall.

And I can see thee heaving
The long white counterpane,—
When shall I keep the night-watch
By thy sick couch again?

I go—the cold bright morning
Breaks up in the grey sky,
On wood, and stream, and valley,
And those green hills that lie

All to the blue sea looking ;
And through the breaking dark
I hear the pigeon cooing,
The first song of the lark.

O time, O youth, O gladness,
How swiftly have ye sped
Since we have watched the sunsets
From yon green mountain head !

Where is the step that bounded
So lightly from the ground,
The ring of that sweet laughter
That hath no fellow sound ;

The large dark eye, all radiant
With glad and glorious thought ?
O suffering, O sorrow,
How surely have ye wrought !

The Parting.

Now wasted form, and languor,
And lowly-breathed word,
And pain, and unrest weary,
And pale lips roughly stirr'd.

Hush, false and vain repining,
Nor drop hot tears of mine !
Doth man not cut the diamond
That it may brighter shine ?

Do we not cast the fine gold
Into the cleansing fire ?
Is not the child most cherish'd
Still chasten'd of its sire ?

And saints wear crowns of glory
Through Heaven's eternal years,
With brightest rays around them—
All framed from earthly tears.

Hush ! there are unseen watchers
Round the blest sufferer now,
And angel-hands, all gently,
Smooth down her pale high brow !

>
The Parting.

73

Hush ! He is here in presence
Who knew all pain and care,
Nor ever layeth on His own
A cross they cannot bear !

Hush ! for a dear hand beckons
Her soul to the bright shore,
Like Summer hasting after
The young Spring gone before !

I go—O parting sorrow,
O anguish of vain tears,
Why will ye mock me—bringing
The shades of our past years ?

Twin spirit to my spirit,
When thou hast left my side
What other love shall comfort ?
What other voice shall guide ?

Hush ! in our high communion
There is no broken link,
And lights gleam through the shadows
On the dark river's brink !


The Parting.

One hope, one faith, one heaven ;
 These years how fast they speed ;
There is no endless parting,
 No, *never*, in our creed.



II.

THE LAST COMMUNION.


MAY not chafe thy weary temple,
 I may not kiss thy dear pale face ;
 But spirit answereth to spirit,
 And loving thought o'erleapeth space.

And thus within thy far sick chamber
 Mine heart communion holds with thine,
 I see the kneeling kindred gather,
 The broken bread, the hallow'd wine.

Hush, heaving sigh ! Hush, murmur'd whisper !
 Swell forth, ye words of love and dread !
 " Take, eat, His life for you was given ;
 Drink ye ; His blood for you was shed ! "

Dim grows thy dark eye, kneeling mother,
 There's anguish on thy bended brow ;
 Ay, weep, there come no second flowers
 When Autumn strips the laden bough.

O broken spirit, meek-eyed creature,
Well may thy brimming eyes run o'er,
Since yet a darker drop may mingle
Within the cup so full before !

And thou, too, honour'd one and cherish'd,
Most happy wife and mother blest,
There comes a cloud o'er thy pure heaven,
Which not the brightness of the rest,

Which not even his dear love who kneeleth
Close at thy side can banish quite ;
For stars that have an equal lustre
Yet shine not with each other's light.

Come, gentle nurse, come, fair young sisters,
Draw closer still the narrowing chain,
Another golden link must sever,
Ye cannot commune thus again.

Once more, once more—death's deepening shadow
Broods o'er our little field of light,
Ere yet the heavy cloud is scatter'd
That wrapp'd our fairest from our sight.

Whom, as we linger by thy pillow,
Dear saint, in look, in smile, in tone,
We trace again, like skies reflecting
The sunlight when the sun is gone.

Still swells the Eucharistic measure,
The feast of love and life is o'er,
The angels joining, and archangels,
And saints who rest and sin no more.


Ah ! not at Christ's own altar kneeling,
Our hearts should thrill, our eyes grow dim,
As though we had not known His presence,
And were not ever one in Him.

The dead—they are the truly living,
They live to God, to love, to us ;
Why should the prescience of brief parting
Sadden the Christian spirit thus ?

Nay, gently lay her on His bosom,—
Nay, gladly give her to His care,
Lest we forget in our own sorrow
How bright the crown His ransom'd wear.

III.

THE CHILD IN THE SICK ROOM.


 HE glorious sun sinks slowly o'er
 The purple ocean broad and even,
 While, pale and pure, one little star
 Rides up the eastern heaven.

The sunset hues of coming death
 Have touch'd her cheek, and lit her eye ;
 The mother hath borne in her babe
 To greet her ere she die.

With solemn look, and passive arms,
 That stretch not now for love's embrace,
 He looketh long and earnestly
 On that sweet, holy face ;

As if the soul, untainted yet,
 And fresh from the Redeemer's touch,
 New-wash'd in His own blood, who loves
 His little ones so much ;

With that bright spirit purified,
In suffering faithful to the end,
Held some mysterious communing
We could not comprehend.

As if to him unveil'd had been
Angelic forms and mysteries,
And awfully the parting soul
Look'd through her bright dark eyes.

Gaze on, the sunlight lingers yet—
The brow is there, with genius fraught,
The parted lips that pour'd so well
The music of her thought.

The brow all calm, the face all fair,
The eye all brilliant as of yore,
Each line by beauty so refined,
It could refine no more.

Gaze on—and Oh, as Eastern skies
Glow when the western heaven is bright,
Perchance thy soul may catch a gleam
From yonder fading light!

The Child in the Sick Room.

Because her lips for thee have vow'd,
Have pray'd for thee in hours of pain,
It cannot be, thou precious child,
Those prayers shall prove in vain.

But they will bring a blessing back,
As oftimes 'neath the summer moon
The dewy mists that heavenward rise
Fall down in showers at noon.

And thou wilt be a holy saint,
Christ's soldier true in fights to come,
Wilt bear His cross as patiently,
And go as gladly home.

Gaze on, gaze on, some scenes there are
Too fair to ruffle with a sigh,
So let us learn of childish awe,
And wait in silence by!

IV.

THE ANNIVERSARY.—TO E. G. H.



KNOW thou art awake to-night—

Thy tears are flowing fast,

Keeping our Saint's nativity,

And dreaming of the past.

Thou weepest for the calm sweet smile

That ne'er again can charm,

For the dear head that, hour by hour,

Droop'd meekly on thine arm ;

For the young lip where wisdom hung—

The honey on the rose ;

For the high spirit calm'd and bow'd—

Faith's beautiful repose.

Ah ! which of us that watch'd that tide

Of ebbing life depart,

Can hear its echoing surge to-night,

Nor tears unbidden start ?

But tears so blended as they rise,
Of mingled joy and woe ;
Like sourceless streams, we cannot tell
What fountain bids them flow.

That gush of sorrow—could she rest
Again upon thy side,
Uplooking with those patient eyes,
Perchance she would not chide.

But couldst thou see her whom thy care
So tended, worn and faint,
Clothed with the beauty of the blest,
The glory of the Saint—

That beauty of the spirit-land
Beyond our brightest dream—
Sure in thy soul the tide of joy
Would drown that darker stream.

And varying thought in gentle strife
Would all thy soul employ,
Of holy human tenderness
With earnest Christian joy.

So keep we watch to-night, my love,
And ever, at His feet
Who bade His angel at this hour
Steal on her slumber sweet ;

And suffer'd not his ruffling wing
To break upon her ear,
But will'd that she should never know
Death's agony and fear.

O Christ, our stay, our strength, as hers,
Make, too, our dying bed,
'Tis but in presence of Thy love
We dare recal the dead !



V.

THE PLACE OF REMEMBRANCE.

WHERE wouldst thou think of her? Where
 the young flowers
 Spring through the turf where so often
 she lay,

Wearily watching the long summer hours,
 Last of her lifetime, fleet slowly away?

There by the garden-wall, cover'd with roses,
 Where, in the shelter, she linger'd so late,
 Under the tree where the shadow reposes,
 Over the spot where at noontime she sate?

Down the green walk where you drew her so slowly,
 Patient and sweet in her helpless decay,
 In her own chamber, the haunted and holy,
 There wouldst thou dream of thy darling to-day?

Where wouldst thou think of her, darkling and
 dreary?

In the lone room where her spirit took flight,

Passing away, as a child that is weary
Turns to its cradle, nor wishes Good-night?

Where, like a wild dream, thy heart still remembers
The lingering smile on the motionless clay—
A flame that lives on in the light of its embers—
There wouldst thou dream of thy darling to-day?

Not in the greenwood glade—hearts need not borrow
Helps from dead nature to teach them to weep,
Not in that lonely room;—why should thy sorrow
Brood o'er her, silent and shrouded in sleep?

Go to the altar, where, morning and even,
The low voice has mingled, the bright head bow'd
down,
Pouring her heart out in commune with Heaven,
Taking His cross up who gave her the crown.

Everywhere, everywhere holdeth communion,
Loving and cheering, her spirit with thine,
But in a holier, happier union,
Meet you with praises to-night at the shrine.

Then in the vale, when the waters are swelling,
Go where the desolate bird finds a nest,
Go to His holy and beautiful dwelling,
The courts of the Lord, where she dwelt and was
blest.

Where the church mingles her happy departed,
Victors gone home with the strugglers who stay,
Bringing forth balm for the desolate-hearted,—
There shouldst thou dream of thy darling to-day !



VI.

RECOLLECTIONS.—TO F. L.



HAVE been dwelling on enchanted
ground,

Looking on thee, and dreaming of the
past ;

A spell of shrouded faces and lost sound
Thou hast around me cast.

Sorrow and joy, thought within thought enshrined,
Childhood and youth I have lived o'er again,
As one chance note unlinketh to the mind
The whole of a sweet strain.

Thus, with the truest love my heart has known,
Thy kindred form so dearly blended seems,
Thine accents have an echo of the tone
That haunts me in my dreams.

A thousand thrilling thoughts thou bring'st to me
Of our old days of happiness on earth ;

I tremble at thy smile, thy laughter free,
Thy little words of mirth.

And I have mused until I seem'd to stray,
With thee and others, down a twilight glade,
Where sweet pale faces gleam'd upon our way,
And silver voices pray'd.

Shadows, and smiles, and gifted words were there,
It was the dream-land of our by-gone hours,
Just on the verge methought grew fresh and fair,
Two rathe and sunny flowers.

Pure balmy germs they grew within their shells,
Two cherish'd things, love-tended night and day,
With blue eyes peeping from their silver bells,
And breath as sweet as May.

There was a spirit with us in the grove—
I saw her linger where the first flower grew,
Breathe o'er it gently words of hope and love,
And leave it bathed in dew.

Now from thy presence, and its soothing power,
From voice, and look, and day-dream of the heart,

From balmy breath of childhood's opening flower,
Dear one, I must depart.

Go thou unto thy gleeful nursery,
Where voices mingle soft, and bright eyes gleam,
And when thy fair-hair'd children climb thy knee,
Read thou my parting dream.

ADDED FOR C. L.


He said he was forgotten in the strain,
When we roam'd through that love-enchanted
spot,
As if there could be, of thy joy or pain,
A dream where he was not.

As if her sainted lips had ever pray'd,
Or her eyes fill'd for thee in thankfulness,
Nor blest his love true-hearted who had made
Her darling's happiness.

In every swelling chord are many notes
So closely blended, they seem all the same,
As, high and far, the glorious measure floats,—
We do not ask their name.

• VII.

LINES.


HE stars sink one by one from sight,
 No trace of them we find;
 They vanish from the brow of night,
 And none is left behind
 Alone,
 And none is left behind.

The sun goes to his ocean-bed,
 In all his rays enshrined,
 He wraps them round his crimson head,
 And leaveth none behind
 To mourn,
 And leaveth none behind.

