

OSCAR WILDE

*The Ballad
of Reading
Gaol
and other
poems*



The Ballad of Reading Gaol and Other Poems

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde was born in Dublin in 1854, his father an eminent eye-surgeon and his mother a nationalist poet who wrote under the pseudonym 'Speranza'. He went to Trinity College, Dublin, and then to Magdalen College, Oxford, where he began to propagandize the new Aesthetic (or 'Art for Art's Sake') Movement. Despite winning a first and the Newdigate Prize for Poetry, Wilde failed to obtain an Oxford fellowship, and was forced to earn a living by public lecturing and writing for periodicals. He published a largely unsuccessful volume of poems in 1881 and in the next year undertook a lecture tour of the United States in order to promote the D'Oyly Carte production of Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera *Patience*. After his marriage to Constance Lloyd in 1884, he tried to establish himself as a writer, but with little initial success. However, his three volumes of short fiction, *The Happy Prince* (1888), *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime* (1891) and *A House of Pomegranates* (1891), together with his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), gradually won him a reputation, confirmed and enhanced by the phenomenal success of his society comedies – *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *A Woman of No Importance*, *An Ideal Husband* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*, all performed on the West End stage between 1892 and 1895.

Success, however, was short-lived. In 1891 Wilde had met and fallen extravagantly in love with Lord Alfred Douglas. In 1895, when his success as a dramatist was at its height, Wilde brought an unsuccessful libel action against Douglas's father, the Marquess of Queensberry. Wilde lost the case and two trials later was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for acts of gross indecency. As a result of this experience

he wrote *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. He was released from prison in 1897 and went into an immediate self-imposed exile on the Continent. He died in Paris in ignominy in 1900.

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OTHER POEMS*



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CHRONOLOGY

- 1854 Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wilde born (he added 'Wills' in the 1870s) on 16 October at 21 Westland Row, Dublin.
- 1855 His family move to 1 Merrion Square in Dublin.
- 1857 Birth of Isola Wilde, Oscar's sister.
- 1858 Birth of Constance Mary Lloyd, Wilde's future wife.
- 1864 Wilde's father is knighted following his appointment as Queen Victoria's 'Surgeon Oculist' the previous year. Wilde attends
Portora Royal School, Enniskillen.
- 1867 Death of Isola Wilde.
- 1871-4 At Trinity College, Dublin, reading Classics and Ancient History.
- 1874-8 At Magdalen College, Oxford, reading Classics and Ancient History ('Greats').
- 1875 Travels in Italy with his tutor from Dublin, J. P. Mahaffy.
- 1876 First poems published in Dublin University Magazine. Death of Sir William Wilde.
- 1877 Further travels in Italy, and in Greece.
- 1878 Wins the Newdigate Prize for Poetry in Oxford with 'Ravenna'. Takes a double first from Oxford. Moves to London and starts
to establish himself as a popularizer of Aestheticism.
- 1879 Meets Constance Lloyd.
- 1881 *Poems* published at his own expense; not well received critically.
- 1882 Lecture tour of North America, speaking on art, aesthetics and decoration. Revised edition of *Poems* published.
- 1883 His first play, *Vera; or, The Nihilists*, performed in New York; it is not a success.
- 1884 Marries Constance Lloyd in London, honeymoon in Paris and Dieppe.
- 1885 Moves into 16 Tite Street, Chelsea. Cyril Wilde born.
- 1886 Vyvyan Wilde born. Meets Robert Ross, to become his lifelong friend and, in 1897, his literary executor. Ross may have been

Wilde's first homosexual lover.

- 1887 Becomes the editor of *Lady's World: A Magazine of Fashion and Society*, and changes its name to *Woman's World*. Publication of 'The Canterville Ghost' and 'Lord Arthur Savil's Crime'.
- 1888 *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* published; on the whole well received.
- 1889 'Pen, Pencil and Poison' (on the forger and poisoner Thomas Griffiths Wainewright), 'The Decay of Lying' (a dialogue in praise of artifice over nature and art over morality), 'The Portrait of Mr W.H.' (on the supposed identity of the dedicatee of Shakespeare's sonnets) all published.
- 1890 *The Picture of Dorian Gray* published in the July number of *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*; fierce debate between Wilde and hostile critics ensues. 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' (later revised and included in *Intentions* as 'The Critic as Artist') published.
- 1891 Wilde's first meeting with Lord Alfred Douglas ('Bosie'). *The Duchess of Padua* performed in New York. 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' and 'Preface to Dorian Gray' published in February and March in the *Fortnightly Review*. The revised and extended edition of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* published by Ward, Lock and Company in April. *Intentions* (collection of critical essays), *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and Other Stories* and *A House of Pomegranates* (fairy-tales) published.
- 1892 *Lady Windermere's Fan* performed at St James's Theatre, London (February to July).
- 1893 *Salomé* published in French. *A Woman of No Importance* performed at Haymarket Theatre, London.
- 1894 *Salome* published in English with illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley; Douglas is the dedicatee. *The Sphinx*, a poem with illustrations by Charles Ricketts, published.
- 1895 *An Ideal Husband* opens at Haymarket Theatre in January; it is followed by the hugely successful *The Importance of Being Earnest* at St James's Theatre in February. On 28 February Wilde returns to his club, the Albemarle, to find a card from Douglas's

father, the Marquess of Queensberry, accusing Wilde of 'posing as a sodomite' (sodomite). Wilde quickly takes out an action

accusing Queensberry of criminal libel. In April Queensberry appears at the Old Bailey and is acquitted, following a successful

plea of justification on the basis that Wilde was guilty of homosexual behaviour. Wilde is immediately arrested, after ignoring

his friends' advice to flee the country. In May he is tried twice at the Old Bailey, and on 25 May sentenced to two years'

imprisonment with hard labour for 'acts of gross indecency with another male person'. In July he is sent to Wandsworth Prison.

In November he is declared bankrupt, and shortly afterwards transferred to Reading Gaol.

- 1896 Death of Wilde's mother, Lady Jane Francesca Wilde ('Speranza').
- 1897 Wilde writes the long letter to Douglas that would be later entitled 'De Profundis'. In May Wilde is released from prison, and sails for Dieppe by the night ferry. He never returns to Britain.
- 1898 *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* published pseudonymously as C.3.3, Wilde's cell-number in Reading Gaol. Wilde moves to Paris in February. Constance Wilde (who had by now changed her name to Holland) dies.
- 1899 Willie (b. 1852), Wilde's elder brother, dies.
- 1900 In January Queensberry dies. By July Wilde himself is very ill with a blood infection. On 29 November he is received into the Roman Catholic Church, and dies on 30 November in the Hôtel d'Alsace in Paris.
- 1905 An abridged version of *De Profundis*, edited by Robert Ross, published.
- 1908 The *Collected Works*, edited by Robert Ross, are published.

THE BALLAD OF READING GAOL

IN MEMORIAM

C. T. W.

Sometime Trooper of the Royal Horse Guards
obit H. M. Prison, Reading, Berkshire

July 7, 1896

1

He did not wear his scarlet coat,

For blood and wine are red,

And blood and wine were on his hands

When they found him with the dead,

The poor dead woman whom he loved,

And murdered in her bed.

He walked amongst the Trial Men

In a suit of shabby grey;

A cricket cap was on his head,

And his step seemed light and gay;

But I never saw a man who looked

So wistfully at the day.

I never saw a man who looked

With such a wistful eye

Upon that little tent of blue

Which prisoners call the sky,

And at every drifting cloud that went

With sails of silver by.

I walked, with other souls in pain,

Within another ring,

And was wondering if the man had done

A great or little thing,

When a voice behind me whispered low,

'That fellow's got to swing.'

Dear Christ! the very prison walls Suddenly seemed to reel,

And the sky above my head became

Like a casque of scorching steel; And, though I was a soul in pain,

My pain I could not feel.

