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ROBERTS BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,

Boston.

THE SECRET OF DEATH,

ETC., ETC.

TO AMERICA.

*Thou new Great Britain! famous, free, and bright!
West of thy west sleepeth my ancient East;
Our sunsets make thy noons! Daytime and Night
Meet in sweet morning-promise on thy breast.*

*Fulfil the promise, Queen of boundless lands!
Where, as thine own, an English singer ranks.
I, who found favor at thy sovereign hands,
Kiss them; and at thy feet lay these, for thanks.*

EDWIN ARNOLD.

THE
SECRET OF DEATH

(From the Sanskrit)

WITH SOME COLLECTED POEMS

BY

EDWIN ARNOLD, M.A.

AUTHOR OF "THE LIGHT OF ASIA," "PEARLS OF THE FAITH,"
"INDIAN IDYLLS," "THE INDIAN SONG OF
SONGS, AND POEMS"



BOSTON
ROBERTS BROTHERS

1886

THE AUTHOR'S ONLY AUTHORIZED AMERICAN EDITION.

University Press:
JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE.

Dedication.

TO MY DAUGHTER.

*Because I know my verse shall henceforth live
On lips to be, in hearts as yet unbeating ;
Because the East and West will some day give —
When Faith and Doubt are friends, at some far meeting —
Late praise to him who dreamed it, — therefore, here,
As one that carves upon a growing willow
The word it is to keep for many a year ;
As one that paints, before she breasts the billow,
A dear name on his vessel's prow ; as one
That, finishing a fane, makes dedication
With golden letters on the polished stone,
Crowning his toil by loving celebration, —
Here, while these last, our love I celebrate,
For thy sake and thy Mother's, — writing " KATE."*

EDWIN ARNOLD.

Christmas, 1884.

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INTRODUCTION.



You ask me, Dear ! what perfect thing
I find in all my wandering
These ancient Sanskrit scrolls amid,
Where India's deepest heart is hid ?
Nothing, I answer, half so wise
As one glance from your gentle eyes !
Nothing so tender or so true
As one word interchanged with you !
Because, two souls conjoined can see
More than the best philosophy.
Yet, wise and true and tender lore
Waits him who will those leaves explore,
Which, plucked from palm or plaintain-tree,
Display, in Devanâgari,
The grand, sonorous, long-linked lines
Wherethrough that " Light of Asia " shines.

And you have asked ; so I obey,
Hastening upon your knees to lay
This lovely lotus-blossom, grown
Long ere our Mary's Rose was blown ;
This pearl of hope, fetched from the sea
Before they fished at Galilee !
For thus, I think, your kindest eyes
May read deep truth with glad surprise.
The subtle thought, the far-off faith,
The deathless spirit mocking Death,
The close-packed sense, hard to unlock
As diamonds from the mother-rock,
The solemn, brief simplicity,
The insight, fancy, mystery
Of Hindoo scriptures — all are had
In this divine Upanishad.

I read it in my Indian days.
Beyond our city, where the ways
Parted — for Looni and Kirkî —
A hill, steep-sloping, you might see.
It rises from the river's bank,
And all its sides are green and rank

With spear-grass, bamboo, cactus, thorn ;
And bright with fragrant blossoms, borne
By neem and baubul ; and the air
Sighs cool across a prospect fair
Of Deccan villages and fields,
Where the dark soil rich tribute yields
Of pulse and millet. Farther back,
Sivaji's mountains, flat and black,
Fold round the plain. Upon that hill
There stood (I think it stands there still)
A little shrine, in ancient days
Built by a Sett to Siva's praise ;
Milk-white it glimmered through the green,
Save that upon its gate was seen
A blood-red hand impressed, and, near,
The threefold mark to Siva dear.
Sacred and placid was the place,
With cool, smooth walls, and slender grace
Of domed roof, and a peepul tree,
And platform of hewn masonry,
Whereto the distant city's hum
Came soft, with broken beats of drum
Which did not mar the solitude ;

For all around that temple cooed
The creamy doves ; striped squirrels leaped
From stem to stem ; the musk-rat peeped
Under the wall ; beside the porch
Flamed the red lizard like a torch
Flung on the rock ; the egrets stretched
Their snowy wings ; green parrots fetched
Fruit to their young with joyous cries ;
The monkey-peoples' mild brown eyes
Glittered from bough and coping-stone ;
And — underneath a root — alone,
Dwelt a great cobra, thick and black,
With ash-gray mottlings on his back, —
A most prodigious snake ! — but he
Kept the peace, too, religiously,
With folded hood, and fangs of death
Sheathed, while he drew his slow, cold breath,
Coiled in the sun, or lapped the feast
Of warm milk poured him by the Priest.

For in that Temple lived a Sage,
A Twice-born, reverend by his age
And wondrous wisdom ; and, it fell

For some small service, — vain to tell, —
This Brahman was my friend ; and so,
Ofttimes at daybreak I would go
To watch the sunlight flood the skies,
And ask of strange philosophies.
Thus chanced it that one morn we had
Talk on this same Upanishad
(Beyond my learning, then, as now) ;
But herein is it written how
I slowly spelled the text we read,
And, at the hard words, what he said
(For nowise shall one comprehend
Such lore without some sager friend).
So have you, Dear ! the help I had
Conning this great Upanishad,
While the snake sunned himself at ease,
And monkeys chattered in the trees,
And on the Moota-Moola lay
The first gold of the growing Day.

THE SECRET OF DEATH.

[In a Temple beside the River Moota-Moola, near the city of Poona, a Brahman Priest and an English "Saheb" read together from a Sanskrit manuscript the first three *Vallis* or "Lotus-Stems" of the *Katha Upanishad*.]

FIRST VALLÎ.

Saheb. UŚAN HA VAI VAJAŚRAVAS — the scroll
Commenceth thus ! SARVVAVEDASANDADAU —
Which is, interpreted : " For hope of heaven
All that he had, Vajaśrava's great son
Gave to the poor."

Priest. 'T is so !

S. TASYA HA NÂM
PUTRA ÂS NACHIKÊTAS : " and of him
The son was Nachikêtas."

P. Yea ! the scroll
Speaketh of one who saw Death face to face
And questioned Death, and from dread Yama's lips

Learned utmost lore of life and death ; and — dead —
 Liveth for ever and for ever. Read
 This holy scripture onward ! I will still
 Recite the comment.

S. DAKSHINĀSU, Sir !

KUMĀRAN SANTAN NĪYAMĀNĀSU

ŚRADDH'ĀVIVESHA : "When the gifts were brought,
 Strong filial pity seized the young man's heart."

(What gifts, and wherefore, Pundit?)

P. These were cows ;

And because Gautama was poor, his cows —
 The leanest of the fields — furnished a gift
 Worthless to take or give, save for the heart
 Of utter charity which offered them.

S. So 'MANYAT — thus it runs : "And then he thought,"
 PITÔDAKĀ, "Such beasts as drink the pool,"
 JUGDHATRINĀ, DUGDHADÔHĀ, "and eat,
 Milkless, the grass," but NIRINDRIYĀ, "keep
 No power to breed ;" TĀ DADAT GACHCHATI
 ANANDĀ NAMA TE LOKĀSTĀN SA,
 "Who giveth such, unto a region goes
 Joyless ;"

P. Good ! this he thought, — and then he said ?

S. SA HOVACH PITARAM TAT, MANDASYASI
 KASMAI : " And then he said unto his sire,
 ' To whom wilt thou that I be given ? ' "

P.

Ay :

' T is thus ; but, comprehendest thou ? The boy
 Grieved so to see his father's fruitless gift —
 Which could not profit ; that for tender love
 Himself he offered, saying, " Give me, sir ! "

S. DWITYAN TRITIYANNAN HOVACH : " when that twice,
 And thrice he said it, Gautama his sire,"
 MRITYAVÈ TWA DADÂMI, " spake, in wrath,
 To Death I give thee ! "

P.

' T was a hasty cry

Sprung from the pride no saint should ever feel !
 Ah ! foolish father ! now thy son must die !

S. BAHÛNÂMÊMI PRATHAM, " I am first
 Of many sons," BAHÛNAM MADHYAMA,
 " But, of as many more not first nor last ! "
 KIM SWIDYAMASYA KARTIVYAM YANMAY
 ADYA KARISHYATI, " what good use
 Of Yama may I serve, dying to-day ? "

P. See now ! the boy was humble, ranking not
 Even his own sweet spirit with the best ;

Yet, best he was ; and, though the scroll saith nought,
 Be sure that woful father wept, and cried :
 “ Alas ! I spake in wrath, guilty and rash !
 Alas ! I would not buy Heaven’s self with thee !
 O son ! take back thy word, that I may take
 My heedless utterance back ! my child ! my child !
 How could I slay thee, who would die for thee ? ”
 Whereto the lad replied — repeat the script !

S. ANUPĀŚYA YATHĀ PURVVĒ — “ Sir ! bethink
 How those of old, the saints, clove to their word ;
 How those who live to-day must cleave to it !
 Like sesamum ripens our mortal life ;
 Like sesamum ’t is reaped, sifted, and sown
 To grow again.”

P. He meaneth : “ Not for life —
 Which is but blade, and ear, and husk, and grain
 To the self-living, changeless sesamum ! —
 Not for this fleeting world — should holy men
 Speak one word vainly.” Now, again, thy scroll
 Is silent here ; yet, thou mayst justly think
 The woful father bowed his head, and knew
 The boy’s speech good, and bore to see him go,
 That both their sayings should be justified.

So went he — seeking Death — to yield himself !
 But coming, all unsummoned, to the house
 Where red Death dwells, no Yama found he there
 To bid him bitter welcome. Then he lodged
 Three days and nights in the abode of Death
 A guest untended. Take the scroll anew,
 And read of Nachikêtas in Death's Hall
 Alone !

S. VAISWÂNARA PRAVIŚHATYATI
 ATITHI GRIHAN BRÂHMANO, "a guest
 That is a Twice-born, entering at the door
 Cometh like sacred fire ;" TASYAITÂN
 ŚÂNTIN KURVVANTI, HAR VAIVASWATA !
 UDAKAM : "Unto such the righteous make
 Due guest-rites, saying, O thou child of Light !
 Have water here, food, shelter." Then it writes :
 AŚÂPRATIKSHÊ SANGATAN, "good heart,
 Good expectations, friendships, favor, grace,
 Strong sons, and fruitful cattle, — all these gifts
 Forfeits that faultful man in whose abode
 A Brahman, entering, findeth proffered not
 Food and foot-water."

P.

True ! the sense is so !

And Yama, coming home, and seeing there
Young Nachikêtas all unhonored, saith :

TISRÔ RÂTRIRYADVÂTSIRGRIHÊ — read !

S. “ ‘ Three days and nights, O Brahman ! tarriedst thou,
None bringing thee, who art a noble guest,
Food and foot-water ! therefore, now, to thee
Repentant salutations ! and to me
Forgiveness for this sin ! But, ere thou diest,
Ask me three boons, for each past night one boon.’
Then Nachikêtas said : ‘ That Gautama
Be comforted, and restful in his mind,
Thinking fair thoughts of me, who die for him, —
This, of thy three boons, Yama ! first I ask.’
Answered the God of Death : ‘ This boon I grant ;
Thy father shall be comforted, and think
Gentle and holy thoughts of thee ; shall sleep
Peaceful at nights, knowing — by dreams I send —
Thou hast made happy passage of Death’s gate.’ ”

P. Now Nachikêtas asks again — and mark
How simple-sweet our Sanskrit rolls along !
See, too, how bold he speaks to Yama here !
NA BHYAN KINCHA SWARGÊ LOKÊ — read !
NÂSTI, NA TATRA TWAN.

S.

NA TATRA TWAN —

“ In Swarga-lôk — in the abodes of Heaven —
 There is not any dread ; nor, any more,
 Terror of thee ! Thou art not there ; nor tears,
 Nor thirst, nor hunger, nor the aches of life !
 But, fled past farthest reach of grief, the souls
 Sleep safely in that place. If that place be,
 Thou knowest, Yama ! how the sacrifice
 Is kindled which may gain it : make me know ;
 That I, who die, may light that holy fire,
 And come, avoiding Hell, to Swarga's peace.
 This, of thy three boons, is the next I ask.’ ”

P. Rightly thou readest ! Yama answereth him :

S. PRA TÊ BRAVÎMI — “ I shall tell thee ! hear !

I know that holy fire, and how it springs.
 The splendor of it shineth through all worlds,
 Possessing them ! The strength of it upholds
 The Universe ! Its spark is hidden close
 Inside the inmost man, in the hollow heart.’ ”
 Guru ! what meaneth he ?

P.

He meaneth this :

“ The spirit of a man, whereby he strives,
 Flashes from star to star — if so it will —

And — if it will — sleeps in the smallest drop
Of the midmost heart-blood." Yama sayeth so.

S. Yet, Pundit, this is hard to comprehend !
How can it be that what hath plenitude
To range from star to star should hide itself
I' the hollow of a heart ?

P. I answer thee
Out of the great Upanishad, surnamed
Khândogyâ ! Gather me up yon fruit
Dropped by the parrots from the Banyan !
What seest thou therein ?

S. A scarlet fig
Not larger than the Moulvie's praying bead !

P. Break it, and say again !

S. I break it, sir,
And see a hundred little yellow seeds !

P. Break it, and say again !

S. I break a seed ;
It is as slight as though a silkworm's egg
Were crushed ; and in the midst a germ, a speck !

P. Break it, and say again !

S. The speck is gone
In touching, Guru ! there is nothing, now !

P. Yet, in that "nothing" lay (thou knowest well !)
 The Nyagrodha tree, the Banyan tree,
 Comely and vast as it was formed to grow ;
 With all its thousand downward-dropping stems
 Waiting to fall from all its thousand boughs,
 And all its lakhs on lakhs of lustrous leaves
 Waiting to push to sunlight, and so make
 New canopies of flower and fruit and shade
 Where creatures of the field, fowls of the air,
 Monkey and squirrel-folk might find their home,
 And man and cattle 'neath its ample roof
 Have shelter from the noon. This Forest-King —
 Of bulk to overspread a Raja's camp —
 Was wrapped in what thou sayest passeth sight !
 Art thou not answered ?

S. I am answered, sir !

LOKÂDIMAGNINTAMUVACHA, next,
 TASMAI YÂ ISHTAKÂ : "Then Yama told
 What fire that is, which was the first thing made,
 When anything was made ; and how the stones
 Of daily acts are laid to build its shrine ;
 How 't is enkindled, and how fed, — which words
 In like mode Nachikêtas after him

Duly repeated ; till, the lesson learned,
 Death spake again, soft-smiling — yea ! Death said,
 The dread, kind god : ‘ See ! I have taught thee this,
 And after thee henceforward shall be named
 That fire by all men. Also take this chain
 Of many colors ! ’ ” What chain meaneth he ?

P. I know not ! None well knoweth ! ’t is forgot,
 Or never told us from the ancient times.

S. “ ‘ Whoso performs, ’ the King of Death went on,
 ‘ Three times this Nachikêtas sacrifice,
 Having by three been taught, doing three works,
 Conquers those three — the Birth, the Life, the Death !
 Who feeds that flame — from Brahma sprung — divine,
 Worthy of praise, light-giving — comes to peace
 Endless and pure. Who, knowing it threefold,
 Offers it thrice — I say — fears not my noose
 Cast round his body — dies rejoicingly,
 And passeth to the peace of Swarga-lôk ! ’ ”
 Guru ! which “ threefold works ” ? what “ teachers
 three ” ?

P. The threefold works are, surely, Sacrifice,
 Reading the Veds, and Liberality.
 The threefold Teachers are the Mother first,

And next the Father, and the Guru third.

ESHA TE AGNIRNACHIKÊT — proceed !

S. “‘This is the holy flame, to hear whereof
Thou, Nachikêtas, for thy second boon
Didst choose — so shall men name it ! Now, thy
third?’

‘There is this doubt,’ young Nachikêtas said :

‘Thou dost give peace — is that peace Nothingness ?

Some say that after death the soul still lives,

Personal, conscious ; some say, Nay, it ends !

Fain would I know which of these twain be true,

By thee enlightened. Be my third boon this.’

Then Yama answered, ‘This was asked of old,

Even by the gods ! This is a subtle thing,

Not to be told, hard to be understood !

Ask me some other boon : I may not grant !

Choose wiser, Nachikêtas ; force me not

To quit this debt — release me from my bond !’

Then, still again spake Nachikêtas : ‘Ay !

The gods have asked this question ; but, O Death !

Albeit thou sayest it is a subtle thing,

Not to be told, hard to be understood,

Yet know I none can answer like to thee,

And no boon like to this abides to ask.

I crave this boon !' ”

P. Mark, now, how Yama strives
To keep his mighty secret ; ŚATĀYUSH
PUTRAPAUTRĀN VRINISHWA, runs it not ?
HASTI HIRANYAMAŚWĀN ?

S. Sir, 't is so !
“ ‘Choose,’ spake he, ‘ sons and grandsons, who shall thrive
A hundred years : choose for them countless herds —
Elephants, horses, gold ! Carve out thy lands
In kingdoms for them. Nay, or be thyself
A king again on earth, reigning as long
As life shall satisfy. And, further, add
Unto these gifts whatever else thou wilt,
Health, wisdom, happiness — the rule of the world,
And I will fill the cup of thy desires !
Whatso is hard to gain and dear to keep
In the eyes of men, ask it of me, and have !
Beautiful, fond companions, fair as those
That ride the cars of Indra, singing sweet
To instruments of heavenly melody,
Lovelier than mortal eye hath gazed upon :
Have these, have heaven within their clinging arms !

I give them — I give all ; save this one thing ;
Ask not of Death what cometh after death ! ” ”

P. MARAÑAN MÂNUPRAKSHĪ — yes, 't is there !
“ Question not Death of death ” — yet who else knows ?
What sayeth Nachikêtas now ?

S. He saith :
ŚWÔ BHĀWĀ — “ ‘ Things that die to-morrow be
Those glories of the senses ! O thou God
That endest men ! our longest life is brief !
The horses, and the elephants, and thrones,
The sweet companions, and the song and dance,
Are thine, and end in thee ! Gold buys not bliss !
If we have wealth, we see thee near, and know
We live but till thou willest ! Let my boon
Be as I asked — that, and not otherwise !
Ah ! in our sad world dwelling, how should man,
Who feels himself day after day decline,
Day after day decay — till death's day come ;
Who sees how beauty fades, and fond love fails,
Be glad to live a little longer span,
For so much longer anguish ? Nay ! my boon !
Tell me, great Yama ! what the true word is
In this which men inquire, the very truth

Of this chief question, of the life to come,
If there be life ! if the soul's self lives on !
Nought else asks Nachikêtas, only that
Which hath been hidden, and which no man knows ;
Which no man knows.' " O Guru ! will he tell ?

HERE ENDS THE FIRST VALLÎ OF THE

KATHA UPANISHAD.

SECOND VALLÎ.

Sahab. “ Then Yama yielded, granting the great boon,
 And spake : ‘ Know, first of all, that what is Good
 And what is Pleasant — these be separate !
 By many ways, in diverse instances
 Pleasure or Good lay hold upon each man !
 Blessed is he who, choosing high, lets go
 Pleasure for Good. The Pleasure-seekers lose
 Life’s end, so lived.

“ ‘ The Pleasant and the Good
 Solicit men ; the Sage, distinguishing
 By understanding, followeth the Good,
 Being more excellent. The foolish man
 Cleaveth to pleasure, seeking still to have,
 To keep, enjoy.

“ ‘ But, disregarding these,
 The dreams of sick desire, long line of years,
 Sons, dominations, tender lures of love,
 Glory, and greatness — thou didst put aside
 What all men crave, O Nachikêtas ! Thou

Scorned'st to tread the path of wealth, wherein
The foolish perish.

“ ‘Wide asunder stand
Wisdom and ignorance ; in sundering ways
They lead mankind ! I judge thee wholly given
To wisdom, seeing all these joys of sense
Persuaded not.

“ ‘The foolish ones who live
In ignorance, holding themselves as wise
And well-instructed, tread the round of change
With erring steps, deluded, like the blind
Led by the blind ! ’ ”

O Master ! how should one
Wilfully fail of wisdom ? What is this ?
Needs must we love to know, if we may know !

P. He speaketh of the deeper knowledge here,
The higher ignorance ! If one should con
Whatever East and West have gained of lore,
And deem he knoweth Truth, holding this world
For true, — that man is ignorant, and dies
To live again, until he learn to die
The death which frees from living. Wise men say
(Kêna Upanishad that high verse holds !)

“ He is unknown to whoso think they know,
And known to whoso know they know him not.”

S. I thank thee, Pundit ! Now the holy text
Seemeth to read —

“ ‘ The necessary road
Which brings to life unchanging is not seen
By such ! wealth dazzles heedless hearts ! deceived
With shows of sense, they deem their world is real,
And the unseen is nought ; so, constantly,
Fall they beneath my stroke !

“ ‘ To reach to Being
Beyond all seeming Being, to know true life, —
This is not gained by many ; seeing that few
So much as hear of it, and of those few
The more part understand not. Brahma’s Truth
Is wonderful to tell, splendid to see,
Delightful, being perceived, when the wise teach.’ ”
Teach me a little, here, what Brahma is !

P. I tell thee from the Śwētaśwatara !
“ HE, Who, Alone, Undifferenced, unites
With Nature, making endless difference,
Producing and receiving all which seems,
Is Brahma ! May he give us light to know !

“ He is the Unseen Spirit which informs
 All subtle essences ! He flames in fire,
 He shines in Sun and Moon, Planets and Stars !
 He bloweth with the winds, rolls with the waves !
 He is Prajâpati, that fills the worlds !

“ He is the man and woman, youth and maid !
 The babe new-born, the withered ancient, propped
 Upon his staff ! He is whatever is, —
 The black bee, and the tiger, and the fish,
 The green bird with red eyes, the tree, the grass,
 The cloud that hath the lightning in its womb,
 The seasons, and the seas ! By Him they are,
 In Him begin and end.” Now, read thou on.

S. “ ‘The uttermost true soul is ill-perceived
 By him, who, unenlightened, sayeth : I
 Am I ; thou, thou ; and life divided ! He
 That knoweth life undifferenced, declares
 The Spirit, what it is, One with the All.
 And this is Truth ! But nowise shall the Truth
 Be compassed, if thou speak of small and great !

“ ‘ Excellent youth ! the knowledge thou didst crave
 Comes not with speech : words are the false world’s
 signs !

By insight surely comes it, if one hears
 True teachers teach the Life undifferenced.
 Lo ! thou hast loved the Truth, and striven for it.
 I would that others, Nachikêtas, strove !

“ ‘ Yea, boy, as thou didst know, the joys of sense
 Are vain ; since lasting good may not be won
 From the Impermanent. Therefore that fire,
 Divinely kindled in the hollow heart,
 Burns down at length. Thou seek'st the Permanent !

“ ‘ Thou, Nachikêtas ! by my second boon
 Didst comprehend the fruit of sacrifice,
 The Rest where all desires are somehow fed ;
 Where the world's centre is ; where fear departs ;
 Laudable, lovely, high, of large expanse ;
 Desirable, the glad abode of Bliss.
 Thou sawest these and sett'dst them aside,
 Wise in thy fixedness !

“ ‘ Only the wise —

By ADHYÂTMAYÔGA — severing
 Their thoughts from shows, and fixing it on truths,
 See HIM, the Perfect and Unspeakable,
 Hard to be seen, retreating, ever hid
 Deeper and deeper in the Uttermost ;

Whose House was never entered, who abides
 Now, and before, and always ; and, so seeing,
 Are freed from griefs and pleasures !