The beautiful and gifted dead,
 The noblest of our kind,
 Have cast their work aside and fled,

And we are left behind
Alone,
And we are left behind.

The dear old friends of early time,
Hearts round our hearts entwined,
Have faded from us in their prime,
And we are left behind
To mourn,
And we are left behind.

Pale stars, red sun, ye come again,
For whom no heart has pined,
We call our darlings back in vain,
Still are we left behind
Alone,
Still are we left behind.

Oh, dear ones, teach us so to run
Our race, in sun and wind,
That we may win where ye have won,
Though we be left behind
Awhile,
Though we be left behind !

VIII.

THE LAST EVENING.

HINGER a moment ere 'tis o'er—
 This last of our sweet evening hours.
 As wanderers, leaving some fair shore,
 Might pause to snatch a few bright flowers,
 Which on their beating hearts they lay,
 Memorials of that sunny clime ;
 Dear friends, shall we not bear away
 Thoughts of this happy time ?

Have we no flowers of memory
 Close at our hearts to treasure fair,
 Perchance to wither as they lie,
 But sometimes still to scent our air ?
 Bright thoughts of love and joy to come,
 In hours of toil and weariness,
 And bring us, in each distant home,
 Gleams of this happiness.

Shall we not dream when twilight shades,
Drop o'er the dark earth's quiet face,
How soft they touch'd the greenwood glade
Around our happy trysting place,
How blithely heart with heart did blend,
How gentle was our sportive strife,
Sisters and kin, each chosen friend,
Dear brother, and young wife ?

Will there not come, when vespers chime,
And one of all the band shall hear
An echo from our service-time,
Deep thrilling to each heart and ear ?
The spirits, by one impulse stirr'd,
Swelling the church's even-song,
The voice that falter'd o'er her word
So solemn, deep, and strong.

Ah ! were we then in truth alone ?
Had not each loving heart a dream,—
A glorious vision of its own,
That all too bright for words did seem,—
Whereat the tear unbidden springs ;
And yet it has no shade of gloom ;

As if two angels waved their wings
Across the quiet room ?

Friends, gentle friends, the world is wide,
And few the scatter'd sweets we find,
We would not cast such flowers aside,
Though we must leave the root behind.
Then pause awhile on this last night,
And linger o'er our parting strain,
This commune sweet, this converse light,
When will they come again ?



IX.

THE CHAPEL.

To E. C. L. on occasion of a Chapel being pulled down to
build a Church on the site.

LET none rebuke our sorrow, vainly swell-
ing,
Nor say we sin to taste, dishonour art,
Because the bareness of this poor low dwelling
Had grown entwined about our heart.

Because no show of cluster'd arches bending,
Nor slender shaft, nor storied window clear,
Nor fretted roof, on pillars proud ascending,
Can give the charm that linger'd here.

For what is taste, but the heart's earnest striving
After the beautiful in form and thought,
From the pure past a nicer sense deriving,
And ever by fair Nature taught;

A strong creative instinct, making real
Dreams framed from earth, or drawn down from
above ?
These barren walls could give one bright ideal,
And the heart's *beautiful* is love.

Here, where no thrill of rapturous emotion,
From impulse wrought by outward cause, might
stir ;
Only His shrine, who claim'd our first devotion,
And that calm, peaceful thought of her.

This was the casket where our hearts embalm'd her,
A reliquary fitting for a saint,
Here, where His love had met, His mercy calm'd her
When her poor human heart did faint.

True, we have other records ; there are places
Rich with the fragrance of her hours most bright,
When, full of gladness, look'd into our faces
Those dark eyes, dancing in soft light.

There is the room where her sick presence lingers,
The couch whereon she lay, the book she read,

The last words traced by her weak, weary fingers ;
But these are relics of the dead.

These tell us of the ear that could not hear us
In our worst anguish, of the close-seal'd eyes ;
Here was the spiritual presence near us
Of the saved soul that never dies.

Still on her place, when a dim ray fell slanting,
There was a sound, known to our hearts alone,
Of angels' wings ; still with the choir's low chanting
Mingled her gentle undertone.

So shall it be no more,—a crimson splendour
Shall break that wandering sunbeam's silver line,
And bid it fall in tinted radiance tender
On the pure pavement by the shrine.

Down the long nave, the deep, full organ pealing,
A hundred echoes, lingering, shall draw
From roof, and niche, and sculptured angel kneeling
In the fair fane she never saw.

Why are our hearts fill'd with so many yearnings
And adverse claims—that each to other call—

Admiring thought, and zeal, and inward burnings,
And this deep, mournful love through all ?

We would not check the work of your adoring ;
We love when art, and wealth, and fervour meet,
Their gifts most bright, most beautiful outpouring,
Sweet ointment for our Master's feet.

Still let us grieve—even as a mother weepeth
For some poor sickly child, in mercy ta'en ;
Deep in her heart his little spot she keepeth,
But wishes him not back again.

And if there be who meet us with upbraiding,
Call back the lost loves of your early years,
The deep, sad thoughts that ask no outward aiding,
And leave us our few silent tears.



THE LONELY GRAVE.



HE silence of a southern day,
 When all the air is sick with heat,
 O'er forest leagues that stretch away
 Before the traveller's weary feet ;

He sees no restive leaflets quiver,
 No glancing rays that meet and part,
 The very beat of the broad river
 Is even, as a silent heart ;

And strange-shaped flowers of gorgeous dyes,
 Unmoved by any wandering breeze,
 Look out with their great scarlet eyes,
 And watch him from the giant trees.

Surely no brother of his race
 Came e'er before to these wild woods,
 To startle, with his pallid face,
 The brightness of their solitudes.

And yet the path before him breaks
Across the tangled thicket drear,
A straighter track than wild beast makes,
Or antelope that bounds in fear.

And as he moves there seems to spring,
In his soul's depth, a consciousness—
As though some other living thing
Were with him in the wilderness.

The pathway broadens—and behold,
In the wood's heart, a chamber hewn,
Where Dryad, of the days of old,
Had loved to come and rest at noon !

Or if but England's sky were bent,
And yonder turf were not so brown,
The fairies might hold parliament
At night, when stars were raining down ;

And in the midst a little mound,
As it had been a small child's grave,
With the green tendrils twisted round
Of plant whence purple blossoms wave.

Calm sleep the dead within the church,
Where simple voices sing and pray,
And calm beyond the ivied porch,
Where village children pause to play.

Their bed is blest, their dirge was sung,
Their dust is with their fathers' dust,
But sure his heart was sorely wrung
Who here could leave his dead in trust.

The lonely wanderer pass'd in haste—
“It is a fearful spot,” he saith;
“There is no life in all the waste,
And yet this shrine of human death.”

Yea, life is near—a thin blue wreath
Comes curling through the foliage dark—
A settler's hut lies hid beneath,
And now he hears the watch-dog's bark.

Bright gleam'd the exile's lustrous eye;
No stranger to his haunts had come,
While, year by year, that forest high
Hung changeless o'er his lonely home.

Long time were greeting hands entwined,
Long time they cheer'd the social board
With many an earnest question kind,
And eager answer freely pour'd.

But when the sun's great heat was quell'd
Beneath the western ocean's wave,
The stranger's hand the exile held,
And led him to the forest-grave.

There, while the round moon rose afar,
Making the listener's face look pale,
While, one by one, broke each bright star
Unmark'd, he told his simple tale.

“ Green grow the valleys of the west,
Bright bound the streams of dark Tyrone,
There are my father's bones at rest,
Where I shall never lay my own.

“ Here drowsy Nature lies asleep,
Crush'd by her own abundant treasure,
But there her restless pulses leap
For ever to a changeful measure ;

“ To moaning of the fitful gale
Through hollows in the purple hill,
To rivers rattling down the vale,
Short showers, and sunbeams shorter still.

“ Ours was a lonely mountain place,
Girt round with berried rowan trees :
Good Sir, the wind on that hill's face,
It would not let them grow like these.

“ But, looking down the mountain bare,
We saw the white church by the river,
And we could hear, when winds were fair,
O'er the low porch, the one bell quiver.

“ And though the path was hard to climb
Across the bog and up the brae,
God's minister came many a time,
Nor ever blamed the rugged way.

“ Ah me ! it is a woeful thing
Never to hear one blessed word
Till sparks, that else might heavenward spring,
Die out for want of being stirr'd.

“ The world was round us all the week,
Hard work was ours from morn till even,
The words that good man used to speak
Brought to our souls a glimpse of heaven.

“ A wife I had, no truer breast,
E'er shared a poor man's grief and joy,
Nor wanted to our mountain nest
Love's dearest pledges—girl and boy.

“ Two died and left me,—first, alas !
The mother went, and then the son ;
Ah well ! the hallow'd churchyard grass
Grows over them—God's will be done.

“ And Rose and I were left alone,
A six-year child without a mother,
And still,” he said, “ though she is gone,
We are alone with one another.

“ In thought my comrade all day long,
She creeps into my dreams at night,
The burden of a wordless song,
An image true to all but sight.

“ Ever a short, low cough I hear,
There lies in mine a thin, small hand,
Or a voice singeth in mine ear ;
The voice that haunted the old land,

“ When that brave mountain breeze of ours
That dash'd the scent from golden furze,
And swept across the heather flowers,
Touch'd not a brighter cheek than hers.

“ Why tell again the tale of tears
Told by a thousand hearts before,
The anguish of those famine years,
The useless toil, the straiten'd store ?

“ How, of the land we loved forsaken,
And spurn'd from off her blighted face,
We dared the dark deep, tempest-shaken,
And found an exile's resting place ?

“ Who lauds the lily's silver crown,
He little thinks how, night by night,
From heaven's great heart the dews dropp'd down
That fed its leaves of dazzling white.

“ Little ye care at home to scan
 How good insensibly is cherish'd,
How holy habits form the man,
 And souls without their dew have perish'd.

“ How, heeding not God's blessed day,
 All days grow godless as they fall,
And he who has no hour to pray
 Forgets, at last, to pray at all.

“ How, sever'd from each symbol rite,
 By Heaven to human weakness lent,
Each pledge of things beyond the sight,
 Worship, and priest, and sacrament,

“ We wander'd through a weary plain,
 Where our souls fainted as we trod,
No golden link in labour's chain,
 No sweet seventh day for rest and God.

“ Still round the child there hung a spell
 Of old traditional rule,
Of texts the Pastor used to tell,
 And hymns she learn'd at Sunday school.

“ My heart has bled to hear her sing,
Or lisp ‘ Our Father ’ in her play,
And, but it was so strange a thing,
I could myself have knelt to pray.

“ Let summer winds blow wild at will,
New buds will deck earth’s wasted bosom ;
O death ! thy blast was sterner still,
It tore away my only blossom.

“ It would have moved a heart of stone
To see how fast my darling faded,
As a young olive dies alone,
By forest trees too closely shaded.

“ And as she wither’d, form and feature,
The smooth round cheek, the dimpled chin,—
It seem’d her spiritual nature
Glow’d with a stronger life within.

“ The struggling soul look’d through the bars
Of those blue eyes so strangely bright ;
Sweet eyes, they burn’d like two young stars
Before the moon is up at night.

“ And she would tell me more and more
About the things she learn'd of old,
As memory open'd all her store
When sickness found the key of gold.

“ 'Twas after a long day of pain,
When the night fell her brain grew weak,
The fever burn'd along her vein,
And strew'd false roses on her cheek.

“ I watch'd beside her in the gloom,
I counted every short, thick breath ;
There was another in the room
Keeping watch, too,—and that was Death.

“ I saw the red moon through the trees,
I heard afar the wild dog crying ;
That her sweet soul was ill at ease
I knew, she was so long of dying.