I only knew what hunted thought

Quickened his step, and why

He looked upon the garish day

With such a wistful eye;

The man had killed the thing he loved,

And so he had to die.

*

Yet each man kills the thing he loves,

By each let this be heard,

Some do it with a bitter look,

Some with a flattering word.

The coward does it with a kiss,

The brave man with a sword!

Some kill their love when they are young,

And some when they are old;

Some strangle with the hands of Lust,

Some with the hands of Gold:

The kindest use a knife, because

The dead so soon grow cold.

Some love too little, some too long,

Some sell, and others buy;

Some do the deed with many tears,

And some without a sigh:

For each man kills the thing he loves,

Yet each man does not die.

He does not die a death of shame On a day of dark disgrace,

Nor have a noose about his neck,

Nor a cloth upon his face,

Nor drop feet foremost through the floor

Into an empty space.

He does not sit with silent men

Who watch him night and day;

Who watch him when he tries to weep,

And when he tries to pray;

Who watch him lest himself should rob

The prison of its prey.

He does not wake at dawn to see

Dread figures throng his room,

The shivering Chaplain robed in white,

The Sheriff stern with gloom,
And the Governor all in shiny black,
With the yellow face of Doom.

He does not rise in piteous haste
To put on convict-clothes,
While some coarse-mouthed Doctor gloats, and notes Each new and
nerve-twitched pose,
Fingering a watch whose little ticks
Are like horrible hammer-blows.

He does not feel that sickening thirst
That sands one's throat, before
The hangman with his gardener's gloves
Comes through the padded door, And binds one with three leathern
thongs,
That the throat may thirst no more.

He does not bend his head to hear
The Burial Office read,
Nor, while the anguish of his soul

Tells him he is not dead,
Cross his own coffin, as he moves
Into the hideous shed.

He does not stare upon the air

Through a little roof of glass:

He does not pray with lips of clay

For his agony to pass;

Nor feel upon his shuddering cheek

The kiss of Caiaphas.

2

Six weeks the guardsman walked the yard,

In the suit of shabby grey:

His cricket cap was on his head,

And his step seemed light and gay,

But I never saw a man who looked

So wistfully at the day.

I never saw a man who looked

With such a wistful eye
Upon that little tent of blue
Which prisoners call the sky,
And at every wandering cloud that trailed
Its ravelled fleeces by.

He did not wring his hands, as do Those witless men who dare
To try to rear the changeling Hope

In the cave of black Despair:
He only looked upon the sun,
And drank the morning air.

He did not wring his hands nor weep,
Nor did he peek or pine,
But he drank the air as though it held

Some healthful anodyne:
With open mouth he drank the sun
As though it had been wine!

And I and all the souls in pain,

Who tramped the other ring,
Forgot if we ourselves had done
A great or little thing,
And watched with gaze of dull amaze
The man who had to swing.

For strange it was to see him pass
With a step so light and gay,
And strange it was to see him look
So wistfully at the day,
And strange it was to think that he
Had such a debt to pay.

*

For oak and elm have pleasant leaves
That in the spring-time shoot:
But grim to see is the gallows-tree,
With its adder-bitten root, And, green or dry, a man must die

Before it bears its fruit!

The loftiest place is that seat of grace

For which all worldlings try:

But who would stand in hempen band

Upon a scaffold high,

And through a murderer's collar take

His last look at the sky?

It is sweet to dance to violins

When Love and Life are fair:

To dance to flutes, to dance to lutes

Is delicate and rare:

But it is not sweet with nimble feet

To dance upon the air!

So with curious eyes and sick surmise

We watched him day by day,

And wondered if each one of us

Would end the self-same way,

For none can tell to what red Hell

His sightless soul may stray.

At last the dead man walked no more

Amongst the Trial Men,

And I knew that he was standing up

In the black dock's dreadful pen,

And that never would I see his face

For weal or woe again.

Like two doomed ships that pass in storm
We had crossed each other's
way:

But we made no sign, we said no word,

We had no word to say;

For we did not meet in the holy night,

But in the shameful day.

A prison wall was round us both,

Two outcast men we were:

The world had thrust us from its heart

And God from out His care:

And the iron gin that waits for Sin

Had caught us in its snare.

3

In Debtors' Yard the stones are hard,

And the dripping wall is high,

So it was there he took the air

Beneath the leaden sky,

And by each side a Warder walked,

For fear the man might die.

Or else he sat with those who watched

His anguish night and day;

Who watched him when he rose to weep,

And when he crouched to pray;

Who watched him lest himself should rob

Their scaffold of its prey.

The Governor was strong upon

The Regulations Act:

The Doctor said that Death was but

A scientific fact: And twice a day the Chaplain called,

And left a little tract.

And twice a day he smoked his pipe,

And drank his quart of beer:

His soul was resolute, and held

No hiding-place for fear;

He often said that he was glad

The hangman's day was near.

But why he said so strange a thing

No warder dared to ask:

For he to whom a watcher's doom

Is given as his task,

Must set a lock upon his lips

And make his face a mask.

Or else he might be moved, and try

To comfort or console:

And what should Human Pity do

Pent up in Murderer's Hole?

What word of grace in such a place

Could help a brother's soul?

With slouch and swing around the ring

We trod the Fool's Parade!

We did not care: we knew we were

The Devil's Own Brigade:

And shaven head and feet of lead

Make a merry masquerade.

We tore the tarry rope to shreds With blunt and bleeding nails;

We rubbed the doors, and scrubbed the floors, And cleaned the shining
rails:

And, rank by rank, we soaped the plank,

And clattered with the pails.

We sewed the sacks, we broke the stones,

We turned the dusty drill:

We banged the tins, and bawled the hymns,

And sweated on the mill:

But in the heart of every man

Terror was lying still.

So still it lay that every day

Crawled like a weed-logged wave:

And we forgot the bitter lot

That waits for fool and knave,

Till once, as we tramped in from work,

We passed an open grave.

With yawning mouth the yellow hole

Gaped for a living thing;

The very mud cried out for blood

To the thirsty asphalt ring;

And we knew that ere one dawn grew fair

Some prisoner had to swing.

Right in we went, with soul intent

On Death and Dread and Doom:

The hangman, with his little bag,

Went shuffling through the gloom: And I trembled as I groped my
way

Into my numbered tomb.

*

That night the empty corridors

Were full of forms of Fear,

And up and down the iron town

Stole feet we could not hear,

And through the bars that hide the stars

White faces seemed to peer.

He lay as one who lies and dreams

In a pleasant meadow-land

The watchers watched him as he slept,

And could not understand

How one could sleep so sweet a sleep

With a hangman close at hand.

But there is no sleep when men must weep

Who never yet have wept:

So we – the fool, the fraud, the knave –

That endless vigil kept,

And through each brain on hands of pain

Another's terror crept.

Alas! it is a fearful thing To feel another's guilt!

For, right, within, the Sword of Sin

Pierced to its poisoned hilt,

And as molten lead were the tears we shed

For the blood we had not spilt.

The warders with their shoes of felt Crept by each padlocked door,

And peeped and saw, with eyes of awe,

Grey figures on the floor,

And wondered why men knelt to pray

Who never prayed before.

All through the night we knelt and prayed, Mad mourners of a corse!

The troubled plumes of midnight shook

The plumes upon a hearse:

And bitter wine upon a sponge

Was the savour of Remorse.

*

The grey cock crew, the red cock crew,

But never came the day:

And crooked shapes of Terror crouched,

In the corners where we lay:

And each evil sprite that walks by night

Before us seemed to play.

They glided past, they glided fast,

Like travellers through a mist:

They mocked the moon in a rigadon

Of delicate turn and twist,

And with formal pace and loathsome grace

The phantoms kept their tryst.

With mop and mow, we saw them go,

Slim shadows hand in hand:

About, about, in ghostly rout

They trod a saraband: And the damned grotesques made arabesques,
Like the wind upon the sand!