“ ‘ Hearing this,

Conceiving verity, — desiring it,
 Distinguishing the soul's deep attributes
 Subtly discerned, far-reaching, — mortal man
 Rejoiceth, having noble cause for joy.
 And thee, O Nachikêtas, I perceive
 A heart whose door stands open for the Truth ! ’ ”

P. Good ! 't is the sense ; albeit once and twice
 Thy feet did stray, treading this lofty path
 Of learning, faintly traced. Now shall the boy
 Press Yama closer, and the Truth will come !

ANYATRA DHARMMÔDANYATRÂDHARMM —

ÂDANYATRÂSMÂTKRITÂKRITÂT

ANYATRA BHUTÂCHCH BHAVYÂCHCH, — TAD VAD !

What saith he ?

S. “ ‘ Make it known to me,’ he saith,
 ‘ Who is HE ? What ? Whom thou hast knowledge of
 Higher than Good and Ill, Unseen, Exempt
 From causes and effects ; Outside the sphere
 Of that which was or will be ; More than these

Mightier, remoter, deeper !’

“ Yama spake :

‘The answer whereunto all Vedas lead ;
The answer whereunto all Penance strives ;
The answer whereunto those strain that live
As Brahmachâryas — hear this from me.’ ”

What did he whisper, Guru ?

P. Doubt thou not

He breathed the holy ÔM. Yet if Death spake
That sacred word so softly, let us not
Exceed the reverent text, which in this place
Hath a great silence ! But the God saith more,
ETADDEVÂKSHARAMPARAN — read on !

S. “ ‘This word, so rightly breathed, signifieth Brahm,
And signifieth Brahma, — GOD withdrawn,
And GOD made manifest. Who knows this word,
With all its purports, what his heart would have
His heart possesseth. This of spoken speech
Is wisest, deepest, best, supremest ! He
That speaketh it, and wotteth what he speaks,
Is worshipped in the place of Brahm with Brahm !
Also, the soul which knoweth thus itself,

It is not born. It doth not die. It sprang
 From none, and it begetteth none ! Unmade,
 Immortal, changeless, primal, — I can break
 The body, but that soul I cannot harm ! ”

P. Now is the next verse famous ! — mark it well.
 The inmost secret of thy scroll lies here.
 Here shalt thou pluck from this most ancient shell
 The whitest pearl of wisdom’s treasury !
 Moreover, in the “ Song of God ” ’t is set,
 And shineth in the *Śvētaśwatara*.

S. HANTÂ CHENMANYATÊ HANTUN
 HATASCHENMANYATE HATAN,
 UBHAU TAU NA VIJNYÂNTO
 NAYAM HANTI NA HANYATÊ.

“ If he that slayeth thinks “ I slay ; ” if he
 Whom he doth slay, thinks “ I am slain, ” — then both
 Know not aright ! That which was life in each
 Cannot be slain, nor slay !

“ The untouched Soul,
 Greater than all the worlds [because the worlds
 By it subsist] ; smaller than subtleties
 Of things minutest ; last of ultimates,
 Sits in the hollow heart of all that lives !

Whoso hath laid aside desire and fear,
 His senses mastered, and his spirit still,
 Sees in the quiet light of verity
 Eternal, safe, majestic — HIS SOUL !

“ ‘ Resting, it ranges everywhere ! asleep,
 It roams the world, unsleeping ! Who, save I,
 Know that divinest spirit, as it is,
 Glad beyond joy, existing outside life ?

“ ‘ Beholding it in bodies bodiless,
 Amid impermanency permanent,
 Embracing all things, yet i' the midst of all,
 The mind, enlightened, casts its grief away !

“ ‘ It is not to be known by knowledge ! man
 Wotteth it not by wisdom ! learning vast
 Halts short of it ! Only by soul itself
 Is soul perceived — when the Soul wills it so !
 There shines no light save its own light to show
 Itself unto itself !

“ ‘ None compasseth
 Its joy who is not wholly ceased from sin,
 Who dwells not self-controlled, self-centred — calm,
 Lord of himself ! It is not gotten else !
 Brahm hath it not to give !

“ ‘How otherwise
Should mortal know where that sure Life abides
Whereto Brahmans and Kshatriyas are but meats
And Death the garnishing?’ ”

The *Valli* ends!

Ah, Master ! what is this which Yama saith ?

P. KA ITṬHA VEDA YATRA SA ? The scroll
Rebuketh thee ! “ Who grasps HIM ? ” Meditate !
There shines no light, save the Soul’s light, to show !
Save the Soul’s light ! —

END OF THE SECOND VALLĪ.

THIRD VALLÎ.

Sahab. “ So Yama spake ; and Nachikêtas then —
 With soul and spirit drinking due result
 Of this world’s works — approached the Hidden House
 Where the SUPREME abides :

“ Knowers of Brahm,
 Performers of the threefold sacrifice,
 And they that light the Nachikêtas fire,
 Call soul and spirit — ever this way linked —
 Sunshine and shadow.

“ Now is understood
 That Nachikêtas-flame which builds the bridge
 For sacrificers ; whereby these attain
 The Eternal ONE, the Place of Peace, the Abode
 Where fear and grief are fled ; the Landing-port
 For spirits which have crossed life’s troubled sea.

“ Look on the Spirit as the rider ! take
 The Body for the chariot, and the Will
 As charioteer ! regard the mind as reins,

The senses as the steeds, and things of sense
 The ways they trample on. So is the Soul
 The Lord that owneth spirit, body, will,
 Mind, senses — all ; itself unowned. Thus think
 The wise !

“ He who is unwise drives with reins
 Slack on the neck o’ the senses ; then they ramp,
 Like restive horses of a charioteer.

“ He that is wise, with watchful mind and firm,
 Calms those wild Five, so they go fair and straight,
 Like well-trained horses of a charioteer.

“ The man unwise, unmindful, evil-lived,
 Comes not to that fixed Place of Peace ; he falls
 Back to the region of sense-life again !

“ The wise and mindful one, heart-purified,
 Attaineth to the changeless Place, wherefrom
 Never again shall births renew for him !

“ For, whoso rides this chariot of the flesh —
 The reins of mind well grasped, the charioteer
 Faithful and firm — comes to his journey’s end,
 Vishnu’s abiding-seat, the Utmost Home.”
 I would hear farther, Guru ! of that Home !

P. Hear what is taught in the Khândogya !

“ The body is the City, and its heart
 The Palace, and the Royal Presence there
 A hid, invisible, close, subtle thing,
 On an ethereal lotus-seat enthroned,
 The Spirit — ÂTMAN !

“ And if they shall say :
 ‘ How should we seek, how should we understand
 That kingly spirit, sitting on the Throne,
 Hid in the Palace of the Body’s Heart,
 Invisible, small, subtle ?’

“ Answer them :
 ‘ As large as is the unbounded Universe,
 So large that little, hidden Spirit is !
 The Heavens and Earths are in it ! Fire and air,
 And sun and moon and stars, darkness and light,
 It comprehends ! Whatever maketh Man,
 The present of him, and the past of him,
 And what shall be of him, — all thoughts and things
 Lie folded in the ethereal vast of It !’

“ And, if they say : ‘ What then is left of it
 When eld upon the Body’s City creeps,
 And breaks and scatters it ; and all its walls
 Fall ; and the Palace of the Heart is void,

Where dwelt the being, the desire, the life,
This Royal Spirit's kingship?'

“ Answer them :

‘ By mortal years the Immortal grows not old !
The Âtman changes not ! The Body's death
Kills not the soul ! It hath its City, still,
Its Palace, and its hidden, proper life !
Becoming Self of Self ; set clear from sin,
As the snake casts her slough ; made free of flesh,
Of age, ache, hunger, thirst, sorrow, and death :
Thenceforth desiring the desirable,
And thinking ever what is good to think ! ’ ”

S. Sayeth thy scripture this?

P.

Ay ! this it saith ! —

Prapâthaka the Eighth, Khanda the First ;
And in the Second : “ If a soul depart
Instructed — knowing itself — and knowing truth,
And how that Brahma and the Self are One —
Then hath it freedom over all the worlds :
And, if it wills the region of the Past,
The Fathers and the Mothers of the Past
Come to receive it ; and that Soul is glad !
And if it wills the region of the Homes,

The Brothers and the Sisters of the Homes
 Come to receive it ; and that Soul is glad !
 And if it wills the region of the Friends,
 The Well-belovèd come to welcome it
 With love undying ; and that Soul is glad !
 And if it wills a world of grace and peace
 Where garlands are, and perfumes, and delights
 Of delicate meats and drinks, music and song,
 Lo ! fragrances, and blossoms, and delights
 Of dainty banquets, and the streams of song
 Come perfect to it ; and that Soul is glad !
 And if it make its bliss in beauty's arms,
 Finding most wonder, most release, most rest
 On the soft bosoms of the Maids of Heaven,
 Lo ! the bright Maids of Heaven — more loving-sweet
 Than loveliest earthly beauty — come to him
 Rejoiced — rejoicing ! And that Soul is glad ! ”

S. How should the Âtman, Guru ! this glad soul,
 Mix, and be one with Brahma — being itself ?

P. There is an answer in the Upanishads !
 “ How should this stream — our Moota-Moola here —
 Which presently is Beema, and anon
 Kistna, and falleth so into the sea,

Be river and be sea? Yet thus it is !
 The great Godâveri, who pours herself
 Into the Lanka waves — is she destroyed?
 Has Gunga vanished, when her sacred tides
 Slacken against the main? or Brahmapûta?
 Or Indus? or the five white sister-floods
 Which by the mouth of Indus find escape?
 Lo ! these live still — though none may know of them —
 Each drop and air-bell of their inland course
 Existent in the vast dark water-world !”
 Thus it is taught ; — but not with mortal words
 Shall wordless truth be compassed !

S.

Reverently

I thank thee, Shastri ! Shall I read again?
 “ ‘ Listen ! the things of sense are more than sense !
 The mind is higher still ! the moving will
 Higher than mind ! the Spirit higher yet !
 And higher than the Spirit is the Soul,
 Highest of all the all-embracing ONE,
 PURUSHA ! Over, or beyond, is nought !—
 Innermost, Utmost, Infinite, is This !
 This is that Ultimate and Uttermost,
 Which shall not be beheld, being in all

The un beholden essence ! Not the less
 Will it reveal itself by subtle light
 Of insight, straitly seeking hidden truth !

“ ‘ If one will see it, let him rule the flesh
 By mind, governing mind with ordered Will,
 Subduing Will by Knowledge, making this
 Serve the firm Spirit, and the Spirit cling
 As Soul to the Eternal Changeless Soul ;
 So shall he see !

“ ‘ UTTISHTAT ! — Rise ! Awake !

Seek the great Teachers, and attend ! The road
 — Is narrow as a knife-edge ! hard to tread !
 But whoso once perceiveth HIM that Is, —
 Without a name, Unseen, Impalpable,
 Bodiless, Undiminished, Unenlarged,
 To senses Undeclared, without an end,
 Without beginning, Timeless, Higher than height,
 Deeper than depth ! Lo ! such an one is saved !
 Death hath not power upon him ! ’

“ Ye who read,
 And ye who hear, these never-dying words

Which Nachikêtas won and Death vouchsafed,
 Rejoice ! for ye are loved in Brahma's world !
 Whoso — pure-hearted — the deep lore of this
 Expoundeth, in th' assembly, or at time
 Of Śraddha (let it otherwise be hid) !
 Thereby obtaineth endless fruit of bliss,
 Yea ! endless fruit of bliss !”

“Yea ! endless fruit !”

Murmured the Pundit, while, rejoiced, I made
 The eight prostrations ; — for what greatness is
 Greater than wisdom ? Then I called my horse,
 Whose hoofs upon the rock the black snake heard
 And glided to his darkness ; but the doves
 Brooded and cooed, and Morning's lovely light
 Lay broad and glad and white upon the grain
 What time we cantered back to Vishrambagh.

HERE ENDS THE THIRD VALLÎ OF THE

KĀTHA UPANISHAD.

THE EPIC OF THE LION.

[From the French of Victor Hugo's "L'Art d'être Grandpère."]



I.

A LION in his jaws caught up a child —
Not harming it — and to the woodland, wild
With secret streams and lairs, bore off his prey ;
The beast, as one might cull a flower in May,
Had plucked this bud, not thinking wrong or right,
Mumbling its stalk, too proud or kind to bite, —
A lion's way, roughly compassionate !
Yet truly dismal was the victim's fate ;
Thrust in a cave which rumbled with each roar,
His food wild herbs, his bed the earthy floor,
He lived, half-dead with daily frightening.
It was a rosy boy, son of a king ;
A ten-year lad, with bright eyes shining wide ;

And, save this son, his Majesty beside
Had but one girl — two years of age — and so
The monarch suffered, being old, much woe,
His heir the monster's prey, while the whole land
In dread both of the beast and king did stand ;
Sore terrified were all.

By came a Knight
That road, who halted, asking, " What 's the fright ? "
They told him, and he spurred straight for the den.

Oh, such a place ! the sunlight entering in
Grew pale — and crept, so grim a sight was shown
Where that gaunt Lion on the rock lay prone :
The wood, at this part thick of growth and wet,
Barred out the sky with black trunks closely set ;
Forest and forester matched wondrous well !
Great stones stood near, with ancient tales to tell, —
Such as make moorlands weird in Brittany,—
And at its edge a mountain you might see,
One of those iron walls which shut off heaven ;
The Lion's den was a deep cavern driven
Into this granite ridge, fenced round with oaks.
Cities and caverns are discordant folks,

They bear each other grudges ! this did wave
 A rustling threat to trespasser, — “ Hence, knave !
 Or meet my Lion ! ”

In the champion went !

The den had all the sombre sentiment
 Which palaces display — deaths — murderings —
 Terrors ! — you felt “ here dwells one of the kings : ”
 Bones strewn around showed that this mighty-lord
 Denied himself nought which his woods afford.
 A rock-rift, pierced by stroke of lightning, gave
 Such misty glimmer as a den need have :
 What eagles might think dawn and owls the dusk,
 Makes day enough for kings of claw and tusk.
 All else was regal, though ! you understood
 Why the majestic brute slept, as he should,
 On leaves, with no lace curtains to his bed ;
 And how his wine was blood — nay, or instead,
 Spring-water lapped *sans* napkin, spoon, or cup,
 Or lackeys.

Being from spur to crest mailed up,
 The champion enters.

In the den he spies
 Truly a Mighty One ! Crowned to the eyes

With shaggy golden fell — the Beast ! — It muses
With look infallible ; for, if he chooses,
The master of a wood may play at Pope,
And this one showed such claws, there was small hope
To argue with him on a point of creed !
The Knight approached — yet not too fast, indeed !
His footfall clanged, flaunted his rose-red feather ;
None the more notice took the beast of either,
Still in his own reflections plunged profound.
Theseus a-marching upon that black ground
Of Sisyphus, Ixion, and dire hell,
Saw such a scene, murk and implacable.
But duty whispered, “ Forward ! ” so the Knight
Drew forth his sword : the Lion at that sight
Lifted his head in slow wise, grim to see.

The Knight said : “ Greeting, monstrous brute, to thee !
In this foul hole thou hast a child in keeping, —
I search its noisome nooks with glances sweeping,
But spy him not. That child I must reclaim ;
Friends are we if thou renderest up the same ;
If not — I too am lion, thou wilt find ;
The king his lost son in his arms shall bind ;

While here thy wicked blood runs, smoking-hot,
Before another dawn."

" I fancy not ! "

Pensive, the Lion said.

The Knight strode near,
Brandished his blade and cried : " Sire ! have a care ! "
The Beast was seen to smile — ominous sight ! —
Never make lions smile ! Then joined they fight,
The man and monster, in most desperate duel
Like warring giants, angry, huge, and cruel ;
Like tigers crimsoning an Indian wood,
The man with steel, the beast with claws as good ;
Fang matching blade, hide mail, that sylvan lord
Hurled himself foaming on the flashing sword :
Stout though the Knight, the Lion stronger was,
And tore his brave breast under its cuirass ;
And, striking blow on blow with ponderous paw,
Forced plate and rivet off, until you saw
Through all the armor's cracks the bright blood spirt,
As when clenched fingers make a mulberry squirt ;
And piece by piece he stripped the iron sheath,
Helm, armlets, greaves — gnawed bare the bones beneath,
Scrumching that hero ; till he sprawled — alas !

Beneath his shield, all blood, and mud, and mess,
Whereat the Lion feasted : then it went
Back to its rocky couch and slept content.

II.

Next came a hermit.

He found out the cave ;
With girdle, gown, and cross — trembling and grave —
He entered. There that Knight lay, out of shape,
Mere pulp : the Lion, waking up, did gape,
Opened his yellow orbs, heard some one grope,
And — seeing the woollen coat bound with a rope,
A black peaked cowl, and inside that a man —
He finished yawning and to growl began :
Then, with a voice like prison-gates which creak,
Roared, “ What wouldst thou ? ”

“ My King ! ”

“ King ? ”

“ May I speak ? ”

“ Of whom ? ”

“ The Prince.”

“ Is that what makes a King ? ”

The monk bowed reverence : “ Majesty ! I bring
A message — wherefore keep this child ? ”

“ For that

Whene'er it rains I 've some one here to chat.”

“ Return him ! ”

“ Not so ! ”

“ What then wilt thou do ?

Wouldst eat him ? ”

“ Ay — if I have nought to chew ! ”

“ Sire ! think upon his Majesty in woe ! ”

“ They killed my dam,” the Beast said, “ long ago.”

“ Bethink thee, sire, a king implores a king.”

“ Nonsense — he talks — he 's man ! when my notes ring,
A Lion 's heard.”

“ His only boy ! ”

“ Well, well !

He hath a daughter.”

“ She 's no heir.”

“ *I dwell*

Alone in this my home, 'mid wood and rock,
Thunder my music, and the lightning-shock
My lamp ; — let his content him ! ”

“ Ah ! show pity.”

“ What means that word ? is 't current in your city ? ”

“Lion, thou’dst wish to go to heaven— see here !
I offer thee indulgence, and, writ clear,
God’s passport to His paradise —”

“Get forth,
Thou holy rogue !” bellowed the Beast in wrath.
The hermit disappeared !

III.

Thereat left free,
Full of a lion’s vast serenity
He slept again, letting the still night pass :
The moon rose, starting spectres on the grass,
Shrouding the marsh with mist, blotting the ways,
And melting the black woodland to gray maze ;
No stir was seen below, above, no motion
Save of the white stars trooping to the ocean :
And while the mole and cricket in the brake
Kept watch, the Lion’s measured breath did make
Slow symphony which held all creatures calm.

Sudden — loud cries and clamors, striking qualm
Into the heart o’ the quiet ; horn and shout
Causing the solemn wood to reel with rout,

And all the nymphs to tremble in their trees.
The uproars of a midnight chase are these,
Which shakes the shades, the marsh, mountain and stream,
And breaks the silence of their sombre dream.
The thicket flashed with many a lurid spark
Of torches borne 'mid wild cries through the dark ;
Hounds, nose to earth, ran yelping through the wood,
And armed groups, gathering in the alleys, stood.
Terrific was the noise that rolled before ;
It seemed a squadron ; nay, 't was something more —
A whole battalion, sent by that sad king
With force of arms his little Prince to bring,
Together with the Lion's bleeding hide.

Which here was right or wrong? who can decide?
Have beasts or men most claim to live? God wots !
He is the unit, we the cipher-dots.

Well warmed with meat and drink those soldiers were,
Good hearts they bore — and many a bow and spear ;
Their number large, and by a captain led
Valiant, whilst some in foreign wars had bled,
And all were men approved and firm in fight.

The Lion heard their cries, affronting night,
For by this time his awful lids were lifted ;
But from the rock his chin he never shifted,
And only his great tail wagged to and fro.

Meantime, outside the cavern, startled so,
Came close the uproar of this shouting crowd.
As round a web flies buzzing in a cloud,
Or hive-bees swarming o'er a bear ensnared,
This hunter-legion buzzed, and swarmed, and flared.
In battle order all their ranks were set :
'T was understood the Beast they came to get,
Fierce as a tiger's cunning — strong to seize —
Could munch up heroes as an ape cracks fleas,
Could with one glance make Jove's own bird look
down ;

Wherefore they laid him siege as to a town.
The pioneers with axes cleared the way,
The spearmen followed in a close array,
The archers held their arrows on the string ;
Silence was bid, lest any chattering
Should mask the Lion's footstep in the wood ;
The dogs — who know the moment when 't is good

To hold their peace — went first, nose to the ground,
Giving no tongue ; the torches all around
Hither and thither flickered, their long beams
Through sighing foliage sending ruddy gleams ; —
Such is the order a great hunt should have.
And soon between the trunks they spy the cave,
A black, dim-outlined hole, deep in the gloom,
Gaping, but blank and silent as the tomb,
Wide open to the night, as though it feared
As little all that clamor as it heard.
There 's smoke where fire smoulders, and a town,
When men lay siege, rings tocsin up and down ;
Nothing so here ! therefore with vague dismay
Each stood, and grasp on bow or blade did lay,
Watching the horrid stillness of that chasm :
The dogs among themselves whimpered : a spasm
From the horror lurking in such voiceless places —
Worse than the rage of tempests — blanched all faces :
Yet they were there to find and fight this Thing,
So they advance, each bush examining,
Dreading full sore the very prey they sought ;
The pioneers held high the lamps they brought :
“ There ! that is it ! the very mouth of the den ! ”

The trees all round it muttered, warning men :
Still they kept step and neared it — look you now,
Company's pleasant ! and there were a thou—

Good Lord ! — all in a moment, there's its face !
Frightful ! — they saw the Lion ! Not one pace
Further stirred any man ; the very trees
Grew blacker with his presence, and the breeze
Blew shudders into all hearts present there :
Yet, whether 't was from valor or wild fear,
The archers drew — and arrow, bolt, and dart
Made target of the Beast. He, on his part —
As calm as Pelion in the rain or hail —
Bristled majestic from the nose to tail,
And shook full fifty missiles from his hide ;
Yet any meaner brute had found beside
Enough still sticking fast to make him yell
Or fly ; the blood was trickling down his fell,
But no heed took he, glaring steadfastly ;
And all those men of war, amazed to be
Thus met by so stupendous might and pride,
Thought him no beast, but some god brutified.
The hounds, tail down, slunk back behind the spears ;

And then the Lion, 'mid the silence, rears
His awful face, and over wood and marsh
Roared a vast roar, hoarse, vibrant, vengeful, harsh, —
A rolling, raging peal of wrath, which spread
From the quaking earth to the echoing vault o'erhead,
Making the half-awakened thunder cry,
“ Who thunders there ? ” from its black bed of sky.

This ended all ! — sheer horror cleared the coast !
As fogs are driven by wind, that valorous host
Melted, dispersed to all the quarters four,
Clean panic-stricken by that monstrous roar ;
Each with one impulse — leaders, rank and file,
Deeming it haunted ground, where Earth somehow
Is wont to breed marvels of lawless might —
They scampered, mad, blind, reckless, wild with fright.
Then quoth the Lion, “ Woods and mountains ! see,
A thousand men enslaved fear one Beast free ! ”

As lava to volcanoes, so a roar
Is to these creatures ; and, the eruption o'er
In heaven-shaking wrath, they mostly calm.
The gods themselves to lions yield the palm

For magnanimity. When Jove was king,
Hercules said, "Let 's finish off the thing,
Not the Nemæan merely ; every one
We 'll strangle — all the lions." Whereupon
The lions yawned a "much obliged !" his way.