“ And ‘ Call the Rector, Father dear,’
Loud in the noon of night she said ;
‘ I cannot go until I hear
A prayer beside my dying bed.’

“ Then would she sleep—Oh that long night !
How slow it went, and yet how fast,
While waver'd on her life's pale light,
And flicker'd, and went out at last !

“ ‘ Will he not come ? ’ she cried again ;
Then—God forgive me that I lied—
‘ He cometh, darling, up the glen,’
I answer'd, and she smiled, and died.”



THE GRAVE AT SPITZBERGEN.*


BOVE, the vast eternal snows,
 The glaciers' rosy peaks,
 Touch'd with pale tints of blue and rose
 When the short sunbeam breaks.

Below, the land-lock'd quiet bay,
 The black rocks stretching far,
 And the great ice-floes out at sea
 That beat against the bar.

No sound along the wide snow plains,
 No echo in the deep,
 But Nature evermore remains
 Wrapp'd in a breathless sleep.

* "Half imbedded in the black moss at his feet, there lay a grey deal coffin, falling to pieces with age; the lid was gone, blown off probably by the wind, and within were stretched the bleaching bones of a human skeleton. A rude cross at the head of the grave still stood partially upright, and a half-obliterated Dutch inscription preserved a record of the dead man's name and age, Van der Shelling, Comman. Jacob Moor, ob. 2 June, 1758, æt. 44."—*Letters from High Latitudes*.

No blade of grass waves in the air
Along the ghastly hill—
Caught by the marvellous silence there
The very streams stand still.

Never to fall, each frozen river
Hangs on the sheer descent,
Like wishes unfulfill'd for ever,
Or words that find no vent.

Only at times, from some ice rock,
A glacier breaks away,
And startles, with a thunder-shock,
The mountain and the bay.

O frozen cliffs ! O motionless snows !
We glide into the creek,
And question of your grim repose,
The lips that will not speak.

In your cold beauty, vast and drear,
Ye lie so still and grand ;
But no heart-stirrings meet us here—
Unsympathizing strand !

112 *The Grave at Spitzbergen.*

No sound in all this sparkling waste,
No voice in Heaven above,—
To some strange region have we pass'd,
Beyond the reach of love ?

Ah, no ! some link there needs must be,
Where Christian foot has trod,
Of the great chain of sympathy
'Twixt man and man, and God.

And, lo ! there lie a dead man's bones,
Uncover'd, where we tread,
An open coffin 'mid the stones,
A rude cross at his head.

The wild white cliffs—the vast still main—
The patch of scant black moss ;
But still the form to rise again,
And still the letter'd cross.

And he whom tender Christian hands
Laid on this barbarous coast,
Who knoweth from what happier lands,
Or by what fortune tost ?

Whether 'mid Amsterdam's brown piles
His stone-prest grave should be,
Where washes round her many isles
The azure Zuyder Zee ;

Or by some vast cathedral wall
His fathers laid them down,
Where chimes are rung and shadows fall,
In an old Flemish town ;

Or whether, 'neath some village turf,
Where children come to weep,
And lighter treads the unletter'd serf,
He should have gone to sleep,

To drone of bees and summer gnats,
In some great linden-tree,
Where the old Rhine, through fertile flats,
Goes sobbing to the sea.

What matters—though these frozen stones
Their burden could not bear,
But gave again his coffin'd bones
Into the freezing air ;

114 *The Grave at Spitzbergen.*

Though here, to snows and storms exposed,
 They bleach'd a hundred years,
Never by human hand composed,
 Nor wet with human tears ;

Though only the shy rein-deer made
 In the black moss a trace,
Or the white bears came out and play'd
 In sunshine by the place ;

Still, silent, from the blacken'd heath,
 Rose that eternal sign,
Memorial of a human death,
 And of a love divine.

Still, type of triumph and of woe,
 Symbol of hope and shame,
It told the everlasting snow
 That single Christian name.

Sleep on, poor wanderer of the main,
 Who camest here to die,
No mother's hand to soothe thy pain,
 No wife to close thine eye.

Sleep well in thy vast sepulchre,
Far from our cares and fears,
The great white hills that never stir
Have watch'd thee round for years.

The skies have lit thee with their sheen,
Or wrapp'd in leaden gloom ;
The glaciers' splinter'd peaks have been
The pillars of thy tomb.

Green be their graves who came of old
From Holland o'er the main,
And left the simple cross that told
Where Christian dust has lain.

Green be their graves beyond the sea,
Who witness'd in this place
The resurrection mystery,
And our dear Saviour's grace.

Who taught us, at this solemn tryste
On the bleak North sea shore,
That the redeeming love of Christ
Is with us evermore.

THE GRAVE OF MRS. HEMANS

(IN ST. ANNE'S CHURCH, DUBLIN.)



HIS her grave! Ah me! she should be
 sleeping

In some grass-green churchyard far
 away,

Where in Spring the violets are peeping,
 And the birds sing through the Summer's day.

Silver rays, through bowers of ivy crawling,
 At calm noon, should lie along her feet;
 Folding flowers, and solemn shadows falling,
 At soft eve, should make her slumbers sweet.

And the wind in the tall trees should lend her
 Musical delight on stormy days,
 With a sound half chivalrous, half tender,
 Like the echo of her own wild lays.

Was it meet to leave her in the city
Where no sun could fall upon her face?
Lift the cold, grey stone, in love and pity
Bear her out unto a fairer place.

Ah, no more—within the poet's bosom
There are gleams that mock external gloom,
Flowers expanding, like the captive's blossom,
'Twixt the flagstones of his prison room!

For this wealth of beauty all around him,
Buds that haunt him with their azure eyes,
Seas whose blue horizons scarcely bound him,
Cloud-capp'd hills that rush into the skies,—

Sunset gleams that rose-tipp'd clouds make duller,
Murmuring streams that into distance lead;
They but give his fair creations colour,
Are but symbols of the Poet's creed.

For our nature is the clay he fashions,
Finds his faith within the hearts of men,
Gives his mighty language to their passions,
Moves the soul, and lays it calm again.

Where their toils, and pleasures, and heart-burnings
 Shall come round him with the busy throng ;
Lay the lips that set their griefs and yearnings
 To the music of his noble song.

Is not England's greatest glory granted
 In the centre of her busiest life,
And her old memorial abbey haunted
 With a murmur of perpetual strife ?

Thousand curious, careless glances scan it,
 And the corner where her poets lie,
Listening, underneath their weight of granite,
 To the sea of life that surges by.

True, like fair ship in a land-lock'd haven,
 Where no storm may touch the shelter'd wave,
Shakespeare, by his own immortal Avon,
 Sleepeth ever in his guarded grave.

True, our Wordsworth hath not left his mountains,
 He lies tranquil in their grand embrace,
Lull'd his ear by Rotha's silver fountains,
 Rydal's shadow on his silent face.

True, the white moon, like a lonely warder,
Guards a fair tomb in a ruin'd aisle,
Where the gentle Minstrel of the Border
Hath all Dryburgh for a burial pile.

But the veriest child of Nature's teaching,
Whom she took a peasant from the plough,
Stoop'd her highest laurels to his reaching :
On her daisied bosom rests not now.

High aspiring, genius, earthly troubles,
In a close, mean suburb lie asleep ;
Not where silver Nith, or Cluden bubbles,
Not where banks of bonny Doune are steep.

Let the Poet lie among his brothers,
Where great words of Christian truth shall be ;
He that hath most fellowship with others
Is most Christ-like in his sympathy.

And all Nature's charms, the bright, the real,
Are but shadows, though they live and move,
Of his own more beautiful ideal,
Of his dream of purity and love.


Let the golden spring-flowers streak the meadows,
Let the storm gleam on the mountain's fall,
Greater than the sunlight, or the shadows,
Is the song divine that paints them all.

Therefore leave her in the gloom and riot ;
Hope and truth shall be her grave-flowers here,
Human hearts throb round her, for the quiet
Of the calm day, and the starlight clear ;

For the music-breathing wind of summer
Words of love and pity shall be said ;
And her own strain tell the careless comer,
Pass not lightly by our Poet's bed.



SOUTHEY'S GRAVE.


 HERE never beam'd a brighter day
 On ancient Skiddaw's glorious height,
 Sweet Keswick water never lay
 Wrapp'd in a flood of purer light,
 When, woo'd by the delicious power
 That rules the haunted mountain-land,
 We roam'd, one golden summer hour,
 By that wild lake's enchanted strand.

" And where does Southey sleep ?" we said.
 The peasant boy made answer none,
 But toward that old white church he led,
 And o'er its wall of guardian stone,
 A bright and lonely burial ground,
 Between the mountain and the wave,—
 The boy stood by one low green mound
 And answer'd: " This is Southey's grave !"

Things are there to the inward eye
That mingle in as sweet accord
As hues that on the mountains lie,
Or notes in one wild measure pour'd ;
And sure that grave at Skiddaw's feet,
The waving grass, the chequer'd skies,
Calm Nature's lover ! seem'd most meet
With thy soul's dream to harmonize.

What though no clustering arches fair
Around thy sculptured marble rise,
Nor lingering sunbeam thither bear
The storied window's gorgeous dyes ;
Nor stream of choral chanting sweet,
Borne down the minster's mighty aisle,
With ocean-swell of organ, meet
Beside thy monumental pile.


Thou sleepest in a statelier fane,
High heaven's blue arch is o'er thee bent,
And winds and waves a sweeter strain
Make round thy mountain monument ;
And sunbeams, when departing night
Rolls back the mists from Gowdar's crest,

Break through their clouds in rosy light,
To lie along thy quiet breast.

Yes! many a shrine our feet have sought,
Where pillar'd aisle and fretted nave
Told man, the richly blest, had brought
Some portion back to Him who gave;
And thoughts of rapturous awe we knew,
But sweeter none than when we stay'd
By that green grave where daisies grew,
In Nature's own cathedral laid.



THE GRAVE BY ST. COLUMBA'S
CROSS.*

OW the storm is hush'd and over, past
the fever's cruel pain,
Bear him gently, bear him kindly, O
thou wildly rolling main.

From his wild home on the foreland to our sullen
Northern shore,
On thine heart that beateth ever, bear the heart that
beats no more.

There's a wailing on the waters, take him slowly
from the boat,
Bear him up the rugged shingle, lift her anchor,
let her float.

* The Rev. T. Wolfe died in the discharge of his pastoral duties at Carrickfin, a peninsula on the coast of Donegal, and was interred beside the old cross of St. Columba, in the graveyard at Myragh. Christmas Eve, 1858.

Harsh her keel grates on the sand-bank, with a
 sound like human pain,
For that burden so belovèd she shall never bear
 again.

Bear him gently, bear him fondly, by the bay-
 indented shore,
'Neath the purple-shadow'd Errigle, from far and
 lone Gweedore ;

By the black rock, and the sand-reach, washed
 brown with charging surf,
To the cross of St. Columba, lying dark along the
 turf.

They are foot-sore, they are weary, they must turn
 away at last,
Those poor hearts that loved him dearly, and whose
 dream of light is past.

All the high hopes and the cheering that one stead-
 fast human heart,
In the strength of Christ's great mercy, can to other
 men impart—

126 *The Grave by St. Columba's Cross.*

They are over, for the pastor, for the friend is borne
along ;
Linger fondly o'er the coffin, sing again his chosen
song.

Onward, onward, like the booming from a distant
cannon borne,
Comes the roar of the Atlantic, rushing madly on
the Horn;

And Muckish, like a giant huge, all the dim horizon
guards,
Where the risen sun looks golden, on the winter woods
of Ards.

