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POEMS

ON

Subjects in the Old Testament.

PART II.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "HYMNS FOR LITTLE CHILDREN," ETC.

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PART II.

BY

C. F. A.,

AUTHOR OF "HYMNS FOR LITTLE CHILDREN," "MORAL SONGS," ETC.

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POEMS

ON

Subjects in the Old Testament.

I.

The Ark a type.

“And the Temple of God was opened in Heaven, and there was seen in His Temple the Ark of His Testament.”—Rev. xi. 19.

THE clouds of night hang dark and dense,
An hour before the break of day,
Save when one crimson ray intense,
Comes peeping round their margin grey ;
And throbs of red light dimly seen,
Like quivering pulses, flash between.

But if thine eyes could pass the ridge
Of those huge clouds, like molten lead,
And pierce beyond their silver'd edge
Into the deep unfathom'd red,
Where from his bright day never done,
Comes round the great unresting sun ;

II. B

And see what corn-rich vales lie steep'd
 In glowing noon-tide far away,
 What hills in purple light are heap'd,
 O'er the green islet's silver bay—
 What dark woods stand with all their tips
 Still glowing from his golden lips ;

If thou could'st see that wondrous orb,
 Whose crimson shadows fall before,
 Whose light shall all those hues absorb,
 That curtain now Heaven's open door,
 How would'st thou start at once to view
 Noon's dazzling ray, Morn's roseate hue !

Then leave the dew-bespangled lawn,
 Each drop a diamond on the sod—
 Come, where the dim prophetic dawn
 Hangs o'er the old-world works of GOD ;
 And read them in the perfect light
 Of Christian noon-tide, clear and bright.

For thee the shadow and the type,
 Wear all their rich reality ;
 Not promise buds, not hopes unripe
 Are clustering round that mystic tree,
 That bears for thee on one fair root,
 At once the blossom, and the fruit.

Beneath the Mount where Moses stayed,
 Wrought well the craftsmen wise of heart,
 The shittim wood with gold o'erlaid,
 And carved the work of cunning art,
 The curtains twined with rare device,
 And made the incense of sweet spice.

Within its tent of scarlet furs,
 The warrior-leader set the shrine,
 Where, hidden from the worshippers,
 Slept ever in a calm divine
 The law, the bread, the rod unfaded,
 The mercy-seat, by cherubs shaded.

Fair gilded type! where we behold
 An image brighter than thine own,
 Of Him Who wears the crown of gold
 In glory by th' Eternal Throne,
 Who bore within the law of GOD,
 And felt the FATHER'S chastening rod.

His heavenly feast, the manna sweet,
 That feeds us as we walk below—
 His wounded heart the mercy-seat,
 Whence GOD'S best words of comfort flow—
 His light the lamp's undying spark,
 Himself the Presence and the Ark.

Thou journeyedst on from place to place,
 Till for thy home, the Monarch spread
 The white dome on the mountain's face;—
 He had not where to lay His Head,
 Till raised from death to Him 'twas given
 To tread the inner courts of Heaven.

Lead on, great Ark! where'er we go,
 As Israel's host was led of yore—
 Cast down the walls of Jericho,
 And part the waves on Jordan's shore;
 Till in GOD'S Temple walls we see,
 Our Ark at last, and rest with Thee.

II.

The Cloud on the Tabernacle.

“Whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the Tabernacle—the children of Israel journeyed not; but when it was taken up they journeyed.”—
 Numb. ix. 32.

WITHIN the Presence-cloud of GOD,
 His Ark enshrouded lay;
 No airs, that kiss'd the desert sod,
 Might breathe that mist away.

So wrapp'd their own soft leaves amid,
 The silver lilies grow,
 So lies the golden chalice hid
 Beneath the veil of snow.

But when the crescent moon from far
 Led up her countless train,
 A brighter light than any star,
 Glowed on the darken'd plain.

The wild beast skulking for his prey,
 Shunned that unearthly blaze,
 The desert bird fled fast away,
 Or shyly came to gaze:—

As outcasts wandering to and fro,
 Pause by the lighted hall,
 And watch the gleam along the snow
 From the high casements fall :

And eyes as wild, with wistful glance,
 Watched where that cloud was hung,
 The warrior leaning on his lance,
 The Priest with stave unslung,

While many a day the banners bright,
 Drooped listless in the heat,
 And children in their mother's sight
 Played down the tented street.

It rose, and over hill and dale,
 The pennons broad were flung—
 The Levite took the purple veil,
 The silver trumpets rung.

And onward boldly Israel trod
 Wide plain, or mountain grey,
 While, silent as the hand of GOD,
 It pointed out the way.

But more than fire in night's dark face,
 Than mists when suns are red,
 The Presence-cloud of love and grace,
 That CHRIST doth on us shed :—

The cloud that goes before our fears,
 And conquers every foe,
 The calm sweet light that glows and cheers,
 When hearts beat cold and low.

Rise up, O LORD ! and scatter Thou
 Our pride, and lust, and hate,
 The sins that line the mountain brow,
 And thron'g the city gate.

Return, O LORD ! when sad and low
 Beneath the desert skies,
 We pause in weariness, or woe,
 With salt tears in our eyes.

Come, gentle as a drooping cloud,
 Sweet as a summer star,
 With Thine own Self ourselves enshroud,
 And lead this weary war.

III.

The Invitation to Hobab.

“ And Moses said unto Hobab the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law : ‘ We are journeying unto the place of which the LORD said, I will give it you : Come thou with us, and we will do thee good.’ ”—Num. x. 29.

“ COME, go with us, the desert path
 Has many a lone and lovely spot,
 Where underneath the tall green palm,
 The silent waters, cool and calm,
 Sleep in their silver grot.

“ And those wild eyes shall pierce for us,
 The unbroken blue that rings us round,
 And o'er the desert's burning face
 Along the track that leaves no trace,
 Shall find their depths profound.

“ Dark chieftain of the wandering tribe,
 Come with us! for thou knowest well,
 (Whose foot hath tracked the desert bird,
 Whose ear the lion's voice has heard,)
 What perils round us dwell.

“Come with us! we will do thee good,
 When skies with morning roses blush;
 Thine hand shall gather angels’ food,
 And for thy cheer the cooling flood
 Out of the rock shall rush.

“For we are journeying to the land
 Where golden corn, and purple vine,
 Streak the dark mountain’s laden breast.
 Come with us! and that glorious rest
 For ever shall be thine.”

So sang they to the Arab chief,
 Along the dewless, desert lea.
 O Christian youth! that waverest still,
 With wandering glance, and perverse will,
 So sing we unto thee.

Come with us, dost thou linger yet?
 The Red sea spray has touched thy brow,
 And, bright as Israel’s streamers fair,
 Floats far above thee in the air
 The banner of thy vow.

And sweet as odorous plants, their shadow
 Flinging on some poor wanderer’s face,
 Who kneels beside the fount at noon,
 On thy bowed head shall fall full soon
 The touch that winneth grace.

Full soon the desert altar wild,
 Shall bear for thee the fruit divine,
 The heavenly bread, and that dark flood,
 Struck from the living rock—the blood
 Drunk with that mystic vine.

And if thine heart have loved too well
 The songs, and scents of Egypt's bowers,
 Come with us! and thy youth shall know
 A holier joy, a purer glow,
 In this strange march of ours.

For many a time the spicy gale
 Comes wandering round our pilgrim band,
 And many a shadowy isle of palms,
 Like a green boat rocks in the calms
 Of this great sea of sand.

Come with us! o'er the hills afar,
 The promised land lies steeped in glory;
 But never spy has gone before,
 And come again, of that fair shore
 To tell the wondrous story.