But this Beast, being whelped by night, not day —
Offspring of glooms — was sterner ; one of those
Who go down slowly when their storm 's at close ;
His anger had a savage ground-swell in it :
He loved to take his naps, too, to the minute,
And to be roused up thus with horn and hound, —
To find an ambush sprung — to be hemmed round —
Targetted — 't was an insult to his grove !
He paced towards the hill, climbed high above,
Lifted his voice, and, as the sowers sow
The seeds down wind, thus did that Lion throw
His message far enough the town to reach.
" King ! your behavior really passes speech !
Thus far no harm I 've wrought to him your son ;
But now I give you notice — when night 's done
I will make entry at your city-gate,
Bringing the Prince alive ; and those that wait

To see him in my jaws — your lackey-crew —
Shall see me eat him in your palace too !”

Quiet the night passed, while the streamlets bubbled,
And the clouds sailed across the vault untroubled.

Next morning this is what was viewed in town :

Dawn coming ! — people going ! — some adown
Praying, some crying ; pallid cheeks, swift feet,
And a huge Lion stalking through the street !

IV.

The quaking townsmen in the cellars hid ;
How make resistance ? briefly, no one did ;
The soldiers left their posts, the gates stood wide ;
'T was felt the Lion had upon his side
A majesty so godlike, such an air —
That den, too, was so dark and grim a lair —
It seemed scarce short of rash impiety
To cross its path as the fierce Beast went by.
So to the palace and its gilded dome
With stately steps unchallenged did he roam,

In many a spot with those vile darts scarred still,
As you may note an oak scored with the bill,
Yet nothing recks that giant-trunk ; so here
Paced this proud wounded Lion, free of fear,
While all the people held aloof in dread,
Seeing the scarlet jaws of that great head
Hold up the princely boy — aswoon.

Is 't true

Princes are flesh and blood? Ah, yes ! and you
Had wept with sacred pity, seeing him
Swing in the Lion's mouth, body and limb :
The tender captive gripped by those grim fangs,
On either side the jowl helplessly hangs,
Deathlike, albeit he bore no wound of tooth.
And for the brute thus gagged it was, in sooth,
A grievous thing to wish to roar, yet be
Muzzled and dumb, so he walked savagely,
His pent heart blazing through his burning eyes,
While not one bow is stretched, no arrow flies ;
They dreaded, peradventure, lest some shaft
Shot with a trembling hand and faltering craft
Might miss the Beast and pierce the Prince :

So, still

As he had promised, roaring from his hill,
This Lion, scorning town and townsfolk, sick
To view such terror, goes on straight and quick
To the King's house, hoping to meet there one
Who dares to speak with him : — outside is none !
The door 's ajar, and flaps with every blast ;
He enters it — within those walls at last ! —
No man !

For, certes, though he raged and wept,
His Majesty, like all, close shelter kept,
Solicitous to live, holding his breath
Specially precious to the realm. Now, death
Is not thus viewed by honest beasts of prey,
And when the Lion found *him* fled away,
Ashamed to be so grand, man being so base,
He muttered to himself in that dark place
Where lions keep their thoughts : “ This wretched King !
’T is well, I ’ll eat his boy ! ” Then, wandering,
Lordly he traversed courts and corridors,
Paced beneath vaults of gold on shining floors,
Glanced at the throne deserted, stalked from hall
To hall — green, yellow, crimson — empty all !
Rich couches void, soft seats unoccupied !

And as he walked he looked from side to side
To find some pleasant nook for his repast,
Since appetite was come to munch at last
The princely morsel. Ah ! what sight astounds
That grisly loungeur ?

In the palace-grounds

An alcove on a garden gives, and there
A tiny thing — forgot in the general fear,
Lulled in the flower-sweet dreams of infancy,
Bathed with soft sunlight falling brokenly
Through leaf and lattice — was that moment waking ;
A little lovely maid, most dear and taking,
The Prince's sister ; all alone — undressed —
She sate up singing : children sing so best !

A voice of joy, than silver lute-string softer !
A mouth all rosebud, blossoming in laughter !
A baby-angel hard at play ! a dream
Of Bethlehem's cradle, or what nests would seem
If girls were hatched ! — all these ! Eyes, too, so blue
That sea and sky might own their sapphire new !
Neck bare, arms bare, pink legs and stomach bare !
Nought hid the roseate satin skin, save where

A little white-laced shift was fastened free ;
She looked as fresh, singing thus peacefully,
As stars at twilight, or as April's heaven ;
A floweret — you had said — divinely given,
To show on earth how God's own lilies grow ;
Such was this beauteous baby-maid ; and so
The Beast caught sight of her and stopped —

And then

Entered ; the joists creaked as he stalked straight in !
Above the playthings by the little bed
The Lion thrust his shaggy massive head,
Dreadful with savage might and lordly scorn,
More dreadful with that princely prey so borne ;
Which she, quick spying, "Brother ! brother !" cried,
"Oh ! my own brother !" and, unterrified —
Looking a living rose that made the place
Brighter and warmer with its fearless grace —
She gazed upon that monster of the wood,
Whose yellow balls not Typhon had withstood ;
And — well ! who knows what thoughts these small heads
hold?
She rose up in her cot — full height, and bold,
And shook her pink fist angrily at him.

Whereon — close to the little bed's white rim,
All dainty silk and laces — this huge Brute
Set down her brother gently at her foot,
Just as a mother might, and said to her, —
“ Don't be put out, now ! there he is, Dear ! there ! ”

NENCIA.

A PASTORAL POEM.

By LORENZO DE' MEDICI, surnamed "The Magnificent."

*Translated for the first time, and in the original metre, from
the Italian.*



[This pastoral by the great Florentine Ruler, Lorenzo the Magnificent, is taken from the Italian text, printed at Bergamo in 1763 A.D. The Bergamese editor remarks, of the fifty stanzas composing it, "*Sono nel loro genere incomparabili*;" and all may certainly admire the dramatic force with which the illustrious Medicean has, as it were, entered into the very heart and soul of his peasant, to depict a rural passion. The "Nencia" was probably written about A.D. 1480 — the dawn of the golden age of Italian art — when the "Magnificent" Lorenzo was chief of all the scholars and poets, as well as of his citizens of Florence, and gathered at his table such men as Michael Angelo, Luca Signorelli, Ghirlandajo, Filippino Lippi, Botticelli, Pulci, Poliziano, and Pico de Mirandola.]

I.

I BURN with love ; — love makes me bold to sing
Praise of the damsel who undoes my heart ;
Each time I think a little tender thing
About her, 't is as if my breath would part :

The world her match for beauty cannot bring,
 No other eyes such lovely lightnings dart ;
 In town and tower and city have I been,
 But seen none nowhere like my country-queen.

2.

To Monticelli, every market-day,
 To Prato, Empoli, and San Casciano,
 To Poggibonsi, and to Colle gay,
 By San Donato down to Dicamano ;
 To Castelfranco, all Figline-way ;
 San Pier', Montagna, Borgo, Gagliano,
 Ofttimes I wend, — a-buying and a-selling, —
 And Barberin, where my Nenciozza 's dwelling.

3.

But never once — saving at Barberin —
 See I a girl so dear, discreet, and taking,
 With cheek, and neck, and nape, and dimpled chin
 So smooth and white : or of such perfect making.
 Her eyes ! 't is like torch-light, when feasts begin,
 To feel their lids lift, and their glance awaking

Joyance ; and 'twixt them comes the winsome nose,
 With proud pink nostrils, like the pits in a rose.

4.

Of pink sea-coral are her dear lips dight,
 With, underneath, two strings of sea-pearls plenty ;
 A Tuscan foal's milk-row is not so white !
 (To judge thereby my Nencia 's come to twenty.)
 Her stainless cheeks have all the softened light
 Of misted marble, chiselled smooth and dainty ;
 Amid the blooms of Beauty she is Rose ;
 The wide world no such lovely wonder shows !

5.

Beyond all noble fortunes fortunate
 He 'll be, who takes her to his happy bosom ;
 Well might he call his star glorious and great
 Whose lot it is to wear this heavenly blossom :
 Well may he make his peace thenceforth with Fate,
 And lightly bear whatever ills should cross him,
 Who clasps fair Nencia as his wedded wife,
 White as wild wax, and with love's honey rife !

6.

I 'll liken thee to fairy cloudland gleams
Which mix the welkin and the world together ;
I will compare thee unto Dian's beams
Who round poor cabins sheds her silver weather ;
Spring-water none so fresh and sparkling seems,
Nor late-trod wine so luscious. Sweet one ! whether
Early or late we see thee, 't is as neat
And fair and wholesome as new-bolted wheat !

7.

Her eyes can steal a shepherd's soul away
Through wall of flesh, whenever she doth look ;
You see her, and you love, the selfsame day,
Albeit the story goes her heart is rock ;
Troops of tamed lovers her behests obey,
And live upon her will, a patient flock :
'T is little she can lose giving one glance,
But, whoso wins it, how his heart doth dance !

8.

La Nencia mia ! Ah, the pearl she seems
Going afoot, on Saints' Days, to hear matins !

She wears a bodice which right bravely gleams
Of damask, and a skirt of brightest satins,
A golden girdle clasps her waist, and streams
Down to the knee with jewelled pins and patines ;
When she hath heard the Mass, and paceth home,
How like a heavenly angel she doth come !

9.

She hath no fellow at the sheaf-tying,
She works and laughs when all the rest are sped ;
Or else at home her merry wheel, fast-flying,
Spins ducats for her with its dancing thread :
For whatso 's deft and rich she will be trying,
Woollen or silk ; and all the while her head
Droops like a snow-drop when the neighbors, mustered,
Praise her. She is as sweet as millet-custard !

10.

Thou hast so witched me with thy braided brow
I cannot ply my mattock as before ;
For meat and drink I have no stomach now ;
No morsel can I swallow any more :

I grow so thin, the withered winter-bough

Lets the blast through it with a sigh less sore :
Nor day nor night repose or comfort brings,
I am so tied to thee by twenty strings.

11.

I am so wild with utter love of thee,

All night I toss and groan and start and sigh ;
The kindly gossips say, to comfort me,
“ Shepherd ! take heart ! thou 'lt win her by-and-by.”
The village damsels jest because they see
I go with cornamuse, where thou dost lie,
At eve, and sing for love some little trifle,
But thou dost sleep, or with hushed laughter stifle.

12.

Last night I could not sleep a single wink,

It seemed a thousand years ere dawn would break,
Bethinking thou wouldst take thy flock to drink
At daytime, and wouldst wend down to the lake ;
So, not to miss one passing blessed blink
Of those black eyes, I, for their sweet light's sake,

Waited two hours against the bake-house close
Till the full moon set and my Nencia rose.

13.

My Nencia's beauty hath not any blot.
She's stately, straight and tall as wench can be ;
A dimple in her chin my love hath got,
Which makes her bright laugh lovelier to see.
There is no single charm she boasteth not ;
I think dame Nature framed her purposely
So fair, so fine, so noble, and so tender,
That all the world might homage to her render.

14.

I culled a posy of snow-blossomed spray,
With buds and berries gathered here and there, —
It was for thee ; but thou didst turn away
So grand ! not deigning answer, foul or fair.
Then spake I to myself, " My love doth play
The high and mighty ; I will match her here ! "
And oftimes since, albeit I turn mine eye,
The folks may see how proud I pass them by.

15.

Yesterday, all day long, I watched for thee

Hard by the mill : I said : " If she comes now
It cannot happen but my chance will be ;

The beasts are safe, grazing upon the brow :
We 'll loiter by the kiln, Nencia and me ;

We 'll stroll together to the fountain, — thou
And thy Vallera, — under th' hiding vine ;
I will tend thy flock and thou shalt herd mine ! "

16.

And when at last from your cot-door you came,
Holding the hound from hurrying the sheep,
My heart swelled in my breast, and shook my frame,
While tears of joy down either cheek did creep :
I started for the cross roads, all aflame,

Quickening my calves and heifers up the steep ;
And waited on the knoll where thou shouldst pass,
But at the by-path thou didst turn — alas !

17.

When next thou comest with thy water-pot,
Wend, I beseech thee, hither to our well !

I 'll draw for thee, and make all toil forgot :
 Who knōws but there will be something to tell?
 Ofttimes I had a mind to hide it not
 When thou wert by, but fear always befell ;
 Yet, if this is to hap, why linger longer?
 The chestnut 's on the bough, the grapes grow stronger !

18.

It was in April that my heart was caught,
 The day I saw thee plucking herbs and cresses ;
 I spake thee fair, but thou didst answer nought
 And frowned, because folks passed, tossing thy tresses ;
 To know thy name and house I vainly sought,
 Lest love be lost for what one word expresses ;
 And from that hour I was no more the same :
 I grew thy thrall ; thou hadst me, meek and tame.

19.

Nenciozza mia ! I have a mind to go —
 Now that my beasts are in the will to drink —
 Down to the pool, where thou must come, I know,
 And there to sit me still upon the brink,

Till I shall spy thee cross. To loiter so
Were pleasant, if it happen as I think.
I'll stay like stone until my sweet hath passed ;
Ah ! do not make my watching vain at last !

20.

Nenciozza mia ! I go a' Saturday
To sell two loads of wood in Florence-town ;
While the sleek heifers cropped the flowers away
I set me yesterday to cut it down.
Ah ! if thou'dst come, Dear ! — But at least I may
Bring fardels for thee, buttons for thy gown,
Powder, pomander, — not to beautify thee ! —
Or pins, or needles : something let me buy thee !

21.

Jove ! when she dances, what a step and skill !
What lightness ! like a kid's her quick feet fly !
She turns as swiftly as the sails of a mill,
And marks the music, hand and foot and eye :
And, when all 's ended, courtesy low she will
And take two backward steps, so gracefully !

She makes the very prettiest salute,
 There 's not in Florence any dame could do 't !

22.

Ask me, Dear ! some small trife from the fair !
 What shall I fetch thee, what slight dainty thing?
 A brooch of carved shell for my love to wear ?
 Or hooks and eyes, or buckles, or silk strings ?
 A broidered gipsire for thy kirtle, Dear !
 Or lace to tie thy lappets, shall I bring ?
 Or wilt thou choose to bind thy bodice close
 A cord of sky-blue silk ? or none of those

23.

But a long necklace for thy milky throat,
 Strung with round coral beads of rosy pink,
 All with a cross to swing midway ; and, note,
 They make them great and small ! which dost thou think
 The prettier ? if my blood could drop, God wot !
 Round ruddy beads to please thee, 't would not shrink !
 So, if I find thy fancy, hold it thine,
 Though I should pawn this jacket, Nencia mine !

24.

If thou shouldst say, when Sieve rolls at flood,
 “ Fling thyself in ! ” I ’d headlong leap straightway !
If thou shouldst bid so end my life, I would
 Dash head against a rock, and die that way !
Command me any deed that seemeth good
 In those dear eyes and I shall straight obey.
I know some promise thus abundantly
Who would not spoil a pair of shoes for thee.

25.

Yea ! and I know — my Nencia ! my heart’s treasure !
 There’s some one whispers thee in my despite :
Let him beware ! I ’ll give him market measure ;
 Six inches in his midriff, sharp and bright !
Thou ’st seen the knife I wear ! Dio ! ’t is pleasure
 To mark it do its work at feast or fight !
If in my quarters it finds any man,
By God ! the steel shall make him skip a span !

26.

Oh, me ! a lass like this white maid of mine,
 So honey-sweet and winning, ne’er was seen !

She's lusty, large, and fresh ; and still so fine,
 So fair and graceful, — of all feasts the queen.
 But yet that mirth and modesty combine
 To keep her ever all she should have been ;
 And how her singing all the feast enhances !
 And, dancing, how all dancers she outdances !

27.

I too know something ! — with the best I'd vie
 If, Nencia ! I dared open all my heart :
 There is no better judge porklings to buy ;
 I shine at plough and harrow, spade and cart :
 When, stripped, I tie my seed-bag on, or ply
 The axe, they say, "What a stout wight thou art !"
 The mattock and the pick I wield like thunder,
 And blow the horn and cow-pipes till you wonder.

28.

But Thou, but thou ! Ah, none is like to thee !
 A well-scrubbed kneading-trough is not so white !
 As syrup draws the flies thou drawest me ;
 As figs tempt wasps so art thou my delight ;

Richer than rape-blooms, sweet as what the bee
 Sucks from their gold thou art ! Oh, if I might
 One kiss of honey from that red mouth rifle,
 New goat's cheese after such would seem a trifle.

29.

I've waited all this while for thee to pass,
 Musing my love where the quick waters shine ;
 My beasts have grazed off every bite of grass,
 I must not tarry, or the fools will pine :
 What doest, Nencia ! not to come ? Alas !
 I looked to see thy wandering charge and mine
 Mix in the willows, then 't were one hour's gain
 To let them seem one flock, though we be twain !

30.

Nenciozza mia ! 't is time for me to go !
 My yearlings must be tethered in the stall,
 God be with thee ! I send fond farewell so —
 Far off ; for Mona Masa loud doth call.
 My heart stays here ! have pity ! let me know
 Thou giv'st me back some tittle, if not all,

Of thine. Good-by! Good-night! *la buona sera!*
 Sleep soft, and think kind things of thy Vallera!

31.

Nencia! Nenciozza! one day say you will
 Climb the hill with me through the willows here!
 Promise! say, "Yes, I'll come!" and fear no ill,
Nenciozza mia! I'll deserve thee, Dear!
Nencia! I love thee so; my love is still
 So great and true, I'd die to bring thee cheer!
 If thou wert stung by some beast fell and frightful,
 I'd suck the poison, and think death delightful!

32.

Or we might meet farther away, where yonder
 The sun's eye doth not shine in the green gloom;
 Don't say "you could not answer!" do not ponder
 If we should hear them when they called from home:
 But come, and lift thy hood, and let the wonder
 Of thy dark blessed eyes gleam on me! Come!
 Eyes which befit thy beauteous breast and brow
 Being angelic, and an angel thou.

33.

Cara Nenciozza mia! I hear the bleating
 One of thy flock makes in the close below,
 Some wolf, may be, is there — killing and eating,
 With deadly jaws, thy lambkin. Nay, 't is so!
 Wilt thou not take thy staff — wilt thou not? sweeting!
 And with me to the lonely valley go,
 And strike the caitiff dead? I 'll be with thee!
 But all the folk shall say: "She killed him! She!"

34.

Ah, come! I know a nest of speckled thrushes
 Ready to fly: the prettiest feathered thing!
 'T is hid away in a thick clump of bushes,
 There are no caged birds that so sweetly sing!
 To-morrow I will show you, for time pushes,
 If thou 'dst rear one; and then, Dear! I will bring
 An oaten cake; while — for a good excuse —
 I shall pass, playing on my cornamuse.

35.

Nenciozza mia! I shall not seem a clown
 When I get home my broidered vest to wear,

And lace my shoes, and tie my long hair down,
 You 'll take me for a sleek, rich townsman, Dear !
 Just now I know I 'm rough about the crown,
 The barber asks too much my locks to shear
 And curl, but if my marketing goes fairly
 I will be barbered properly and rarely.

36.

Farewell ! my Lily with the lovely bloom !
 I see the beasts are breaking for the wheat ;
 To-morrow, Nencia ! when again I come,
 I 'll bring you wild wood strawberries — if they 're sweet —
 So, when you hear my cornamusa boom,
 Trip to the spot we wot, where the roads meet,
 At corner of the orchard. I can find
 Dittany there for thee, if thou 'st a mind !

37.

I asked thee of thy father — dost thou know ?
 Old Beco droned me out some doubtful word,
 And, taking counsel of thy mother so,
 Gave me to understand I 'm not preferred ;

Yet look for me to come — ('less thou say'st "no" —)

With such a band some day to catch my bird
That none shall let. I've told father and mother
Thee I will have for wife, and never other!

38.

Oh, when I see thee compassed round with folk,
Something inside me seems to boil and swim;
But if one makes thee eyes, ah, I could choke,
My heart leaps up my throat to come at him!
Alas! poor heart! by this 't were burst and broke,
So full of thee it is; full to the brim!
But that its thousand sighs, each one an anguish,
Fly all day long to thee, saying "I languish!"

39.

Nenciozza! Come at dinner-time! we'll eat
Salads together, and, it may be, cheese:
Be sure you keep your word to come, my sweet!
But so that no accursed gossip sees.
I bear my weapons, Dear! if we did meet
Some of old Beco's crew under the trees

There 'd be wild words — I know — and blood, may be ; —
The Devil flay them, if they flout at me !

40.

I talk too fierce ! Ah, Nencia ! — when she goes,
On feast-days, what a pearl of grace she seems !
Smooth, white, and clean, and neat from top to toes :
A little ring on each midfinger gleams.
For she hath store of trinkets, and bestows
So trimly here and there her beauty's beams.
Pearls too — fine pearls — my love wears ! Not the best
Can anywhere compare with Nencia dressed !

41.

Ah, Nencia ! didst thou know the love immense,
The burning love I bear for those bright eyes,
The tears I pour, the grievous woe intense
That seems to crack and rend me with deep sighs ;
If thou knewedst this, and all — thy gentle sense
Would melt — thou wouldst all lesser love despise,
And cry, " My poor Vallera ! thou art he
That lov'st me most, thou shalt not woful be ! "

42.

I marked thee, Nencia ! tripping home that day
 From Santo — oh, so splendid ! I was dazed.
 Thou hadst a mind to take the meadow way
 And slipped adown where Beco's asses grazed.
 I hid myself ; quoth I, " Meet now we may !"
 Then while you singing tripped, I, breathless ; gazed ;
 And so drew closer ; but ere this could pass
 You spied me, and you turned aside, alas !

43.

Nenciozza mia ! it made me dumb with pleasure
 To see thy rose-fair face even thus near :
 If I could once more come so nigh my treasure
 I 'd live upon such joy a whole long year !
 If I could speak thee forth my love's full measure
 Meseems my life's luck would be perfect, Dear !
 If in my grasp that dear hand I could hold,
 I'd not unclasp, to get mine filled with gold !

44.

I'm here ! but Nencia does not come, nor wake :
 Nencia ! why art thou such a slug-a-bed ?

Thou hearest me ; thou know'st that for thy sake
 I blow this cornamuse ; why art thou hid ?
 Thou wert not wont such heavy sleep to take !
 Pleaseth no more the music, as it did ?
 All day I conned this gentle strain to sing thee,
 I meant it for a charm would surely bring thee.

45.

O heart too hard ! what maiden would not render
 Love to a lover loving her like me ?
 Who else would melt not, and wax honey-tender
 Seeing me suffer thus ? Ah, Nencia ! see !
 Thou knowest I am so faithful ; must it end here
 The pain which should be crowned with joy by thee ?
 Ah, yield a little ! one kind thought discover,
 Then do with me as pitchforks do with clover !

46.

Nay ! when one speaks of forks, how deft she is !
 There 's no such nimble worker in the land.
 She weaves a hat of straw that way and this,
 With knots and ends so dexterously planned,
 You never saw such skill ! the neighbors press,
 To see the plaits obey her cunning hand.

She can make osier-pots, and baskets, too,
 And what the best doth, that will Nencia do.

47.

Nencia ! ah, *Nencia* ! I do love thee so !