Pause again, ye weary bearers, lay him down a
little while,
Ye must wait the mourner's coming, in the lowly
church's aisle ;

Through the misty morn he cometh, let him clasp
that coffin bare,
For he saw not the last anguish, for he heard not
the last prayer :

The Grave by St. Columba's Cross. 127

Let him cling to that poor shadow, till beside the
cross they part ;
High words upon his trembling lip, grief's arrow in
his heart.

Ah, often, in the glorious land of the cedar and the
palm,
He shall draw that golden arrow out, and find it
tipp'd with balm,—

It shall tell to him, who labours in the red heat of
the sun,
Of the green land where he resteth, of the work so
early done.

In the south, where suns are brighter, and the
breeze more softly blows,
And calm lakes, like silver dewdrops in the bosom
of a rose,

Lie alone in purple mountains, with the shadows of
their crests,
In a hush of lonely grandeur, sleeping ever on their
breasts.

128 *The Grave by St. Columba's Cross.*

There were three who went together, when the
blessed Christmas broke,
Brought red berries from the holly, and green ivy
from the oak ;

That the types of life immortal, for the feast of life
might wave :
Now keep the three their Christmas Eve,—ah me !
by an open grave.

They keep their tryste—but two of them, with hearts
by sorrow riven,
And those words that sink in anguish, though they
come to raise to Heaven.

Hear the tender voice that trembles as the “ Dust
to dust” is said,
See the tears that with the earth fall on the beauti-
ful young head :

And one—not love, not thrilling thoughts that
tender memories lend,
Not the hot tears of his brother, not the sweet
voice of his friend—

The Grave by St. Columba's Cross. 129

Can touch that heart, or link again that delicate
chain of life,
That strain'd against the fever's grasp, and was
shiver'd in the strife.

But whether now he strikes his harp, with the holy
Seraphim,
Who sang in the fields at midnight, the first great
Christmas hymn,

Or whether, 'neath that awful shrine, where the
weary saints find rest,
He meets the souls who dropp'd asleep before him
on Jesus' breast ;

He is safe, he is blest, where sin and sorrow can
vex no more,
Where the works of the saints do follow them
through the pearly door.

And if, in their high communion, our tears can his
spirit move,
'Tis but with a wond'ring pity, born of sublimer
love.

130 *The Grave by St. Columba's Cross.*

Now let him lie, the west'ring sun sinks into his
ocean bed,
And the breeze that cannot reach him howls around
his coffin'd head.

Leave him lying where he would be, in the shadow
of the cross :
Hoarsely sighs the wind of even, and we see the
breakers toss,

And the dark rocks about Torraighe look like
battlements of gold ;
O, the glory of that amber over waves of sapphire
roll'd !

And O, that we were safe at last, in the golden city's
street,
With the jasper walls above us, and the crystal at
our feet !



SORROW ON THE SEA.



WHITE sail, shifting in the sun,
 Drops slowly down the shadowy lake,
 The heaving billows hardly make

A silver track in her green wake,
 So lazily they run.

Down, down she drops, the feathery clouds
 Lie loosen'd on the distant hills,
 An oar-splash in the silence thrills,
 Helping the wind that never fills
 Her sail, but flaps her shrouds.

Down where those headlands, wildly fair,
 Each with a beauty of its own,
 Brown heather tuft, or dark grey stone,
 Stand double, one in ocean thrown,
 One cutting the clear air.

She drops, that scarcely seems to move,
Where calm those colour'd pictures sleep
In the still bosom of the deep ;
As o'er man's heart the shadows creep
Of our life's grief and love.

Vain image ! all that light and dark
Shall with the sun-gleams come and go ;
With time and change it is not so,
Their shadows on the heart they throw,
But, ah ! they leave their mark !

Change, change, O tide ! Thy cold salt wa
The same by rock and silver strand,
Unscathed shall leave the shadowy land,
Unstain'd shall bear the sunset's brand,
And kiss the coral cave.

But with our hearts 'tis different far :
The tide of life may ebb and flow,
Still the great love shall lurk below,
Still the deep wound of the great woe,
Shall never, never scar.

A woman sitteth silently
In the boat's stern, nor weeps nor sighs ;
But gazes where that dark rock lies,
As if the glare of dead men's eyes
 Look'd at her through the sea.

Soul, sight, and sense, in one dark mist
Hang o'er the spot ; the boatmen say :—
“ Poor soul ! five years gone and a day,
He went down in that treacherous bay,
 And still she keeps her tryst.”

Out of the heart of that great town,
Where turbid Clyde awhile must stray
'Mid warehouse vast and busy quay,
Then leaves them, rushing through the spray,
 Down to his Highlands brown :

Out of the noise of toil and crime,
The cry for wealth, the hot pursuit :
To where the sun set grandly mute,
O'er Cumrae wild, and greener Bute,
 And Arran's heights sublime,

Where, as the headlands of Argyle
Grew dim, and faded on the lee,
Fair Antrim's cliffs rose from the sea,
And the shafts carven wondrously,
Of the huge giant's pile,

She came—out of the crush and gloom,
Into the ocean's broken blue,
The glory of the distant view ;
Still her poor heart, too sadly true,
Beat but to one low tomb.

In the old abbey's keeping laid,
Where shadows into shadows merge,
He lieth sweetly : while the surge,
Repentant, sings a ceaseless dirge
Around the graves it made.

There will she find a vent for tears,
And hug the turf, and sing : “ Alas,
There is so long a time to pass
Ere I shall lie beneath this grass,
I am so young in years !”

Or in a calmer mood she sits,
All a long summer's day alone,
And decks the grave with flowers new blown,
And plucks the grey moss from the stone,
And weeps and prays by fits.

To her great loneliness of grief
No human voice draws ever nigh ;
Ah, mountain airs that pass me by !
Ah, blue drifts in the clouded sky !
Can ye not bring relief ?

Dark headlands rooted in the wave,
With sunset glories on your face,
And storm-tost billows at your base,
Can ye not tell of woe by grace
Made noble, pure, and brave ?

Can ye not tell of holy calm
In some high region where the mind—
This dust and ashes left behind—
For bleeding love a salve shall find,
For separation, balm ?

That sunless land is bright and green ;
Its flowers are fair ; but evermore
Cold death hangs looming on the shore,
And we but think how sad and sore
The entering in hath been.

As if a bird, her wings spread wide
For scented groves in sunnier land,
Should linger in the mud and sand,
Where from some well low-lying strand
Creeps back the northern tide.

As if, through that blind-driving mist,
The golden hills we could not see,
Nor feel how fast the shadows flee,
How long the bright eternity,
There with our risen Christ.

Who sits for ever by the cross,
And only kisses the pierced feet,
And hears the painful pulses beat,
Though that great agony be sweet ;
Surely he hath a loss.

He never brought his spice and myrrh,
And watch'd all night where Jesus lay,
Till the grave heaved at break of day,
And the seal'd stone was roll'd away ;
He never heard the stir

Of wings that pant, and harps that quiver,
When He who died that heaven to win,
The King of Glory, enter'd in,
An intercessor for our sin,
At God's right hand for ever.

Bear, bear her where that music rolls,
And let her lie at those pierced feet,
(But treading now the golden street,)
And let her hear the strains that greet
His own redeemèd souls.

Let grief's long passion pass away,
That parting never more to be,
The cold low grave beside the sea,
The shriek of his death agony,
The rock in the blue bay.

Bear her where only such a heart
Can cease to sorrow and to yearn,
For only there love meets return,
And only there eyes never mourn,
And loved ones never part.

Then bring her back where burden'd Clyde
Round many a lashing wheel raves white,
There, calm and still in faith's dear might,
Her loving heart shall read you right,
Strains of the hill and tide.





Hymns and Sacred Poems.

EARTH AND HEAVEN.

THE roseate hues of early dawn,
The brightness of the day,
The crimson of the sunset sky ;
How fast they fade away !

Oh, for the pearly gates of Heaven !
Oh, for the golden floor !
Oh, for the Sun of Righteousness
That setteth nevermore !

The highest hopes we cherish here,
How fast they tire and faint !
How many a spot defiles the robe
That wraps an earthly saint !

Oh, for a heart that never sins !
Oh, for a robe wash'd white !
Oh, for a voice to praise our King,
Nor weary day or night !

Here faith is ours, and heavenly hope,
And grace to lead us higher,
But there are perfectness and peace
Beyond our best desire.

Oh, by Thy love and anguish, Lord !
Oh, by Thy life laid down !
Oh, that we fall not from Thy grace,
Nor cast away our crown !



“ TOUCHED WITH THE FEELING OF
OUR INFIRMITIES.”

WHEN, wounded sore, the stricken soul
Lies bleeding and unbound,
One only hand, a piercèd hand,
Can salve the sinner's wound.

When sorrow swells the laden breast,
And tears of anguish flow,
One only heart, a broken heart,
Can feel the sinner's woe.

When penitence has wept in vain
Over some foul, dark spot,
One only stream, a stream of blood,
Can wash away the blot.

'Tis Jesus' blood that washes white,
His hand that brings relief,
His heart that's touch'd with all our joys,
And feeleth for our grief.

Lift up Thy bleeding hand, O Lord,
Unseal that cleansing tide ;
We have no shelter from our sin,
But in Thy wounded side !



COMMUNION HYMN.



JESUS, bruised and wounded more
 Than bursted grape, or bread of wheat,
 The Life of Life within our souls,
 The cup of our salvation sweet ;

We come to show Thy dying hour,
 Thy streaming vein, thy broken flesh ;
 And still the blood is warm to save,
 And still the fragrant wounds are fresh.


O heart, that with a double tide
 Of blood and water makest pure !
 O flesh, once offer'd on the cross,
 The gift that makes our pardon sure !

Let never more our sinful souls
 The anguish of Thy cross renew,
 Nor forge again the cruel nails
 That pierced Thy victim body through.

Come, bread of Heaven, to feed our souls,
And with Thee, Jesus, enter in ;
Come, wine of God, and as we drink
His precious blood, wash out our sin.



EPIPHANY HYMN.


STAR of the East ! whose silver ray
 Was erst the faithful Gentile's guide,
 Star of our souls ! look down to-day,
 And lead us to Thy cradle side.

Hither, of old, the wise men bore
 Gift for a God, their incense sweet,
 A monarch's tribute, golden ore,
 And balmy myrrh for victim meet.

Here, too, our hearts would pause awhile,
 Sweet Source of love and mercy free,
 Would linger in Thy cradle-smile,
 And lift the voice, and bend the knee.

O Christ our God ! Thy name we own
 The highest name in earth or heaven.
 O Christ our King ! to Thee alone
 The homage of our hearts be given.


O Christ our Saviour, who didst bow
For us Thy sinless victim-head,
To wear the thorn-wreath on thy brow,
To lie embalm'd among the dead ;

We follow where our fathers trod,
We open, too, our treasure-store ;
Redeemer, Monarch, mighty God,
Save, guide, and keep us evermore.



RUTH.

I.


IN the land of Bethlehem Judah
 Let us linger, let us wander ;
 Ephrath's sorrow, Rachel's pillar,
 Lieth in the valley yonder ;
 And the yellow barley harvest
 Floods it with a golden glory.
 Let us back into the old time,
 Dreaming of her tender story,
 Of her true heart's strong devotion,
 From beyond the Dead Sea water,
 From the heathen land of Moab—
 Mahlon's wife, and Mara's daughter.

II.

On the terebinth and fig-tree
 Suns of olden time are shining,
 And the dark leaf of the olive
 Scarcely shows its silver lining ;
 For still noon is on the thicket,

Where the blue-neck'd pigeons listen
To their own reproachful music ;
And the red pomegranates glisten.
As a queen a golden circlet,
As a maid might wear a blossom,
So the valley wears the cornfields
Heaving on her fertile bosom :
And the round grey hills stand o'er them,
All their terraced vineyards swelling,
Like the green waves of a forest,
Up to David's royal dwelling.