With the pirouettes of marionettes,

They tripped on pointed tread:

But with flutes of Fear they filled the ear, As their grisly masque they
led,

And loud they sang, and long they sang,

For they sang to wake the dead.

'Oho!' they cried, 'The world is wide,

But fettered limbs go lame!

And once, or twice, to throw the dice

Is a gentlemanly game,

But he does not win who plays with Sin

In the secret House of Shame.'

No things of air these antics were,

That frolicked with such glee:

To men whose lives were held in gyves,

And whose feet might not go free,

Ah! wounds of Christ! they were living things, Most terrible to see.

Around, around, they waltzed and wound;

Some wheeled in smirking pairs;

With the mincing step of a demirep

Some sidled up the stairs;

And with subtle sneer, and fawning leer,

Each helped us at our prayers.

The morning wind began to moan, But still the night went on:

Through its giant loom the web of gloom

Crept till each thread was spun:

And, as we prayed, we grew afraid

Of the Justice of the Sun.

The moaning wind went wandering round

The weeping prison-wall:

Till like a wheel of turning steel

We felt the minutes crawl:

O moaning wind! what had we done To have such a seneschal?

At last I saw the shadowed bars,

Like a lattice wrought in lead,

Move right across the whitewashed wall

That faced my three-plank bed,

And I knew that somewhere in the world

God's dreadful dawn was red.

At six o'clock we cleaned our cells,

At seven all was still,

But the sough and swing of a mighty wing

The prison seemed to fill,

For the Lord of Death with icy breath

Had entered in to kill.

He did not pass in purple pomp,

Nor ride a moon-white steed.

Three yards of cord and a sliding board

Are all the gallows' need: So with rope of shame the Herald came

To do the secret deed.

We were as men who through a fen

Of filthy darkness grope:

We did not dare to breathe a prayer,

Or to give our anguish scope:

Something was dead in each of us,

And what was dead was Hope.

For Man's grim Justice goes its way,

And will not swerve aside:

It slays the weak, it slays the strong,

It has a deadly stride:

With iron heel it slays the strong,

The monstrous parricide!

We waited for the stroke of eight:

Each tongue was thick with thirst:

For the stroke of eight is the stroke of Fate That makes a man
accursed,

And Fate will use a running noose

For the best man and the worst.

We had no other thing to do,

Save to wait for the sign to come:

So, like things of stone in a valley lone, Quiet we sat and dumb:

But each man's heart beat thick, and quick, Like a madman on a drum!

With sudden shock the prison-clock Smote on the shivering air,

And from all the gaol rose up a wail

Of impotent despair,

Like the sound that frightened marshes hear From some leper in his
lair.

And as one sees most fearful things

In the crystal of a dream,
We saw the greasy hempen rope
 Hooked to the blackened beam,
And heard the prayer the hangman's snare
 Strangled into a scream.

And all the woe that moved him so
 That he gave that bitter cry,
And the wild regrets, and the bloody sweats, None knew so well as I:
For he who lives more lives than one
 More deaths than one must die.

4

There is no chapel on the day
 On which they hang a man:
The Chaplain's heart is far too sick,
 Or his face is far too wan,
Or there is that written in his eyes
 Which none should look upon.

So they kept us close till nigh on noon,

And then they rang the bell,

And the warders with their jingling keys

Opened each listening cell, And down the iron stair we tramped,

Each from his separate Hell.

Out into God's sweet air we went,

But not in wonted way,

For this man's face was white with fear,

And that man's face was grey,

And I never saw sad men who looked

So wistfully at the day.

I never saw sad men who looked

With such a wistful eye

Upon that little tent of blue

We prisoners called the sky,

And at every happy cloud that passed

In such strange freedom by.

But there were those amongst us all
Who walked with downcast head,
And knew that, had each got his due,
They should have died instead:
He had but killed a thing that lived,
Whilst they had killed the dead.

For he who sins a second time
Wakes a dead soul to pain,
And draws it from its spotted shroud,
And makes it bleed again,
And makes it bleed great gouts of blood,
And makes it bleed in vain!

*

Like ape or clown, in monstrous garb With crooked arrows starred,
Silently we went round and round
The slippery asphalte yard;

Silently we went round and round,

And no man spoke a word.

Silently we went round and round,

And through each hollow mind

The Memory of dreadful things

Rushed like a dreadful wind,

And Horror stalked before each man,

And Terror crept behind.

*

The warders strutted up and down,

And watched their herd of brutes,

Their uniforms were spick and span,

And they wore their Sunday suits,

But we knew the work they had been at,

By the quicklime on their boots.

For where a grave had opened wide,

There was no grave at all:
Only a stretch of mud and sand
By the hideous prison-wall,
And a little heap of burning lime,
That the man should have his pall.
For he has a pall, this wretched man,
Such as few men can claim:
Deep down below a prison-yard,
Naked for greater shame, He lies, with fetters on each foot,
Wrapt in a sheet of flame!
And all the while the burning lime
Eats flesh and bone away,
It eats the brittle bone by night,
And the soft flesh by day,
It eats the flesh and bone by turns,
But it eats the heart always.

For three long years they will not sow

Or root or seedling there:

For three long years the unblessed spot

Will sterile be and bare,

And look upon the wondering sky

With unreproachful stare.

They think a murderer's heart would taint

Each simple seed they sow.

It is not true! God's kindly earth Is kindlier than men know,

And the red rose would blow more red,

The white rose whiter blow.

Out of his mouth a red, red rose!

Out of his heart a white!

For who can say by what strange way,

Christ brings His will to light,

Since the barren staff the pilgrim bore

Bloomed in the great Pope's sight?

But neither milk-white rose nor red May bloom in prison-air;

The shard, the pebble, and the flint,

Are what they give us there:

For flowers have been known to heal

A common man's despair.

So never will wine-red rose or white,

Petal by petal, fall

On that stretch of mud and sand that lies

By the hideous prison-wall,

To tell the men who tramp the yard

That God's Son died for all.

*

Yet though the hideous prison-wall

Still hems him round and round,

And a spirit may not walk by night

That is with fetters bound,
And a spirit may but weep that lies
In such unholy ground,
He is at peace – this wretched man –
At peace, or will be soon:
There is no thing to make him mad,
Nor does Terror walk at noon,
For the lampless Earth in which he lies
Has neither Sun nor Moon.
They hanged him as a beast is hanged:
They did not even toll
A requiem that might have brought
Rest to his startled soul, But hurriedly they took him out,
And hid him in a hole.
The warders stripped him of his clothes,
And gave him to the flies:
They mocked the swollen purple throat,

And the stark and staring eyes:

And with laughter loud they heaped the shroud In which the convict
lies.

The Chaplain would not kneel to pray

By his dishonoured grave:

Nor mark it with that blessed Cross

That Christ for sinners gave,

Because the man was one of those

Whom Christ came down to save.

Yet all is well; he has but passed

To Life's appointed bourne;

And alien tears will fill for him

Pity's long-broken urn,

For his mourners will be outcast men,

And outcasts always mourn.

5

I know not whether Laws be right,

Or whether Laws be wrong;

All that we know who lie in gaol

Is that the wall is strong;

And that each day is like a year,

A year whose days are long.

But this I know, that every Law That men have made for Man,

Since first Man took his brother's life,

And the sad world began,

But straws the wheat and saves the chaff

With a most evil fan.

This too I know – and wise it were

If each could know the same –

That every prison that men build

Is built with bricks of shame,

And bound with bars lest Christ should see How men their brothers
maim.

With bars they blur the gracious moon,

And blind the goodly sun:

And they do well to hide their Hell,

For in it things are done

That Son of God nor son of Man

Ever should look upon!

*

The vilest deeds like poison weeds,

Bloom well in prison-air;

It is only what is good in Man

That wastes and withers there:

Pale Anguish keeps the heavy gate,

And the Warder is Despair.