As the poor moth the flame which crisps his wings ;
Ah mia Nenciozza ! seeking thee I go

As flies to honey, when the sweetness brings
 Death. Must I die? Then shine, dear Lantern ! oh,

Shed sweet death, Honey ! But if better things
 Await me, then, kind Love ! be this now said
 Before the chestnuts fall and grapes grow red.

48.

Peace, poor Vallera ! peace, thou foolish youth !

Wasted thy song is, and thy sorrow vain !
 It seemed she liked me once, but now, in sooth,

She likes me not, I see : therefore sharp pain
 Rives me and drives me, sobbing : for no ruth

My love will show, and these hot tears again
 Tell to what anguish I am led, alas !

Who shake with passion, if she only pass.

49.

Nencia ! Nenciozza ! thou wilt be my death !
 Yet so to see me die can please thee not.
 Ah, would to God that I could keep my breath
 Whilst I drew forth my heart, and laid it hot
 Upon thy hand, to hear how its beat saith,
 “ *Nencia ! Nenciozza !* ” — and to witness what
 A load it bears ! But, if thou didst so take
 My heart in hand, 't would sigh, “ Keep me ! ” and break !

50.

Good-by ! *Nenciozza !* Heaven have guard of thee !
 The weary beasts are to their homestead near ;
 I must not have, for any fault of me,
 Some heifer left lowing outside her lair ;
 The last one now will o'er the river be.
 (Yea ! yea ! Madonna Masa ! I can hear !
 I come !) Farewell, cold Love ! She calls again,
 There 's Nanni bustling, and the wine to strain !

THE STRATFORD PILGRIMS.



“ AH ! the troop at the Tabard Inn,
Manciple, Miller, and Frankelyn,
Tightening the girths, and draining the ale,
And away on their wild ride by river and dale !
Gone, Dan Chaucer ! gone, but for thee,
Is the clatter of that gay companie,
The rattle and ring of stirrup and spur,
Floating of plume, and folding of fur,
With the round of tales that held from town
To the sweet green slopes of the broad South Down.
Certes ! with such it were pleasant indeed
To patter an Ave, or finger a bead,
And forth each dawn by the cock to wend
From shrine to shrine unto Albion’s end ;

But their day is done, and their course is run,
None goeth forth on a pilgrimage — none !”

“ Well ! but the woods are as green as then,
And the sunshine as splendid on gray rock and glen ;
The linnet and missel-thrush sing, I trow,
With as rich a trill in their little throats now ;
Rivers will ripple, and beech-boughs wave,
And the meadows be decked in a dress as brave,
And the great glad sky build a roof as blue,
Though it overarch only pilgrims two.
Sweetheart, come ! let us do as they
Did in old time on as fair a day :
We lack but a chapel whereunto to wend,
A shrine and a saint for our journey’s end ;
And of that gay ride — the shrine, God wot,
Is the dusty goal that I envy them not.”

“ Nay, pardie !” quoth she that I love,
“ Fit for thy mood as the hand for the glove,
Or the hilt of his sword for the soldier’s fist,
Or a poet to be praised, or a lip to be kissed,
Far on yon path, by the emerald lea,
Fair Avon glideth adown to the sea ;

By the walls of a church, beneath whose stones
Sleeps dust sacred as saintly bones, —
His whom thou lovest.”

“ Right good ! ” I said,
And forth a foot to the lea I led,
With staff and scrip, and a spirit in tune
To the merry noise of a midsummer noon : —
Two we were of one heart and age
Going a pious pilgrimage.

Sooth ! I doubt if palmers as gay
Ever set forth on so fair a way.
Sooth ! I doubt if a day so rare
Ever made pilgrimage half so fair.
But, certes ! never did palmers go
To holier shrine than where he lies low,
Who miracles wrought for heart and eye :
The wonder of Imogen's constancy,
The airy marvels of Prospero's isle,
The magic of Queen Cleopatra's smile ;
Her barge that burned on the glowing water,
The patience and faith of Lear's leal daughter,
The Roman Portia's fond, firm heart,

And the Veronese lovers death did not part.
Something I laughed, Heav'n 'ield it me,
At Becket and Benedict "saints," — not he !
So came we on where the wayfarer sees
Far Warwick fading behind the trees,
And Guy's great castle behind the town,
That "setter up," and that "bringer down."
For "Stratford — ho !" our green road lay,
And I spake with my heart in the ancient day :
"Sweet ! thou art fair for a prioress,
And I am an 'Oxenforde clerke,' no less ;
Tell out some fable of ancient day !
I rede you to prove that woman may
Be as true as man !" — "Benedicite !
Hearken my story and judge," quoth she.

VERNIER.

If ever thou shalt follow silver Seine
 Through his French vineyards and French villages,
 For love of love and pity turn aside
 At Vernier, and bear to linger there !
 The gentle river doth so — lingering long
 Round the dark marshland, and the pool Grand'mer,
 And then with slower ripple steals away
 Down from his merry Paris. Do thou this ;
 'Tis kind to keep a memory of the dead, —
 The bygone, silent dead ; and these lie there,
 Buried a twenty fathoms in the pool,
 Whose rough cold wave is closed above their grave,
 Like the black cover of an ancient book
 Over a tearful story.

Very lovely

Was Julie de Montargis : even now —
 After six hundred years are dead with her,
 Her village name — the name a stranger hears —
 Is, " La plus belle des belles ; " — they tell him yet,

The glossy night-black pansies of the land
Lost depth in her dark hair ; and that she owned
The noble Norman eye — the violet eye,
Almost — so far and fine its lashes drooped —
Darkened to purple.

All the country-folk
Went lightly to their work at sight of her ;
And all their children learned a grace by heart,
And said it with small lips when she went by,
The Lady of the Castle.

Dear, past words,
Was all this beauty and this gentleness
Unto her first love and her playfellow,
Roland le Vavasour.

Too dear to leave,
Save that his knightly vow to pluck a palm,
And bear the cross broidered above his heart,
To where upon the cross Christ died for him,
Led him away from loving.

But a year,
And they shall meet — alas ! to those that joy,
It is a pleasant season, all too short,
Made of white winter and of scarlet spring,

With fireside comfort and sweet summer-nights :
But parted lovers count the minutes up,
And see no sunshine.

Julie heeded none,
When she had belted on her Roland's sword,
Buckled his breastplate, and upon her lip
Taken his last long kisses.

Listen now !

She was no light-o'-love, to change and change,
And, deeply written on her heart, she kept
The night and hour the star of Love should see
A true love-meeting. Walking by the pool,
Many a time she longed to wear a wing
As fleet and white as the swift sea-bird spread,
That she might hover over Roland's sails,
Follow him to the field, and in the battle
Shield the hot Syrian sun from dazing him :
High on the turret many an autumn eve,
When the light, merry swallow tried his plumes
For foreign flight, she gave him messages, —
Fond messages of love, for Palestine,
Unto her knight. What wonder, loving so,
She greeted well the brother that he sent

From Ascalon with spoils — Claude Vavasour?
Could she do less? — he had so deft a hand
Upon the mandolin, and sang so well
What Roland did so bravely; nay, in sooth,
She had not heart to frown upon his songs.
When they sang other love and other deeds
Than Roland's, being brother to her lord.
Yet sometimes was she grave and sad of eye,
For knowledge of the spell her glance could work
Upon its watcher. Ah! he came to serve,
And stayed to love her; and she knew it soon,
Past all concealment. Oftentimes his eyes,
Fastened upon her face, fell suddenly,
For brother-love and shame; but, once and twice,
Julie had seen them, through her tender tears,
Fixed on some messenger from Holy Land
With wild significance, the drawn white lips
Working for grief, because she smiled again.

He spake no love — he breathed no passionate tale,
Till there came one who told how Roland's sword,
From heel to point, dripped with the Paynim blood;
How Ascalon had watched, and Joppa's lists,

And Gaza, and Nicæa's noble fight,
 His chivalry ; and how, with palm-branch won,
 Bringing his honors and his wounds a-front,
 His prow was cleaving Genoa's sapphire sea,
 Bound homewards. Then, the last day of the year,
 Claude brought his unused charger to the gate,
 Sprang to the broad strong back, and reined its rage
 Into a marble stillness. Yet more still,
 Young Claude le Vavasour, thy visage was,
 More marble-white.

She stood to see him pass,
 And their eyes met ; and full of tears were hers
 To mark his suffering ; and she called his name,
 And came below the gate ; but he bowed low,
 And thrust the visor close over his face,
 So riding on.

Before St. Ouen's shrine
 That night the lady watched — a sombre night,
 With fleeting gleams of fitful moonlight sent
 'Twixt driving clouds : the gray stone statues gleamed
 Through the gloom ghost-like ; the still effigies
 Of knight and abbess had a show of life,
 Lit by pale crimsons and faint amethysts

That fell along them from the oriels ;
And if she broke the silence with a step,
It seemed the echo lent them speech again
To speak in ghostly whispers ; while, o'er all,
With a weird paleness midnight might not hide,
Straight from the wall St. Ouen looked upon her,
Knitting his granite brows, bidding her hope
No lover's kiss that night — no loving kiss —
None — though there came the whisper of her name,
And a chill sleety blast of wintry wind
Moaning about the tombs, and striking her,
For fear, down to her knees.

That opened porch
Brought more than wind and whisper ; there were steps,
And the dim wave of a white gabardine —
Horribly dim ; and then the voice again,
As though the dead called Julie. Was it dead,
The form which, at the holy altar foot,
Stood spectral in the flickering window-lights ?
It does not turn, nor speak, nor seek for her,
But passes through the chancel, grim and still !
Ah, Holy Mother ! dead — and in its hand
The pennon of Sir Roland, and the palm,

Both laid so stilly on the altar front ;
 A presence like a knight, clad in close mail
 From spur to crest, yet from his armèd heel
 No footfall ; a white face, white as the stones,
 Lit by the moonlight long enough to know
 How the dead kept his tryst ; and It was gone,
 Leaving the lady on the flags, ice-cold.

O gentle River ! thou that knowest all,
 Tell them how for a while she mourned her knight ;
 How her grief withered all the rose-bloom off,
 And wrote its record on her fading cheek ;
 And say, bright River ! lest they do her wrong,
 All the sad story of those twenty moons,
 The true-love dead — the true-love that lived on —
 Her clinging memories, and Claude's generous praise,
 Claude's silent service, and her tearful thanks ;
 And ask them, River, for Saint Charity,
 To think not too much wrong, that so she gave,
 Her heart being given and gone, her hand to him,
 The brother of her lord. —

Now banish care !

Sandals and brown serge brushed the yellow broom,
Till to the lake he came and loosed his skiff,
And paddled to the lonely island-cell
Midway over the wavelets. Long ago
The people of the lonely water knew
He came alone to dwell there — 't was the night
Of Lady Julie's vigil ; ever since
The simple fishers left their silver tithes
Of lake-fish for him on the wave-worn flags,
Wherefrom he wandered not, save when that day
He went unasked, and marred the bridal show, —
Wherefore none knew, nor how, — save two alone,
A lady swooning — and a monk at prayers.

And now not Castle-gates, nor cell, nor swoon,
Nor splashing waters, nor the flooded marsh,
Can keep these two apart. The Chapel-bells
Ring Angelus and Even-song, and then
Sleep, like her waiting maidens — only Blanche,
Her foster-sister, lying at the gate,
Dreaming of roving spirits — starts at one,
And marvels at the night-gear, poorly hid,
And overdone with pity at her plaint,

Lets her dear Lady forth, and watches her
Gleaming from crag to crag — but lost at last,
A white speck on the night.

More watchful eyes

Follow her flying ; — down the water-path,
Mad at his broken bridals, sore amazed
With fear and pain, Claude tracks the wanderer —
Waits, while the wild white fingers loose the cord —
But when she drove the shallop through the lake
Straight for the island-cell, he brooked no stay,
But doffed his steel-coat on the reedy rim,
And gave himself to the quick-plashing pool,
And swimming in the foam her fleetness made,
Strove after — sometimes losing his white guide,
Down-sinking in the dark wash of the waves.

Together to the island-cell they come,
The shallop and the swimmer — she alone
Thrusts at the wicket, — enters wet and wild.
What sees he there under the crucifix?
What holds his eyesight to the ivied loop?
O Claude ! — O furious heart ! be still, or break !
The Monk and Julie kneeling, not at prayer !

She kisses him with warm, wild, eager lips —
 Weeps on his heart — that woman, nearly wived,
 And, “Sweetest love,” she saith, “I thought thee dead.”
 And he — who is he that he fondles so
 In his her shaking hands, and bends adown,
 Crying, “Ah, my lost love ! it was no ghost
 That left the palm-branch ; but I saw thee not
 In the dim moonlight of the midnight aisle ;
 And heard their talk of Claude, and held thee false,
 These many erring days.” Now, gaze no more,
 Claude, Claude, for thy soul’s peace ! She binds the brand
 About his gabardine, with close caress ;
 She fondles the thin neck, and clasps thereon
 The gorget ! then the breast-piece and the helm
 Her quick hands fasten. “Come away,” she cries,
 “Thou Knight, and take me from them all for thine.
 Come, true love ! come.” The pebbles, water-washed,
 Grate with the gliding of the shallop’s keel,
 Scarce bearing up those twain.

Frail boat, be strong !

Three lives are thine to keep — ah, Lady pale,
 Choose of two lovers — for the other comes
 With a wild bound that shakes the rotten plank.

Moon ! shine out clear for Claude's avenging blow !
She glitters on a quiet face and form
That shuns it not, — yet stays the lifted death.
“ My brother Roland ! ” — “ Claude, ah, brother mine ! ” —
“ I thought thee dead ! ” — “ I would that I had died
Ere this had come ! ” — “ Just God ! but she is thine ! ” —
“ He wills her not for either ! look, we fill,
The current drifts us, and the oars are gone,
I will leap forth ! ” — “ Now by the breast we sucked,
So shalt thou not : let the black waters break
Over a broken heart ! ” — “ Nay, tell him no ;
Bid him to save thee, Julie — I will leap ! ”
So strove they sinking, sinking — Julie bending
Between them ; and those brothers over her
With knees and arms close locked for leave to die
Each for the other ; — while the Moon shone down,
Silvering their far-off home, and the black wave
That struck, and rose, and floated over them,
Hushing their death-cries, hiding their kind strife,
Ending the love of those great troubled hearts
With silence, save for lapping of the lake.

THE RAJAH'S RIDE.

A PUNJAB SONG.



Now is the Devil-horse come to Sindh !
Wah ! wah ! Gooroo ! — that is true !
His belly is stuffed with the fire and the wind,
But a fleeter steed had Runjeet Dehu !

It's forty koss from Lahore to the ford,
Forty and more to far Jummoo ;
Fast may go the Feringhee lord,
But never so fast as Runjeet Dehu !

Runjeet Dehu was King of the Hill,
Lord and eagle of every crest ;
Now the swords and the spears are still,
God will have it — and God knows best !

Rajah Runjeet sate in the sky,
Watching the loaded Kafilas in ;
Affghan, Kashmeree, passing by,
Paid him pushm to save their skin.

Once he caracoled into the plain,
Wah ! the sparkle of steel on steel !
And up the pass came singing again
With a lakh of silver borne at his heel.

Once he trusted the Mussulman's word,
Wah ! wah ! trust a liar to lie !
Down from his eyrie they tempted my Bird,
And clipped his wings that he could not fly.

Fettered him fast in far Lahore,
Fast by the gate at the Runchenee Pâl ;
Sad was the soul of Chunda Kour,
Glad the merchants of rich Kurnool.

Ten months Runjeet lay in Lahore —
Wah ! a hero's heart is brass !
Ten months never did Chunda Kour
Braid her hair at the tiring-glass.

There came a steed from Toorkistan,
Wah ! God made him to match the hawk !
Fast beside him the four grooms ran,
To keep abreast of the Toorkman's walk.

Black as the bear on Iskardoo ;
Savage at heart as a tiger chained ;
Fleeter than hawk that ever flew,
Never a Muslim could ride him reined.

“ Runjeet Dehu ! come forth from thy hold ” —
Wah ! ten months had rusted his chain !
“ Ride this Sheitan's liver cold ” —
Runjeet twisted his hand in the mane ;

Runjeet sprang to the Toorkman's back,
Wah ! a king on a kingly throne !
Snort, black Sheitan ! till nostrils crack,
Rajah Runjeet sits, a stone.

Three times round the Maidan he rode,
Touched its neck at the Kashmeree wall,
Struck the spurs till they spirted blood,
Leapt the rampart before them all !

Breasted the waves of the blue Ravee,
Forty horsemen mounting behind,
Forty bridle-chains flung free, —
Wah ! wah ! better chase the wind !

Chunda Kour sate sad in Jummoo : —
Hark ! what horse-hoof echoes without ?
“ Rise ! and welcome Runjeet Dehu —
Wash the Toorkman's nostrils out !

“ Forty koss he has come, my life !
Forty koss back he must carry me ;
Rajah Runjeet visits his wife,
He steals no steed like an Afreedee.

“ They bade me teach them how to ride —
Wah ! wah ! now I have taught them well ! ”
Chunda Kour sank low at his side ;
Rajah Runjeet rode the hill.

When he came back to far Lahore —
Long or ever the night began —
Spake he, “ Take your horse once more,
He carries well — when he bears a man ! ”

Then they gave him a khillut and gold,
All for his honor and grace and truth ;
Sent him back to his mountain-hold —
Muslim manners have touch of ruth ;

Sent him back, with dances and drum —
Wah ! my Rajah Runjeet Dehu !
To Chunda Kour and his Jummoo home —
Wah ! wah ! Futtee ! — wah, Gooroo !

A BIHARI MILL-SONG.



OF eight great beams the boat was wrought,
With four red row-pins ; — *Hu-ri-jee !*
When Mirza Saheb spied at the Ghaut
Bhagbati bathing. — *Hu-ri-jee !*

“ O girls ! that hither your chatties bring,
Who is this bathing ? ” — *Hu-ri-jee !*
“ The Head of our village is Horil Singh ;
’T is the Raja’s sister ! ” — *Hu-ri-jee !*

“ Run thou, Barber ! — and, Peon ! run thou ;
Bring hither that Rajpût ! ” — *Hu-ri-jee !*
“ O girls ! who carry the chatties, now,
Which is his dwelling ? ” — *Hu-ri-jee !*

“The dwelling of Horil Singh looks north,
 And north of the door is a sandal-tree :” —
 With arms fast-bound they brought him forth ;
 “Salaam to the Mirza !” — *Hu-ri-jee !*

“Take, Horil Singh, this basket of gold,
 And give me thy sister, sweet Bhagbati.”
 “Fire burn thy basket !” he answered, bold, —
 “My sister ’s a Rajpût !” — *Hu-ri-jee !*

Horil’s wife came down from her house ;
 She weeps in the courtyard : “Cursèd be,
 O sister-in-law, thy beautiful brows !
 My husband is chained for them !” — *Hu-ri-jee !*

“Now, sister-in-law ! of thy house keep charge,
 And the duties therein :” quoth Bhagbati ;
 “For Horil Singh shall be set at large,
 I go to release him !” — *Hu-ri-jee !*

When Bhagbati came to the Mirza’s hall
 Low she salaamed to him : — *Hu-ri-jee !*
 “The fetters of Horil Singh let fall,
 If, Mirza,” she said, “thou desirest me.”

“If, Mirza,” she said, “thou wouldst have my love,
Dye me a bride-cloth ;” — *Hu-ri-jee!*

“Saffron beneath and vermilion above,
Fit for a Rajpût !” — *Hu-ri-jee!*

“If, Mirza,” she said, “I am fair in thine eyes,
And mine is thy heart, now,” — *Hu-ri-jee!*

“Command me jewels of rich device,
Fit for a Rajpût !” — *Hu-ri-jee!*

“If, Mirza,” she said, “I must do this thing,
Quitting my people,” — *Hu-ri-jee!*

“The palanquin and the bearers bring,
That I go not afoot from them !” — *Hu-ri-jee!*

Smiling, he bade the dyers haste
To dye her a bride-cloth. — *Hu-ri-jee!*

Weeping — weeping, around her waist
Bhagbati bound it. — *Hu-ri-jee!*

Smiling, he bought, from the goldsmith’s best,
Jewels unparalleled. — *Hu-ri-jee!*

Weeping, weeping — on neck and breast
Bhagbati clasped them. — *Hu-ri-jee!*

Joyously smiling, "Bring forth," he cried,
 "My gilded palanquin!" — *Hu-ri-jee!*
 Bitterly sorrowing, entered the bride,
 Beautiful Bhagbati. — *Hu-ri-jee!*

A koss and a half of a koss went they,
 And another koss after; — *Hu-ri-jee!*
 Then Bhagbati thirsted: "Bearers, stay!
 I would drink at the tank here!" — *Hu-ri-jee!*

"Take from my cup," the Mirza said:
 "Oh, not to-day will I take!" quoth she:
 "For this was my father's tank, who is dead,
 And it soon will be distant!" — *Hu-ri-jee!*

She quaffed one draught from her hollowed palm,
 And again she dipped it; — *Hu-ri-jee!*
 Then leaped in the water, dark and calm,
 And sank from the sight of them. — *Hu-ri-jee!*

Sorely the Mirza bewailed, and hid
 His face in his cloth, for rage to be
 So mocked: "See, now, in all she did
 Bhagbati fooled me!" — *Hu-ri-jee!*

Grieving, the Mirza cast a net

Dragging the water ; — *Hu-ri-jee !*

Only shells and weeds did he get,

Shells and bladder-weeds. — *Hu-ri-jee !*

Laughing, a net cast Horil Singh,

Dragging the water ; — *Hu-ri-jee !*

Lo ! at the first sweep, up they bring

Dead, cold Bhagbati — fair to see !

Laughing, homeward the Rajpût wends,

Chewing his betel ; “For now,” quoth he,

“In honor this leap of Bhagbati ends

Ten generations !” — *Hu-ri-jee !*

HINDOO FUNERAL SONG.



CALL on Rama ! call to Rama !
Oh, my brothers, call on Rama !
 For this Dead
 Whom we bring,
Call aloud to mighty Rama !

As we bear him, oh, my brothers,
Call together, very loudly,
 That the Bhûts
 May be scared ;
That his spirit pass in comfort.

Turn his feet now, calling " Rama,"
Calling " Rama," who shall take him
 When the flames
 Make an end :
Ram ! Ram ! — oh, call to Rama !

SONG OF THE SERPENT CHARMERS.



COME forth, O Snake ! come forth, O glittering Snake !
O shining, silent, deadly Nâg ! appear,
Dance to the music that we make,
 This serpent-song, so sweet and clear,
 Blown on the beaded gourd, so clear,
 So soft and clear.

O dread Lord Snake ! come forth and spread thy hood,
And drink the milk and suck the eggs ; and show
Thy tongue ; and own the tune is good :
 Hear, Maharaj ! how hard we blow !
 Ah, Maharaj ! for thee we blow ;
 See how we blow !

Great Uncle Snake ! creep forth and dance to-day !

This music is the music snakes love best ;

Taste the warm white new milk, and play

 Standing erect, with fangs at rest,

 Dancing on end, sharp fangs at rest,

 Fierce fangs at rest.

Ah, wise Lord Nâg ! thou comest ! — Fear thou not !

We make salaam to thee, the Serpent-King,

Draw forth thy folds, knot after knot ;

 Dance, Master ! while we softly sing ;

 Dance, Serpent ! while we play and sing,

 We play and sing.

Dance, dreadful King ! whose kisses strike men dead ;

Dance this side, mighty Snake ! the milk is here !