III.

Lo ! the princely-hearted Boaz
Moves among his reapers slowly,
And the widow'd child of Moab
Bends behind the gleaners lowly ;
Gathering, gleaning as she goeth
Down the slopes, and up the hollows,
While the love of old Naomi,
Like a guardian angel, follows ;
And he speaketh words of kindness,
Words of kindness calm and stately,
Till he breaks the springs of gladness

That lay cold and frozen lately ;
And the love-flowers, that had faded
Deep within her bosom lonely,
Slowly open as he questions,
Soon for him to blossom only,—
When that spring shall fill with music,
Like an overflowing river,
All his homestead, and those flowers
Bloom beside his hearth for ever.
Mother of a line of princes,
Wrought into that race's story,
Whom the Godhead, breaking earthward,
Mark'd with an unearthly glory.

IV.


Still he walks among the reapers :
The long day is nearly over,
And the lonely mountain partridge
Seeks afar his scanty cover ;
And the flocks of wild blue pigeons,
That had glean'd behind the gleaner,
Find their shelter in the thicket ;
And the cloudless sky grows sheener
With a sudden flush of crimson,

Steeping in a fiery lustre
Every sheaf-top in the valley,
On the hill-side every cluster.

v.

Slowly, slowly fade, fair picture,
Yellow lights and purple shadows,
On the valley, on the mountain,
And sweet Ruth among the meadows.
Yet delay, true heart, and teach us,
Pausing in thy matron beauty,
Care of elders, love of kindred,
All unselfish thought and duty.
Linger, Boaz, noble minded !
Teach us, haughty and unsparing,
Tender care for lowlier station,
Kindly speech, and courteous bearing.
Still each softest, loveliest colour,
Shrine the form beloved and loving,
Heroine of our hearts' first poem,
Through our childhoods' dreamland moving ;
When the great old Bible open'd,
And a pleasant pastoral measure,
As our mothers read the story,
Fill'd our infant hearts with pleasure.

THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.


 HE sick man in his chamber,
 Through the long weary night
 Toss'd on his restless pillow,
 How longs he for the light !

He counts the hours that linger,
 Heavy with clouds and rain,
 And a great weight of darkness
 Lies on his fever'd brain.

He hears the loud clock ticking,
 And the owl hoot afar,
 While glimmers the pale night-light,
 And fades the midnight star.

Till eastward in the heaven
 He sees, at last, the sign,
 O'er the far purple mountains ;
 A single silver line ;

It broadens, and it deepens
To a sea of red and gold,
With clouds of rosy amber
Around its glory roll'd :

Till each pane of his window
Is silver'd o'er and o'er,
And lines of golden arrows
Lie on the dusky floor.

The sick soul lieth weary
In the world's soft unrest,
With clouds of care and sorrow,
And weight of sins opprest.

Out of the night she crieth,
Out of the narrow room :—
“ O Saviour, gentle Saviour,
Wilt Thou not pierce the gloom ?

“ Break on this night of longing,
Where hand in hand we grope
Through wastes of vain endeavours,
'Neath stars of fruitless hope,

“ O'er the great hills of sadness
That hem us darkly in,
Rough with our tears and losses,
And black with many a sin.

“ Rise, rise above the mountains,
With healing on Thy wings,
Break into the dark chambers
Where pain in secret stings.

“ Come, while the morning tarries
Our waiting eyes to bless,
Look through the lowly lattice,
Bright Sun of Righteousness !

“ Set, for the hearts that love Thee,
Thy token up above,
The white rays of redemption,
And the red fire of love.

“ Out of our gloom we call Thee,
Out of our helpless night :
Sun of the world, sweet Saviour,
Show us Thy perfect light !”



Missionary and Colonial.

TO C. H. A.

Who married a Clergyman, and went out with him to join the
Bishop of New Zealand. Sent with a
cross of Irish bog-oak.



UT of the bosom desolate and deep
Of her that was the " Isle of Saints"
of old,
Where, far below, her buried forests sleep,
They cut this little cross of ancient mould.*

Type of her beautiful and glorious days,
Her first pure days of faith, and lore, and love,

* The Irish oak is cut out of the bogs which contain vast buried forests. It was probably in the days when these forests stood, that Ireland was celebrated for her schools of Christian learning.

When wanted not sweet Nature's note of praise ;
Her deep winds whispering down the leafy grove.

I bid thee lay it on thy pilgrim breast—
I would some thought of us should go with thee,
Some message from the melancholy west,
To that bright isle beyond the southern sea.

And oh, of all our thoughts most sweet, most vast,
What better sign between our hearts than this ?
What fitter form to carve out of the past ?
What brighter presage of the future's bliss ?

Most meet for you, who not with thoughts of ease
Gild your calm dreams of holy wedded life,
Who bear your Master's cross beyond the seas,
For earnest labour, and for weary strife.

Meet symbol, too, from this fair isle forlorn,
To her who hears the wide Pacific roar,
Who sitteth in the twilight of her morn,
Watching the lights that break along the shore ;

Hearkening a strain more sweet than rapt'rous burst
Of wild bird's song when dawn is in the sky ;
An echo of the angels' song that erst
Spake peace on earth, and told salvation nigh.

And he who leads and modulates that strain,
Wandering by pathless waste and lonely rock,
Whose restless bark is ever on the main,
Patiently gathering in his little flock.

How will he look along the heaving tide,
And bless the breeze that brings from the old land
One brother more to labour at his side,
Another sister to his exiled band.

And ye will catch the burden of his song,
Will swell the measure when perchance it faints,
Bid gulf and cliff the glorious strain prolong,
And make that isle another Isle of Saints.

Pray for us, brother, sister,—love doth make
No count of space, devotion hath no bound—
And chief for them, the faithful few, who wake,
Watching our island fold with foes around ;

And so farewell!—already the winds greet
Your out-bound sail, and lift the crested wave ;
How oft in thought, in hope, in heart, we meet
By the dear sign of Him who died to save !



PRAISE AND INTERCESSION.*

WAKE, wanderer, wake ! a solemn voice
 Chants softly to the chill night air,
 In old familiar melody,
 Sweet strains of praise and prayer ;

Such strains as in thine own dear land
 Unnumber'd voices love to sing,
 When, morn and eve, the Bride of Heaven
 Brings homage to her King.

Here are no old collegiate walls,
 No mighty minster fair and strong ;—
 Whence caught this wild north-western waste
 The Church's evensong ?

* A traveller in North America, while resting at a lonely Inn, was roused at night by a voice chanting the Psalms ; on inquiry, he found that it was the Bishop of Newfoundland chanting, alone, the Evening Service.

Sleep, wanderer, sleep ! thy mother's hand
Is stretch'd to guard each wandering child,
Her shepherd waketh for the flock
Far scatter'd in the wild.

'Tis meet his deep, unwearied voice,
Still, night and day, her songs renew,
Like strain thrice echoed from the hills,
Whose every note is true.

Head of the Church, for ever near,
Hear Thou Thy servant's evening hymn,
Give that lone voice a power to raise
From sleep more dark and dim :

Be it a witness to Thy name,
For truth, for love, for order dear,
Charming the sinner from his path,
Soothing the exile's ear.


It dies beneath the wide grey Heaven,
It dies along the silent plain,
No answering flock, no deep-voiced choir
Take up the solemn strain.

Yet patience, strong and holy heart,
Nor fear the full response shall come ;
Still waken with thy lonely note
The desert dark and dumb.

Deep down the course of coming years
The chord shall vibrate yet again,
And ages yet unborn shall hear
That slumbering Amen.



THE LOST CHILD.


 S when in sleep the mother deems
 She holds her dead child in her bosom,
 And feels a waxen hand, and dreams
 She sees again her perish'd blossom,

And dearer, sweeter seems to her
 That image wan than any other ;
 So should the thought within thee stir,
 Of thy lost children, island mother !

No voice of dreams, it haunts thy soul
 Across the blue Pacific water,
 Above the wild Atlantic's roll,
 From many an exiled son and daughter :

No vision'd forms, they wander there
 Beneath old woods' primeval shadows ;
 Through coral-girded islands fair,
 By frozen rocks and sun-burnt meadows :

Thy living dead, for whom the spring
Is dried of spiritual being,
And every sacramental thing
That leads to the unseen All-seeing :

They hear no more, when Sundays come,
The old bells swing in village towers,
A message from the angels' home
Unto this work-day world of ours ;

No more they seek, in reverent haste,
Christ's wedding-feast within His palace,
Nor eat the precious bread, nor taste
The wine-drop in the sacred chalice ;

For them no calm chance words are said
By pastoral lips in love and meetness,
Like breathings from a violet-bed,
That touch the common air with sweetness ;

Therefore, lift up thine arm this day,
Bid the Church meet them, island mother ;
Lest they forget her as they stray,
Or falsely deem they find another.

THE IRISH MOTHER'S LAMENT.



HALF the long night, my children, I lie
 waking
 Till the dawn rustles in the old thorn-
 tree,
 Then dream of you, while the red morn is breaking
 Beyond that broad salt sea ;

 In this poor room, where many a time the measure
 Of your low, regular breathing in mine ear,
 Brought to my listening heart a keener pleasure
 Than any music clear ;

 Here, where, your soft heads in my bosom laying,
 Ye nestled, with your hearts to my heart press'd,
 And I have felt your little fingers playing,
 All night, around my breast ;

 On the brown hill-side, where so oft together,
 Roaming forth idly, when our work was done,
 We heard the moor-fowl in the purple heather,
 Crowing at set of sun ;

I am alone—still on my threshold lieth
The shadow of the thorn ye play'd beneath,
Still to her mate, at eve, the brown bird crieth,
Out of the lonely heath :

But in my desolate house no sound of laughter,
And by my dreary hearth no daughter's face ;
I watch the black smoke curling round the rafter,
I see each empty place.

How could ye leave me ? Did ye think a mother
Was natured like a bird in summer's prime,
Who leaves her young brood, hopeful of another
In the next glad spring time ?

They tell me your new home is rich and sunny,
More than this dwelling on the mountain cold,
Fair as the land that flow'd with milk and honey,
In the great book of old.

They tell me flowers most beautiful are blowing
Out on your waysides, on your common trees,
But will ye find the mother's love there growing,
Ye gave for things like these ?

And some have told me souls are never parted,
Faith leads us all unto the same bright Heaven,
Nor meet it is, that woman, christian-hearted,
To such wild grief be given ;

Ah ! but I know in that bright land are wanting,
On Sunday morn, the sweet church-calling bell,
The pastoral word, the gather'd voices chanting
Hymns that ye loved so well.

The cares of this great world, its toils, its beauty,
Will dim your eyes, and grow about your heart,
And shut out heavenly hope and Christian duty,
And every better part.

The prayers we pray'd together at God's altar,
The creed ye lisp'd into my ear at night,
The verses that I taught your lips to falter
Will be forgotten quite.

Ah me ! could I but think those lips were making,
In some far church, the vows they used to pour,
I could lie down without this wild heart-aching
Lest we should meet no more.

Sad mother! for the visible presence pining
Of eyes that smile, and lips that fondly move,
Things that, like dewy nights and bright sun's
shining,
Nurse the sweet flowers of love.

But, sadder far, when the wild waves that sever
Sing to her ear in one foreboding strain :—
“ We part you now, but must ye part for ever ? ”
Echoing the heart's dull pain.



COME OVER AND HELP US.

SOULS in heathen darkness lying
 Where no light has broken through,
 Souls that Jesus bought by dying,
 Whom His soul in travail knew ;
 Thousand voices
 Call us o'er the waters blue.