Their Canaan wore a thousand tints
 From field, and rock, and flowers that wither;
 Ours glows and gleams in one still light,
 From CHRIST's perpetual presence bright,
 Come with us, for we wander thither!

IV.

The Faithless Spies.

“ But the men that went up with him said, ‘ We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.’—
Num. xiii. 31.

“ Go not up to that land, though the purple grapes
glowing
In clusters of beauty hang red by the rill,
Though the valleys are green, and the cornfields
are showing,
Like girdles of gold on the vineyarded hill.

“ We have searched out its regions of beauty and
glory,
From Zin where the salt sea beats cold on the sand,
By Rehob, and Hamath, to Hebron the hoary,
And borne back from Eshcol the fruit of the land.

“ From Shenir, and Hermon all crested with ices,
From Lebanon dark with the cedar and fir,
At daybreak we gazed on the gardens of spices,
And caught the first breath from the mountains of
myrrh.

“The roe-deer woke up on the wild hill of Bether,
 The top of Anana looked red in the glow,
 The pomegranates blushed in the orchards beneath
 her,
 And doves by the lattice were murmuring low.

“The figtree and vine by their threshold are
 twining,
 But go ye not up with the sword in your hand ;
 The bucklers of brass on their ramparts are
 shining,
 The children of Anak are strong in the land.”

O false and fainthearted! who looked on the
 beauty,
 And tasted the sweetness, but feared to pass in ;
 Who turned back the hosts of the LORD from
 their duty,
 Till He left them alone in their darkness and sin.

There's a land far away o'er the waste and the
 river,
 The desert of life, and the Jordan of death ;
 No foot has gone in there, or come again ever,
 To bring back the grapes that grow ripe in its
 breath.

No eye ever looked on its heavenly splendour,
 The light without shadow that sleeps on its sod,

No ear ever thrilled to the harmonies tender,
That rock there the rest of the people of GOD.

More faithless by far, if in sight of that portal,
We turn back to toy with the follies of life ;
Nor deem that its joys, and its mansions immortal,
Were worth all the danger and toil of our strife.

V.

Caleb and Joshua.

“And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes ; and they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, ‘The land which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land.’”—Num. xiv. 6, 7.

THE mist-wrapp’d mountains stand like grisly
shadows,
The driving clouds come blinding from the west,
O’er the black marshes, and the dripping meadows,
And the swollen river’s breast.

The clouds hang heavily in leaden masses
On the hilltops, or wildly eastward roll ;
The struggling wind moans in the mountain passes,
Like an imprisoned soul.

Who now could call up gleams of sunny weather,
 Flooding the plain, and dancing on the rill,
 And those soft shadows of the purple heather,
 Staining th' unclouded hill ?

Ah, no ! like rainbow tints that children capture,
 Even from our grasp unrealised they part ;
 Dream as we will, the summer's golden rapture
 Thrills not the wintry heart.

And hard it is, when visible shadows bound us,
 Tied to its duties, by its chidings vex'd,
 With all of this world ever, ever round us,
 To realise the next.

Hard was it haply in the desert lonely,
 For those two hearts that tedious forty years ;
 Caleb and Joshua—found faithful only,
 Amid a people's fears.

When night by night, a ring of fiery lustre,
 The hot sun burned into the dead white sand ;
 When day by day, in the same weary cluster,
 The tents stood on the land ;

And like the scanty plumes at some poor burial,
 A few tall palms at furthest distance placed,
 With their stiff shadows broke the blue ethereal
 Of the monotonous waste :

Hard was it to call up the cornfields golden,
 The purple vintage by the brook of grapes,
 The giant cedars in the forest olden,
 The graceful mountain shapes.

Yet for all this, through all the lone recesses,
 Of those wild hills shall summer smile again,
 The stream shall dimple to her bright caresses,
 The flowers shall paint the plain.

Yet for all this, in Canaan Caleb's daughters
 Dwelt by the upper and the nether springs,
 Still Joshua led through Jordan's riven waters,
 And o'er the necks of kings.

Yet for all this, true faith is eagle-sighted,
 Steadying her gaze though the weak heart will
 shrink,
 Into the land of sun and moon unlighted,
 O'er the dark river's brink,

Into that summer where these wintry sorrows,
 That wrap us round and round shall fall away,
 Where from past joys no light the spirit borrows,
 CHRIST is its Light for aye!

VI.

The Red Heifer.

“ And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and it shall be kept for a water of separation : it is a purification for sin.”—Num. xix. 9.

WE need not now like Israel's son,
 The sprinkled ashes making pure ;
 For us a nobler work is done,
 And we have found a better cure.

Forth from the lone camp in the wild,
 A spotless thing without a stain,
 They led th' unblemished creature mild,
 And slew her in the desert-plain.

Bring hither what your hands have spoiled,
 The gold, the silver, and the lead—
 Or if there be whose robe is soiled,
 Or one whose hand has touched the dead :

Come scatter wide the ashen shower,
 And let the waters o'er them lie,
 And that bright sprinkling shall have power
 From aught unclean to purify.

A stainless victim, holy all,
 Without a spot on soul or frame,
 Forth from the city's guilty wall,
 To death our sinless Offering came.

And lo! a tide to cleanse, and save,
 A thousand times more free and wide
 Than that old purifying wave,
 Is gushing from His riven Side.

That did but touch the outward part,
 This purifies the soul within;
 The only tide to reach the heart,
 The only wave that washes sin.

Then if there be, who born anew,
 Have soiled the robe without a stain,
 Come hither, and this crimson dew
 Shall wash it white as snow again;

And bring whate'er in studious hour,
 Whate'er in life's keen strife ye gain,
 Learning, and wealth, and moral power,
 Each treasure of the heart and brain.

Bring burning thought, and reason strong,
 The iron of the earnest mind,
 The golden pen, the silver song,
 Nor leave one glorious gift behind.

And wash them all in CHRIST'S dear Blood,
 So shall your works be sanctified ;
 For nought is pure, or true, or good,
 That hath not touched that crimson tide. ♦

 VII.

The Dead.

SUGGESTED BY A SCENE ON ASCENSION DAY.

"He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days."—Num. xix. 11.

I HEARD the bells clang out, that told
 It was the LORD'S Ascension Day.
 Leisurely the great river rolled,
 Keeping its own eternal time ;
 And from the thorn, and from the lime,
 Sweet came the breeze of May.

Two wasted tapers flared and died,
 Beside a little cradle bed,
 Two sleeping babies lay inside ;
 No need for mother's lullaby,
 A white cloth at their feet did lie,
 A white cloth at their head.

Soft primrose flowers that first unfurl
 Were strewn amidst the snowy bands,
 As like they lay as pearl to pearl,

As still, save when the mother press'd,
 With restless lip those lips at rest,
 Or kissed the waxen hands.

• Yea, Christian mother, fold them fast,
 Thou dost not fear defilement given ;
 No need of sprinkling ashes cast
 On garment soiled and weeping face,
 Polluted by that last embrace,
 Until the seventh day's even.

Those pale twin brows were washen clean,
 The shadow of the Cross is there ;
 Fair shrines where GOD Himself has been,
 (And never Grecian reared a fane,
 With marble of such delicate vein,
 Or chiselled work so rare.)

One fleshly form within the veil,
 For sinners' sake has passed to-day,
 And evermore the curse doth fail,
 Because the glory that He set
 On our man's nature lingers yet,
 And we are hallow'd clay.

O blessed creed for joy or pain,
 And soothing e'en our worst distress,
 Teaching that these shall live again ;
 Love unrebuked may linger now,
 O'er the closed lip, and kiss the brow,
 And hoard the silken tress.