For they starve the little frightened child Till it weeps both night and
day:

And they scourge the weak, and flog the fool, And gibe the old and
grey, And some grow mad, and all grow bad,

And none a word may say.

Each narrow cell in which we dwell

Is a foul and dark latrine,
And the fetid breath of living Death
Chokes up each grated screen,
And all, but Lust, is turned to dust
In Humanity's machine.

The brackish water that we drink
Creeps with a loathsome slime,
And the bitter bread they weigh in scales
Is full of chalk and lime,
And Sleep will not lie down, but walks
Wild-eyed, and cries to Time.

*

But though lean Hunger and green Thirst
Like asp with adder fight,
We have little care of prison fare,
For what chills and kills outright

Is that every stone one lifts by day

Becomes one's heart by night.

With midnight always in one's heart,

And twilight in one's cell,

We turn the crank, or tear the rope,

Each in his separate Hell,

And the silence is more awful far

Than the sound of a brazen bell.

And never a human voice comes near To speak a gentle word:

And the eye that watches through the door

Is pitiless and hard:

And by all forgot, we rot and rot,

With soul and body marred.

And thus we rust Life's iron chain

Degraded and alone:

And some men curse, and some men weep,

And some men make no moan:

But God's eternal Laws are kind

And break the heart of stone.

*

And every human heart that breaks,

In prison-cell or yard,

Is as that broken box that gave

Its treasure to the Lord.

And filled the unclean leper's house

With the scent of costliest nard.

Ah! happy they whose hearts can break And peace of pardon win!

How else may man make straight his plan

And cleanse his soul from Sin?

How else but through a broken heart

May Lord Christ enter in?

*

And he of the swollen purple throat, And the stark and staring eyes,

Waits for the holy hands that took

The Thief to Paradise;

And a broken and a contrite heart

The Lord will not despise.

The man in red who reads the Law

Gave him three weeks of life,

Three little weeks in which to heal

His soul of his soul's strife,

And cleanse from every blot of blood

The hand that held the knife.

And with tears of blood he cleansed the hand, The hand that held the
steel:

For only blood can wipe out blood,

And only tears can heal:

And the crimson stain that was of Cain

Became Christ's snow-white seal.

O

In Reading gaol by Reading town

There is a pit of shame,

And in it lies a wretched man

Eaten by teeth of flame,

In a burning winding-sheet he lies,

And his grave has got no name.

And there, till Christ call forth the dead, In silence let him lie:

No need to waste the foolish tear,

Or heave the windy sigh: The man had killed the thing he loved,

And so he had to die.

And all men kill the thing they love,

By all let this be heard,

Some do it with a bitter look,

Some with a flattering word,

The coward does it with a kiss,

The brave man with a sword!

OTHER POEMS

ELEUTHERIA

Sonnet to Liberty

Not that I love thy children, whose dull eyes
See nothing save their own unlovely woe,
Whose minds know nothing, nothing care to know, – But that the roar
of thy Democracies,
Thy reigns of Terror, thy great Anarchies,
Mirror my wildest passions like the sea, –
And give my rage a brother——! Liberty!
For this sake only do thy dissonant cries
Delight my discreet soul, else might all kings
By bloody knout or treacherous cannonades
Rob nations of their rights inviolate
And I remain unmoved – and yet, and yet,
These Christs that die upon the barricades,
God knows it I am with them, in some things.

AVE IMPERATRIX

Set in this stormy Northern sea,
Queen of these restless fields of tide,
England! what shall men say of thee, Before whose feet the worlds

divide?

The earth, a brittle globe of glass,

Lies in the hollow of thy hand,

And through its heart of crystal pass,

Like shadows through a twilight land,

The spears of crimson-suited war, The long white-crested waves of
fight,

And all the deadly fires which are

The torches of the lords of Night.

The yellow leopards, strained and lean,

The treacherous Russian knows so well,

With gaping blackened jaws are seen

Leap through the hail of screaming shell.

The strong sea-lion of England's wars

Hath left his sapphire cave of sea,

To battle with the storm that mars

The star of England's chivalry.

The brazen-throated clarion blows

Across the Pathan's reedy fen,

And the high steeps of Indian snows

Shake to the tread of armèd men.

And many an Afghan chief, who lies

Beneath his cool pomegranate-trees,

Clutches his sword in fierce surmise

When on the mountain-side he sees

The fleet-foot Marri scout, who comes

To tell how he hath heard afar

The measured roll of English drums

Beat at the gates of Kandahar.

For southern wind and east wind meet Where, girt and crowned by
sword and fire,

England with bare and bloody feet

Climbs the steep road of wide empire.

O lonely Himalayan height,

Grey pillar of the Indian sky,
Where saw'st thou last in clanging fight
Our wingèd dogs of Victory?

The almond groves of Samarcand,
Bokhara, where red lilies blow,
And Oxus, by whose yellow sand
The grave white-turbaned merchants go:

And on from thence to Ispahan,
The gilded garden of the sun,
Whence the long dusty caravan
Brings cedar and vermilion;

And that dread city of Cabool
Set at the mountain's scarpèd feet,
Whose marble tanks are ever full
With water for the noonday heat:

Where through the narrow straight Bazaar
A little maid Circassian

Is led, a present from the Czar

Unto some old and bearded khan, –

Here have our wild war-eagles flown, And flapped wide wings in fiery
fight;

But the sad dove, that sits alone

In England – she hath no delight.

In vain the laughing girl will lean

To greet her love with love-lit eyes:

Down in some treacherous black ravine,

Clutching his flag, the dead boy lies.

And many a moon and sun will see

The lingering wistful children wait

To climb upon their father's knee;

And in each house made desolate

Pale women who have lost their lord

Will kiss the relics of the slain –

Some tarnished epaulette – some sword –

Poor toys to soothe such anguished pain.

For not in quiet English fields

Are these, our brothers, lain to rest,

Where we might deck their broken shields

With all the flowers the dead love best.

For some are by the Delhi walls,

And many in the Afghan land,

And many where the Ganges falls

Through seven mouths of shifting sand.

And some in Russian waters lie, And others in the seas which are

The portals to the East, or by

The wind-swept heights of Trafalgar.

O wandering graves! O restless sleep!

O silence of the sunless day!

O still ravine! O stormy deep!

Give up your prey! Give up your prey!

And thou whose wounds are never healed,

Whose weary race is never won,

O Cromwell's England! must thou yield For every inch of ground a
son?

Go! crown with thorns thy gold-crowned head, Change thy glad song
to song of pain;

Wind and wild wave have got thy dead,

And will not yield them back again.

Wave and wild wind and foreign shore

Possess the flower of English land –

Lips that thy lips shall kiss no more,

Hands that shall never clasp thy hand.

What profit now that we have bound

The whole round world with nets of gold,

If hidden in our heart is found

The care that groweth never old?

What profit that our galleys ride, Pine-forest-like, on every main?

Ruin and wreck are at our side,

Grim warders of the House of pain.

Where are the brave, the strong, the fleet?

Where is our English chivalry?

Wild grasses are their burial-sheet,

And sobbing waves their threnody.

O loved ones lying far away,

What word of love can dead lips send!

O wasted dust! O senseless clay!

Is this the end! is this the end!

Peace, peace! we wrong the noble dead To vex their solemn slumber
so;

Though childless, and with thorn-crowned head,

Up the steep road must England go,

Yet when this fiery web is spun,

Her watchmen shall descry from far

The young Republic like a sun

Rise from these crimson seas of war.

TO MILTON

Milton! I think thy spirit hath passed away
From these white cliffs, and
high-embattled towers; This gorgeous fiery-coloured world of
ours

Seems fallen into ashes dull and grey,

And the age changed unto a mimic play

Wherein we waste our else too-crowded hours: For all our pomp
and pageantry and powers

We are but fit to delve the common clay,

Seeing this little isle on which we stand,

This England, this sea-lion of the sea,

By ignorant demagogues is held in fee,

Who love her not: Dear God! is this the land Which bare a triple
empire in her hand

When Cromwell spake the word Democracy!