 [*They seize the Cobra by the neck.*]

Ah, *shabash* ! pin his angry head !

 Thou fool ! this nautch shall cost thee dear ;

 Wrench forth his fangs ! this piping clear

 It costs thee dear !

SONG OF THE FLOUR-MILL.



TURN the merry mill-stone, Gunga !

Pour the golden grain in ;

Those that twist the churrak fastest

The cakes soonest win :

Good stones, turn !

The fire begins to burn ;

Gunga, stay not !

The hearth is nearly hot.

Grind the hard gold to silver,

Sing quick to the stone ;

Feed its mouth with dal and bajri,

It will feed us anon.

Sing, Gunga ! to the mill-stone,

It helps the wheel hum ;

Blithesome hearts and willing elbows

Make the fine meal come :

Handsful three

For Gopal, you, and me ;

Now it falls white,

Good stones, bite !

Drive it round and round, my Gunga !

Sing soft to the stone ;

Better corn and churrak-working

Than idleness and none.

[NOTE. — The above three songs were written to native Hindoo melodies.]

“STUDENTS’ DAY” IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY.



OUR of all the hundred fair Madonnas
Seen in many a rich and distant city —
Sweet Madonnas, with the mother’s bosoms ;
Sad Madonnas, with the eyes of anguish ;
Rapt Madonnas, caught in clouds to heaven
(Clouds of golden, glad, adoring Angels) —
She of Florence, in the chair, — so perfect !
She that was the “Grand Duke’s ” wealth and glory,
She that makes the picture “of the Goldfinch,”
Ghirlandajo’s, with the cloak and jewels ;
Guido’s Queen, whom men and angels worship,
Della Robbia’s best ; and that sweet “Perla ” —
Seville’s bright boast — Mary of Murillo
(Painted — so they vow — “with milk and roses”),

Guido Reni’s Quadro at Bologna,
 Munich’s masterpiece, grim Dürer’s Goddess ;
 Yes ! and thy brave work — Beltraffio mio ! —
 Many as the lessons are I owe them,
 Thanks and wonder ; worship ; grateful memories,
 Oftenest I shall think of Perugino’s.

Do you know it? Either side a triptych
 Stands an armed Archangel — as to guard her —
 Glorious — with great wings, and shining armor :
 In the middle panel, pure and tender,
 Clasp close her hands, with adoration
 (All the Mother’s love — the Mortal’s worship —
 In their yearning, in their reverence, painted),
 Gazes Mary on the Child. A seraph
 Holds Him, smiling, at her knees ; and, smiling,
 Looks she down, with spirit humbly-happy,
 Full — to heart’s brim — of the Peace of Heaven.
 Reverence mingles with the Mother’s passion,
 But no touch of sadness, or of doubting.
 Far away a river runneth seaward
 (Little now — like Truth — like Truth, to widen),
 Leads the light across a blue dim country,

Under peaks — by forests — to the ocean :
Soft and warm, a pearly sky broods over
Where three Winged-Ones, at the Father's footstool,
Sing the "peace and good-will" song to mortals.

If you ask me why that Perugino
Of the rest can never be forgotten,
Let this serve : I learned a lesson by it,
Watching one whose light and faithful fingers —
Following touch by touch her lovely labor —
Caught the Master's trick, and made him modern.
While she bent above her new Madonna,
Laid the splendid smalts, and touched the crimsons,
Swept the shadows under the gilt tresses,
Smoothed the sinless brows, and drooped the eyelids, —
What the Master did, so also doing, —
I bethought me, "True and good the toil is !
Noble thus to double gifts of beauty !
Yet, alas ! this 'peace and good-will' anthem, —
If the dear Madonna knew what ages —
Slowly following ages — would creep o'er us,
And those words be still as wind that passes,
Breathing fragrance from a land we know not,

Sighing music to a tune we catch not,
 Stirring hearts, as leaves, i’ the night, a little
 Shake, and sleep again, and wait for sunlight
 (Sweet, glad sunlight ! oh, so long a-coming !),
 Would she smile so? I had painted rather
 (While she listened to those singing Angels, —
 Mary, with a sword-blade in her bosom
 (Sword that was to pierce her heart, of all hearts !);
 I had shown her with deep eyes of trouble,
 Half afraid to credit that Evangel;
 I had limned her ‘pondering all those sayings,’
 All our later agonies foreseeing,
 After all our years have heard ‘the tidings.’”

But the Artist, painting bold and largely,
 Washing soft and clear the broadening colors;
 With a liberal brush, at skilful working,
 Linking lights and shadows on the visage,
Dropped by hazard there, one drop of water!
 “Lo, a tear!” I thought; “that teaches Pietro!
 That is wiser than the Master’s wisdom!
 Now the picture’s meaning will be perfect!
 For she could not be so calm — Christ’s Mother —

Could she? even though Archangels kept her !
Could she? even though those sang in Heaven !
Knowing how her world would roll beyond them,
Twenty centuries past this sacred moment,
Out of sound of this angelic singing ;
Loaded with the wrongs Christ's justice rights not,
Reddened with the blood Christ's teachings stanch not,
Reeking with the tears Christ's pity stays not :
Let the tear shine there ! it suits the story !
Tear and smile go wondrous well together !
Seeing that this song was sung by Angels ;
Seeing that the foolish world gainsays it.
That one lustrous drop completes the picture !
You forgot it ! Peter of Perugia !"

Ah ! I did not know an Artist's wisdom !
I had still to learn my deepest lesson :
She I watched, with better thought inspired,
Took some tender color in her pencil
(Faint dawn-color, — blush of rose, — I marked not !),
Touched the tear, and melted it to brightness,
Spread it in a heavenly smile all over,
Magically made it turn to service ;

Till that tear, charged with its rosy tintings,
 Deepened the first sweet smile, and left it lovelier, —
 Like the Master’s work, complete, sufficient !

Then I thought : “ Pietro’s wise Madonna
 Was too wise to weep at little sorrows !
 Christ, and She, and Heaven, and all the angels
 Last ; — ’t is sin, and grief, alone which passes !
 Roses grow of dew, and smiles from weeping !
 Sweetest smile is made of saddest tear-drop !
 She hath not forgotten we shall suffer !
 In her heart that sword — to the heft — is planted,
 But beyond the years, she sees Time over ;
 Past the Calvary she counts ‘ the mansions.’
 Dear Madonna ! — wise to be so happy !
 Should you weep, because we have not listened ?
 We shall listen ! and His Mother knows it ! ”

This is why — of many rare Madonnas —
 Most of all I think on Perugino’s ;
 I who know so many more and love them !
 This is why I thank my gentle artist,
 She who taught me that, a student’s wisdom !

THE KNIGHT'S TOMB AT SWANS- COMBE CHURCH.



WHERE, through western windows, dieth —
Gold and rose — the sunset's light,
With his dame, in marble, lieth
Andrew Weldon, armèd Knight :
Side by side, the legend sayeth,
These two lived and died :
Seemeth it most fair and fit
To rest so, side by side.

Nothing here, above or under,
Of fanatic gloom ;
No fool's fear of death's deep wonder
Spoils their simple tomb :
Seems it that the sculptor carved it
Only for to show

What the Lady and the Knight were
Now they are not so.

Silvery twitters of swift swallows
Reach them, flashing by ;
Shadows of the spear-leaved shallows
On their foreheads lie,
Shadows of the flickering shallows,
Of the fragrant limes,
Waving to-day as green and gay
As in their vanished times.

Fair, be sure, was this great lady,
Eyes, I guess, whose blue,
Cold and calm, but beaming steady,
Tender seemed and true.
Certes ! of a noble presence,
Dutiful and staid,
Worthiness was glad before her,
Worthlessness dismayed.

Read beneath, in golden letters
Proudly written down,

Names of all her "sonnes and daughteres!"

Each a matron-crown :

Deftly carved in ruff and wimple,

Kneeling figures show

Small heads over smaller, rising

In a solemn row.

These her triumphs : sterner token

Chronicles her Lord !

Hangs above him, grim and broken,

Gilded helm and sword :

Sometimes, when with choir and organ

All the still air swings,

Red with the rust, and gray with the dust,

Low rattles the blade, and rings.

Time was, Knight, that tiny treble

Should have stirred thy soul

More than drums and trumpets rebel

Braiding after Noll :

No more fight, now ! — nay, nor flight, now !

The rest which thou hast given

In chancel-shade to yon good blade
God gives thy soul in Heaven.

Somewhere on this summer morning
In this English isle,
Gleams a cheek whose soft adorning,
Lady ! wears thy smile !
Some one in the Realm, whose fathers
Suffered much and long,
Owes that sword and its good Lord
Thanks for a righted wrong.

Therefore for that maiden pray I
Dame ! God thee assoil !
Therefore for that freeman say I
Knight ! God quit thy toil !
And for all Christian men — and me —
Grace from the gracious Lord
To write our name with no more shame,
And sheathe as clean a sword.

JUNE, 1857.

ALLA MANO DELLA MIA DONNA.



LISTEN ! poets, loving-hearted,
Here abiding — hence departed ;
Ye who ranged the realms above
Seeking symbols of your love ;
Provence bards and Persian Saadis
Eloquently lauding ladies ;
Frauenlob — the Minnesinger
Mourned of maidens — and that bringer
Of delight to camp and grove,
Camoens, the Lord of love ;
Praise as proudly as ye list,
All the honeyed lips ye kissed ;
Vaunt your true loves' violet eyes,
Vow them bluer than the skies ;
Swear no south-wind ever came
Sweet and soft as she you name ;

Nor no lily ever grew
White as that which bloomed for you !
Look ! I fling you down a glove
In one dear name that I love —
Never hand so fair and fine
As my lady's — Katharine.

Yes ! I know it — Father Homer !
Too long in thy rolls a roamer
Not to know how radiant-mighty
Rose the sea-born Aphrodite ;
Yes ! I know the pearly splendor
Of that hand, whose curvings tender,
Silver glinting under gold,
Combed away the sea-foam bold.
And I worship, bending low,
Herë's awful arm of snow ;
And of mortal boldness shorn
Hail the Rosy-fingered Morn ;
But those Gods above the thunder
Are for fear and reverent wonder ;
She whose gentle hand I praise
Woman is, with woman's ways,

And I hold this gage of mine
None a hand — like Katharine.

All the bards that lips have kissed
Enter angry on the list,
And the legions that appear,
Might move any heart to fear.
Lo ! Athenian Sophocles —
Virgil, too, my fancy sees —
And I sink my spear-head bright
As beseemeth younger knight ;
And I kneel, but not to yield,
For I keep the tented field —
Vowing no such hand was seen
Were Electra twice a Queen,
And Lavinia's hue as fair
As 't was bragged in Latin air :
Nay, nor falter for Sibylla,
Or the careless-eyed Camilla,
Though her wounded wrist did shine
Likest " ivory, stained with wine ;"
Let them go, my noble Masters,
With a sigh for Love's disasters,

And the challenge — none so fine !
None a hand — like Katharine.

Dante ! spirit sad and lone !
Laughing love thou hast not known ;
Weeping love attends on thee,
With its mortal mystery ;
And thine Angel, Beatrice,
Aweth with her hand of ice.
Thou, Petrarca ! dost thou frown ?
Lay thy latest sonnet down !
Set thy shining lance in rest !
For I tilt upon thy breast :
Say'st thou, “ like a curving shell,
Where the tender pink does dwell,”
Gleamed thy Laura's milky hand ?
Lo ! I read it ! and I stand
Firm of foot to make it seem,
Even so my Love's doth gleam ;
And this gentle hand of mine
Gave a heart — thus did not thine.

Ah ! Dan Chaucer ! — art thou he,
Morning star of minstrelsy ?

Eldest of the English choir,
Highest hill — touched first with fire.
Pass ! no bow of mine is bent
At the heart where I have leant,
And thy dream of Marguerite
Was a vision of my Sweet.

Next to thee what champions come?
There be valorous poets some —
Other some whose steel I scorn
In unknighthly hands yborne ;
At the last a Minstrel proud
Rideth high amid the crowd,
Knight of Lady Una he,
And I do him courtesy ;
Yet though “ whiter than the snow ”
Gleamed that noble Dame, I trow,
White as snow, and therewith warm,
Is my Lady’s loving arm ;
And not golden Oriana,
Nor maid Amoret’s high manner,
Waved a hand as white and fine
As the hand of Katharine.

Com'st thou, Tasso, with thy crew,
Eastern-aired Armida too?
Oh! a lustrous lady she,
"Beautiful, exceedingly;"
But her Asian soul I doubt,
Looking from those large eyes out;
And her white wrist plays a part,
Beating not as beats her heart.
Hence, Enchantress! hence, too, thou
Mistress of the southern brow;
Though thou be'st Boccaccio's best,
"Bocca bacciata" hath no zest!
After thee there floats another
Like as sister of one mother,
Ariosto's Angelique, —
Hide her hand, and hide her cheek!
Let a nobler Dame have life
Led by nobler knight to strife —
High born, great, and graceful too,
All thy loving songs are true;
Swear, Lord Surrey, stoutly swear,
Was never woman half so fair!

And I will swear that Geraldine
Had no such hand as Katharine.

Nay ! high poets, let it be
Thine to thee, and mine to me ;
For I see th' accepted King
Of all earthly minstrelling
Crowned with homely Avon lilies,
As his regal way and will is.
Mighty Master ! let me speak :
Though Queen Cleopatra's cheek
Shamed the rosy lotus-dyes,
And her hand in Antony's
Whiter than dove's milky wing
Lay a plaything for a King ;
Yet, an thou shalt pardon yield,
Thus I leave the foughten field ;
All as fair and yet more true
Than was known to one but you,
Is that fair frank hand of mine
That gave to me Katharine.

JANUARY, 1856.

THE HYMN OF THE PRIESTESS OF DIANA.



OH, of all maidens Mistress! Help at need
Of souls unstained and bosoms virginal!
With vervain and with fragrant gums we feed
The flame that burned, and burns, and ever shall;
Feed thou the fire that flames with holy thought,
And let the world to thy white shrine be brought.

The altar-light, mounting to find thy face,
Gleams back upon us from the brow divine,
Filling with placid splendor all the place:
Fill so the earth, supremest Goddess mine!
That men, awaking out of fancied light,
May know it, matched with Dian's noon-time — night.

O brow, where shame can never come to sit!
O cheek of snow, which blush can never melt!

O ear, that hears no word or wish unfit !
 O breast, which thought unsainted never felt !
 Show thyself, Dian ! unto other eyes
 As unto ours, thy deep-sworn votaries.

For we, who round about thine altar go,
 Thou Daughter of the Father of the world !
 Know thee divinest ; — if men knew thee so,
 Then were the false gods from their temples hurled ;
 And mortals, leaving blind and sinful yearning,
 Should scorn false beauty, beauty true discerning.

Queen of the quiet sky ! — the night's full Moon !
 Be moon ! and pierce the darkness of this cloud,
 Whereunder wander, in a dreamful swoon,
 The fellows of our blood, a witless crowd ;
 Send thou the silver ray that lightens this ;
 Show them the path which goes by good to bliss.

Huntress of noble harts, — high-purposed Maid !
 Whose sandal tied for free and fearless chase
 Is fairer than the cestus proud, displayed
 By her of Cyprus, — stand in pride of place

Before the eyes of men, and lead them on
To hunt beside thee, turning off for none.

Ah, bliss ! beside thee — by thee — in thy spirit —
The chase of life along the years to lead,
Conquering desire by high desire to merit
The joy of joys, the love of loves, the meed
Of untold peace, waiting th' unshaken faith
Firm held through life, in full repose on death.

For Thou, of all the gods, hast these to give, —
The kingdom of a calm and equal mind ;
The kiss — cold, true — bidding the soul's life live
To meet caresses, tarrying yet behind,
But past hope tender, like the dreams the moon
Left on the forehead of Endymion.

Eheu ! we speak of things we cannot know,
And knowing, in this presence we were dumb ;
But on the winds which round thy portal go
Echoes from Aphrodite's revels come,
Marring our hymns. High Goddess ! make men see
The "Foam-Born's" beauty but a blot to thee.

TO A SLEEPING LADY.



DARLING! as you lie there sleeping, with the holy angels
keeping

Watch and ward around your pillow, shading it with
wings of gold;

Sentinels whose happy duty is to guard your grace and
beauty;

While you lie there dreaming, seeming all your sweet
self, chaste and cold;

Who would think that the true treasure of that casket,
beyond measure

Rich, and fair, and finished, is not where the lovely
casket lies?

That they see the palace-portal set ajar, and the Immortal
Gone forth from its rosy gateway, locking satin lids
on eyes?

Yet so is it! Fairest woman! and what's there is but
the human

Robe and raiment which your spirit wears, to walk
with all the rest,

Regal raiment! ah, the silky wavelets of that hair! the
milky

Whiteness of the brow! the neck! the soft hands folded
o'er the breast!

As a Queen's grace seems to linger in the pearl-strings
which her finger

Loosens — so thy soul leaves glory on that sleeping
form of thine;

But the beautiful still body is not that which most I
worship,

And your soul, my Pride! my Bride! — is here, and
talking low with mine.

All because, at such an hour, Love hath so much charm
and power,

Life hath so much deeper knowledge of its march and
mystery,

That — so soon as I invite it — coy no longer, but de-
lighted

Forth thy sweet and stately spirit comes for fellowship
with me !
And, beside my spirit sitting, thoughts with deep thoughts
interknitting,
Speaking plainly in a silence, clearer, dearer far than
speech,
Mine grows all thine inmost being ; and I see thee —
more than seeing —
I and thou as one together ; blended, ended, each
in each.

TO STELLA.



SWEET Soul ! suddenly met, utterly loved,
At the first eye-glance of our sudden meeting !
I look back on the ways whereby I moved
To this fair fate, my lonely life completing :
I did not seek you, Dear ! no vision tender
Bade me expect you on my rayless road !
There was no dreamy dawning of the splendor
Your white light sheds ! no morning gray that showed
Where my Star waited under life's horizon ! —
Ah, fair, pure, silvery Star ! set not again !
Better no lamp to fix the sailors' eyes on
Than one brief beam cast on the cold dark main !

INSCRIBED ON A SKULL PICKED UP ON
THE ACROPOLIS AT ATHENS.



I AM the skull of Nedjm, a Turk,
Who fought at Athens with the Giaour ;
When cannon-balls were hard at work
Shattering the Parthenon — that hour
A classic fragment took me fair
Under the waist-cloth, and so made
“ Ruins ” of me. For long years there
My remnants with the rest have laid.
Scant burial got we from the Greek —
The green fly and the hooded crow
Helped the hot sun to leave me sleek,
Till, as thou seest, my pate did grow
White as new Parian. At the last
A Briton spied me, as he passed,

Roaming the strewed Acropolis,
And lightly fashioned me to this.
Drink ! if thou wilt ; and, drinking, say
Never did ancient craftsman make
Cyathus, Krater, Patera
Fitter a mighty thirst to slake.
But, call not me a thing of the clod !
The Parthenon owned no such plan !
Man made that temple for a God,
God made these temples for a man !

THE NEW LUCIAN.

[To H. D. Traill, Esq., on the Dedication of his book, "The
New Lucian."]



"At that eternal parting of the ways,"
Thou say'st, good Friend ! looking to see it come
When hands which cling unclasp, arms disembrace,
And lips, that murmured love to lips, are dumb.
Ay ! it will come, — the bitter hour ! — but bringing
A better love beyond, more subtle-sweet ;
A higher road to tread, with happier singing,
And no cross-ways to part familiar feet !
Smil'st thou, my later Lucian ! knowing too well
Hope's under-ache, Faith's fallacies all sped ?
Yet THAT which gave thee thy fair gift, to tell
How in Elysium chat th' unsilenced Dead,
Shall some day whisper : " Lo ! the Life Immortal !
Enter ! for *thee* stands wide the golden portal ! "

ON THE DEATH OF THE PRINCESS ALICE.

[It will be remembered that Her Royal Highness died of diphtheria, contracted from the caresses of her little son, whom she was nursing.]



TENDER and true ! whose virtue was thy crown !
Whose royalty was royally to live !
Death, sent to fetch thee, laid his arrow down,
And prayed that Love the bitter call would give ;
But Love, who could not stop such gentle breath,
Whispered thy child to give the Kiss of Death !

FACIES NON OMNIBUS UNA.



NOR a life below the sun
But is precious — unto one !
Not an eye, however dull,
But seems — somewhere — beautiful ;
Not a heart, howe'er despised,
But is passioned for and prized.
Fool ! who laughs at lack of graces,
Each man hath a many faces !

ARMAGEDDON.

A WAR SONG OF THE FUTURE.



MARCHING down to Armageddon —

Brothers, stout and strong !

Let us cheer the way we tread on

With a soldier's song !

Faint we by the weary road,

Or fall we in the rout,

Dirge or Pæan, Death or Triumph ! —

Let the song ring out !

We are they who scorn the scorners —

Love the lovers — hate

None within the world's four corners —

All must share one fate ;

We are they whose common banner

Bears no badge nor sign, .

Save the Light which dyes it white —
 The Hope that makes it shine.

We are they whose bugle rings,
 That all the wars may cease ;
 We are they will pay the Kings
 Their cruel price for Peace ;
 We are they whose steadfast watchword
 Is what Christ did teach, —
 “ Each man for his Brother first —
 And Heaven, then, for each.”

We are they who will not falter —
 Many swords or few —
 Till we make this Earth the altar
 Of a worship new ;
 We are they who will not take
 From palace, priest, or code,
 A meaner Law than “ Brotherhood ” —
 A lower Lord than GOD.

Marching down to Armageddon —
 Brothers, stout and strong !

Ask not why the way we tread on
Is so rough and long !
God will tell us when our spirits
Grow to grasp His plan !
Let us do our part to-day —
And help Him, helping Man !

Shall we even curse the madness,
Which for “ ends of State ”
Dooms us to the long, long sadness
Of this human hate ?
Let us slay in perfect pity
Those that must not live ;
Vanquish, and forgive our foes —
Or fall — and still forgive !

We are those whose unpaid legions,
In free ranks arrayed,
Massacred in many regions —
Never once were stayed :
We are they whose torn battalions,
Trained to bleed, not fly,

Make our agonies a triumph, —
Conquer, while we die !

Therefore, down to Armageddon —
Brothers, bold and strong ;
Cheer the glorious way we tread on
With this soldier's song !
Let the armies of the old Flags
March in silent dread !
Death and Life are one to us,
Who fight for Quick and Dead !

THE FOUR CROWNS.

[Written upon the death of the Prince Consort.]



THRONE before the people
Queen of land and sea,
While from tower and steeple
Crashed the clangorous glee ;
First of four — enamelled
All with kingdoms round,
The crown of this, our England,
Upon thy brow was bound.

Next, in happiest hours,
Came the crown of life ;
Love's fair wreath of flowers
Diademed thee Wife :

THE FOUR CROWNS.

Hailed, Princess and Woman,
Honored, Queen and Spouse,
Half the golden burden
Lightened on thy brows.

Yet a crown came after,
Waiting thee to wear ;
Little children's laughter
Rippled in thine ear.
At thy knee, most Noble !
Learning how to reign,
Princes and princesses
Grew — a gracious train.

Then, that coronation,
Grandeur than of Queen,
Making highest station
Higher than had been,
Did betide thee ! binding
On thy drooping brow
Sorrow's thorny circlet —
Death hath crowned thee now.

O our Queen ! our Mother !
Thou, of all, know'st all ;
Joy or sorrow — other
Cannot hence befall.
Sad, imperial Forehead !
Sceptred, weary Hand !
Widowed Heart ! the Greatest
And Loneliest in the Land !