These bodies of our pain and woe,
 Wherein the spark of life divine
 Was born, and nursed, and struggled so,
 Like costly odours that all day,
 Burn dimly in a lamp of clay,
 Before some Indian shrine.

These bodies that weigh down the soul,
 Shall live again in form and frame,
 Though death have revell'd on the whole,
 When the grave's victory is o'er,
 And pain, and sin can hurt no more,
 How changed, yet still the same!

VIII.

The Punishment of Moses.

“And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed Me not—ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.”—Numb. xx. 12.

“Get thee up into this Mount Abarim—yet thou shalt see the land before thee, but thou shalt not go thither unto the land that I give the children of Israel.”—Deut. xxxii. 49, 52.

OVER the cedars beyond Jordan growing,
 Come, balmy breeze! and touch the old man's cheek,
 Come from the land with milk and honey flowing:
 His eye not dim, his natural strength not weak,
 He stands and gazes from Abarim's peak,
 But never shall his weary foot pass o'er
 Like a glad bird to that desired shore.

Sweet as the image fair in every part
The mother pictures of her babe unborn,
Feeling the burden at her happy heart;
Dear as his home to wayfarer forlorn;
As to the youth his hope of bridal morn;
So dear, so sweet had been that old man's dream
Of the good land beyond the silver stream.

How oft, when Pharaoh's halls were wild with joy,
That vision like a strain of music stole
O'er the lone musings of the Hebrew boy;
How often, like a charm, it used to roll
Before him in the desert, when his soul
Was weary; and his spirit fail'd within,
Vex'd with the people's selfishness, and sin.

And now it lies before him, all embalm'd
In odours like a garden; and he stands
Like a good ship just in the port becalm'd—
Her crew hang o'er her sides with idle hands,
And see their wives and children thron'd the sands,
Gaze on the outstretch'd arms they cannot reach,
And hear their voices murmur from the beach.

There lies the golden end of all his hopes,
To fancy fair, more beautiful to sight:
The blue topp'd mountains with long sunny slopes,
And deep green hollows bath'd in purple light;
The foam-white streamlets leaping from the height,

And stretching far away the chequer'd plain,
 Red with its grape, and yellow with its grain.

But he may never cross the silver river,
 Because in Kadesh, when the people strove,
 He sinn'd to the LORD GOD; and so for ever
 He turns from the fond dream his childhood wove,
 His boyhood's eager hope, his manhood's love—
 Turns with quick quivering lip and streaming eye,
 And lies down on the mountain top to die.

Come, sinful soul, where purple Pisgah dips
 Her brow in clouds; watch by this dying Saint,
Once spake he unadvis'dly with his lips,
 Are not thine full of anger and complaint,
 Words quick, and light, or with a fouler taint?
 He *once* rebell'd—then what of thee whose life
 Is one long treason, one continual strife?

And, O for him, though life's dear hope was
 blighted,
 Better that mountain grave by hands undrest,
 Where soft winds sang, and angel forms alighted;
 For sweeter far than Israel's promised rest
 For ever safe to lie down with the blest,
 And fairer still than Canaan's boasted sod
 Th' eternal hills, the Paradise of GOD.

IX.

Balaam.

“And Balak brought Balaam unto the top of Peor that looketh toward Jeshimon.”—Numb. xxiii. 28.

“And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents,—and the Spirit of God came upon him.”—Numb. xxiv. 2.

IN Moab's plains the tents of Israel lie,
Like cedar trees in many a goodly row.
Jeshimon's breezes as they wander by,
Bear up her children's songs to Peor's brow.

Is it the sunbeam flashing on the rills,
That touches the dark mountain into light?
Is it the bald old eagle of the hills
That claps his wings exulting from the height?

No glistening sunbeam on the streamlet shines,
Screams from the beetling crag no eagle grey;
Why dost thou linger by thy seven shrines,
Wild prophet! from the river far away?

Why dost thou bid the twice seven victims bleed,
Seeking enchantments in thy waywardness,
Who knowest well the doom by Heaven decreed,
Whose prophet-lip can only part to bless?

Fear not, O Israel ! in the shadow sleeping
 Of that great mountain like a fawn at rest,
 Thy wandering sons are in a safer keeping,
 How shall GOD's Prophet curse whom GOD has
 blest ?

He seeks no more enchantments ; from the tip
 Of the blue hill he gazes, and the tide
 Of glorious blessing gushes from his lip,
 Like silver water from a dark rock's side.

The vision of the Almighty fills his eyes,
 He looks into the latter days afar,
 Sees the gold sceptre out of Israel rise,
 Sees bright from Jacob break the morning star.

Fare on, thou favour'd host ! not Moab's king
 Can buy one curse with all his proffer'd gold,
 Lo ! in his ear, red Edom's dirges ring,
 And Moab's doom, and Amalek's are told.

So fareth CHRIST's dear Church, belovèd much,
 Through Moab's plains, the desert, and the river ;
 No curse can reach, no rage of man can touch
 The souls redeem'd she holdeth safe for ever.

And that dark seer that like a wild storm-cloud
 Half light, half darkness, swept o'er Israel's path
 With GOD's pure glory burning thro' the shroud
 Of his own wilful worldliness, and wrath ;

A shrine defiled where grace and mammon met,
 A mystery of knowledge and of sin,
 Oft as his tranced eye to the desert set,
 Looms on our thought, and his strong words
 break in.

Fear we the double heart, the service cold,
 The covetous desire that leads astray,
 The lust of earthly place, the love of gold,
 Ask we a single eye to choose the narrow way.

 X.

The possession on this side Jordan.

“We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones, but we ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel.”—Numb. xxxii. 16.

WHERE pastoral Jazer stretches wide,
 Where balmy Gilead slopes away,
 From fruitful Hermon’s mountain side
 To where the Jordan’s waters stray,
 As drops the dove into her nest,
 As lies the lamb down in the fold,
 Manasseh! let thy thousands rest,
 And warrior Gad, and Reuben bold!

For more to you these pastoral dells
 Where the huge ox unburdened walks,
 And crushes down the cowslip bells,
 And daisies on their tender stalks;

Than fields of corn that make the plain
 To ripple like a sea of gold ;
 Than grapes that cast a purple stain,
 On the dark mountain's bosom cold ;

Here let your lowly homestead rise,
 Where the green figleaf thickest twines
 With lattices for maidens' eyes,
 And cool verandahs hung with vines.
 Where, when the mother rests at last,
 The babe, unwean'd upon her knee,
 Shall watch the lambs that frolic past,
 And clap its dimpled hands in glee.

But though your hearts be left behind,
 Still let your arms be strong and brave.
 The buckler on your shoulders bind,
 And dip the foot in Jordan's wave.
 Go ready arm'd before the LORD
 Win the good land beyond the river,
 Then rest ye like a victor's sword
 That drops into its sheath for ever !

Return ! and long in peace and joy,
 Your flocks shall fill these valleys fair
 And shepherd-fathers teach the boy
 The greenest spots embosom'd there.

The maids shall chatter at the mill,
 The sheep-bells tinkle from the height,
 And when all other sounds are still
 The nightingale shall sing at night.

O precious rest, and duly earn'd,
 Those grass rich glades, that clover sod,
 Where Israel's bloody battle burn'd
 Afar for Canaan, and for GOD;
 For many a year, from Jordan's ford
 To Arnon's brook all gemm'd with froth,
 Told lowing kine, and bleating herd,
 How well the warrior kept his troth.

Come then ; but not for strain of lute
 Or cattle bells along the shore.
 These all are broken now and mute,
 Their lonely haunts shall teach thee more,
 Shall teach the truth so oft forgot,—
 Man lives not for himself alone,
 He may not hold his own fair lot,
 Regardless of another's moan.