Christians, say they, none has taught us
 Of His love so deep and dear,
 Of the precious price that bought us,
 Of the nail, the thorn, the spear ;
 Ye who know Him
 Guide us from our darkness drear.

Still, Mohammed's hosts adoring,
 Call untired their prophet's name,
 Morn and eve his aid imploring ;—
 Tell the greater Chief who came,
 The true Prophet,
 Winning glory out of shame.

Still, the Jew, in dreams unholy,
Hails a conqueror's crimson reign,
Scorns the Son of Mary, lowly :—
Read him right the Prophet's strain,
Christ can give him
Israel's glories back again.

Still old Asia's sages yearning,
Grove for truth with darken'd eye,
By the lamp within them burning,
While the sun is in the sky—
Nothing dreaming
Of the glorious light on high.

Still the earth hath cruel places,
Wrath, and hate, and vengeance grim,—
Still God looks on human faces
Heavenward turn'd, but not to Him ;
Slaves who know not
Comfort in their anguish dim.

Eastward far the bright sun breaking
Treads the dark clouds into light,
East and west the lands are waking,

Come over and help Us.


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Other feet are on the height,
More beautiful,
Bearing words of love and might.

Haste, O haste to spread the tidings,
Let no shore be left untrod,
No lost brother's bitter chidings
Haunt us from the furthest sod :
Tell the heathen
All the precious truth of God !



LOOKING UP TO HEAVEN.*


THE sun sinks o'er the western sea
 And o'er the trackless plain,
 Where the good Bishop wearily
 Leads on his scanty train ;

The moon fades from the brow of night,
 Dark broods the lonely hour,
 No passing gleam of social light
 Shines out from hall and bower ;

Such gleam as dear old England sees
 From the closed casement far
 At even, through her tall dark trees ;
 The peasant's polar star ;

* Suggested by a passage in the Bishop of New Zealand's Journal, in which he describes having first seen the sun and then the moon go down, and being afterwards lighted on his journey by the constellations of the Southern Cross and the Triangle.

Which, wearied with his long day's toil,
He greeteth far away ;
Christ's labourer tills a harder soil—
Hath he no cheering ray ?

Yes, wanderer, look, to heaven's blue height
The Southern Cross ascends,
And, bathing all thy path in light,
Thine " own Triangle" bends.

Sweet stars, there lies a gentle lore
In Nature's shadowings,
And we may find in her full store
The types of holier things.

God's holy Church, mysterious still,
Wends on, from age to age,
Through this dark world of strife and ill,
Her lonely pilgrimage ;

And darkness meets her on the wold,
And frowns the gathering foe,
And hearts are false, and love is cold,
And even faith burns low :

Because we look not up on high
Where waves the red cross wide,
Nor think how He who died to save,
Still guards His mystic Bride ;

Because we have no hearts to see
Bright, as in days of old,
The presence of the Eternal Three
Within her sacred fold.

And thou to whom thy Lord has given
The crozier and the key,
And bade thee tend the Bride of Heaven,
Girt by that southern sea,

What though cold-hearted Christians fear,
What though the heathen frown,
Though all the waste be wild and drear,
And sun and moon go down,

Yet shalt thou lay Redemption's sign
On many a savage brow,
And many a rudely sacred shrine
Shalt to the Triune vow ;

And hope on them and peace be pour'd,
Who see thy face no more,—
The exile labouring for his Lord
Upon that heathen shore !





Churches.

ON THE LAYING OF THE FIRST STONE
OF THE MEMORIAL CHURCH AT
CONSTANTINOPLE BY
LORD STRATFORD DE REDCLIFFE, OCT. 19, 1858.

NOW no more fair Stamboul hears the rattle
Of the warriors' harness at her gates ;
Sees no more the tide of Europe's battle
Hotly pressing through her azure straits.

Queen-like, from her terraces and gardens,
She looks down, along those waters blue,
On those turrets twain, her ancient wardens,
Guardians of the old world and the new.

From her throne the languid European
Sees the old camp on the Asian shore,

Sees the foam-wreaths on the far Ægean,
And the white sails flitting slowly o'er.

Sees no more the gathering host that wander'd
To that wild peninsula afar,
To the desolate fort where England squander'd
So much life in one brief winter's war.

When the full ship, with her living burden,
Pass'd so near, she heard the canvas strain,
As she rush'd in haste, for glory's guerdon,
Toward the rock-reefs of that stormy main.

When the waifs of that great strife and anguish,
Like spars borne on a receding tide,
Came back wounded, came back sick to languish
In her shadow, on the Asian side;

To those walls, where sick men, breathing faintly,
Heard an angel rustling in the gloom,
And a woman's presence, calm and stately,
Lighted up the melancholy room.

176 *On the Laying of the First Stone*

Look down, Stamboul, from thy fair dome swelling,
 Where Sophia's broken crosses lie,
And thine Imaums, night and day, are telling,
 In God's face, that everlasting lie.

Not in anger come we to upbraid thee,
 Not with war-ships floating on thy bay,
Not with brand and banner come to aid thee,
 Stand we by thy golden horn to-day.

Lay the stone, O statesman tried and hoary,
 'Tis no marble monument of war,
But a trophy to thine England's glory,
 Unto distant ages, nobler far.

But a tribute, meeter and more solemn,
 To our lost ones by that rough Black Sea,
Than triumphal arch or granite column,
 Graven all with names of victory.

They have had their dirges in our sorrows
 When the chill'd blood left the cheek and brow,
In that voiceless agony that borrows
 An expression out of silent woe.

And their names writ down in Britain's story,
The best page she shows to future years,
And their cold brows twined with wreaths of glory ;
Ah, those laurels wet with woman's tears !

Not yet time, with surely-healing fingers,
To our beggar'd love has brought relief,
Still a vain thought of requital lingers,
And an aching memory of grief.

This, our vengeance for the gallant bosoms,
In those cruel trenches, night by night,
Chill'd to death, as snow-encumber'd blossoms
Fall down, and are trampled out of sight.

This, our vengeance for the young life wasted
In the hot charge and the vain attack,
The assault to which so many hasted,
And the charge from which so few came back.

This, our memory of the true and fearless,
Spotless honour, uncomplaining toil,
And the Christian zeal, the valour peerless,
And the tenderness war could not spoil.

178 *On the Laying of the First Stone, &c.*

Here we raise their monument for ever,
Singing for them, till the world shall end,
“ In Memoriam,” such as poet never
Set to Heaven’s own music for his friend.

Here we rear the white cross and the altar,
Day by day the page of truth unfold,
Chant their dirges from dear England’s Psalter,
Read their requiem from her Bible old.

Blend their memory with these aisles of beauty,
Grave them on the window’s storied line ;
Meet it is that men who died for duty
Be embalm’d in such a noble shrine ;

Where the voice of praise and prayer habitual,
In due order, rises day and night,
Where the calm voice of that grand old ritual
Calls the soldier to a better fight.

Sleep, O warriors ! cold your place of burial
In that rough Crimean valley lies,
While our church-spire cleaves the blue ethereal,
And all Nature smiles beneath our eyes.

Sleep, O warriors ! all your toil and striving,
In one glorious mission, end at last ;
Here to speak salvation for the living,
Hope in death, and pardon for the past.


All your strength and valour now are blending
In one note of love, that swells and thrills
Like a strain of martial music, ending
In long echoes drawn from sylvan hills ;

For all acts that make our hearts to quiver
With a strong emotion as we read,
Are divine, and go back to the Giver.
High endurance, courage, generous deed,

Come from Christ, and, unto Christ returning,
Find their full acceptance only there,
In that centre of all noble yearning,
In that type of all perfection fair.

Here we leave you in His Church, embalming
Your dear names with thoughts of love and peace,
Till He come to reign, all discord calming,
And the warfare of the world shall cease.

ON AN OLD FONT IN THE WARDEN'S
GARDEN AT WINCHESTER.

IGH not, nor deem that stone profaned
Whose lip has held, in olden day,
The hallow'd waters, where the stain'd
Wash'd earth's first taint away.

Still dearly love that sculptured shrine
Where hallow'd genius loved to bring
Her curious work, her rare design,
To God in offering.

The clustering arch, the storied pane
Still proudly prize—but let no thought
Sin to the fairer, statelier fane,
That His own hand has wrought;

Nor deem that broken font misplaced
Within this graceful garden-ground,
Flowers such as chisel never traced
Are here to clasp it round.

Here through the quiet Summer night,
Long silent nights without a cloud,
It lieth ; in the sweet star-light
Wrapt like a silver shroud.

Here incense sweet, at morn and even,
From countless censers riseth up,
And pure bright dew-drops, fresh from Heaven,
Fall in its broken cup.

Still through its guardian plane-trees tall
The fretted window fairly shows,
And on the turf the chapel wall
A stately shadow throws.

Still when the stream's wild bubble dies,
A deep sweet chant is on the air,
Teaching our hearts to harmonize
The holy and the fair ;

The hoary tower, the shadowy tree,
The stream, the flowers entwining gay,
Genius, and love, and piety,
Old strength and fair decay ;

182 *On an Old Font at Winchester.*

Here met and mingled—all His own,
Who Nature framed, who guided art,
Inspired the hand that traced the stone,
And stain'd the lily's heart.

Marble and flower to Him look up,
His presence hallows shrine and sod ;
Deem not they desecrate the cup
Who leave it here with God.



OUTSIDE.

I.

IN SPIRIT.

On seeing a Lady perverted to Romanism stand outside
Winchester Cathedral during Evening Service.

DOST thou stand at thy mother's threshold,
And wilt not enter in,
Though her sweet voice patiently swelleth
Over the city's din ?

Could a wandering child thus linger
Outside the latticed pane,
If she heard her own mother singing,
Within, her cradle strain ?

If she saw, through the narrow casement,
The lights on the hearth-stone burn,
And her brethren there, and her sisters
Waiting their sire's return ?

Down the long nave falleth the measure
That sooth'd thy childhood's rest,
And the mother is singing vespers,
Who bore thee on her breast ;

And the fire is bright on the altar,
And the worshippers are there—
Wilt thou stand alone on the threshold,
Out in the evening air ?



II.

IN BODY.



THOU hast been dwelling in a gleam
 Of glorious light, sent down from
 Heaven,

It mingled with thy morning dream,
 It broke the twilight of thine even ;

It came with concord of sweet sounds,
 With herald strains of church-bells ringing,
 With words of mercy breathing round,
 With chanted prayers and choral singing.

Along thy daily path it lay,
 For inward peace, for added grace,
 And thou didst linger in the ray ;
 The world shut out a little space.

'Tis past, or if it linger yet,
 Poor weary heart, 'tis not for thee,

Still, day by day, those sweet bells set
Chime to the murmur of the sea.

Still by the fair shrine never cease
The cry of penitence and prayer—
The answering voice of hope, and peace,
And comfort,—but thou art not there.

In vain the distant measure thrills
Thine heart, and vibrates in thine ear,
'Tis but an echo from the hills,
That cheats the home-sick mountaineer ;

'Tis but the wild wave's murmuring tone
In ocean-shell far inland heard ;—
But say not, dream not, thus alone
Is heavenward thought and rapture stirr'd.

Sweet are the strains that upward float
When Christian hearts in unison meet,
And passing sweet the pastoral note
That bears them to a Saviour's feet.

But, these denied, let no quick word
Or thought o'er fond, or hopeless sigh,
O living temple of the Lord !
Sin to Thine inward commune high.

Thou hast a shrine no hand can close,
No duty leave its courts untrod,
Where the true heart in secret knows
The presence of the spirit's God.