LOUIS NAPOLEON

Eagle of Austerlitz! where were thy wings When far away upon a
barbarous strand,

In fight unequal, by an obscure hand,

Fell the last scion of thy brood of Kings!

Poor boy! thou wilt not flaunt thy cloak of red, Nor ride in state
through Paris in the van

Of thy returning legions, but instead

Thy mother France, free and republican,

Shall on thy dead and crownless forehead place

The better laurels of a soldier's crown,

That not dishonoured should thy soul go down

To tell the mighty Sire of thy race

That France hath kissed the mouth of Liberty,

And found it sweeter than his honied bees,

And that the giant wave Democracy

Breaks on the shores where Kings lay crouched at ease.

*SONNET ON THE MASSACRE OF THE CHRISTIANS IN
BULGARIA*

Christ, dost thou live indeed? or are thy bones Still straightened in
their rock-hewn sepulchre?

And was thy Rising only dreamed by Her

Whose love of thee for all her sin atones?

For here the air is horrid with men's groans,

The priests who call upon thy name are slain,

Dost thou not hear the bitter wail of pain

From those whose children lie upon the stones?

Come down, O Son of God! incestuous gloom Curtains the land, and
through the starless night Over thy Cross the Crescent moon I
see!

If thou in very truth didst burst the tomb

Come down, O Son of Man! and show thy might, Lest Mahomet be
crowned instead of Thee!

QUANTUM MUTATA

There was a time in Europe long ago

When no man died for freedom anywhere,

But England's lion leaping from its lair

Laid hands on the oppressor! it was so While England could a great
Republic show.

Witness the men of Piedmont, chiefest care

Of Cromwell, when with impotent despair

The Pontiff in his painted portico

Trembled before our stern ambassadors.

How comes it then that from such high estate

We have thus fallen, save that Luxury

With barren merchandise piles up the gate Where nobler thoughts and
deeds should enter by: Else might we still be Milton's heritors.

LIBERTATIS SACRA FAMES

Albeit nurtured in democracy,

And liking best that state republican

Where every man is Kinglike and no man

Is crowned above his fellows, yet I see,

Spite of this modern fret for Liberty,

Better the rule of One, whom all obey,

Than to let clamorous demagogues betray

Our freedom with the kiss of anarchy.

Wherefore I love them not whose hands profane

Plant the red flag upon the piled-up street

For no right cause, beneath whose ignorant reign Arts, Culture,
Reverence, Honour, all things fade, Save Treason and the
dagger of her trade,

And Murder with his silent bloody feet.

THEORETIKOS

This mighty empire hath but feet of clay:

Of all its ancient chivalry and might

Our little island is forsaken quite:

Some enemy hath stolen its crown of bay,

And from its hills that voice hath passed away

Which spake of Freedom: O come out of it,

Come out of it, my Soul, thou art not fit

For this vile traffic-house, where day by day

Wisdom and reverence are sold at mart, And the rude people rage
with ignorant cries

Against an heritage of centuries.

It mars my calm: wherefore in dreams of Art

And loftiest culture I would stand apart,

Neither for God, nor for his enemies.

THE GARDEN OF EROS

It is full summer now, the heart of June,

Not yet the sun-burnt reapers are a-stir

Upon the upland meadow where too soon

Rich autumn time, the season's usurer,

Will lend his hoarded gold to all the trees,

And see his treasure scattered by the wild and spendthrift breeze.

Too soon indeed! yet here the daffodil, That love-child of the Spring,
has lingered on

To vex the rose with jealousy, and still

The harebell spreads her azure pavilion,

And like a strayed and wandering reveller

Abandoned of its brothers, whom long since June's messenger

The missel-thrush has frightened from the glade,

One pale narcissus loiters fearfully

Close to a shadowy nook, where half afraid

Of their own loveliness some violets lie

That will not look the gold sun in the face

For fear of too much splendour, – ah! methinks it is a place

Which should be trodden by Persephone

When wearied of the flowerless fields of Dis!

Or danced on by the lads of Arcady!

The hidden secret of eternal bliss Known to the Grecian here a man
might find,

Ah! you and I may find it now if Love and Sleep be kind.

There are the flowers which mourning Herakles

Strewed on the tomb of Hylas, columbine,

Its white doves all a-flutter where the breeze

Kissed them too harshly, the small celandine,

That yellow-kirtled chorister of eve,

And lilac lady's-smock, – but let them bloom alone, and leave

Yon spired holly-hock red-crocketed

To sway its silent chimes, else must the bee,

Its little bellringer, go seek instead

Some other pleasaunce; the anemone

That weeps at daybreak, like a silly girl

Before her love, and hardly lets the butterflies unfurl

Their painted wings beside it, – bid it pine

In pale virginity; the winter snow

Will suit it better than those lips of thine

Whose fires would but scorch it, rather go

And pluck that amorous flower which blooms alone,

Fed by the pander wind with dust of kisses not its own.

The trumpet-mouths of red convolvulus

So dear to maidens, creamy meadow-sweet

Whiter than Juno's throat and odorous

As all Arabia, hyacinths the feet

Of Huntress Dian would be loth to mar

For any dappled fawn, – pluck these, and those fond flowers which are

Fairer than what Queen Venus trod upon Beneath the pines of Ida,
eucharis,

That morning star which does not dread the sun,

And budding marjoram which but to kiss
Would sweeten Cytheraea's lips and make
Adonis jealous, – these for thy head, – and for thy girdle take
Yon curving spray of purple clematis
Whose gorgeous dye outflames the Tyrian King,
And fox-gloves with their nodding chalices,
But that one narciss which the startled Spring
Let from her kirtle fall when first she heard
In her own woods the wild tempestuous song of summer's bird,
Ah! leave it for a subtle memory
Of those sweet tremulous days of rain and sun,
When April laughed between her tears to see
The early primrose with shy footsteps run
From the gnarled oak-tree roots till all the wold,
Spite of its brown and trampled leaves, grew bright with shimmering
gold.
Nay, pluck it too, it is not half so sweet

As thou thyself, my soul's idolatry!

And when thou art a-wearied at thy feet

Shall oxlips weave their brightest tapestry,

For thee the woodbine shall forget its pride

And veil its tangled whorls, and thou shalt walk on daisies pied.

And I will cut a reed by yonder spring
And make the wood-gods
jealous, and old

Pan Wonder what young intruder dares to sing

In these still haunts, where never foot of man

Should tread at evening, lest he chance to spy

The marble limbs of Artemis and all her company.

And I will tell thee why the jacinth wears

Such dread embroidery of dolorous moan,

And why the hapless nightingale forbears

To sing her song at noon, but weeps alone

When the fleet swallow sleeps, and rich men feast,

And why the laurel trembles when she sees the lightning east.

And I will sing how sad Proserpina

Unto a grave and gloomy Lord was wed,

And lure the silver-breasted Helena

Back from the lotus meadows of the dead,

So shalt thou see that awful loveliness

For which two mighty Hosts met fearfully in war's abyss!

And then I'll pipe to thee that Grecian tale

How Cynthia loves the lad Endymion,

And hidden in a grey and misty veil

Hies to the cliffs of Latmos once the Sun

Leaps from his ocean bed in fruitless chase

Of those pale flying feet which fade away in his embrace.

And if my flute can breathe sweet melody,

We may behold Her face who long ago

Dwelt among men by the Aegean sea,

And whose sad house with pillaged portico
And friezeless wall and
columns toppled down

Looms o'er the ruins of that fair and violet-cinctured town.