And none of us unmoved may view
 His brother's strife, or hear him plead ;
 We must go over Jordan too,
 With many a self-denying deed ;

We may not turn in joy and health,
 To homes with peaceful blessings crown'd,
 And stores of spiritual wealth,
 While souls and bodies starve around.

Their cries on every breeze are borne,
 GOD'S champions battle in the van.
 We're every one a warrior sworn,
 And each must do the most he can,
 Use all his powers—though faint and few—
 Give prayers, and soothing words, and alms,
 Else Hermon hath for us no dew,
 And Gilead's bowers no precious balms.

 XI.

Gerizim and Ebal.

“Thou shalt stand upon Mount Gerizim and bless the people—and thou shalt stand upon Mount Ebal to curse.”—
 Deut. xxvii. 12, 13.

HE that hath climb'd Gerizim's steep
 Has loved to linger on the height,
 And feel the rapturous thrills that creep
 Through every sense from ravish'd sight.

So fair beneath the glowing scene
 Of groves and gardens breathing balm,
 And rich with ever varied green
 Dark olive bower, and crested palm.

And still their tints are most profuse,
 And still the landscape fairest shines,
 Where like a snow-drift white Nablous,¹
 Lies nestling in her purple vines.

From neighbouring Ebal's summit bare
 The wild hawk shrieks upon the gale,
 And sweet songs wrapt in scented air
 Come wandering up from Leban's vale.

But thought too has her inward views,
 The golden gleams that never fell
 On visible landscape—shapes and hues
 To the soul's eye made palpable.

So from rich vale and mountain hoary,
 His wandering eye shall turn within,
 And many a glorious old time story
 Shall to a holier rapture win.

In Shechem's fields the white flocks stray,
 The spice-encumber'd camels bear
 Their rich load up the rocky way,
 And Joseph's brethren linger there.

No more of piping pastoral note
 That rose at eve by Jacob's well:
 In the steep pass bright banners float,
 And loud the brazen trumpets swell.

¹ Modern name of Samaria.

Joy-flushed they come, a glorious band,
 Elders and priests and warriors all,
 From Ai's spoil, from Jordan's strand,
 From Jericho's GOD-stricken wall.

'Now hush'd in awe the living tide
 Rolls, quiet as a silent surge,
 To either mountain's barren side,
 And motionless hangs upon its verge.

The curses of a broken law
 In mutter'd storms from Ebal roll;
 Gerizim, fair in rapturous awe,
 Speaks blessings on th' obedient soul.

Now band and banner fade together,
 The patient seedsman flings the grain,
 In a bright noon of Autumn weather,
 Along the fertile Syrian plain.

Who sitteth worn with toil, and want,
 On Jacob's well, by Joseph's grave,
 While sinful woman scarce will grant
 The draught His parched lip would crave?

Hungry, and thirsty, and alone,
 He rests the wearied human limb,
 Those mountain-shadows o'er Him thrown,
 And all their types are found in Him.

Fountain of bliss! a thousand fold
 Richer than aught Gerizim spake;
 Nor ever curse from Ebal rolled,
 Dark as He bore for sinner's sake.

O weary flesh, and over task'd;
 Poor sons of toil in every land!
 He knew your sorrows ere ye ask'd,
 And feels your griefs at GOD's right hand.

O laden souls! by guilt press'd down
 He bore for you the curse of sin,
 He earn'd the palm, the robe, the crown,
 And all Gerizim could not win.

Fade gorgeous landscape, tower and tree!
 Or steep'd in beauty linger still,
 Where never eye of ours shall see,
 Beyond the far dawn-crimson'd hill.

But still to memory's eye be dear,
 Still palpable to soul and thought,
 The weary love that linger'd here,
 And all the precious truth He taught.

XII.

The Burial of Moses.

“And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab over against Beth-Peor, but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.”—Deut. xxxiv. 6.

BY Nebo's lonely mountain,
 On this side Jordan's wave,
 In a vale in the land of Moab
 There lies a lonely grave.
 And no man knows that sepulchre,
 And no man saw it e'er,
 For the angels of GOD upturned the sod,
 And laid the dead man there.

That was the grandest funeral
 That ever pass'd on earth ;
 But no man heard the trampling,
 Or saw the train go forth—
 Noiselessly as the daylight
 Comes back when night is done,
 And the crimson streak on ocean's cheek
 Grows into the great sun ;

Noiselessly as the spring-time
 Her crown of verdure weaves,
 And all the trees on all the hills,
 Open their thousand leaves ;

So without sound of music,
 Or voice of them that wept,
 Silently down from the mountain's crown,
 The great procession swept.

Perchance the bald old eagle,
 On grey Beth Peär's height,
 Out of his lonely eyrie,
 Looked on the wondrous sight;
 Perchance the lion stalking,
 Still shuns that hallowed spot,
 For beast and bird have seen and heard,
 That which man knoweth not.

But when the warrior dieth,
 His comrades in the war,
 With arms reversed and muffled drum,
 Follow his funeral car;
 They show the banners taken,
 They tell his battles won,
 And after him lead his masterless steed
 While peals the minute gun.

Amid the noblest of the land,
 We lay the sage to rest,
 And give the bard an honour'd place
 With costly marble drest,

In the great minster transept
 Where lights like glories fall,
 And the organ rings, and the sweet choir
 sings,
 Along the emblazon'd wall.

This was the truest warrior
 That ever buckled sword ;
 This, the most gifted poet
 That ever breath'd a word.
 And never earth's philosopher
 Traced with his golden pen
 On the deathless page truths half so sage
 As he wrote down for men.

And had he not high honour,
 The hill side for a pall,
 To lie in state, while angels wait
 With stars for tapers tall,
 And the dark rock-pines, like tossing plumes,
 Over his bier to wave,
 And GOD's own hand in that lonely land
 To lay him in the grave.

In that strange grave without a name,
 Whence his uncoffin'd clay
 Shall break again, O wondrous thought !
 Before the Judgment Day,

And stand with glory wrapt around
 On the hills he never trod,
 And speak of the strife, that won our life,
 With the Incarnate SON of GOD.

O lonely grave in Moab's land!
 O dark Beth-peor's hill!
 Speak to these curious hearts of ours,
 And teach them to be still.
 GOD hath His mysteries of grace,
 Ways that we cannot tell,
 He hides them deep, like the hidden sleep
 Of him He loved so well.

XIII.

Rahab.

"By faith Rahab perished not with them that believed not when she had received the spies with peace."—Heb. xi. 31.

RISE up, rise up, O Rahab;
 And bind the scarlet thread
 On the casement of thy chamber,
 When the battle waxeth red.

From the double feast of Gilgal,
 From Jordan's cloven wave,
 They come with sound of trumpet
 With banner and with glaive.

Death to the foes of Israel !
 But joy to thee, and thine,
 To her who saved the spies of GOD,
 Who shows the scarlet line !

'Twas in the time of harvest, -
 When the corn lay on the earth,
 That first she bound the signal
 And bade the spies go forth.

For a cry came to her spirit
 From the far Egyptian coasts,
 And a dread was in her bosom
 Of the Mighty LORD of Hosts.

And the faith of saints and martyrs
 Lay brave at her heart's core,
 As some inward pulse were throbbing
 Of the kingly line she bore.

As there comes a sudden fragrance
 In the last long winter's day,
 From the paly silken primrose,
 Or the violet by the way.

And we pause, and look around us,
 And we feel through every vein
 That the tender spring is coming
 And the summer's rosy reign.

In the twilight of our childhood,
When youth's shadows lie before,
There come thoughts into our bosoms
Like the spies to Rahab's door.