HAVELOCK IN TRAFALGAR SQUARE.



THE foot set firm, — the hand upon the hilt, —
The warrior-gaze, — as innocent of fear
As any maid's of shame, — which, past the guilt
And blood and battle, sees the triumph clear :

Stand so in bronze ! — large to thy levelled eye,
In the supreme imperial peril dawning,
“ *Hoc signo vinces* ” shines upon the sky ;
And calm as one who knows his Master's warning :

Stand thou in bronze ! — stand ! what thou wert, a rock
Whereon Rebellion's yeasty billows breaking,
Drove wave on wave, — dashed high, — and from the shock
Fell back in shattered foam ; — thyself unshaking :

So stand ! — the busy feet of men go by thee,
Each one to-day the safer for that sword ;
Meeanee's just and valiant chief is nigh thee,
Palmerston, Beaconsfield, the great Sea-lord, —

Well met in some far-off serenest session,
The unimpassioned rest of great men gone ;
And here together set — love's poor profession ! —
In storied effigy and sculptured stone.

Ah ! speaking stone, and bronze, cunningly graven
To show these Champions of the English name,
Are men's hearts such, that knave and fool and craven
Can pass ye daily, and be still the same ?

But, true and faithful servant ! somewhere plaining
That labor multiplies and wage is none,
Read Havelock's history, and thereby gaining
The comfort of his courage, copy one

Who all life's chilly spring and summer dreary
Wrought in pure patience what he found to do,
Possessing his own soul — not once a-weary —
Content, because God was contented too.

Wherefrom he hived the honey which is sweetest,
The flower of all the flowers of all a life,
A wisdom so perfected, so completest,
Great soldiers gave him place to stem the strife :

Which never given, Havelock's highest glory
Had lacked our knowledge, not his Master's praise,
One splendid page been lost from England's story,
But not one leaf from his immortal bays.

Go to ! and work — God's servant — serving men ;
Bethinking how the ranks closed up, and cried,
“ *Way for the General !* ” and his answer then, —
“ *You have made way, my lads !* ” — fair time for pride !

JUNE, 1862.

OXFORD REVISITED.



MOTHER ! mild Mother ! after many years —
So many that the head I bow turns gray —
Come I once more to thee, thinking to say
In what far lands, through what hard hopes and fears,
'Mid how much toil and triumph, joys and tears,
I taught thy teaching ; and, withal, to lay
At thy kind feet such of my wreaths as may
Seem least unworthy. But what grown child dares
Offer thee honors, Fair and Queenly One !
Tower-crowned, and girdled with thy silver streams,
Mother of — ah ! so many a better son ?
Let me but list thy solemn voice, which seems
Like Christ's, raising my dead : and let me be
Back for one hour — a Boy — beside thy knee.

MAY, 1883.

A DUET.



HE.

“AH! — if you knew! if I dared to discover
Half that my heart feels to-day :
If there were words for so faithful a lover,
Soft enough, fond enough, — say,
Would you be vexed at my passionate pleading,
Would you believe it was true?
How would the beautiful eyes look, — conceding?
Rebuking? Ah, Sweet! if you knew!”

SHE.

“How can I know, when a glance of relenting
Stays the rash whisper, half-said?
How can I know, when, — while I am consenting,
‘No’ — is the sentence you dread?”

Sometimes — I think I should never believe you,
Sometimes — my thought — is not so ;
If you say nothing, no answer can grieve you,
Only then — what can I know ? ”

THE ALTAR OF PITY.

[From the "Thebais" of Statius.]

In the mid-city — to no mighty God
Dedicate — rose an altar. Pity built
Her gentle seat there, and the miserable
Made all its consecration : never lacked
That Altar suppliants ! none are turned away !
Whoso doth ask is heard ; for day and night
The shrine stands open, and the offering
Of woful wail is free. A frugal faith !
No spice-fed flames burn there ! no costly blood
Is shed : with tears — salt tears — the marble reeks.
No image soars above, no bronze hath ta'en
Stamp of the Deity ! She loves to dwell
Deep in the thoughts, — hid in the aching heart,
And ever hath she trembling worshippers :
And ever is the spot thick with a throng
Sad-faced ; the happy only know 't not !

THE CHOLERA IN ITALY.

[Suggested by a sketch of John Millais, Esq., R.A., representing a skeleton shooting an arrow by night into the habitations of a fortified town.]

How did it come to his mind? the fleshless and horrible
dream —

Grewsome, cruel, and weird — making the murk more
grim ;

Standing stark-naked in bone, which the starlight sets
all a-gleam —

Shooting his shot at the town, the little town silent and
dim?

Said we not, each to the other, “Death is an Angel of
Light !”

While our tears as they rolled gave the lie to our lips?

Here 's one paints us the thing awful, authentic, aright—

Tells the Truth straight out, from the skull to the spiked
toe-tips !

So, if you opened this page an idle moment to soothe,
Madam ! or Sir !—as may be — best close the volume
for good ;

Here 's no matter to flatter flesh and blood in their youth !
Here 's an Artist in earnest — Death's picture on worm-
eaten wood !

But if you ask what he meant, yonder the Tuscan town
lies

Under the curtains of midnight, spangled with planet
and star,

All looking down so calm ! so splendid ! as if the eyes
Of numberless Angels were watching our one little world
from afar.

And I hear on the rampart-stones the heel of the sentinel
ring ;

And I see him halt and count the chimes of the midnight
bell,

And he listens towards us here ; — “ But 't is only the
cicalas sing ! ”

And he shoulders his musket again, and passes the word,
“ All 's well ! ”

And away, within those walls, I know there is pleasure
and pain ;

(Ah me ! the sorrows and joys wherewith one town may
be fraught !)

There 's scented smoke from the censers, where the
people pray in vain,

And a flare from the pharos-lantern to bring the feluccas
to port.

And I seem to see in the gleam which hangs all over
the town,

Cresset lights of a banquet, and merry torch-bearers
who go —

Their jolly feet false with the wine — in laughter up and
down,

With rose-crowns awry on their heads — and cornets
that cheerily blow.

Ah, and I know that, beneath the beautiful roof of the night,
Bridal couches are spread, and lovers at last are one,

Who say, " If God would will that it never more should
be light,

Then stay on the other side, and wait till we wish for thee,
Sun ! "

Laughter, and music, and banquets, and roses, and revelry,
And prayers in the churches to please the Keeper of
 heaven and hell,
And the ships with spices and bales ploughing bravely in
 from the sea,
And still that sentinel looks from the wall and cries, "All's
 well!"

Doth he not see, close by, this spectre we see so plain,
Who blisters the growing grass with the bones of his
 clattering feet?
And makes the still air reek with the fester of live things
 slain,
And turns to corpse-light, on his skull, the starlight holy
 and sweet?

Cannot he hear the Voice — still — small — that comes
 with this thing?
Drives it, striding along; halts it, elbows and knees,
Says to the skeleton bowman, "Now fit thy shaft to the
 string,
Shoot me a shot at the town; for the hour is come to
 these!"

Cursed Bowman ! who shoot'st with an arrow dipped in
the pest !

Maker of all ! Whose will is good, though Thou willest we
die !

It is changed in that little town from joy at its gayest and
best,
To cramps that curdle the blood, and tortures that glaze
the eye.

The sentinel, careless of all, stalks quiet upon the wall ;
But the pilot has yielded the helm of his vessel with a
scream :

At the banquet the guests drop dead — the worshippers,
priests, and all,

Fly ! ere they chant " Amen ; " — and that sweet bridal
dream,

Which the lovers dreamed together — but half asleep —
while their lips

Still kissed, for fear lest a minute from love's brief rapture
be took —

Is ended in this, that one from the arms of the other slips,
And that other — chilled by the corpse — turns corpse
herself, at a look.

Ah, Thou Lord, Thou God ! Who sendest this pestilent
wraith !

Giver of life, Who hast given the instinct to love to live,
Teach us another lesson — to render it back in faith,
When the messenger comes like this, with a ghastly
message to give.

Ah, Thou Lord, Thou God ! our hearts are the little town :
At the twanging of that black bow, ill fare they who there
do dwell ;

But help our souls to hear, through the darkness that
settles down,

Thy sentinel on the wall, crying always to all, " All 's well ! "

THE FIRST DISTRIBUTION OF THE VICTORIA CROSS.



To-DAY the people gather from the streets,
To-day the soldiers muster near and far ;
Peace, with a glad look and a grateful, meets
Her rugged brother War.

To-day the Queen of all the English land,
She who sits high o'er Kaisers and o'er Kings,
Gives with her royal hand — th' Imperial hand
Whose grasp the earth en-rings —

Her Cross of Valor to her worthiest ; —
No golden toy with milky pearls besprent,
But simple bronze, and for a warrior's breast
A fair, fit ornament.

And richer than red gold that dull bronze seems,
 Since it was bought with lavish waste of worth
Whereto the wealth of Earth's gold-sanded streams
 Were but a lack, and dearth.

Muscovite metal makes this English Cross,
 Won in a rain of blood and wreath of flame ;
The guns that thundered for their brave lives' loss
 Are worn hence, for their fame !

For, listen ! all ye maidens laughing-eyed,
 And all ye English mothers, be aware !
Those who shall pass before ye at noontide
 Your friends and champions are.

The men of all the army and the fleet,
 The very bravest of the very brave,
Linesman and Lord — these fought with equal feet
 Firm-planted on their grave.

The men who, setting light their blood and breath
 So they might win a victor's haught renown,
Held their steel straight against the face of Death,
 And frowned his frowning down.

And some that grasped the bomb, all fury-fraught,
And hurled it far, to spend its spite away, —
Between the rescue and the risk, no thought, —
Shall pass our Queen this day ;

And some who climbed the deadly glaxis-side,
For all that steel could stay, or savage shell ;
And some, whose blood upon the Colors dried
Tells if they bore them well ;

Some, too, who, gentle-hearted even in strife,
Seeing their fellow or their friend go down,
Saved his, at peril of their own dear life,
And won the Civic Crown.

Well done for them ; and, fair Isle, well for thee !
While that thy bosom beareth sons like those,
“ *The little gem set in the silver sea* ”
Shall never fear her foes.

1856.

THE WRECK OF THE "NORTHERN BELLE."

FAIR sight ! for a crew
Of Englishmen true,
When homeward their course they hold,
With sails bleached white
By the tropic light,
And sheathing a-glitter like gold ;
Fair sight ! from the rails,
— When the Topman hails
“ Land ho ! on the larboard ! ” — to see
The green waves leap
At the white cliff's steep
On the shore of the land of the free : —
Fair music they make together,
The cliff and the climbing foam ;

And it sounds in the bright blue weather
Like the wanderer's welcome home.

But when the east wind howleth,
And the great seas rise and rave,
Another sight
Is that belt of white,
And another sound 's on the wave ;
Small welcome for wildered vessel,
When the billows, giant and gray,
Break — sworn on the sand
Her keel to strand,
And her ribs on the rocks to lay !
Oh ! the silver gates of your island
Were liker the gates of hell,
In the mist of that winter morning
To the crew of the " Northern Belle."

We left New York for London
(And the wind left with us too !),
We thrashed our way
Through Atlantic spray,
And ran the Channel through ;

'T was three on the morning of Monday
When we let the anchors go
Ten cables, or more,
From Kingsgate shore,
To ride out the storm and snow ;
Ten cables from where green meadows
And quiet homes could be seen,
No greater space
From peril to peace —
But the savage sea between !

Yet a greater space
To us had been grace,
For still as we neared the shore,
The wild white roll of the waves on the shoal
Roared round us more and more ;
Roared out, in a ring around us,
You might see them fore and aft,
On ragged ledge,
And splintered edge,
All mad to dash our craft ;
While the weltering rocks,
With their sea-weed locks

Awash in the whirling froth,
 Stood up like slaves
 Of the winds and waves,
Waiting to wreak their wrath.

Not yet, brave ship !
 For the anchor's grip
Is fast in the ooze and shell ;
 The gusts may shake,
 And the great surge break,
But the iron holds her well.
 If a smith could tell,
 As his sledge-hammer fell,
That each little link should hold
 The craft and the crew,
 And their lives' hope too,
His strokes would be strong and bold !
 Ease, ease, mad strain !
 Hold, hold, good chain !
We freshened the hawse once more ;
 'T was ten of the day,
 And the vessel lay
Stern on to the snow-dimmed shore.

And now from the town
 They hurry down,
 For the cry is, "A Wreck!" "A Wreck!"
 (Ah! under their tread
 Is the firm green mead,
 'Neath ours but the slippery deck.)
 Kind souls! they shout!
 Look! yonder comes out
 A lugger from off the land,
 Brave crew and craft!—
 Ready fore and aft!—
 She will lend us a helping hand:
 'Bout ship! so, so!
 She stays,— yes! no!
 Port, port! ah Heaven! that sea—
 Gone— vessel and men
 While the heart beats ten!
 Gone,— drowned, for their charity!

Rose from each lip
 On shore and ship
 A cry, a groan, a prayer;
 While the nine hearts brave

Went under the wave,
And their death-cry hung in air ;
No seaman but felt
His man's heart melt ; —
But the masts were down ere now,
And the raffle and wreck,
Scarce clear of the deck,
Hung, fouling the larboard bow ;
So we shouted at last,
" Clear away that mast
Or else we are ill bested !
God take those home !
When our turn 's come
The dead can bury the dead."

Thus, all that day,
In snow and spray,
For dear life still we toiled ;
And faint and few
The bold words grew
As nearer the breakers boiled ;
And still, like a steed
Reined back at speed,

The ship did plunge and rear ;
 While the burly main
 Strove on in vain
To crack our cable and gear :
 Till the twilight gloom,
 Like the earth on the tomb,
Came over, and hid the town ;
 And the last we could see,
 They were busy a-lee
Dragging the life-boats down.

Ah me ! no boat
 In that surf could float,
No oarsmen cleave a way ;
 No eye so bright
 As to pierce the night
That on land and water lay :
 O leaden dark !
 That left no spark
Of star in the wild wet sky,
 Not one pale ray
 To glimmer and say
That God and help were nigh.

The timbers racked,
The cables cracked,
Wilder the waters dashed ;
Ease her ! no need —
The ship is freed !
She drove, — she rose, — she crashed !

Then settled and fell
The "Northern Belle,"
As one who no more strives ;
But the foremast stood,
Good Canada wood,
With nine and twenty lives :
If dreadful the day
As none can say,
Oh ! the night was terribler far,
As each man clung
To the shrouds, or hung
Ice-cold on the icy spar ;
And hearts beat slow,
As the night did go,
Like a lazily-ticking clock ;
Till we longed to drop

From the dripping top
Nor wait for the last sure shock.

Then, while she did grind,
We called to mind
Each one his own home-place,
New Jersey towns,
And Connecticut downs,
And the pleasant meadows of maize :
We thought of brothers,
And wives and mothers,
With whom we should never be ;
Of our babies playing,
Or perhaps a prayer saying
For "daddy," far off at sea ;
And *we* said prayers
To mingle with theirs,
And held for the daylight still,
Which came anon
When hope was gone,
As God's best mercies will.

For, soon as the clouds,
Like great gray shrouds,

Let out the Lazarus-light,
We looked to land
And saw on the sand,
Good God ! a cheery sight ; —
Seven noble men
(Christ save them, then !)
That would not see us drown,
With oars in hand,
And the life-boat manned
(The life-boat dragged from the town) ;
And they gave us a cheer
We could plainly hear,
Which we answered with aching throat :
Ah then ! dear life !
To watch the strife
Between the storm and the boat.

More strong and steep
The waves did leap
For every stroke she made ;
As they were bound
To see us drowned,
And would not be gainsayed :

"Now, now! ah now!
 Pull bow! pull bow!
 Oh! yonder swells a sea,
 She swamps! — no! no!
 Thank God, not so!
 She rounds beneath our lee."
 — Thrice with a freight
 Of lives they fight
 Their way — stern down and stem —
 Then — safe and sound,
 On the English ground!
 Thanks to the Lord, and them.

.
 Look ye, mates mine!
 There be stories fine
 Of Greek and Roman deed;
 But when all's done
 There was never one
 Of better help and need.
 Which man of our crew,
 My messmates true,
 But holds his life a gift
 From those brave Seven,

Henceforward, please Heaven,
To be used with thoughtful thrift !
To be held on earth
For service of worth,
Save when Englishmen cry — and then
Come storm, come slaughter,
To be spent like water
For the sake of the Kingsgate men.

There are those at home,
When the news is come,
Will crowd to hear of the ship,
With great tears rounding
And glad hearts bounding,
And blessings a-pant on the lip.
There are girls there, plenty,
Not come to twenty,
Too shy and demure to speak,
Real ladies, — would kiss,
For love of this,
Each man of that crew on his cheek :
Ay ! count it grand
To touch but a hand

Of the Seven, who staked their lives,
Lost seamen to save
From a cold sea-grave,
And send them to sisters and wives.

I'll say one thing
Before I bring
This plain sea-song to its end, —
Such hearts of gold,
More than state-craft old,
Will help all quarrels to mend.
America sent,
With warm intent,
Your ship for a new-year's token,
You give her back
Our lives from wrack, —
Shall such friends ever be broken?
No! no! they shall stand
Hand fast in hand,
All sisterly — side by side —
And none ever tell
Of the "Northern Belle,"
Save with flushes and smiles of pride.

Yet more 's to do, —
That first boat's crew
In this verse shall be given,
That Yankee boys
With a ready voice
May say the list of the Seven.
The men I write
In the "Mary White,"
GEORGE CASTLE's boat, did go —
JOHN, CASTLE's brother,
GEORGE FOX, another,
NED EMPTAGE and JEM ROWE —
Those gallant five
Did save alive
Our crew from the "Northern Belle,"
With ROBERT MILLER
And WILLIAM HILLER
.
.
.
.
.
I have no more to tell.

HASTINGS, Jan. 23, 1857.

A HOME SONG.



THE swallow is come from his African home
To build on the English eaves ;
The Sycamore wears all his glistening spears,
And the Almond rains roseate leaves ;
And — dear Love ! — with thee, as with bird and with tree,
'T is the time of blossom and nest,
Then, what good thing of the bountiful Spring
Shall I liken to thee — the best ?

Over the streamlet the rose-bushes bend
Clouded with tender green,
And green the buds grow upon every bough,
Though as yet no rose-tint is seen ;
Like those, thou art come to thy promise of bloom,
Like theirs, thine shunneth the light ;

Break, rose-bud !— and let a longing heart know
If the blossom be red or white !

Up the broad river with swelling sails
A glorious vessel goes,
And not more clear in the soft blue air
Than in the still water she shows !
Dost thou not go with as brave a show,
And, sooth, with as swelling a state ?
Oh, come into harbor with that thou bear'st,
Dear ship !— for I eagerly wait.

Fair ship !— ah, Kate ! none beareth a freight
As precious and rich as thine,
And where 's the rose-bush that will burgeon and blush
With a blossom like thine and mine ?
— Well ! well ! — we do, as the meadow birds too,
Since meadows with gold were dyed, —
The hen sits at rest in the hidden nest,
And her mate sings glad at her side.

SWANSCOMBE, April, 1857.

FOND FANCIES.



FOND fancies, past the telling,
Come o'er me — idly spelling
The mystic meanings dwelling
 In what these Hindoos taught ;
So fast they rise — and faster,
That I bid them overmaster
Slow study ; — and far past her
 Carry my willing thought !

Carry my thoughts, confessing
Each dear and separate blessing
Ah ! how beyond expressing
 (Except with eyes, sweet wife !),
Each help, from Love's hid heaven,
That thy gentle soul has given
To a soul else overdriven
 In the eager race of life.

Sweetheart ! how dull beside them
Seems all that would outpride them
How weak, what may betide them
 To bring to fall or fear
This joy to live together
In changeless summer weather !
No clouds to gloom or gather !
 No seasons in our year !

Past all weak words the pleasure,
The luxury, the treasure,
Of knowing without measure
 This fondness fully-grown ;
So that love, no more careful,
Nor fanciful, nor fearful,
Takes — heart, and eye, and ear-full —
 The love that is its own !

Let go old legends ! sweeter
Than fruit of lotus-eater,
Diviner and completer,
 Than Circe's anodyne ;

To lessen sadness sent us,
 And to double gladness lent us,
 The true, unpresse'd nepenthos
 Is true love's honey-wine !

Let go the pride of learning,
 The foolishness of spurning
 Life's life, for large discerning
 Of vain philosophies !
 " The highest truth lies nearest ! "
 'T was a Greek said it, Dearest !
 Of sages the sincerest,
 Gray old Pheidippides !

And let go that mad battle
 Which tempts us, with its rattle
 To join — like June-mad cattle,
 In sinful strife for place !
 The sin is not worth sinning ;
 The end mocks the beginning ;
 The only prize worth winning
 Is ours, without the race !

Therefore, when fears do fret me,
Whenever wild winds threat me,
I fold my sails and get me
 To the harbor of thy breast ;
Safe there from outer riot,
Like a bird whom fierce hawks fly at,
Escaped, and brooding quiet
 Down in his happy nest !

JUNE, 1860.

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TO H. R. H. THE PRINCESS OF
WALES

ON HER FIRST ARRIVAL IN ENGLAND.



FIERCE, brown-bearded, enclad in the spoils of wolf and
of wild-cat,
Keener in ravin than wolves, than wild-cats wilder in
onset,
Came, in the days gone by, the Danes to the shores of
the Angles,
Came on an errand of blood — to beleaguer, to burn,
and to ravage.
Ploughing up furrows of foam on the grass-green meads
of the North Sea
Steered the old Vikings their course, one hand on the
helm of their galley,
One on the helve of their axe : and when from Flam-
borough's foreland,



Shading his eyes from the glimmer of sunrise, the watcher
beheld them

Holding right on for the coast, with the signs and the
standards of battle,

Loud through the wolds rang the cry, "The Dane! the
Dane cometh hither!"

Flickered with warning flames the crests of the hills, and
the cressets,

Mothers and maidens fled inland — fast gathered the
bowmen and billmen.

Grim the welcome awaiting those strangers! — such
greeting as arrows

Carry on wings of wrath, such kisses as edge of sword
renders; —

All their room in the land as much as the length of
their lances,

Nay, or beneath its turf, the length of the Chieftains
who bore them.

Fair, golden-haired, and glad with the joy of her youth
and her beauty,

Daughter herself of a Prince, of a Prince the loved and
the chosen,

Comes in these happier days the Dane to the shores of
the Angles,

Comes on an errand of love, to the music of soft
hymenæals.

Over the silver-green seas, which kiss the keel of her
vessel,

Bending their foreheads on this side and that to the
Maiden of Norseland

(Rightfully Queen of the waves by her Father's right
and her Husband's),

Speeds the sweet Princess to land; and all the voices
of gladness

Tell that she is arrived whose hand the Prince of the
English

Takes in the sight of God and man for the hand of his
consort —

Consort in splendors and cares, in the gloom and the
glitter of ruling.

Warm the welcome awaiting this lovely and winning
invader!

Such as men give with the lips when the heart has gone
forward before them;

Such as a nation of freemen, not apt to flatter for fashion,

Make, when the innocent past is a pledge of the happy
to-morrows.