Spirit of Beauty! tarry still a-while, They are not dead, thine ancient
votaries,

Some few there are to whom thy radiant smile

Is better than a thousand victories,

Though all the nobly slain of Waterloo

Rise up in wrath against them! tarry still, there are a few.

Who for thy sake would give their manlihood

And consecrate their being, I at least

Have done so, made thy lips my daily food,

And in thy temples found a goodlier feast

Than this starved age can give me, spite of all

Its new-found creeds so sceptical and so dogmatical.

Here not Cephissos, not Ilissos flows,

The woods of white Colonos are not here,

On our bleak hills the olive never blows,

No simple priest conducts his lowing steer

Up the steep marble way, nor through the town

Do laughing maidens bear to thee the crocus-flowered gown.

Yet tarry! for the boy who loved thee best, Whose very name should
be a memory

To make thee linger, sleeps in silent rest

Beneath the Roman walls, and melody

Still mourns her sweetest lyre, none can play

The lute of Adonais, with his lips Song passed away.

Nay, when Keats died the Muses still had left One silver voice to sing
his threnody,

But ah! too soon of it we were bereft When on that riven night and
stormy sea

Panthea claimed her singer as her own,

And slew the mouth that praised her; since which time we walk alone,

Save for that fiery heart, that morning star

Of re-arisen England, whose clear eye

Saw from our tottering throne and waste of war

The grand Greek limbs of young Democracy

Rise mightily like Hesperus and bring

The great Republic! him at least thy love hath taught to sing,

And he hath been with thee at Thessaly,

And seen white Atalanta fleet of foot

In passionless and fierce virginity

Hunting the tuskèd boar, his honied lute

Hath pierced the cavern of the hollow hill,

And Venus laughs to know one knee will bow before her still.

And he hath kissed the lips of Proserpine,

And sung the Galilaeen's requiem,

That wounded forehead dashed with blood and wine

He hath discrowned, the Ancient Gods in him

Have found their last, most ardent worshipper,

And the new Sign grows grey and dim before its conqueror.

Spirit of Beauty! tarry with us still, It is not quenched the torch of
poesy,

The star that shook above the Eastern hill

Holds unassailed its argent armoury From all the gathering gloom
and fretful fight – O tarry with us still! for through the long and

common night,

Morris, our sweet and simple Chaucer's child,

Dear heritor of Spenser's tuneful reed,

With soft and sylvan pipe has oft beguiled

The weary soul of man in troublous need,

And from the far and flowerless fields of ice

Has brought fair flowers meet to make an earthly paradise.

We know them all, Gudrun the strong men's bride,

Aslaug and Olafson we know them all,

How giant Grettir fought and Sigurd died,

And what enchantment held the king in thrall

When lonely Brynhild wrestled with the powers

That war against all passion, ah! how oft through summer hours,

Long listless summer hours when the noon

Being enamoured of a damask rose

Forgets to journey westward, till the moon

The pale usurper of its tribute grows

From a thin sickle to a silver shield
And chides its loitering car – how oft, in some cool grassy field
Far from the cricket-ground and noisy eight,
 At Bagley, where the rustling bluebells come
Almost before the blackbird finds a mate
 And overstay the swallow, and the hum Of many murmuring bees
 flits through the leaves,
Have I lain poring on the dreamy tales his fancy weaves,
And through their unreal woes and mimic pain
 Wept for myself, and so was purified,
And in their simple mirth grew glad again;
 For as I sailed upon that pictured tide
The strength and splendour of the storm was mine
Without the storm's red ruin, for the singer is divine,
The little laugh of water falling down
 Is not so musical, the clammy gold
Close hoarded in the tiny waxen town

Has less of sweetness in it, and the old
Half-withered reeds that waved in Arcady
Touched by his lips break forth again to fresher harmony.

Spirit of Beauty tarry yet a-while!

Although the cheating merchants of the mart
With iron roads profane our lovely isle,

And break on whirling wheels the limbs of Art,
Ay! though the crowded factories beget The blind-worm Ignorance
that slays the soul, O tarry yet!

For One at least there is, – He bears his name

From Dante and the seraph Gabriel, –
Whose double laurels burn with deathless flame

To light thine altar; He too loves thee well,
Who saw old Merlin lured in Vivien's snare,
And the white feet of angels coming down the golden stair,

Loves thee so well, that all the World for him A gorgeous-coloured
vestiture must wear,

And Sorrow take a purple diadem,

Or else be no more Sorrow, and Despair
Gild its own thorns, and Pain, like Adon, be
Even in anguish beautiful; – such is the empery
Which Painters hold, and such the heritage
This gentle solemn Spirit doth possess,
Being a better mirror of his age
In all his pity, love, and weariness,
Than those who can but copy common things,
And leave the Soul unpainted with its mighty questionings.
But they are few, and all romance has flown,
And men can prophesy about the sun,
And lecture on his arrows – how, alone,
Through a waste void the soulless atoms run,
How from each tree its weeping nymph has fled,
And that no more 'mid English reeds a Naiad shows her head.
Methinks these new Actaeons boast too soon
That they have spied on beauty; what if we

Have analysed the rainbow, robbed the moon

Of her most ancient, chastest mystery,

Shall I, the last Endymion, lose all hope

Because rude eyes peer at my mistress through a telescope!

What profit if this scientific age

Burst through our gates with all its retinue

Of modern miracles! Can it assuage One lover's breaking heart? what
can it do To make one life more beautiful, one day

More god-like in its period? but now the Age of Clay

Returns in horrid cycle, and the earth

Hath borne again a noisy progeny

Of ignorant Titans, whose ungodly birth

Hurls them against the august hierarchy

Which sat upon Olympus, to the Dust

They have appealed, and to that barren arbiter they must

Repair for judgment, let them, if they can,

From Natural Warfare and insensate Chance,

Create the new Ideal rule for man!

 Methinks that was not my inheritance;

For I was nurtured otherwise, my soul

Passes from higher heights of life to a more supreme goal.

Lo! while we spake the earth did turn away Her visage from the God,
 and Hecate's boat

Rose silver-laden, till the jealous day

 Blew all its torches out: I did not note

The waning hours, to young Endymions

Time's palsied fingers count in vain his rosary of suns! –

Mark how the yellow iris wearily

 Leans back its throat, as though it would be kissed

By its false chamberer, the dragon-fly,

 Who, like a blue vein on a girl's white wrist,

Sleeps on that snowy primrose of the night,

Which 'gins to flush with crimson shame, and die beneath the light.

Come let us go, against the pallid shield Of the wan sky the almond
 blossoms gleam,

The corn-crake nested in the unmown field

Answers its mate, across the misty stream

On fitful wing the startled curlews fly,

And in his sedgy bed the lark, for joy that Day is nigh,

Scatters the pearlèd dew from off the grass,

In tremulous ecstasy to greet the sun,

Who soon in gilded panoply will pass

Forth from yon orange-curtained pavilion

Hung in the burning east, see, the red rim

O'ertops the expectant hills! it is the God! for love of him

Already the shrill lark is out of sight,

Flooding with waves of song this silent dell, –

Ah! there is something more in that bird's flight Than could be tested
in a crucible! – But the air freshens, let us go, – why soon

The woodmen will be here; how we have lived this night of June!

ROSA MYSTICA

Requiescat

Tread lightly, she is near

Under the snow,

Speak gently, she can hear

The daisies grow.

All her bright golden hair

Tarnished with rust,

She that was young and fair

Fallen to dust.

Lily-like, white as snow,

She hardly knew

She was a woman, so

Sweetly she grew.

Coffin-board, heavy stone,

Lie on her breast,

I vex my heart alone

She is at rest.

Peace, Peace, she cannot hear

Lyre or sonnet,

All my life's buried here,

Heap earth upon it.