And we scarcely know their value,
Or their power for good or ill,
But we feel they are GOD's angels,
And they seek us at His will.

And we tremble at their presence,
And we blush to let them forth,
In some word of tender feeling,
Or some deed of Christian worth.

Yet those guests perchance may witness
In that awful battle day,
When the foe is on the threshold,
And the gates of life give way :

When the soul that seeks for safety,
Shall behold but one red sign—
But the blood drops of Atonement
On the cross of Love Divine !

XIV.

The warning Angel.

“And an Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim.”—Judges ii. 1.

AN Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal
 Up to the place of tears,
 From where in the deep forest-calms
 The ancient wind was singing psalms,
 And all in tune, the tall green palms
 Bow'd down their feathery spears.

The Angel spake at Bochim to the people,
 And like a whirlwind swept
 His words of anger, as he told
 Of heathen shrines within the fold,
 Of heathen altars on the wold,
 Till all the people wept.

They wept, like husbandmen in summer weather
 Who watch the ripening corn,
 And see the crimson poppy stain
 The yellowing sea of golden grain,
 Like drops of blood; and all in vain
 Their idle spring-time mourn.

E

Cometh the Angel of the LORD full often
 And standeth by our homes,
 Not in his visible presence bright
 Passing from Gilgal's palmy height
 With word of power, and arm of might,
 Yet evermore he comes.

Perchance he takes death by the hand and standeth
 Low knocking at our door,—
 We miss one little lambkin's bleat,
 The gabbling voice so wild and sweet,
 The tottering of uneven feet
 Along the nursery floor.

Perchance he comes with sickness in his quiver,
 And stirreth all the deeps
 Of our whole inward life, and tells
 Where in our bosom's secret cells
 In its green grove some idol dwells,
 Some sin unheeded sleeps.

But whether with sharp pain he come, or sorrow,
 Happy who own him near;
 Who o'er the bier, and by the bed,
 Feel his white wings and know his tread
 And softly say with bended head,
 "An Angel hath been here"!

Yes, he hath come up surely to our Bochim
 Out of the green palm-wood ;
 So hearken we GOD's awful word,
 Lay bare our bosom's bleeding chord,
 And make an offering to the LORD,
 Even where the Angel stood.

 XV.

Sisera.

"The LORD made me have dominion over the mighty."
 Judges v. 13.

FORTH look'd the mother from her lattice high,
 To Judah's mountains turn'd her proud dark eye,
 "Why do his chariot wheels delay so long ?
 Why tarries thus the valiant and the strong ?

"Have they not sped ? have they not won the day ?
 To every man hath been a glorious prey,
 The gorgeous work by Syrian maidens plann'd,
 And fair young slaves the choicest in the land.

"Sure he will deck his loved ones with the spoil,"
 In vain she looketh toward that envied soil :
 With shout and song in peace returning home
 He cometh not ; nor e'er again shall come.

Far far away, within the Kenite's tent
 His brow is bloody, and his head is bent

Where Kishon's ancient waters hurry by
On Taanach's plains his trampled warriors lie.

For Israel's GOD hath led the glorious fight,
Abinoam's son has conquer'd in His might,
And she who sat by Bethel's judgment tree
Has risen to chant the song of victory.

One woman dwelling in her tent alone
In the LORD's Name has slain the mighty one,
She heard the cry of battle on the blast,
She stayed the flying chieftain as he passed.

Then say not here on earth are feeble things,
Too weak, and mean, to serve the King of kings ;
The shallow stream scarce noticed in its course
Feeds the broad lake, and swells the torrent's
force.

Prayers of the poor and lowly, heard above,
Hang like a charm around the Church we love,
And sighs prevail, and simple words have power
More than we think, when foes like tempests
lour.

Weak woman's love when CHRIST was here below,
How oft it served and soothed the "Man of
Woe."

And children's voices swelled the loud acclaim,
When once in lowly state, to Zion's walls He
came.

XVI.

Gideon's Fleece.

"And Gideon said unto God, Let me prove, I pray Thee, but this once with the fleece."—Judges v. 39.

ALL night long on hot Gilboa's mountain,
With unmoistened breath, the breezes blew;
All night long the green corn in the valley
Thirsted, thirsted for one drop of dew.

Came the warrior from his home in Ophrah,
Sought the white fleece in the mountain pass,
As he heard the crimson morning rustle
In the dry leaves of the bearded grass.

Not a pearl was on the red pomegranate,
Not a diamond in the lily's crown,
Yet the fleece was heavy with its moisture,
Wet with dew drops where no dew rained down.

All night long the dew was on the olives,
Every dark leaf set in diamond drops;
Silver frosted lay the lowland meadows,
Silver frosted all the mountain tops.

Once again from Ophrah came the chieftain,
Sought his white fleece mid the dewy damps,
As the early sun looked through the woodlands
Lighting up a thousand crystal lamps.

Every bright leaf gave back from its bosom,
 Of that breaking sun a semblance rare ;
 All the wet earth glistened like a mirror,
 Yet the fleece lay dry and dewless there.

Type, strange type, of Israel's early glory,
 Heaven-besprinkled when the earth was dry ;
 Mystic type too of her sad declining,
 Who doth desolate, and dewless lie,

When all earth is glistening in the Presence
 Of the Sun that sets not night or day,
 When the fulness of His Spirit droppeth
 On the islands very far away.

Dream no more of Israel's sin and sorrow,
 Of her glory and her grievous fall,
 Hath that sacrament of shame and splendour
 To thine own heart not a nearer call ?

There are homes whereon the grace of Heaven
 Falleth ever softly from above,
 Homes by simple faith, and Christian duty,
 Steeped in peace, and holiness, and love :

Churches where the voice of praise and blessing
 Droppeth daily like the silver dew,
 Where the earnest lip of love distilleth
 Words, like water running through and through.

There are children trained in truth and goodness,
 Graceless, careless in those holy homes,
 There are hearts within those Christian temples,
 Cold as angels carved upon the domes.

Places are there sin-defiled and barren,
 Haunts of prayerless lips, and ruined souls:
 Where some lonely heart, in secret, filleth
 Cups of mercy, full as Gideon's bowls.

Where some CHRIST-like spirit, pure and gentle,
 Sheddeth moisture on the desert spot,
 Feels a tender Spirit, in the darkness,
 Dewing all the dryness of his lot.

CHRIST! be with us, that these hearts within us
 Prove not graceless in the hour of grace;
 Dew of heaven! feed us with the sweetness
 Of Thy Spirit in the dewless place.

XVII.

Jephthah's Daughter.

"And she went with her companions and bewailed her
 virginity upon the mountains."—Judges xi. 38.

THROUGH the woods and pastures comes a crying,
 A sweet voice that neither fears nor hopes,
 Mid the ancient oaks of Bashan dying,
 Dying on green Hermon's sunny slopes.

Not the mother, when her grief is sorest
 For her nest and nestlings torn away,
 Sends a sadder wailing through the forest,
 Sitting lonely on her hawthorn-spray.

Not the wild deer, wounded by the fountain,
 Gasping out his life with heavy moan,
 Draws a wilder echo from the mountain,
 Hath a stranger anguish in his tone.

For she wailleth, wailleth, in the hollows,
 On the hill-tops rich with many a stripe
 Of green pasture, where the wild goat follows
 Shepherd's call, or note of pastoral pipe.

Hearken, Gilead! where, with foamy waters,
 Arnon runneth down to Jordan's shore,
 In her youth, the fairest of thy daughters
 Passeth from thy plains for evermore.