There grief may all her woes reveal,
There penitence may bring her shame,
Submission by the altar kneel,
And self-denial feed the flame ;

There patience, wearing duty's chain,
And meek-faced love, and pure desire,
May breathe within as sweet a strain
As ever thrill'd from yonder choir ;

There, though thy heart in vain should yearn
For other voice, estranged or dumb,
If thine own incense duly burn,
The great High Priest Himself shall come.

Ah ! dream in sorrowing mood no more,
Of vows unpaid, uncancell'd sin,
Thou art not shut from Eden's door,
Thy truest Heaven is found within.

Deep in that wounded heart of thine
The temple of thy refuge lies,
Thyself the altar and the shrine,
And thine own heart the sacrifice.





Miscellaneous.

WITHERED LEAVES.

DELICATE leaves, with your shifting
colours,
Crimson and golden, or russet brown,
Under what sunsets of calm October,
Out of what groves were ye shaken down ?

When the sun, dying in red and amber,
Tinted the woods with the hues he wore,
As the stain'd light in a great cathedral,
Through the east-window, falls on the floor.

In your high homes where the tall shafts quiver,
And the green boughs, like a trellis, cross,
When ye grow brighter, and change, and wither,
Symbols ye are of our gain and loss.


Hopes that we cherish'd, and grand ideals,
Dreams that to colour and substance grew,
Ah! they were lofty and green and golden,
Now they lie dead on our hearts like you.

Silent as snow from his airy chamber,
Down on the earth drops the wither'd leaf,
Silently back, on the heart of the dreamer,
Noticed of none, falls the secret grief.

Yet ye deceive us, beautiful prophets;
For like one side of an ocean shell,
Cast by the tide on a dripping sand-beach,
Only a half of the truth ye tell.

Much of decadence and death ye sing us,
Rightly ye tell us earth's hopes are vain,
But of the life out of death no whisper,
Saying, " We die, but we live again."

Bring us some teacher, O leaves Autumnal,
Some voice to sing, from your crimson skies,
Of the home where our hope is immortal,
Of the land where the leaf never dies.

AVES, waves, waves,
 Graceful arches, lit with night's pale gold,
 Boom like thunder through the mountain
 roll'd,

Hiss and make their music manifold,
 Sing, and work for God along the strand.

Leaves, leaves, leaves,
 Beautified by Autumn's scorching breath,
 Ivory skeletons, carven fair by death,
 Fall and drift at a sublime command.

Thoughts, thoughts, thoughts,
 Breaking, wave-like, on the mind's strange shore,
 Rustling, leaf-like, through it evermore,
 O, that they might follow God's good hand !

THE ROYAL BRIDAL.

ROUND wild Dunree's unshelter'd rock,
 That hears the broad Atlantic beat,
 The salt waves of the great sea lough
 Wash'd to the poet's feet.

Like jewel in a frosted setting
 Was that sweet day in winter time,
 And all day long those blue waves fretting
 Had mingled with his rhyme.

No harsher sound the distance broke,
 Where Inch, a giant fast asleep,
 Lay folded in his purple cloak,
 Upon a purple deep.

The round sun sinking slowly down
 Behind Rathmullan far away,
 Saw other hills eternal crown
 Mulroy's romantic bay.

All round his burning amber bed,
 Were rosy clouds, and crimson fringed,
And lines of golden light that led
 Through dark doors, silver-hinged.

Burn, burn, O sun ! along the west ;
 Ye fringed cloudlets shift and gleam,
Fill with bright shapes the poet's breast,
 Give colour to his dream.

For, like a relic in a shroud
 Of crimson silk, within its shrine,
His heart lies in a chapel proud,
 Wrapt in a vision fine.

A glorious trance of bridal pomp,
 Of tossing plume and jewell'd hair,
Of pawing steed and swelling trump,
 Brave men, and women fair.

No need of light clouds set on fire
 To paint the royal pageant's pride,
When passes to the blazing choir
 That graceful child-like bride.

When, proud of heart, but calm and grave,
The matron queen of all the land,
Comes pacing up the banner'd nave,
Her children in her hand.

Hush, weltering wave, and streams that dash
Down mountain clefts—ye charm no more,
He hears the organ's mighty crash,
He hears the anthem pour.

They pass,—they pause—prince, princess, queen,
And now the herald's task is done,
Dies slowly down the gorgeous scene
The word that makes them one.

Ah me! there's many a peasant's eye
That looks on purple Inch to-day,
And only sees a headland high,
A shadow in the bay.

There's many a curious, careless face,
Has look'd along that glittering line,
Seen but the beauty and the grace,
And mark'd the jewels shine.

They saw the fairest court on earth,
They saw the monarch most beloved,
Nor dream'd beneath that mask of mirth
What holier feelings moved.

They praised the regal mantle's flow,
They praised the diamonds richly piled,
While all the time the heart below
Was yearning for her child.

On the bride's brow, so young, so pale,
They watch'd the whiter myrtles set,
But not the glances through her veil,
Half love and half regret.

Ah, what dear household memories press'd
Through all their hearts!—what prayers were
pour'd
To Him whose hallowing presence bless'd,
Of old, the bridal board.

What broken links of joy there fell,
While still smiled on that face serene!
What tears were those—beseeming well
The mother and the queen!

Go, Bride, fair home afar be thine,
And happy even as her own ;
We grudge thee to that grand old Rhine,
And to thy German throne.

Old England gives thee from her arms,
She gives thee with all blessings crown'd,
All surest vows, all holiest charms
Wherewith true hearts are bound.

One general thrill of love and hope
Has stirr'd in all our island hearts—
From wooded plain, and pasture slope,
And crowded city marts,

To where, from rude cliffs beetling high,
The great sea-eagle northward shrieks,
And the long rolling billows lie
In mountain-guarded creeks.

MUSIC AT NIGHT.



TILL lingers eve with fond delay,
 Though night has claim'd yon lovely
 shore,

And sends from far her shadow grey,
 Pale twilight stealing on before.

And yonder waves of varying sheen,
 The distant headland's line of blue,
 The tall red cliffs, the soft sea-green,
 Are mingling in one misty hue.

'Tis past—that gleam of crimson light,
 The last faint blush of lingering day ;
 Now leaning from her stately height
 The silver moon looks on the bay.

And restless waves, that loved to chide,
 And fling their foam-like showers of snow,
 Calm as a lake without a tide,
 Lie still and quiver in her glow.

The clouds of grief have dimm'd his eye,
The waves of woe have swell'd his breast ;
What pure pale planet draweth nigh
Whose look can soothe them all to rest ?

Come, fairer than yon crescent moon ;
Come, touch the tone he loves so well ;
And grief and care shall slumber soon,
And sorrow own the soothing spell.

Come with thy calm and quiet grace,
Thy meek, soft smile and silver tone,
The rose-tints deepening on thy face,
And charm as thou canst charm alone.

There's not a wave on yon wide sea
But thrills to that pure power above,
Nor heart-string, weary though it be,
But trembles to the touch of love.

From Nature's beauteous outward things
What gleams of hidden life we win !
For still the world without us flings
Strong shadows of the world within.

Sweet scene ! we shall not love thee less
Because thy pulses, wild and free,
With our home-dream of happiness
This hour have thrill'd in harmony.

Rather, a thousand-fold more fair,
Thy sea, thy shore, fresh charms shall borrow,
For they have heard the tender air
She sang to-night to soothe his sorrow.

Torquay, 1850.



WRITTEN IN A VOLUME OF MATTHEW
ARNOLD'S POEMS.

O mine own poet dreaming, in his moun-
tains,
Such dreams as solitary moments nurse,
Go, Poet, that by Castaly's clear fountains
Hast twined thy glorious verse.

Go—when his wearied heart among the hills
Lies dead and flat—and breathe thy golden strain,
Till all the poet in his bosom thrills,
And high thoughts speak again.

He, too, has heard the bees in Summer weave
Their drowsy chant 'mid Oxford's scented limes ;
He, too, has watch'd the quickening pulses heave
The heart of these strange times ;

He, too, has felt the pressure of deep thought—
As his soul struggled through the angry throng,

When wrath, or fear, or love too keenly wrought—
Work itself off in song.

His voice, like thine, has rung in that great hall,
Through the deep silence, ere the plaudits stirr'd,
When thousand hearts hung breathless in the thrall
Of his own measured word.

Go—in brief pauses won from sterner duty,
Much needs the soul sweet fancy's wand of gold,
That, touching, tinges with a strange wild beauty
Earth's common things, and cold.

Go—and as sweet a strain perchance shall swell
Where his own fount of song lies sealed and dim,
For, when strange waters drop into the well,
It bubbles to the brim.



THE SEAMAN'S HOME.

VIDE let the venturous sea-bird roam,
 A speck on ocean's bosom cast,
 Touch with white breast the whiter foam,
 And shriek before the rising blast.

But give her, when her wing is weary,
 A home beyond the cliff's bare verge,
 That, resting in her rocky eyry,
 Her eye may scan the rolling surge.

Beyond, where bravest sea-bird dares,
 The seaman's eager prow has driven ;
 And far beyond the line that bears
 The mingled blue of sea and heaven :

His ship has drifted to the gale,
 Where, many a night, the full round moon
 Saw but herself and that white sail
 O'er all the central ocean strewn ;

Where, many a night, each cold, pale star
Look'd kindly on his lonely watch,
Telling of cottage homes afar,
And lattice lights beneath the thatch.

He brought the gold of other lands,
He braved the battle's stormy rage ;
Give him a home, where kindly hands
Shall rock the cradle of his age.

No grey-hair'd wife may soothe his grief,
No child may guide his tottering limb,
The honey on the wither'd leaf,
The charms of life are not for him.

But give him, on his own loved shore,
A quiet haven, where the brawl
Of the chafed sea shall vex no more,
Or only come at memory's call ;

And let some gentle pastoral tone
Speak to his soul of pardon'd sin,
Till mercy melt the heart of stone,
And hope, with sorrow, enter in ;

Till, as of old, when out at sea
His country far behind him faded,
Some brighter isle before would be,
With golden vales by palm-trees shaded.

So, as his life fades slow and calm,
And all of earth in distance dies,
The land that bears the heavenly palm
Shall break on faith's fast-closing eyes.



LENT LILIES.

BAIR children of unwilling spring,
 They grow beside our leafless bowers,
 And gentle hopes and perfumes bring,
 To cheer our cold and dreary hours.
 To sunless skies and scentless gale
 They lift their leaves of golden hue,
 Sweet Friend, they tell a cheering tale,
 Our Lent has lilies, too.

For through this penitential time
 Together have we watch'd and pray'd,
 Together heard the matin chime,
 And seen the tender evening fade;
 We trod the steep appointed way,
 We wash'd with tear-drops penitent,
 In meek obedience, day by day,
 The lilies of our Lent.


And not in vain these hours of woe
For haughty sons of sinful clay,
More rugged path He trod below
Who wash'd our heavy guilt away.
Yet cheerly tread—He rose who died,
Bright hope with all our grief is blent,
And we may wear, at Easter-tide,
The lilies of our Lent.

And when the toilsome strife is past,
All fasts, and fears, and vigils done,
How brightly then shall dawn, at last,
The everlasting Easter sun :
On eyes that tears shall never wet,
On hearts for ever pure and true ;
Oh, dearly loved and rarely met,
Our Lent has lilies, too !



THE DEAF AND DUMB CHILD.

I.

O voice nor sound for me had power,
 I walk'd as in a sun-lit night,
 The stillness of the midnight hour
 Was round me all the noon-day bright.

I saw the dark blue streamlet glide,
 The wild wind bow'd the forest trees,
 I heard no murmur in the tide,
 No music in the rushing breeze.