AVIGNON

SONNET ON APPROACHING ITALY

I reached the Alps: the soul within me burned

Italia, my Italia, at thy name:

And when from out the mountain's heart I came

And saw the land for which my life had yearned,

I laughed as one who some great prize had earned: And musing on the
story of thy fame

I watched the day, till marked with wounds of flame The turquoise
sky to burnished gold was turned,

The pine-trees waved as waves a woman's hair,

And in the orchards every twining spray

Was breaking into flakes of blossoming foam:

But when I knew that far away at Rome

In evil bonds a second Peter lay,

I wept to see the land so very fair.

TURIN

SAN MINIATO

See, I have climbed the mountain side

Up to this holy house of God,

Where once that Angel-Painter trod

Who saw the heavens opened wide,

And throned upon the crescent moon

The Virginal white Queen of Grace, –

Mary! could I but see thy face Death could not come at all too soon.

O crowned by God with thorns and pain!

Mother of Christ! O mystic wife!

My heart is weary of this life

And over-sad to sing again.

O crowned by God with love and flame!

O crowned by Christ the Holy One!

O listen ere the searching sun

Show to the world my sin and shame.

AVE MARIA PLENA GRATIA

Was this His coming! I had hoped to see A scene of wondrous glory,
as was told

Of some great God who in a rain of gold

Broke open bars and fell on Danaé:

Or a dread vision as when Semele

Sickening for love and unappeased desire

Prayed to see God's clear body, and the fire

Caught her white limbs and slew her utterly:

With such glad dreams I sought this holy place,

And now with wondering eyes and heart I stand

Before this supreme mystery of Love:

A kneeling girl with passionless pale face,

An angel with a lily in his hand,

And over both with outstretched wings the Dove.

FLORENCE

ITALIA

Italia! thou art fallen, though with sheen Of battle-spears thy

clamorous armies stride

From the north Alps to the Sicilian tide!

Ay! fallen, though the nations hail thee Queen Because rich gold in
every town is seen,

And on thy sapphire lake in tossing pride

Of wind-filled vans thy myriad galleys ride

Beneath one flag of red and white and green.

O Fair and Strong! O Strong and Fair in vain!

Look southward where Rome's desecrated town

Lies mourning for her God-anointed King!

Look heaven-ward! shall God allow this thing?

Nay! but some flame-girt Raphael shall come down, And smite the
Spoiler with the sword of pain.

VENICE

SONNET WRITTEN IN HOLY WEEK AT GENOA

I wandered in Scoglietto's green retreat,

The oranges on each o'erhanging spray

Burned as bright lamps of gold to shame the day; Some startled bird
with fluttering wings and fleet Made snow of all the blossoms,
at my feet

Like silver moons the pale narcissi lay:

And the curved waves that streaked the sapphire bay
Laughed i' the sun, and life seemed very sweet.

Outside the young boy-priest passed singing clear, 'Jesus the Son of
Mary has been slain,

O come and fill his sepulchre with flowers.'

Ah, God! Ah, God! those dear Hellenic hours
Had drowned all memory of Thy bitter pain,

The Cross, the Crown, the Soldiers, and the Spear.

ROME UNVISITED

I

The corn has turned from grey to red,

Since first my spirit wandered forth

From the drear cities of the north,

And to Italia's mountains fled.

And here I set my face towards home,

For all my pilgrimage is done,

Although, methinks, yon blood-red sun

Marshals the way to Holy Rome.

O Blessed Lady, who dost hold
Upon the seven hills thy reign!
O Mother without blot or stain,
Crowned with bright crowns of triple gold!

O Roma, Roma, at thy feet
I lay this barren gift of song!
For, ah! the way is steep and long That leads unto thy sacred street.

II

And yet what joy it were for me
To turn my feet unto the south,
And journeying towards the Tiber mouth
To kneel again at Fiesole!
And wandering through the tangled pines
That break the gold of Arno's stream,
To see the purple mist and gleam
Of morning on the Apennines.
By many a vineyard-hidden home,

Orchard, and olive-garden grey,
Till from the drear Campagna's way
The seven hills bear up the dome!

III

A pilgrim from the northern seas –
What joy for me to seek alone
The wondrous Temple, and the throne
Of Him who holds the awful keys!

When, bright with purple and with gold,
Come priest and holy Cardinal,
And borne above the heads of all
The gentle Shepherd of the Fold.

O joy to see before I die
The only God-anointed King,
And hear the silver trumpets ring
A triumph as He passes by!

Or at the altar of the shrine Holds high the mystic sacrifice,

And shows a God to human eyes
Beneath the veil of bread and wine.

IV

For lo, what changes time can bring!

The cycles of revolving years

May free my heart from all its fears, –

And teach my lips a song to sing.

Before yon field of trembling gold

Is garnered into dusty sheaves,

Or ere the autumn's scarlet leaves

Flutter as birds adown the wold,

I may have run the glorious race,

And caught the torch while yet aflame,

And called upon the holy name

Of Him who now doth hide His face.

URBS SACRA AETERNA

Rome! what a scroll of History thine has been
In the first days thy
sword republican

Ruled the whole world for many an age's span:

Then of thy peoples thou wert crownèd Queen,

Till in thy streets the bearded Goth was seen;

And now upon thy walls the breezes fan

(Ah, city crowned by God, discrowned by man!)

The hated flag of red and white and green.

When was thy glory! when in search for power Thine eagles flew to
greet the double sun,

And all the nations trembled at thy rod?

Nay, but thy glory tarried for this hour.

When pilgrims kneel before the Holy One.

The prisoned shepherd of the Church of God.

Sonnet on Hearing the Dies Irae Sung in the Sistine Chapel

Nay, Lord, not thus! white lilies in the spring, Sad olive-groves, or
silver-breasted dove,

Teach me more clearly of Thy life and love

Than terrors of red flame and thundering.

The empurpled vines dear memories of Thee bring: A bird at evening
flying to its nest,

Tells me of One who had no place of rest:

I think it is of Thee the sparrows sing.

Come rather on some autumn afternoon,

When red and brown are burnished on the leaves, And the fields
echo to the gleaner's song,

Come when the splendid fulness of the moon

Looks down upon the rows of golden sheaves,

And reap Thy harvest: we have waited long.

EASTER DAY

The silver trumpets rang across the Dome:

The people knelt upon the ground with awe:

And borne upon the necks of men I saw,

Like some great God, the Holy Lord of Rome.

Priest-like, he wore a robe more white than foam, And, king-like,
swathed himself in royal red,

Three crowns of gold rose high upon his head:

In splendour and in light the Pope passed home.

My heart stole back across wide wastes of years To One who
wandered by a lonely sea,

And sought in vain for any place of rest:

‘Foxes have holes, and every bird its nest,

I, only I, must wander wearily,

And bruise my feet, and drink wine salt with tears.’

E TENEBRIS

Come down, O Christ, and help me! reach thy hand, For I am
drowning in a stormier sea

Than Simon on thy lake of Galilee:

The wine of life is spilt upon the sand,

My heart is as some famine-murdered land,

Whence all good things have perished utterly,

And well I know my soul in Hell must lie

If I this night before God’s throne should stand.

‘He sleeps perchance, or rideth to the chase,

Like Baal, when his prophets howled that name

From morn to noon on Carmel’s smitten height.’

Nay, peace, I shall behold before the night,

The feet of brass, the robe more white than flame, The wounded
hands, the weary human face.

VITA NUOVA

I stood by the unvintageable sea

Till the wet waves drenched face and hair with spray, The long red
fires of the dying day

Burned in the west; the wind piped drearily;

And to the land the clamorous gulls did flee:

‘Alas!’ I cried, ‘my life is full of pain,

And who can garner fruit or golden grain,

From these waste fields which travail ceaselessly!’

My nets gaped wide with many a break and flaw

Nathless I threw them as my final cast

Into the sea, and waited for the end.

When lo! a sudden glory! and I saw The argent splendour of white
limbs ascend,

And in that joy forgot my tortured past.