Hearken, Bashan! where thine old oaks hoary
 Guard the silver lilies at their feet,
 When the sunlight crowns them with a glory,
 Streaming inward where thy branches meet.

For the lily that was sweetest, fairest,
 Shall not blossom next year in thy shades,
 She, of all thy flowers that was the rarest,
 Never more shall bloom along thy glades.

O wild forest ! O ye upland meadows,
 Like green oceans, tossing to and fro !
 Ye can only see Heaven's lights and shadows,
 Can'but hear a natural voice of woe,

Knowing nothing of the heart's emotion,
 Nothing of the earnest love that brings
 All its first, and best, in strong devotion
 To the altar of the King of kings.

But to us, she singeth, singeth faintly,
 Going up and down that mountain sod,
 "Nought is grievous to the spirit saintly,
 Dearest things, and purest, are for GOD.

Therefore laid I, on the shrine of duty,
 All sweet flowers that used to bind my brow ;
 So I went down in my youth, and beauty,
 Went a victim to my father's vow."

XVIII.

Samson.

"And they called for Samson out of the prison-house, and he made them sport."—Judges xvii. 25.

"BRING the captive from the prison,"
 Quoth the lordly Philistine,
 "To-day we hold high festival
 With banquet, and with wine.

Call all Philistia's nobles,
 From the sea to the mountain gorge,
 Call the maiden from the millstone
 The warrior from the forge,

"From all the rich corn country
 'Twixt the hills, and the sandy plain,
 Where five great cities ride like ships
 Upon a golden main,
 From Gaza where the fish-god
 Hath many honoured shrines,
 To Ashdod, and to Askelon,
 And Jaffa on her wave-washed throne,
 And Ekron girt with vines ;

"From fair pomegranate gardens
 Red as the blushing east,
 From thickets hung with oranges,
 Like gold lamps at a feast,
 Come to the hall of Dagon !
 Come throng his temple court !
 'To-day we bring the strong man forth
 To make the people sport."—

The eagle cast a shadow
 As he sailed to and fro,
 On far Lekiah's limestone cliff,
 And on the sward below ;—
 The white clouds flung strange figures

On the corn, and the waving grass,
 While the blind man ground in his prison-
 house,
 Bound with his chains of brass.
 But shades and lights more wonderful
 Were in that lone dark place,
 For the shadow of his own great deeds,
 Was on the blind man's face.

At Timnath in the vineyards
 He heard the lion roar,
 And the LORD'S SPIRIT mightily,
 Came on him as of yore ;
 Three thousand warriors bore him down
 From Etam's rock again,
 And he cast away their cords like flax,
 And slew his thousand men.

Once more he bore the Gazite gates
 Up Hebron's weary hill,
 And at his side a woman's voice
 Was sounding, sounding still.
 And ever while his heavy hand
 Ground in the prison drear,
 "The Philistines be upon thee,"
 Was sounding in his ear.

In the chambers of its darkness,
 When the Christian soul lies low,

Counting o'er his former graces ;
 And the spiritual foe
 Shows his armies without number,
 Shows his weapons keenly tried,
 Let him look up through his blindness,
 For the LORD is on his side.
 When the wicked triumph greatly,
 And the Dagon of their sin
 Hath conquered both with guile, and sword,
 Cast down the servants of the LORD
 And quenched good thoughts within :
 Then let them tremble where they stand,
 For the LORD'S vengeance is at hand,
 And He is sure to win.

Come forth, thou blind old champion !
 The people call thee now,
 The day of wrath is come at length ;
 For lo ! the seven locks of thy strength
 Show grisly on thy brow.
 A glorious death thou com'st to die,
 A nation's wail thy funeral cry ;
 Lay hand upon the pillars twain,
 And as they lean, and bend, and fall,
 Lie down beneath the crushing wall,
 Upon thy thousands slain.

XIX.

Ruth.

“It has been fully showed me all that thou hast done—a full reward be given thee of the LORD GOD of Israel, under Whose wings thou art come to trust.”—Ruth ii. 11, 12.

LIKE one that cometh back again
 To where his childhood used to roam,
 And sitteth by the window pane,
 And listens for the sounds of home,

And watches every passing cloud,
 And thinks how changed is all the scene;
 Until the brown thrush singeth loud
 His anthem from the thicket green,

Until, perchance, the bells begin
 To ring from out the old church tower,
 And all his spirit melts within,
 Touched with the thoughts of childhood's hour :

So is it with that simple tale,
 Familiar from our earliest time,
 No Church bells on the summer gale
 Had ever half so sweet a chime.

No wild bird, flooding in his glory
 All nature from the birchen tree,
 Can thrill us, like that tender story,
 With such an old time-harmony.

And like some brilliant foreign thing,
 From infancy remember'd well ;
 The burnish of a beetle's wing,
 The rose-tint on a tropic shell ;

The tinge of Eastern life that clings
 Around thy gentle tale, sweet Ruth ;
 The simple pastoral tone that brings
 Home to each heart its stamp of truth.

But not alone old memories sweet
 Of hours beguiled should'st thou record ;
 Or pass us by, like fairy feet,
 That trace light rings on summer sward.

True wife, true daughter, thou hast taught
 To Christian hearts a holier strain—
 Fair type of each unselfish thought,
 The love that fears not want or pain.

One of the bright flowers flung of old
 Along the path the Godhead trod,
 A link in the long chain of gold
 'Twixt David's Son, and David's GOD.

Come, teach us from thine earnest heart,
 Each depth of true devoted love,
 And every self-denying art,
 And cares that noblest spirits move.

And leave us with a tender glow,
 The light flung off from moral beauty
 Still lingering in our homes below
 Pure love, and calm heroic duty.

 XX.

Hannah's Offering.

"Therefore also I have lent him unto the LORD, as long as he liveth, he shall be lent unto the LORD."—1 Sam. i. 28.

To Shiloh from the mountains,
 Where Ephraim's grapes are trod,
 The mother brought her offering
 Unto the house of GOD.
 The merchantmen from Edom
 Give spices rich for gold,
 But she doth bear a gift more rare,
 Unto that sacred hold.

There are lambs in Ephraim's pastures,
 Pure as the drifted snows,
 That lie on the brow of Lebanon
 For ever, like a rose.

There are heifers in her valleys,
 And costly gifts they are—
 But she doth bring a living thing,
 That is more precious far.

The little face that nestled
 Into her heart at night,
 The lips that lisping "mother,"
 First thrilled her with delight.
 He that in all home music,
 Was her one golden chord ;
 She brings him now to shrive her vow,
 And leaves him with the LORD.

The brow of the child Nazarite
 Was open as the morn,
 Whereon like gold-fringed cloudlets
 Lay the bright locks unshorn—
 The baby hand that rested
 In hers was pure from stain,
 As she brought him nigh to the old priest's eye,
 Nor brought him forth again.

O mothers, by the cradles
 Of your baptized sons,
 Weaving a web of happy years,
 For those beloved ones,
 As in each passive feature
 Some glorious hope ye trace,
 And a long bright shade by the future made,
 Lies on the sleeping face ;

Give them a fate more noble,
 In your unspoken thought,
 Than earth, with her dreamy greatness
 And fame, hath ever brought.
 Bring them a free heart-offering,
 Back to the GOD Who gave,
 By the vows that were said on the infant head,
 Over the hallowed wave.

O Christian, when thou bringest
 An offering to GOD's shrine,
 Take of the thing that is closest twined
 Around that heart of thine—
 The hope, or the pride, or the dearest love
 That ever thy soul has known,
 Lay them down there, in CHRIST's own care,
 And He will bless the loan.

 XXI.

The Harping of David.

“And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand, so Saul was refreshed and was well.”—1 Sam. xvi. 23.