Princess ! weak is one voice in the throng and clamor
of voices,

Poor one flower in the rain of the roses that shower at
thy footsteps,

Faint one prayer in the anthem of litanies uttered to
bless thee ;

Yet to thy young fair face I make an Englishman's
greeting,

On thy path to the altar I lay this wreath from a singer,
Unto the God of the altar we pray for blessings together,
We — of the men whose fathers encountered thy fathers
with battle,

These — of the women whose mothers turned pale at the
galleys of Denmark,

Heralds of happiness now, sea-birds that bring from the
Norland

Unto our Prince his Bride — and to England omens of
gladness.

TO F. C. H.



IN the shade of the Castle elm-trees,
Under the College limes,
Wherever we sate in deep debate
We said it a hundred times ;

With hearts that beat together
At the glad defiance hurled
Against that Fear whose shadow drear
Chills an awakening world ;

With a smile at the Saintly heaven,
And a sigh for the Priestly hell,
Together we stood to make it good,
However our fate befell,

That God is One for all living,
One God of His living and dead,
That Faith and Love have a crown above,
Whatever their creed, we said ;

Whatever their creed or country,
Whatever their language or line,
Though a thousand Articles thundered
Against their Right divine.

The Challenge is come to a battle,
The flag of the Truth streams out ;
Her soldiers, — a maniple, — muster,
Her enemies gather — a rout ;

And Thou, who hadst loved to hurtle
A Lancelot of the fray,
To the side of the fewer and truer,
Ah me ! art dead ere the day.

Dear voice ! so clear and gentle,
Art still, for evermore ?—
Kind hand, so fast and faithful,
Art cold — as never before ?—

Still ! cold ! — by the Jumna river
Lie the bones of a murdered man ;
We know not the slain from the slayers,
Our brother from Ali Khan.

— In the days of the bloody rebellion
Shot down, and left in his blood —
How should we ? — the jackals took something,
And something the wolves of the wood.

And the impulse of human affections
That hunger to have what they love,
Moans over those blank recollections,
Whilst thou dost pity — above :

Dost pity us — splendidly seated
With the workmen of God who die ;
Thy task done — ah ! so early !
Thy wages won — oh, so high !

Thou seest the “ whence ” and the “ whither,”
Most noble and happy Friend !
Thou watchest the strife of our lower life ;
Oh, awful ! — thou knowest its end.

I wait — I whisper no question
Whose answer is Death's to speak ;
I know it is wise to be foolish,
I know it is strong to be weak :
And wise, to their own discomfort,
And bold for their fellows' sake
Meseems these Seven speak out under heaven ;¹
And theirs is the side I take, —
The side we took when we sojourned
Under the Indian palms,
Watching, with Brahmans and Shastris,
These thought-storms breaking our calms.
Let break ! — through Life's rough water,
Dear Friend ! — more dear, being dead,
As we sailed, consorts, together,
So sail I alone to thee, Fred !
And under the Castle elm-trees,
In the shade of the College limes,
None sits in thy seat at deep debate ;
I say by myself, at times,

¹ Written at the time of "Essays and Reviews."

That God is one God of all living,
Who maketh alive His dead,
That Hope and Love have a crown above,
I say, — as we often said,

Whatever their creed or country,
Whatever their language or line,
Though a thousand Articles thundered
Against their Right divine.

JANUARY, 1858.

ON A DEAD LADY.



*Non può far Morte il dolce viso amaro,
Ma 'l dolce viso dolce può far Morte.*

Death cannot change her face, tender and fair !
'T is she who changes Death, and makes him dear.

THE THREE STUDENTS.

[From the German.]



THERE came three students from over the Rhine ;
To a certain good hostel they turned them for wine.

“Ho ! Landlady, have you strong wine and beer ?
How fareth the Fraulein, your daughter dear ?”

“My beer is fresh, and my wine is bright ;
My child will be shrouded and buried to-night.”

They drew the door of her death-room back,
There she slept in her coffin black : —

The first he lifted the veil from the dead,
And bared his curls, and bended, and said,

“ Ah ! couldst thou but live again, Maiden, here
From this day forth I would love thee dear ! ”

The second spread softly the face-cloth again,
And his tears fell fast as the midsummer rain :

“ Dead ! art thou, Lisbeth ? cold, lip and brow ?
Ah, God ! I learn how I loved thee now ! ”

But the third in his hand did the little hand take,
And kissed the white forehead, and smiled, and spake :

“ I love thee to-day as I loved thee before,
I shall love thee as truly for evermore.”

SERENADE.

LUTE ! breathe thy lowest in my Lady's ear,
Sing while she sleeps, " Ah ! belle dame, aimez-vous ? "
Till, dreaming still, she dream that I am here,
And wake to find it, as my love is, true ;
Then, while she listens in her warm white nest,
Say in slow music, — softer, tenderer yet,
That lute-strings quiver when their tone 's at rest,
And my heart trembles when my lips are set.

Stars ! if my sweet love still a-dreaming lies,
Shine through the roses for a lover's sake ;
And send your silver to her lidded eyes,
Kissing them very gently till she wake ;
Then, while she wonders at the lay and light,
Tell her, though morning endeth star and song,
That ye live still, when no star glitters bright,
And my love lasteth, though it finds no tongue.

LYDIA.

[From Horace.]



HE.

As long as I was dear to you, and none —
Not one, save I —
Dared lock his arms about your neck, the Sun
Saw no King happier underneath the sky.

SHE.

As long as you loved Lydia more than all,
And Chloe's face
Had not made Lydia's nought, men might me call
The happiest girl of all the Roman race.

HE.

Well ! now, that 's past ! and Chloe binds my heart
With lute and voice ;
Whom so I love that, if Death's fatal dart,
Aimed at her life, struck mine, I should rejoice.

SHE.

Ah ! yes — 't is past ! I love a Thurian boy,
Who dotes on me ;
And for his dear sake I would die with joy,
Nay, or twice over — were the thing to be.

HE.

But — just suppose — the old love could come back
As good as new !
That Chloe with her golden hair should pack,
And my heart open all its gates to you !

SHE.

Supposing that — oh ! well ! — my Thurian 's dear,
And you — alas !
Are wild as Adria, and more light than air,
Yet, Love ! with you life and dark Death I 'd pass.

DANTE AND HIS VERSES.

[From the French.]



DANTE had writ two lines : the lines
Talked. Quoth the one, " Fame's gateway shines
Open for us."

" Oh ! 't is but ink

We are ! " says t' other.

" Dost thou think

Thoughts perish ? " the first line replied.

" What's Thought but Nought ? " the second cried.

" Nay ! feel'st thou not th' immortal stir

In every word and character ? "

Asks one.

Sighs t' other, " Not a jot !

I feel dead letters ! "

To the spot

Comes Dante, reads his lines ; thinks deep :
Then blots one verse, and one will keep.
They knew !— his pen was Destiny !
One was to live, and one to die.

THE LOST PLEIAD.

A STORY OF THE STARS.



AT the noon of a May night,
When the stars are all alight,
And the white moon wanders through the gray ;
While softly over all
God's piteous hand doth fall,
To shield tired eyes from the day ;—

At such a night's noon
I watched the stars and moon
Till they and I alone did seem to be ;
Till, in that silver throng
Sorely my soul did long
To rove at will, and many wonders see.

Wherefore I let it large,
And up from Earth's dim marge
It bounded like a horse with broken rein ;
From the Dragon's flaming crest
To Orion's star-bound breast
It roamed upon that planet-studded plain.

On the broad flank of the Bear,
Dubhè flashed fierce and clear,
Lighting his glancing eyes and gleaming tusk ;
And the Lion shook his mane,
And the great star-feathered Crane
Was up among his brothers of the dusk.

In the Northern Bull's bright van
I saw dread Aldebaran,
Andromeda's wild hair I saw a-flame ;
By the Lyre's glittering strings,
Down through the Swan's white wings,
Unto a lovely, lonely light I came ;

A cloud of splendor sent
Out on the firmament
As 't were the breath of each light-laden star ;

A stream of splendor seen
Broad in that sea of sheen,
Like Indian rivers flowing seaward far.

None other orbs did move
In such sweet show of love ;
None shone like those 'mid the sky companies ;
I knew the Sisters Seven
Were the light-bearers of Heaven,
Whom men do name the tearful Pleiades.

On each sphere's rolling rim
Each held an urn at brim,
And poured its molten silver down her world ;
In which fair gift of light
Its live things took delight,
And she in them : — one orb alone was furled

In gloom ; nor ray did send,
Save when the Six did bend
Their sister glances on the lonely One ;
Whereat I could descry
A sad, mild Majesty,
Sitting unlighted on a lightless sun.

Why she alone of Seven
 Nor gave nor took in Heaven
 Heaven's gift and gladness — Heaven-filling light —
 Wherefore God's awful wrath
 Sent her that lampless path,
 And dimmed her crown among the Queens of Night

I longed, and sought to hear ; —
 Oh, gather round and near, —
 I know that starless Angel's story through ;
 It was not all a dream,
 It did not wholly seem, —
 Listen ! I strike low strings ! and tell it true.

.

Ah ! Sisters Six, lead my dark star and me,
 For I am Merope — blind Merope,
 And I go shorn of light, who lighted all.
 O splendent Sister Stars ! gleam on my path,
 And show me where it winds among the worlds ;
 Nor turn your glances hence, because I sit
 And moan upon the story of my sin ;
 For I am Merope, — blind Merope, —

Merope, — light-abandoned Merope,
Who stood between God's lowest and God's love.

O thrice twain Sisters ! lead my world along.
In the beginning when none was save He,
God flung from both great hands His star-seed forth
Over the endless meadows of the void ;
Wherein, as in the grain the broad green blade,
Life lay, and life's high loves and happy ends ;
And unto each He gave fit ministrant
And faithful warder. Some were kings of suns,
And dipped their cressets in the molten gold
That rippled round His throne ; and other some
Fed on their borrowed glory, and were glad,
Frail spirits, shunning the full glance of God ;
Some, with the vaporous wreaths they did bestride,
Faded or were illumed ; and some at speed
Rode errant angels, singing thorough space,
Curbing the Comets to their headlong course ;
And unto some He gave a gentler gift,
To tend the lower worlds, and shine for them ;
And unto us, his youngest-born, the Earth,
An ever-needing, never-ceasing care :

For chief He charged our Seven Sister-lights
To wax and wane above her, keeping aye
Mid station : and at noon and night, and ever,
To listen open-eared, and bear above
Unto His feet its children's cries and tears, —
For all tears that do fall, fall for God's¹ ear.
Ai, ai ! it was our charge — a gracious charge,
Ai, ai ! I lost love's task unlovingly ;
For I am Merope — blind Merope,
Merope, — light-abandoned Merope,
Who stood between God's lowest and God's love.

O Sisters Six ! I follow plainly, —
For I am Merope ; and on my brow
God, at the giving of the silver worlds,
Laying His hand, left splendor. None of all,
Sisters — not one of all your gleaming band,
Wore whiter glory, or stood nearer Him.
First of the seven lights I came and went,
And unto me Electra bent her beams,
And Maia bowed her brightness — and ye three,
Alcyone, Celæno, Taygetë,
And silver Sterope, next me in place,

Took fire from me, and tended me with love.
I was a perfect Angel of pure ray,
Chosen a chief of Planets. Woe is me !
I am a wildered World in well-known paths,
For I am Merope, — rash Merope, —
She that was great in Heaven become the least,
Standing between God's lowest and God's love.

O Sisters ! lead me with the sound of song,
Sweep solemn music forth from balanced wings,
And leave it cloudlike in the fluttered sky,
That I may feel and follow. Ah ! my light,
My vanished lovely light ! I sate in place
With wakeful eyes and kept the earth in ken ;
And ye around me waited for my word.
Far down below the cone of shadow crept
Whereunder lay Earth's night, and from its gloom
Prayers, and the sound of tears, and other sounds
Which unto angel ears are strange, came up
Like smoke from peaked volcano, and our vans
Fanned them fresh breath to take them on to God.
Sisters ! amid the myriad cries that rose
From lips that Night's nepenthe could not calm,

Came a long prayer for mercy, growing loud
As it waxed hopeless ; — she who uttered it,
A sad, stained woman, with a fair fierce cheek,
*Kneeling beside the black rim of a river,
The rim of a black river, surging out
From a great city's glare into the gloom.*

I saw her — and ye saw her, Sisters mine,
Plucking the mother's bosom from her babe
Ere the waves took them — one starved dead of love,
And one of life — both crying one heart-cry
That asked God's pity in pain's common tongue ;
And ye said, " Sister, let it go above ; "
But I, who, knowing all things, knew her sin,
And what deed stained the raiment of her soul,
Answered, " It goeth not, her grief is just ; "
And struck it down the sky. Woe ! woe ! her cry
Fell, and then rose, and grew up from a groan
Into a voice, — a voice that struck the Stars
And bounded from their brilliant capes, and rolled
Louder than thundering crash of orb on orb,
Thrilling the Planets, till each Angel knew
The very voice of God, saying, " Thou Star !
Thou, Merope ! go earthward." Ah, my light !

O Sisters, lead my world on while I weep,
For I am Merope, — blind Merope,
Merope, — light-abandoned Merope,
Who heard unmoved God's lowest ask His love.

List no more, holy Sisters, list no more !
Bar the white porch of each unshamed ear
With double-folded wing, for I must speak
Of things that enter not at that high gate, —
The mournful matter of a mortal life,
Whereto I went, — hence, — but I know not how !
Fairer are homes of heaven, yet very fair
Thy fields and fountains were, my prison-house !
Caverns and woods, valleys and veiny brooks ;
And thou, too, mountain-cradled Indian stream !
By whose green brim my feet new from the clouds
Touched the hard earth, and stood : in whose great towns
My spirit breathed harsh air of earth, — and lived :
Within the temple of that country's God
Amid the Indian maids I moved as one,
And took the manner of their race and tongue,
And wore their vest and veil, and bore the name
An earthly father gave, and called his boy

A gentle human boy, loving and brave,
My brother ! — Oh, woe ! woe ! light me along !
For I am Merope, — shamed Merope,
She that was made God's lowest on the earth,
Standing between God's lowest and His love.

O Stars ! — I say not Sisters, saying this, —
War rose in that our home, spears fringed the walls
Where corn bristled before ; an old fierce king
Sought us for slaves, and men laid down their lives
That others might live free. My brother fought
A-front in all the battles, for these hands
Buckled the steel which kept his heart from harm,
And fed his quiver. Sinless human love
Touched me ; and on the battlements by night,
Gazing unknowingly upon mine own,
I charged Star-Angels to shine fair for him,
And send him favoring beams. At such a time
The captain of the chariots of the king,
Watching our wall, cast eyes of earnest love
On me, and lit my soul up with a flame
Wherein all maiden meekness, fear and faith,
Courage to strive and purity to pray,

And the last little wrack of glory lost,
Melted as May snow melts under the sun,
And left a bare bad heart. Oh, hear me not,
High Stars ! a cursed thing is loveless love, —
Accursed of Heav'n ; I knew it, and I fell.
Am I not Merope ? — dark Merope,
That Merope whom God's wrath did cast down,
Standing between God's lowest and God's love ?

Sisters ! lead me along. The Planets pale,
The powers of Heaven are pale to hear in Heaven
The story of my shame. Ai ! ai ! light on !
I hurry to the ending. Many an eve, —
O silver Worlds, ye saw it ! — we did meet,
And drank the burning cup of Passion dry,
Nor slacked the draught, nor stayed, though we might see
The dreggy poison through the purple wine.
Ah, a strong thing is Love ! strong as a curse
To drag the soul to woe, — strong as a prayer
To lift it to sweet grace ! I swore to him
To yield the city open-gated up
Unto his thirsty swords, for pity went,

And faith, and fair thoughts, — all but headlong love,
At his strong breath. My brother kept the guard
I' the eastern gate : I took him food, and tried
The buckles of his breastplate, — one I loosed,
And drew his battle-knife, and laughingly
Struck on the tempered scales, whereat he smiled,
And bade me strike amain : good sooth ! I did, —
Down through the stolen passage past his heart,
So that life left him ere the bright blood came ;
Then I flung back the portals, and let in
A sea of stormy plumes, — it swept along
One little breath-time ; soon a rock-like band
Met it — and stayed — and turned, and scattered it,
Ten to a hundred, fighting for the right,
And speared the backs of the fliers, for all fled
Save one ; and him, under my wringing hands,
The savage lances stabbed through greave and groin :
Then mine eyes swam in blood ; some angry gripe
Somewhither haled the reeking corse and me
Past howling citizens. Oh, let me end !
Oh ! light sad Merope, and let her end !
Merope, — hope-abandoned Merope,
Who stood between God's lowest and God's love !

Ah, sapphire-vested Sisters ! ah, crowned Lights !
Bear with my moan a little ; I must tell
How human life did leave me. It was when
The stream whereby we lived did slowly rise
To flood its reeded banks. I, gaining sight,
Waking in fetters by the dark stream-side,
Saw under me the swelling tide, and knew
Cold Death was creeping upward. Oh ! I shrieked,
And strained the links that held me to the slime,
And sank soul-stricken on the bloody breast
Of what I loved, — he lay there, and on mine
My child, poor fool ! I tore him off, and then,
Mad, bleeding, passion-poisoned, wild with woe,
Kneeling beside the black rim of the river, —
The rim of the black river, surging out
From the great city's glare into the gloom,
I cried aloud to Heaven. *The cry came back,*
As I had spurned it ! Yes, I knew it all !
As I had spurned it, sitting on my Star !
Yes, yes ! I knew it all, and one wild space
God's anger scathed me ; then the kind quick waves
Lapped o'er my lip and washed the foul life out ;
And then, I know not what, — and then I sat,

Dark on my darkling star. Maker of all !
I do adore Thee, Mighty, Merciful,
Pitying all things, Thou didst pity me,
Who pitied not ; for I am Merope, —
Ai, ai ! Light-bearers, I am Merope,
Merope, — Heaven-exiled Merope,
Who stood between God's lowest and God's love.

1856.

AMADIS OF GAUL TO DON QUIXOTE
DE LA MANCHA.

[From the Spanish.]

THOU, who didst imitate the mournful manner
Of my most lonely and despisèd life,
And — leaving joy for suffering and strife —
Upon the bare hillside didst pitch thy banner !
Thou, whose unshamèd eyes with tears oft ran o'er —
Salt, dripping tears ! — when, giving up all proper
Vessels of use, silver, and tin, and copper,
Thou atest earth's herbs on the earth, — a woful dinner !
Rest thou content, Sir Knight ! Ever and ever —
Or, at the least, while through the hemispheres
Golden Apollo drives his glittering mares —
Famous and praised shall be thy high endeavor !
Thy land of birth the glory of all nations !
Thy chronicler's, the crown of reputations !

THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS.

[Suggested by the well-known picture of Mr. Holman Hunt, in which the uplifted form of Christ, resting with extended arms from His labor in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, throws upon the wall of the Virgin's house a figure of a Cross.]



LIGHT and Shadow ! Shadow and Light !

Twins that were born at the birth of the sun !

One the secret of all things bright ;

The secret of all things sombre, one ;

One the joy of the radiant day ;

One the spell of the dolorous night :

One at the dew-fall bearing sway ;

One at the day-break, rosy and white.

Sister and brother, born of one mother,

Made of a thought of the Infinite One,

Made by the wisdom of God — and none other —

In times when the times were not begun.

One with the morning-star for its gem,

Glad Eösphorus, herald of beams ;

One that wears for its diadem

Pale, sad Hesperus, planet of dreams.

One for the glory and one for the gloom ;

One to show forth and one to shroud ;

One for the birth and one for the tomb ;

One for the clear sky and one for the cloud.

Sister and brother, for ever and ever,

Nowise departed, and nowhere a-twain ;

Mysteries no man's thinking shall sever ;

Marvels none can miss, or explain.

Light, which without a shadow shines not !

Shadow, which shows not unless by light !

(For that which we see to sight combines not,

Except by the sides that escape the sight.)

Is this the parable? this the ending?

That nothing lives for us unless with a foil ;

That all things show by contrast and blending, —

Pleasure by Pain, and Rest by Toil?

Strength by Weakness, and Gladness by Sorrow ;
Hope by Despair, and Peace by Strife ;
The Good by the Evil, the Day by the Morrow ;
Love by Hatred, and Death by Life ?

Ah ! then I hate you, Shadow ! Shadow !
Ghost and ghoul of the glittering Light !
If the gold of wisdom, the El Dorado
Of Art must be had in this sorrowful sight.

Shadow ! we know how lovely and tender
Are the deeds you do with your witchcraft dim ;
What wonderful sorcery tempers the splendor
Of light, in your sisterly play with him !

We know what rose-leaf lips would be cold
Without the soft finish of warm half-light ;
We know what tresses would lose their gold
If you did not gloss it and gild it aright.

We know how weary the dawns would go
Lacking the promise of placid eyes ;
We know how fiercely the hours could glow
Without the kind shadows under the leaves ;

Yes ! and we know how joy would tire,

And gladness turn madness, and life be undone ;
And strength prove weakness, and Hope expire,
And Love droop wingless, if change were none.

And, Holiest Shadow of God's great hand ! —

That makest the sleep and the spangled night, —
I know that by Thee we understand
The stars which in silver His glories write.

And we seem to know that, to eyes like ours,

Dawn by Dusk must usher its state ;
That hearts win hope from the darkest hours,
And Love kisses best with a shudder at Hate.

But, Shadow ! Shadow ! Ghost of the Light !

Be Sadness ! be Softness ! be solemn Gloom !
Be Death ! be Doubt ! be the secret of Night !
Be the spell of Beauty ! but past the tomb

Thou wendest not with us, accursed Shadow !

That makest a fable of all real things : —
The gold of wisdom, the El Dorado
Of art, a happier musing brings.

Far off — worlds off — in the Pleiads seven
Is a Star of the Stars — Alcyonë —
The orb which moves never in all the Heaven,
The centre of all sweet Light we see.

And there, thou Shadow of Earth's pale seeming !
The wisest say no shadow can be,
But perfect splendors, lucidly streaming,
And Life and Light at intensity.

Then why did the artist show it thus —
The Sorrow of Sorrows personified —
Painting the carpenter's Son for us
And the Shadow behind of the Crucified ?

Meek and sweet in the sun He stands,
Drinking the air of His Syrian skies ;
Lifting to Heaven toil-wearied hands,
Seeing " His Father " with those mild eyes ;

Gazing from trestle and bench and saw,
To the Kingdom kept for His rule above.
O Christ, the Lord ! we see with awe !
Ah ! Joseph's son ! we look with love !

Ah ! Mary Mother ! we watch with moans
Marking that phantom thy sweet eyes see,
That hateful *Shadow* upon the stones,
That sign of a coming agony !

Did it happen so once in Nazareth ?
Did a Christmas sun show such a sight,
Making from Life a spectre of Death,
Mocking our " Light of the World " with Light ?

He tells us — this artist — one Christmas-tide,
The sunset painted that ominous Cross ;
The shadows of evening prophesied
The hyssop to Him, and to us the loss.

For, her pang is the pang of us, every one :
Wherever the Light shines the Shadow is ;
Where beams a smile must be heard a moan ;
The anguish follows the flying bliss.

Yon crown which the Magi brought to her,
It makes a vision of brows that bleed ;
Yon censer of spikenard and balm and myrrh,
It looks on the wall like a " sponge and reed."

And, therefore, long ago was it written —
Of a Christmas to come in the realms of Light —
“The curse shall depart and death shall be smitten,
And then *there shall be no more night.*”

O Christ, our Lord, in that Shadowless Land,
Be mindful of these sad shadows which lie !
Look forth and mark what a woful band
Of glooms attend us across Thy sky !