I saw bright eyes on bright eyes bent,
 The speaking glance I knew full well,
 But the lips moved—and what they sent
 To other lips I could not tell.

And, like to water cold and lone
 Hid down in some deep sunless cave,
 The current of my thoughts flow'd on ;
 No light was on the gloomy wave.

I walk'd the dew-bespangled sod,
 I look'd into the broad blue sky,
 I wist not of the good great God,
 I never dream'd of things on high.

II.

My soul is not untutor'd now,
 Even words and tongues for me have might,
 My thought has learn'd a calmer flow,
 And the dark waters leap in light ;

They tell me hill, and stream, and tree,
 Can breathe to God no grateful lays,
 Yet all day long they seem to me
 In loveliness to speak His praise.

And I have learn'd a dearer lore,
 Of blood-bought mercy freely won,
 And my freed lip above shall pour
 The praise in silence here begun.

Oh, happiest, who, running o'er
 With God's good gifts in mercy given,
 Turn from their own abundant store
 To teach the dumb the songs of Heaven.

And tenfold more unblest than mine
His hopeless, heartless, thankless lot,
Who hears on earth no voice Divine,
Whose lip can speak, and praises not.





Voices for the Dumb.

PRELUDE.*

WHEN her nest is scatter'd, a complaining
On the spray the little mother weaves,
From her heart's wild harp its sorrows
raining,
Thick as shadows from the shaken leaves.

There are lands, wherein, when Death's white
fingers
Tap at last upon the sick-room pane,
Send the neighbours all their sweetest singers—
Comes the minstrel of the cunning strain.

* These lines refer to a calamitous fire at the Derry and Raphoe Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, in which six of the inmates perished.

Sweetly are the singers measure keeping ;
Sweetly, sweetly do the minstrels play ;
Till the hot heart finds a vent in weeping,
As in rain the sultry summer day.

Nest and nestlings Death from us hath taken ;
Ruin broods upon our labour now ;
Ours is only like the music shaken
By the wild bird from the hawthorn bough.

Death climb'd up with crown of fire above him—
Not as sometimes to the child he comes,
Gentle, so that we can almost love him,
Knocking at the nurseries of our homes—

But with red eyes, mad in anger mortal,
And his red hair streaming wildly o'er,
Flashing fiery swords before the portal,
Hissing, like a serpent at the door.

We are but as poor musicians, ringing
On their harps some natural rise and fall—
We are only like the singers, singing
At the children's lowly funeral !

And far away,
By hill and bay,
Hearts have been mourning them night and day.
Where Foyle runs down
To her famous town,
Telling her banks of their old renown.

Where the rays make
A silver wake,
Dancing in light on the shadowy lake,
Whose soft waves pour
For evermore,
With a regular fall on her shingly shore.

In the long reach
Of sandy beach,
Where the wild sea-eagles at Malin screech,
And rock-reefs stand,
Far out from the land,
Like a chieftain charging in front of his band.

In grassy sweeps
Where the lone hut sleeps,
Rock'd by winds from the furzy steeps

Of hills that rest,
With gold on their breast,
Like kings in their regal garments drest.

There mothers weep
In anguish deep,
Starting at night in uneasy sleep,
And wave-wash'd reef,
And winds in the leaf,
Are set by their sorrow to songs of grief.

“ Oh, for one breath,
In that hot death,
Of the cool wind over the fragrant heath ;
Oh, for one wave,”
They cry, “ to lave
Those poor, little hearts in their burning grave.”

God's Spirit sweet
Quench Thou the heat
Of our passionate hearts that rave and beat ;
Quiet their swell,
And gently tell,
That God's right hand doeth all things well.

Under the shroud
Of His thunder cloud
Lie we still when His voice is loud,
And our hearts shall feel
His love-notes steal,
As a bird sings after the thunder-peal.

O Spirit dear,
Bring Him us near,
Who bore our sorrows and felt our fear ;
Who tenderly weighs
Each cross that He lays,
And saveth the soul that in mercy He slays.

Tell us they heard
(Whom never a word
Of our articulate language stirr'd)
That sweeter speech
That shall one day reach
All nations and tongues—in the heart of each.

In the dark room,
When the shriek of doom
Echoless knock'd at their heart's dull gloom,

Tell us Christ came,
And call'd by name
Each little lamb from the scorching flame.

Tell us that He,
As erst with the "three,"
Walk'd with those six in their agony ;
Drew them in nigher,
And wafted them higher,
To Heaven, whose chariot and horsemen are fire.



II.

THE VOICE OF HOPE.

WHAT is the saddest sound that ever gave
 Its weight of woe unto the earth or
 wave?—

A river, ringing out its long, low knell,
 As when a poet sings his sorrow well?
 A sea that sobs in starlight on the beach,
 With some great anguish shaking all his speech?
 A wind, that droneth out its midnight mass
 For the dead Summer, in a mountain pass?

Nay, none of these. Rhyme on, O ancient river!
 Break, break, O sea, upon thy beach for ever!
 And thou, wild wind, thy requiem intone,
 In the dark pine-wood, round the grey cairn stone!
 But all that sadness comes from conscious powers,
 And all those sobbings are not theirs, but ours;
 And they are but as bells that nature times,
 While we lend language to her random chimes.

A sad, sweet voice is by the river's brink,
But only sad and sweet for those who think.
The mute old mountain hath no head to ache—
The stern old ocean hath no heart to break.

Not from the sea, his grand and grief-full tune
Wailing on silver trumps to the white moon.
The saddest sounds are still the sounds that start
From the dark sea men call a human heart !
But saddest of the saddest unto me
Is the poor mutes' unmusical mimicry.
Fair to a mother's eye the tiny flower
That grows so gently in her nursery bower ;
Sweet to her ear the scarce-articulate word,
The first faint murmur of her little bird :
But the mute's mother listens—oh, how long !
And her bright bird can sing her no sweet song ;
And his voice rings not on with joy elate,
Like flower-bells swinging with their own sweet
weight.

Dim rain the sunlights on the blind boys' face,
They make no sunshine in that shady place ;
Yet love invisible bids his path rejoice,
Known, like the sky-lark, by its exquisite voice.

To other children knowledge, year by year,
Moveth in music through the open ear ;
And God's good spirit comes to all and each,
With his wings spread upon the winds of speech.
And words, those marvellous ships, whose freight
is thought,
Touch at the harbour of their hearts unsought.
But he, in sun-lit silence, fares abroad,
And his dark nature never felt for God ;
And no brave galley ever o'er the dim
And formless void hath walk'd the waves to him.

'Twas o'er the sealèd ear, the tongue yet tied,
The Man of Sorrows look'd to heaven and sigh'd.
They, too, have sigh'd, who rear'd that lowly dome,
Where the mute child might find his spirit's home.
They, too, have look'd to Heaven : albeit no tongue
For them were loosed, and no deaf man sung,
Yet there, the cunning finger finely twined
The subtle thread that knitteth mind to mind.
There, that strange bridge of signs was built, where
roll
The sunless waves that sever soul from soul,
And by the arch, no bigger than a hand,

Truth travell'd over to the silent land.
What though that tribe can have no poet strong
To steep their sorrow in the wine of song ;
Though their dull language never bursts and stirs,
As the gorse bursts out with its golden furze,
And thoughts' poor thorn above life's dusty walk
Hangs down no hawthorn-buds of pleasant talk.
Is not our richer language all too weak ?
Are not our best thoughts, thoughts we cannot
 speak ?

The grandest lights that ever lit the seas,
The grandest colour of the forest-trees,
Look in lone beauty to the lone, blue sky,
Unseen, unmiss'd by any mortal eye :
So hath the mute high thoughts unseen abroad,
Beautiful only for the eye of God !—
There, over Reason's silent harp of gold
Moved the wise hand, and out the music roll'd ;
There hove in sight through conscience' stormy mist,
That new-discover'd isle, the love of Christ.
There, too, they learn'd that life must never be
Like a bird swinging on a wind-rock'd tree,
But a great earnest thing that wrestles sore,
Till the night cometh when the work is o'er.

And did my gentle Saviour weep erewhile ?
Methinks I see Him look to Heaven and smile.

Smiled He that night, who dust for joy returns,
For life the ashes of so many urns ?
Smiled He who brought His little children nigher,
Girt with a glory of consuming fire ?
Of old with healing things He sweetly came—
Worketh He now His work with drops of flame ?
Often, methinks, the frown our blindness mourns,
Is a smile shadow'd by the crown of thorns.
Oft, just as morning comes with amice grey,
Where we have wrestled till the break of day,
The touch that shrinks our sinews where we stand,
Is a love-token of the bleeding hand.
Cry not in spirit o'er the blacken'd wall,
“ Ashes for beauty ! Home, and hearts, and all,
Labour, the gift of gold, the work of prayer,
Seek them, thou dreamer, in those ashes there ! ”
Nay, let thy sorrow take a truer strain,
Who work for God have never work'd in vain.
We write “ Resurgam ” where our hearts entrust
Love to the cold ground, and give dust to dust.
When thy hopes dying hang with Him who died,
Know that Good Friday hath its Easter-tide,

Nor say, "The Spring is maying on the meadows ;
The sunlights sail about the lake of shadows ;
The furze is burning goldenly all day,
As if a stream of stars had lost its way ;
Each heather'd mountain in the silence weaves
Raiment as purple as the passionate eve's.
But mother's lips are ever making moan
By Swilly's shore, by hills of dark Tyrone ;
For the small foot no longer prints the strand,
And the bright eye sees not the purple land,
And the swift step no longer bravely stirs
The pale gold primrose, and the deep red furze ;
For her mute child is where no shadows float,
No sunshine silvers any pilgrim's boat,
Nor the great laughter of the deep, salt sea,
Bids him behold, who cannot hear its glee."
Nay, Hope hath other strains than these in store.
I hear her faintly singing o'er and o'er—
"These from the fire, like those from Herod's sword,
Unconscious martyrs, wait on their dear Lord.
Our love is poorer by those perish'd things,
But He is richer by six priests and kings ;
And sweeter strains across His temple pass,
For six new harps are on the sea of glass."

III.

THE VOICE OF THE MOTHER.

LADY, lady," the mother said,
 Low kneeling on the sod ;
 " I came, I look'd upon my dead,
 And yet I thank my God."

And still she wept, and still she knelt—
 " The Lord God bless," said she,
 " The hands that work'd, the hearts that felt
 For my poor child and me.

" 'Tis not to look upon the place
 Where our darling lies at rest,
 That brings the salt tears to the face,
 The sorrow to the breast.

" 'Tis not to tell, in anguish sore,
 The manner of his going ;
 For that brief bitterness is o'er,
 And time is ever flowing.

“ But, oh, the mother’s infinite loss,
Who lays her treasure down,
And knows he never knew the cross
That only wins the crown.

“ And oh, the saltness of her tear
On her christen’d heathen’s grave,
Who could not tell to his closed ear
Of Him who waits to save.

“ How many a time I wept and pray’d
That Christ would wet the clay,
And give the speechless creature aid,
That in my bosom lay.

“ That He would touch the poor ears dim,
The lips so rosy fair,
Would touch them to a sense of Him,—
And Jesus heard my prayer.

“ I left him dull as ships afar,
That lie becalm’d in port,
And see the waves beyond the bar
Dash to the winds in sport ;

“ I came—a new intelligence
Had touch'd his soul's loose sail,
And, tighten'd by that quickening sense,
Each cord strain'd to the gale.

“ O blessed hope ! my speechless boy
Lies in his Saviour's breast ;
And what were years of this world's joy
To that one thought of rest ?

“ I hear no more the crackling flame,—
He heard it not at all ;
I only know that Jesus came,
And he could hear His call.”

FINIS.