THE cloud is on the monarch's soul,
 Foreshadower of his future doom;
 So mists, before the thunders roll,
 Come down and wrap the hill in gloom—

Go, call the gentle Bethlehemite,
 And bid him wake his sweetest lay,
 Perchance that music, pure and light,
 May drive the threatening fiend away.

The shepherd boy has brought his lute,
 He sings, he strikes the pliant chords!
 Each ear is caught, each lip hangs mute,
 On the sweet air, the wondrous words.

He stays his hand, the impassioned strain
 Along the lofty palace dies ;
 The listening courtiers breathe again,
 The cloud has left the monarch's eyes

Ah, no ! the measure died not all—
 The echoes of that golden rhyme
 Are ringing on, from fall to fall,
 For ever down the stream of time.

At matin hour, in vespers low,
 They ring, they ring, those silver bells
 For praise, for plaint, for joy or woe,
 Whene'er our strain of worship swells.

The silken thread so wrought and wrought
 Into the tissue of its frame,
 It hath a tongue for every thought,
 Through all its moods, and still the same.

The fair cathedral's arches grand,
Her marble saints with lifted palms,
Her carven pillars ever stand,
Wrapt in a dream of rolling psalms.

The grey old walls beneath the yew,
With modest porch, and taper spire,
Have ripened to their music too,
Rung from the clamorous village choir.

When wakeful men, with ears unstopped,
Through weary hours have told each sound
That broke upon the dark, then dropped
Into the pulseless silence round,

While the strained eye impatient longs
For the first throb of breaking light,
What snatches of those heavenly songs
Have come to him at dead of night?

Some grand Laudate's lofty roll
Some tender penitential wail,
Have made a music in his soul,
Sweeter than any nightingale.

Come, blessed Psalms! when mists of sin
Over my soul beclouded lie,
Pierce through the wild world's strife and din,
And bid the evil spirit fly.

Come blessed Psalms ! when weak and lone
 My heart breaks down, and finds no aid,
 And let me find in your deep tone
 Some voice of comfort ready made.

For who shall find, in pain or loss,
 Words of such sweet, sustaining power,
 As those that hung about the Cross,
 And soothed my SAVIOUR'S dying hour ?

 XXII.

The Burial of Samuel.

“And Samuel died, and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah.”—1 Sam. xxv. 1.

THIRTY days amid the hills of Ramah
 Doth the voice of lamentation swell,
 Like the murmur of a mighty river,
 When the winter floods are on the fell,

Like a wind imprisoned in the gorges
 Of the mountains, moaning as it sweeps—
 But no tempest in the valley struggles,
 And no torrent tumbles from the steeps.

All the Israelites make moan together
 With a lamentation loud and sore,
 For the seer is gathered to his fathers,
 They shall hear the prophet's voice no more.

Bear him, bear him slowly to the burial,
 Haunted as ye go is all the air,
 With a thousand sweet and solemn fancies,
 Memories of the great man that ye bear.

Like a sudden incense borne from Shiloh,
 Round the cold corpse comes a fragrant breath,
 And a young child with a linen ephod
 Girded, glideth by the car of death.

There's a look upon the sharpened features
 Of the old man, strangely like the grace
 And the glory of unclouded childhood,
 As it smiles upon that phantom face.

Sure those lips have held a high communion
 And those ears a wondrous Voice have heard,
 When the call came through the darkened chamber,
 And the child made answer, "Speak, O LORD,"

For his smile is shadowed in its brightness,
 As by some great glory pass'd away—
 So the hills that have been gold at sunrise,
 Wear a deeper purple all the day.

Lo! the kingly Benjamite beside him
 Walketh once again with stately tread,
 And the withered hands are raised in blessing,
 And the oil is poured upon his head.

But the prophet's heart is full of sorrow,
 And some natural tears unbidden spring,
 For he sees the rending of the mantle,
 And he mourneth for the fallen king.

Sons of Jesse, tall of form, and goodly,
 Seven brave warriors pass before the seer,
 Look not on their beauty, or their stature,
 For the LORD's anointed is not here !

Call the youngest, call him from the sheepfold,
 In his eye a spirit pure and free,
 On his cheek the colour of the morning,
 Call him from the sheepfold ! this is he !—

Slowly, slowly now the visions vanish,
 Israel's wail comes up upon the ear,
 Prayers of pleading, words of love and warning,
 All are over—lift the silent bier !

Leave the old man—leave him with his Father,
 Dark and lonely in that quiet place.
 Lonelier shadows on his heart have fallen,
 Darker griefs have deepened on his face.

An ungrateful people's causeless clamour,
 Sons regardless of their father's call,
 And his dream of hero-goodness broken
 On the hard heart of rebellious Saul.

But the tree that blossomed well in summer,
 Blossoms sweetly at the autumn's close ;
 Graces nursed in childhood and in manhood,
 In old age are sweeter than the rose.

Here is incense, richer than in Shiloh
 The child-Levite from the altar sent
 Deeds of love and mercy and devotion,
 All the fragrance of a life well spent.

Calmly slept the fair child by the altar,
 As he waited for GOD'S voice of dread—
 Calmer doth the good saint sleep in Ramah,
 Waiting for the Voice that wakes the dead.

XXIII.

Saul.

" But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul,"—1 Sam.
 xxviii. 15.

I STOOD beside the shadowy lake,¹
 I watched the glorious brimful tide,
 In lines of foamy music break
 Against her shingly side.

¹ Lough Swilly, "the Lake of Shadows," an arm of the sea
 in the north of Ireland.

The wild hills by her waters kiss'd,
 Hung round her soft as soft might be,
 They glimmer'd through a silver mist,
 Down on a silver sea.

And where their darkest ridge upheaves,
 A rich red light was streaming o'er,
 —Like a great heap of crimson leaves,
 Piled on a purple floor—

Red in the western heaven on high,
 Red in the burning lake below,
 And deep-red in the Eastern sky
 That kindled with the glow.

So like, methought, a noble life,
 Attempered well in every part,
 No jarring element at strife
 With GOD'S grace in the heart.

I came another eventime—
 The long blue tide had ebb'd away;
 A sullen ridge of sand and slime
 Under the mountains lay.

The crimson light in heaven might burn,
 The purple hue might wrap the hill,
 But down below was no return,
 For all was dark and still.

Wandering along the lonely shore,
 The curlew gave her sorrowful call,
 Like a good angel weeping sore
 Over a sinner's fall.

For that wild scene was like a heart
 Whence GOD'S full tide of grace is driven,
 That dwells in wilful sin apart,
 And hath no share in heaven.

I thought of Ramah's regal feast,
 I thought of red Gilboa's plain,
 Of bright hopes in that kingly breast,
 Of that unworthy slain :

Of all the promise rich that lay,
 Around thy glorious youth, great Saul!
 Of stubbornness that spurned at sway,
 And pride that marred it all.

Sweet lake ! again thy tide shall draw
 Soft rippling to thy mountains' feet—
 Against thy nature's gentle law
 Thy wild heart never beat.

But never more GOD'S holy dew
 Came to that GOD-forsaken man,
 Till wilfulness, rebellion grew,
 And pride to madness ran.

G

O, when we read with wondering eyes,
 The hero's greatness, and his sin,
 Self-doubting be the thoughts that rise,
 Sharp be the glance within!

We too would walk our own wild way—
 Our hearts are wilful every one,
 Ever the hardest prayer to pray,
 Is CHRIST'S, "Thy will be done."

So catch we Nature's lesson still,
 Her harmony of hue, and tone,
 That heart, and mind, and fretful will,
 Move to GOD'S will alone.

XXIV.

Crossing the Brook.