“Christmas !” and hear what wars and woe !
“Christmas !” and see what grief o'er all !
Lord Christ ! our suns shine out to show
Crosses and thorns on Time's old wall !

So, if Thou art where that star gleams,
Alcyonë, or higher still,
Send down one blessed ray which beams
Free of all shadows — for they kill !

CHRIST BLESSING LITTLE CHILDREN.

[Suggested by the picture of Rembrandt in the National Gallery.]



MASTER, well done ! thy sombre colors stoop,
As what they paint did, to the root of things !
Thy Christ hath eyes, whose weary glances droop,
Marred with much love, and all the ache it brings :
Thy children — soft, albeit, their Syrian grace —
Clasp sunburnt breasts, and drink of milk that cost
Sweat to provide it ; from each mother's face
Is gone the bridal beauty ; lapsed and lost
Bliss from these bondsmen ; yet, how the Divine
Breaks through the clay ! how Truth's gold gilds the
story !
How longing for heaven's light makes earth's gloom shine !
How lovely, at its lowest, is love's glory !
We see Him as He sate in Palestine.

Lord Christ ! these are the little ones that come !
 Thou spakest, " Suffer them ; " yea, Thou didst say,
 " Forbid them not, for in my kingdom some
 Are like to such ! " O Lord ! do Angels lay
 Small aching heads on sorrow-laden bosoms ?
 Do Thy young angels toil, and starve, and weep ?
 Hardly for these will ope life's morning blossoms
 Before their days bring griefs, their nightly sleep
 Dreams of the Roman whip. Ah, Master Mild !
 Be some great secret of Thy kingdom said
 To keep the grown man glad as this male child,
 The woman pure as is that tender maid !
 They " see Thy Father's face ! " Then, how beguiled ?

Little sweet sister, standing at His knee !
 Small peasant sister ! sucking at thy thumb,
 Touched to thy tiny heart with the mystery,
 Glad to be brought, but far too shy to come ;
 Ah ! tremble, but steal closer ; let it cover
 All of thy head, that potent, piteous hand ;
 And, mothers ! reach your round-eyed babies over
 To take their turn, nought though they understand.
 For these thereby are safe, being so kissed

By that Love's lips which kisses out of heaven ;
And we, with little children, but no Christ,
Press near ; perchance the blessing may be given
From theirs to ours, though we His face have missed.

ON A CYCLAMEN,
*PLUCKED AT CANA OF GALILEE, AND
PRESENTED TO A BRIDE.*



ONLY a Flower ! but, then, it grew
On the green mountains which en-ring
Kana-el-Jelil ; looking to
The village, and the little Spring !

The Love which did those bridals bless
Ever and ever on you shine !
Make happier all your happiness,
And turn its water into wine !

A DISCOURSE OF BUDDHA.

HEREWITH, a broken gem of Buddha's lore !
One beamlet of the brightness of his love !
Rose-light which lingers when the sun is down
Such space that men may find a path thereby.
Ananda told his Brethren of the robe
In the full Sangha, saying, " I have heard ! "

Ananda said : " Upon a certain morn
At Rajagriha, in Wasanta-time,
Lord Buddha sate — the great Tathâgato —
Speaking with wayfarers words such as these.
There was a temple built to Surya
Between the dyers' sheds and grain-market,
With white porch sheltered by a peepul-tree ;
Whereby he sate ; and a priest questioned him —
' Which is Life's chief good, Master ? ' And he spake :

“ ‘Shadows are good when the high sun is flaming,
From wheresoe'er they fall ;
Some take their rest beneath the holy temple,
Some by the prison-wall.

“ ‘The King's gilt palace-roof shuts out the sunshine,
So doth the dyers' shed !
Which is the chiefest shade of all these shadows ?'
‘They are alike !’ one said.

“ ‘So is it,’ quoth he, ‘with all shows of living ;
As shadows fall, they fall !
Rest under, if ye must, but question not
Which is the best of all.

“ ‘Yet, some trees in the forest wave with fragrance
Of fruit and bloom o'erhead ;
And some are evil, bearing fruitless branches,
Whence poisonous air is spread.

“ ‘Therefore, though all be false, seek, if ye must,
Right shelter from life's heat.
Lo ! those do well who toil for wife and child
Threading the burning street !

“ ‘ Good is it helping kindred ! good to dwell
Blameless and just to all ;
Good to give alms, with good-will in the heart,
Albeit the store be small !

“ ‘ Good to speak sweet and gentle words, to be
Merciful, patient, mild ;
To hear the Law, and keep it, leading days
Innocent, undefiled.

“ ‘ These be chief goods — for evil by its like
Ends not, nor hate by hate :
By love hate ceaseth ; by well-doing ill ;
By knowledge life’s sad state.

“ ‘ But see where soars an eagle ! mark those wings
Which cleave the blue, cool skies !
What shadow needeth yon proud Lord of Air
To shield his fearless eyes ?

“ ‘ Rise from this life ; lift upon pinions bold
Hearts free and great as his ;
The eagle seeks no shadow, nor the wise
Greater or lesser bliss ! ’ ”

THE TWELVE MONTHS.



JANUARY.

°RAIN — hail — sleet — snow ! — But in my East
This is the time when palm-trees quicken
With flowers, wherefrom the Arabs' feast
Of amber dates will thenceforth thicken.

Palms, — he and she, — in sight they grow ;
And o'er the desert-sands is wafted,
On light airs of the After-glow,
That golden dust whence fruit is grafted.

Ah, happy trees ! who feel no frost
Of winter-time, to chill your gladness ;
And grow not close enough for cost
Of bliss fulfilled, which heightens sadness ;

No gray reality's alloy
Your green ideal can diminish !
You have love's kiss, in all its joy,
Without love's lips, which let it finish !

FEBRUARY.

FAIR Grecian legend, that, in Spring,
Seeking sweet tale for sunnier hours,
Fabled how Enna's queen did bring
Back from the underworld her flowers !

Whence come ye else, goblets of gold,
Which men the yellow crocus call?
You snow-drops, maiden-meeek and cold,
What other fingers let you fall?

What hand but hers, who, wont to rove
The asphodel in Himera,
Torn thence by an ungentle love,
Flung not her favorites away?

King of dark death ! on thoughts that roam
Thy passion and thy power were spent :·

When blossom-time is come at home,
 Homeward the soul's strong wings are bent.

So comes she, with her pleasant wont,
 When Spring-time chases Winter cold,
 Couching against his frozen front
 Her tiny spears of green and gold.

MARCH.

WELCOME, North-wind ! from the Norland ;
 Strike upon our foremost foreland,
 Sweep away across the moorland,
 Do thy lusty kind !

Thou and we were born together
 In the black Norwegian weather ;
 Birds we be of one brave feather,
 Welcome, bully wind !

Buss us ! set our girls' cheeks glowing ;
 Southern blood asks sun for flowing,
 North blood warms when winds are blowing,
 Most of all winds, thou ;

There's a sea-smack in thy kisses
 Better than all breezy blisses,
 So we know, our kinsman this is :
 Buss us ! cheek and brow.

Rollick out thy wild sea-catches,
 Roar thy stormy mad sea-snatches,
 What bare masts and battened hatches
 Thou hast left behind ;
 Ring it, till our ears shall ring, too,
 How thou mad'st the Frenchman bring-to :
 That's the music Northmen sing to,
 Burly brother wind !

Go ! with train of spray and sea-bird,
 Fling the milky waves to leeward,
 Drive the ragged rain-clouds seaward,
 Chase the scudding ships ;
 To the South-wind take our greeting,
 Bid him bring the Spring — his Sweeting —
 Say what glad hearts wait her meeting,
 What bright eyes and lips.

APRIL.

BLOSSOM of the almond-trees,
April's gift to April's bees,
Birthday ornament of spring,
Flora's fairest daughterling ! —
Coming when no flow'rets dare
Trust the cruel outer air ;
When the royal king-cup bold
Will not don his coat of gold ;
And the sturdy blackthorn spray
Keeps its silver for the May ; —
Coming when no flow'rets would,
Save thy lowly sisterhood
Early violets, blue and white,
Dying for their love of light.
Almond blossom, sent to teach us
That the spring-days soon will reach us,
Lest, with longing over-tried,
We die as the violets died.
Blossom, clouding all the tree
With thy crimson 'broidery,

Long before a leaf of green
On the bravest bough is seen ;
Ah ! when wintry winds are swinging
All thy red bells into ringing,
With a bee in every bell,
Almond bloom, we greet thee well !

MAY.

Who cares on the land to stay,
Wasting the wealth of a day?
The yellow fields leave
For the meadows that heave,
And away to the sea — away !

To the meadows far out on the deep,
Whose ploughs are the winds that sweep
The green furrows high,
When into the sky
The silvery foam-bells leap.

At sea ! — my bark — at sea !
With the winds, and the wild clouds and me ;

The low shore soon
Will be down with the moon,
And none on the waves but we !

Thy wings are abroad, my bird,
And the sound of their speed is heard ;
The scud fieth west,
And the gull to her nest,
But they lag far behind us, my bird !

White as my true love's neck
Are the sails that shadow thy deck ;
And thine image wan,
Like the stream-mirrored swan,
Lies dim on thy dancing track.

On ! on ! with a swoop and a swirl,
High over the clear waves' curl ;
Under thy prow,
Like a fairy, now,
Make the blue water bubble with pearl !

Lo ! yonder, my lady, the light !
'T is the last of the land in sight !

Look once — and away !
Bows down in the spray ;
Lighted on by the lamps of the night !

JUNE.

LILY of June, pearl-petalled, emerald-leaved !
A sceptre thou, a silver-studded wand
By lusty June, the Lord of Summer, waved,
To give to blade and bud his high command.

Nay ! not a sceptre, but a seated Bride,
The white Sultana of a world of flowers,
Chosen, o'er all their passion and their pride,
To reign with June, Lady of azure hours.

Ah, vestal-bosomed ! Thou that, all the May,
From maidenly reserve wouldst not depart,
Till June's warm wooing won thee to display
The golden secret hidden at thy heart :

Lay thy white heart bare to the Summer King !
Brim thy broad chalice for him with fresh rain !
Fling to him from thy milky censers, fling
Fine fragrances, a Bride without a stain !

Without?— look, June ! thy pearly love is smutched !
That which did wake her gentle beauty, slays ;
Alas ! that nothing lovely lasts, if touched
By aught more earnest than a longing gaze.

JULY.

PROUD, on the bosom of the river,
White-winged the vessels come and go,
Dropping down with ingots to deliver,
Drifting up stately on the flow.
Mirrored in the sparkling waters under,
Mightily rising to the sky,
Kings of the sunshine and the thunder,
Come they and go they, in July.

Quiet, in the reaches of the river,
Blooms the sea-poppy all alone ;
Hidden by the marshy sedges ever,
Who knows its golden cup is blown ?
Who cares if far-distant billows,
Rocking the great ships to sea,

Underneath the tassels of the willows
Rocks the sea-poppy and the bee?

Rocks the marsh-blossom with its burden,
Only a worker bee at most !
Working for nothing but the guerdon
To live on its honey in the frost.
The outward-bound ye watch, and the incomer ;
The bee and the blossom none espy !
But those have their portion in the summer,
In the glad, gold sunshine of July.

AUGUST.

[From the German.]

ONCE, with a landlord wondrous fine,
A weary guest, I tarried,
A golden pippin was his sign,
Upon a green branch carried !

Mine host — he was an apple-tree
With whom I took my leisure ;
Fair fruit, and mellowed juicily,
He gave me from his treasure.

THE TWELVE MONTHS.

There came to that same hostel gay
Bright guests, in brave adorning ;
A merry feast they made all day,
And sang, and slept till morning.

I, too, to rest my body laid
On bed of crimson clover ;
The landlord with his own broad shade
Carefully spread me over.

I rose ; — I called to pay the score,
But “ No ! ” he grandly boweth ;
Now, root and fruit, for evermore
God bless him, while he groweth !

SEPTEMBER.

THE harvest-moon stands on the sea,
Her golden rim 's adrip ;
She lights the sheaves on many a lea,
The sails on many a ship ;
Glitter, sweet Queen ! upon the spray,
And glimmer on the heather ;

Right fair thy ray to gild the way
Where lovers walk together.

The red wheat rustles, and the vines
Are purple to the foot ;
And true-love, waiting patient, wins
Its blessed time of fruit :
Lamp of all lovers, Lady-moon ! ,
Light these ripe lips together
Which reap alone a harvest sown
Long ere September weather.

OCTOBER.

A BOLD brunette she is, radiant with mirth,
Who comes a-tripping over corn-fields cropped ;
Fruits and blown roses, from her full arms dropped,
Carpet her feet along the gladdened earth ;

Around her brow glitters a careless crown
Of bronzed oak, and apple-leaves, and vine ;
And russet-nuts and country berries twine
About her gleaming shoulders and loose gown.

Like grapes at vintage, where the ripe wine glows,
 Glowes so her sweet cheek, summer-touched but fair ;
 And, like grape-tendrils, all her wealth of hair,
Gold on a ground of brown, nods as she goes :

Grapes too, a-spirt, her brimming fingers bear,
 A dainty winepress, pouring wet and warm
 The crimson river over wrist and arm,
And on her lips — adding no crimson there !

Ah ! golden autumn hours — fly not so fast !
 Let the sweet Lady long with us delay ;
 The sunset makes the sun so wished-for, — stay !
Of three fair sisters — loveliest and the last !

But after laughter ever follows grief,
 And Pleasure's sunshine brings its shadow Pain ;
 Even now begins the dreary time again,
The first dull patter of the first dead leaf.

NOVEMBER.

COME ! in thy veil of ashen cloud
With mists around thee, like a shroud,
And wan face colored with no light
Of sun or moon, by day or night ;
I would not see thee glad and gay,
Dark month ! that called my Love away !

I would not see thee otherwise,
Gray month ! that hast the dying eyes ;
Cold month ! that com'st with icy hands
Chaining the waters and the lands !
So didst thou chill two hearts at play,
Dark month ! that called my Love away !

And yet, I know, behind thy mists
The bright Sun shines, Love's star subsists !
If we could lift thy veil, may be,
Thy hidden face were good to see !
Come as thou wilt — I say not nay,
Dark month ! that called my Love away !

NOVEMBER, 1864.

DECEMBER.

In fret-work of frost and spangle of snow
Unto his end the year doth wend ;
And sadly for some the days did go,
And glad for some were beginning and end !
But — sad or glad — grieve not for his death,
Mournfully counting your measures of breath,
You, that, before the stars began,
Were seed of woman and promise of man,
You who are older than Aldebaran !
It was but a ring round about the Sun,
One passing dance of the planets done ;
One step of the Infinite Minuet
Which the great worlds pace, to a music set
By Life immortal and Love divine :
Whereof is struck, in your threescore and ten,
One chord of the harmony, fair and fine,
Of that which maketh us women and men !
In fret-work of frost and spangle of snow,
Sad or glad — let the old year go !

NOTICES

OF

“THE LIGHT OF ASIA.”

REV. WM. H. CHANNING, LONDON.

[*Extract from a Letter to a Friend in Concord, Mass.*]

“The Light of Asia” is a poem in which the effort is made to bring before our modern age, in the Western world, that sublime embodiment of the finest genius of the Orient, in its prime, whom we call BUDDHA, in *living form*, and to sketch this outline of his speculative and ethical *systems* in vivid pictorial representation. And marvellously successful has the effort of the poet proved. Those who are most familiar with the semi-historical, semi-legendary biographies of Prince Siddārtha Gautama, will be the most prompt to admit that never has the image of the serene and heroic, saintly and gentle sage been more beautifully portrayed than in this poem; and from infancy, through youth and manhood, to his new birth in extreme age, his whole growth towards perfection is so glowingly brought before the reader, that he feels as if lifted into personal communion with this grand and lovely teacher of the “Way to Peace.” Buddha lives and moves and speaks again in these pages, as he lived and moved and taught amid the sacred groves of India.

But one of the chief charms of the poem is the singularly vital reality with which the very scenery and climate, the people and the communities, the manners, dwellings, and actual society of Hindostan, two thousand years or more ago, is made to pass, as if in *palingenesia*, before and around us. The long-buried past is reanimated at the poet's touch. And from the midst of the rush and turmoil of our restless modern age we enter, behind a lifted veil, into the tranquil stillness, calm dignity, and meditative quiet of the East, as if from sultry, dusty, summer noon we could bathe our fevered brows in the fresh, sweet, dewy air of a spring morning. And the contrast rejuvenates our fagged and weary powers delightfully.

One is the more surprised, in reading this poem, to learn that the writer has created this lovely work of art, not in the stillness of a country solitude, nor amid the cloistered aisles of universities, but right in the throng and uproar of this bustling metropolis. For the poet is one of the most indefatigable editors of the daily press in London, and every morning, week in, week out, addresses the largest circle of readers approached by any writer of "leaders" in Great Britain, or probably in Christendom; for Edwin Arnold is editor-in-chief of the Daily Telegraph, which has an average circulation of a quarter of a million of copies, with probably four readers a copy. And certainly no editor writes on a wider range of topics, political, social, scientific, &c. That, amidst the responsibilities, interruptions, anxieties, harassing cares, and ever-varying distractions of such a life, a poet could evoke, in his few hours for quiet thought, an epic in eight books, on one of the loftiest themes for spiritual contemplation, and one of the purest ideal types of a heavenly human life known in history, is certainly a surprising instance of concentrated power. Within my experience, or my acquaintance with literary efforts, no greater success of this kind has been attained; for to my certain knowledge this

book was only conceived and begun *last September*, and has been perfected and published in one of the most disturbed and trying periods that this nation has passed through for this generation at least.

This effort, indeed, has been a labor of love, and so a rest and refreshment to the poet ; for Edwin Arnold is an impassioned lover of India, and has for years been a loving admirer of Buddha. So the poem wrote itself out of his memory and imagination. Trained at Oxford, where he won honors as a classic, and gained the Newdigate Prize for Poetry, after publishing a small volume of poems, Mr. Arnold went in early life to Hindostan, where he was appointed as Principal of the Deccan College at Poona. Here he resided for seven years, acquiring a knowledge of the Sanscrit and other Indian languages, and translating the very interesting "Book of Good Counsels," the "Hitopodesa," which has long been a valued text-book for Sanscrit scholars, as it is accompanied with an interlinear text and vocabulary, &c. In India he became the friend of Lord Dalhousie, John Lawrence (the saviour of the Punjab, afterward Lord Lawrence), and other leading statesmen ; and was on the road to preferment when he was compelled to leave his much-loved India by the death of a child and the illness of his young wife. After his return, he wrote and published, in two volumes, an important and instructive "History of Lord Dalhousie's Administration," and printed another volume of poems, and a translation of one of the books of Herodotus. Becoming then engaged as a sub-editor in the Telegraph, where during our civil war he defended the cause of freedom and confidently predicted the triumph of the Republic, he gradually rose to higher influence, until, after the death of Thornton Hunt, he was advanced to the responsible post of editor-in-chief, and has become greatly distinguished as a writer of powerful "leaders." But amidst his incessant toil, he has still found leisure for literary work,

having translated a volume of the poets of Greece, accompanied by biographical and critical notices, and an exquisitely beautiful version of the "Indian Song of Songs," — one of the most characteristic productions of Hindoo literature. And now, at length, he has found a fit sphere for his poetic genius in this representation of Buddha, in which he has embodied his own highest ideals and aspirations.

In speaking thus warmly, and enthusiastically even, of this poem, it is nowise my wish or end to indorse Mr. Arnold's view of Buddha and his system; for, in several very important and even essential points my estimate of Gautama differs very widely from the poet's, both as to the *character* of the MAN, and the *principles and tendency* of his philosophical and moral SYSTEM. But Goethe's prime rule of criticism has long been my guide, — "Before passing judgment on a book, a work of art, a scheme of doctrine, or a person, first give yourself up to a sympathetic appreciation of them." Now Mr. Arnold has conceived and composed his poem as a HINDOO BUDDHIST. In that spirit let this beautiful book be read, — and *then* criticised.

DR. RIPLEY, in the New York *Tribune*.

The fruits of an earnest study of Oriental literature and of a personal residence of several years in India are embodied in this stately poetical romance. From the dim and shadowy legends of the princely founder of the great religion of the East, scanty and uncertain as they prove to be under the hand of critical research, Mr. Arnold has constructed a poem, which for affluence of imagination, splendor of diction, and virile descriptive power, will not be easily matched among the most remarkable productions in the literature of the day. His starting-point is the historical im-

portance of the Buddhist faith, which has existed during twenty-four centuries, and now surpasses in the number of its followers and the extent of its prevalence any other form of religious belief. Not less than four hundred and seventy millions of our race live and die in the tenets of Gautama. His spiritual dominions at the present time reach from Nepal and Ceylon over the whole Eastern Peninsula to China, Japan, Thibet, Central Asia, Siberia, and even Swedish Lapland. "More than a third of mankind, therefore," Mr. Arnold remarks, "owe their moral and religious ideas to this illustrious Prince, whose personality, though imperfectly revealed in the existing sources of information, cannot but appear the highest, gentlest, holiest, and most beneficent, with one exception, in the history of Thought." Not a single act or word is recorded "which mars the perfect purity and tenderness of this Indian teacher, who united the truest princely qualities with the intellect of a sage and the passionate devotion of a martyr."

The author has put his poem into the mouth of an Indian Buddhist, because the spirit of Asiatic thought must be regarded from an Oriental point of view, in order to gain a correct appreciation of its significance. After relating the circumstances attending the birth of Prince Siddârtha (known as the founder of a religion by the name of Buddha), the poet proceeds to describe his education under the discipline provided by his wise and liberal father, who spared none of the resources of an Oriental monarchy for the training and culture of the youthful Prince. He early displayed a precocity of intellect and character, which surpassed the highest skill of his teachers, and presaged a future of marvellous import : —

Which reverence
Lord Buddha kept to all his schoolmasters,
Albeit beyond their learning taught ; in speech

Right gentle, yet so wise ; princely of mien,
 Yet softly-mannered ; modest, deferent,
 And tender-hearted, though of fearless blood ;
 No bolder horseman in the youthful band
 E'er rode in gay chase of the shy gazelles ;
 No keener driver of the chariot
 In mimic contests scoured the Palace-courts ;
 Yet in mid-play the boy would oftentimes pause,
 Letting the deer pass free ; would oftentimes yield
 His half-won race because the laboring steeds
 Fetched painful breath ; or if his princely mates
 Saddened to lose, or if some wistful dream
 Swept o'er his thoughts. And ever with the years
 Waxed this compassionateness of our Lord,
 Even as a great tree grows from two soft leaves
 To spread its shade afar ; but hardly yet
 Knew the young child of sorrow, pain, or tears,
 Save as strange names for things not felt by kings,
 Nor ever to be felt.

The poet then relates an instance illustrating the early development of the "quality of mercy" in the bosom of the Prince. It happened one vernal day that a wild swan was shot by an idle courtier as the flock flew near the palace, and the wounded bird fell into the hands of Siddârtha. As he soothed the frightened, fluttering bird with tender touch, and drew the arrow from its side, he pressed the barb into his own wrist to make trial of the pain : —

Then some one came who said, " My Prince hath shot
 A swan, which fell among the roses here.
 He bids me pray you send it. Will you send ? "
 " Nay," quoth Siddârtha, " if the bird were dead
 To send it to the slayer might be well,
 But the swan lives ; my cousin hath but killed
 The god-like speed which throbbled in this white wing."
 And Devadatta answered, " The wild thing,

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