"The king also himself passed over the brook Kidron."—
 2 Sam. xv. 23.

"When JESUS had spoken these words He went forth with
 His disciples over the brook Cedron."—S. John xviii. 1.

LIKE him that doth the picture find,
 Of one beloved but long unseen,
 And gazes until form and mien
 Live once again before his mind:

So living on the page of truth,
 Doth many a scene beloved shine,
 And we have hung upon the line,
 And haunts familiar from our youth :

And pictured every hill and brook,
 And looked into the sky above,
 Till as it is with those that love,
 We seemed to know their very look.

We seemed to see the yellow moon,
 To watch ourselves the drifting clouds,
 That hurried by, or hung in shrouds,
 Across the burning Eastern noon.

How many Christian hearts have met
 Between that city and the hill,
 And over Cedron's mournful rill,
 And up the steep of Olivet !

How oft that low mount, green and brown,
 To substance and to shape has grown
 Filled in with colours of our own,
 And shadowed from the distant town.

Over the brook a weeping king,
 Behind a weeping host has passed ;
 A long shrill wail comes on the blast,
 We hear the quivering olives ring.

The faithful people go before,
 Lamenting loud their monarch fled—
 Barefoot he comes, with covered head,
 Feeling another sorrow more—

The grief that lay all deep and dumb,
 Behind the grief that sobbed and burned,
 The father's injured love that yearned
 Still for his rebel Absalom.

Another King has crossed the flood!
 How many wayward sons had part
 To wound and break that loving heart,
 Whose tears were drops of falling blood.

And what a pale and weary brow,
 In that dark olive shade bowed down,
 The King that never wore a crown,
 For whom the thorns are weaving now!

O mount! where David's bitter tears
 Fell on the softly-shaded sod,
 Where David's King, and David's GOD,
 Strove with a whole world's weight of fears.

O wild dark brook! that heard the cry,
 A people's mourning on the air,
 That murmured to the thrice-told prayer
 Wrung from a deeper agony:

Bid our vain hearts some shade to borrow,
 From that great mystery of grief,
 Let swelling wave, and drooping leaf,
 Teach us the worth and depth of sorrow.

Tears were in royal David's eyes,
 Strong tears upon my SAVIOUR's cheek,
 And shall we shun with spirit weak,
 All sadder holier thoughts that rise ?

Musings that mar our lighter strain,
 Of heaven, and hell, and sinners lost,
 And of the priceless price they cost,
 Heart-sorrow, death, and lingering pain ?

Nay let us find some dark sad hour,
 When we may weep and think alone
 Of CHRIST, and of the Judgment throne,
 Of death and sin's destroying power.

Befits us well the brook of tears,
 Befits us well the olive-shade,
 Who have so rarely, coldly, prayed,
 Have trifled with so many fears.

Who shareth thus his SAVIOUR's woe,
 Shall come as David came again,
 But to a city where no pain
 Can enter, and no tear can flow.

XXV.

King David's Offering.

"Nay, but I will surely buy it of thee at a price, neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my GOD of that which doth cost me nothing."—2 Sam. xxiv. 24.

WHEN sorrowing David stood of yore,
Beside Araunah's threshing-floor,
What time the noble Jebusite
Bowed in the humbled monarch's sight,
And without price had given,
His oxen for the costly rite,
A freewill gift to heaven;

The princely penitent forbore
The generous donor's offered store,
Though kinglike to a king preferred,
He turned aside with gentle word,
And forth the silver shekels brought—
He would not offer to the LORD,
Of that which cost him nought.

Our love is not like theirs of old,
Our hands are closed, our hearts are cold—
For choicest gifts of wealth and mind
We bring the lame, the weak, the blind,
For youth's devotion high
The few pale flowers that lurk behind
When age has dimmed the eye.

The broken cup by folly drained,
 The faded wreath, the garment stained,
 A little time, a little thought
 That brings no loss, that costs us nought,
 A little gold in offering
 To Him Who our full safety wrought,
 Is all the gift we bring.

Nay, not with things of smallest worth
 Should Christians serve the LORD on earth;
 CHRIST said, "Your daily crosses take,
 Bear pain, use trouble for My sake,
 Deny yourselves for Me,
 Remembering all I bore, to make
 Your sinful spirits free."

If wealth, so perilous to hold,
 Be yours, give freely of your gold—
 Not the poor pittance pleasure spares
 From luxury's ideal cares;
 Nor let the poor and low
 Deem he with his rich brother shares
 Nought fitting to bestow.

Give GOD that first, best sacrifice,
 An humble heart's repentant sighs;
 Give Him some hours that else were spent
 In sleep or sloth, or merriment,
 For prayer and holy deed,
 The praises of a heart content
 With all by Him decreed.

CHRIST looketh on our inward life ;
 He knows the cost, He sees the strife,
 Alike accepted in His sight
 The rich man's thousand talents bright,
 Given all in quiet lowliness,
 And the poor widow's single mite,
 Saved from her hard distress.

 XXVI.

The Death of David.

"So David slept with his fathers."—1 Kings ii. 10.

KING David sleepeth in his fathers' grave—
 O for one echo of that deep dirge-strain,
 Mourning so well the beautiful and brave,
 That rang erewhile o'er Gilboa's royal slain !

O for a murmur as of his own Psalms,
 Touching all hearts, like a great wind at play,
 That sports with Nature in long ocean calms,
 And green earth valleys, all a summer's day.

From his calm face the shadows sharp and strong
 Of olden days have passed, and left it still ;
 From his closed lip the last low lingering song,
 Like the last echo flung back from a hill,

Has died away ; and never, never more,
 So bold a hand shall sweep the silver lyre,
 So true a tone shall teach to kneel and soar,
 So sweet a voice shall lead the saintly choir.

Warrior, and king, and minstrel more renown'd
 Than ever touched fair fancy's noblest chord,
 Saint with a wondrous weight of glory crown'd,
 At once the type and prophet of his LORD.

He hath gone down into the shadowy vale—
 What though his face with many tears was wet,
 Though sin's remorseful cry, though sorrow's wail
 Swelled from that harp to heavenly music set ;

Still in that grief we read a deeper sorrow,
 The awful mystery of a suffering GOD,
 Still from that sharp, sin-laden cry we borrow
 A voice that mourns where our own feet have trod.

What though his warrior-eye might ne'er behold
 On green Moriah's side the white stone flower,
 For which his red right hand had piled the gold,
 Planning GOD's temple in his happier hour ;

Still like a dream before his eye it slept,
 Its chambers flooded with a golden glow,
 A strange bright place where faintest odours crept,
 From cedar-flowers eternally in blow.

And he had heard a grander music thrilling
 Where needs no temple's marble wall to rise,
 Had seen his glorious ritual's fulfilling,
 And known the One-sufficient Sacrifice.

As a great mountain on a stormy eve,
 After a stormy day, stands dimly shown,
 —How many times we saw the grey mist weave
 A murky mantle for his crest of stone!—

Now a brief sunset splendour wraps his brow,
 A crimson glory on a field of gold,
 Yet the wild tide is breaking dark below,
 Nor from its shaggy side the cloud has rolled—

So dim, so beautiful we see thy form,
 Conqueror and saint, man sinning and forgiven,
 Around thee wrapt earth's shadows and its storm,
 With here and there a glimpse of purest heaven.

But the morn breaks, a morning without clouds,
 A clear calm shining when the rain is o'er,
 He lieth where no mist of earth enshrouds,
 In GOD'S great sunlight wrapped for evermore.

Psalmist of Israel! sure thou hearest now,
 If sweeter strains than thine can ever be,
 A sweeter music where the elders bow,
 Striking their harps upon the crystal sea.



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