MADONNA MIA

A lily-girl, not made for this world’s pain,

With brown, soft hair close braided by her ears, And longing eyes
half veiled by slumberous tears Like bluest water seen through
mists of rain:

Pale cheeks whereon no love hath left its stain, Red underlip drawn in
for fear of love,

And white throat, whiter than the silvered dove, Through whose
wan marble creeps one purple vein.

Yet, though my lips shall praise her without cease, Even to kiss her
feet I am not bold,

Being o'ershadowed by the wings of awe.

Like Dante, when he stood with Beatrice Beneath the flaming Lion's
breast, and saw

The seventh Crystal, and the Stair of Gold.

THE NEW HELEN

Where hast thou been since round the walls of Troy The sons of God
fought in that great emprise?

Why dost thou walk our common earth again?

Hast thou forgotten that impassioned boy,

His purple galley, and his Tyrian men,

And treacherous Aphrodite's mocking eyes?

For surely it was thou, who, like a star

Hung in the silver silence of the night,

Didst lure the Old World's chivalry and might

Into the clamorous crimson waves of war!

Or didst thou rule the fire-laden moon?

In amorous Sidon was thy temple built

Over the light and laughter of the sea?

Where, behind lattice scarlet-wrought and gilt, Some brown-limbed
girl did weave thee tapestry, All through the waste and wearied
hours of noon; Till her wan cheek with flame of passion
burned, And she rose up the sea-washed lips to kiss

Of some glad Cyprian sailor, safe returned

From Calpé and the cliffs of Herakles!

No! thou art Helen, and none other one!

It was for thee that young Sarpedôn died,

And Memnôn's manhood was untimely spent;

It was for thee gold-crested Hector tried

With Thetis' child that evil race to run, In the last year of thy
beleaguerment;

Ay! even now the glory of thy fame Burns in those fields of trampled
asphodel,

Where the high lords whom Ilion knew so well

Clash ghostly shields, and call upon thy name.

Where hast thou been? in that enchanted land Whose slumbering vales
forlorn Calypso knew,

Where never mower rose to greet the day

But all unswathed the trammelling grasses grew, And the sad
shepherd saw the tall corn stand

Till summer's red had changed to withered grey?

Didst thou lie there by some Lethaeian stream

Deep brooding on thine ancient memory,

The crash of broken spears, the fiery gleam

From shivered helm, the Grecian battle-cry.

Nay, thou wert hidden in that hollow hill

With one who is forgotten utterly,

That discrowned Queen men call the Erycine;

Hidden away that never mightst thou see

The face of Her, before whose mouldering shrine To-day at Rome
the silent nations kneel;

Who gat from Love no joyous gladdening,

But only Love's intolerable pain,

Only a sword to pierce her heart in twain,
Only the bitterness of child-bearing.

The lotos-leaves which heal the wounds of Death Lie in thy hand; O,
be thou kind to me,

While yet I know the summer of my days;
For hardly can my tremulous lips draw breath
To fill the silver trumpet with thy praise, So bowed am I before
thy mystery;

So bowed and broken on Love's terrible wheel,
That I have lost all hope and heart to sing,
Yet care I not what ruin time may bring
If in thy temple thou wilt let me kneel.

Alas, alas, thou wilt not tarry here,
But, like that bird, the servant of the sun,
Who flies before the northwind and the night,
So wilt thou fly our evil land and drear,
Back to the tower of thine old delight,
And the red lips of young Euphorion;

Nor shall I ever see thy face again,

But in this poisonous garden must I stay,

Crowning my brows with the thorn-crown of pain, Till all my loveless
life shall pass away.

O Helen! Helen! Helen! yet awhile, Yet for a little while, O, tarry here,

Till the dawn cometh and the shadows flee!

For in the gladsome sunlight of thy smile

Of heaven or hell I have no thought or fear,

Seeing I know no other god but thee:

No other god save him, before whose feet

In nets of gold the tired planets move,

The incarnate spirit of spiritual love

Who in thy body holds his joyous seat.

Thou wert not born as common women are!

But, girt with silver splendour of the foam,

Didst from the depths of sapphire seas arise!

And at thy coming some immortal star,

Bearded with flame, blazed in the Eastern skies, And waked the

shepherds on thine island-home.

Thou shalt not die: no asps of Egypt creep

Close at thy heels to taint the delicate air;

No sullen-blooming poppies stain thy hair,

Those scarlet heralds of eternal sleep.

Lily of love, pure and inviolate!

Tower of ivory! red rose of fire!

Thou hast come down our darkness to illumine:

For we, close-caught in the wide nets of Fate,

Wearied with waiting for the World's Desire,

Aimlessly wandered in the house of gloom,

Aimlessly sought some slumberous anodyne

For wasted lives, for lingering wretchedness,

Till we beheld thy re-arisen shrine,

And the white glory of thy loveliness.

THE BURDEN OF ITYS

This English Thames is holier far than Rome,

Those harebells like a sudden flush of sea

Breaking across the woodland, with the foam

Of meadow-sweet and white anemone

To fleck their blue waves, – God is likelier there,

Than hidden in that crystal-hearted star the pale monks bear!

Those violet-gleaming butterflies that take

Yon creamy lily for their pavilion

Are monsignores, and where the rushes shake

A lazy pike lies basking in the sun

His eyes half-shut, – He is some mitred old

Bishop *in partibus*! look at those gaudy scales all green and gold.

The wind the restless prisoner of the trees

Does well for Palaestrina, one would say

The mighty master's hands were on the keys

Of the Maria organ, which they play

When early on some sapphire Easter morn

In a high litter red as blood or sin the Pope is borne

From his dark House out to the Balcony

Above the bronze gates and the crowded square,

Whose very fountains seem for ecstasy

To toss their silver lances in the air,

And stretching out weak hands to East and West In vain sends peace to
peaceless lands, to restless nations rest.

Is not yon lingering orange afterglow

That stays to vex the moon more fair than all

Rome's lordliest pageants! strange, a year ago I knelt before some
crimson Cardinal

Who bare the Host across the Esquiline,

And now – those common poppies in the wheat seem twice as fine.

The blue-green beanfields yonder, tremulous

With the last shower, sweeter perfume bring

Through this cool evening than the odorous

Flame-jewelled censers the young deacons swing,

When the grey priest unlocks the curtained shrine,

And makes God's body from the common fruit of corn and vine.

Poor Fra Giovanni bawling at the mass

Were out of tune now, for a small brown bird
Sings overhead, and through the long cool grass

I see that throbbing throat which once I heard
On starlit hills of flower-starred Arcady,
Once where the white and crescent sand of Salamis meets sea.

Sweet is the swallow twittering on the eaves

At daybreak, when the mower whets his scythe,
And stock-doves murmur, and the milkmaid leaves

Her little lonely bed, and carols blithe
To see the heavy-lowing cattle wait Stretching their huge and dripping
mouths across the farmyard gate.

And sweet the hops upon the Kentish leas,

And sweet the wind that lifts the new-mown hay,
And sweet the fretful swarms of grumbling bees

That round and round the linden blossoms play;

And sweet the heifer breathing in the stall,
And the green bursting figs that hang upon the red-brick wall.

And sweet to hear the cuckoo mock the spring
 While the last violet loiters by the well,
And sweet to hear the shepherd Daphnis sing
 The song of Linus through a sunny dell
Of warm Arcadia where the corn is gold
And the slight lithe-limbed reapers dance about the wattled fold.

And sweet with young Lycoris to recline
 In some Illyrian valley far away,
Where canopied on herbs amaracine
 We too might waste the summer-tranced day
Matching our reeds in sportive rivalry,
While far beneath us frets the troubled purple of the sea.

But sweeter far if silver-sandalled foot
 Of some long-hidden God should ever tread
The Nuneham meadows, if with reeded flute

Pressed to his lips some Faun might raise his head

By the green water-flags, ah! sweet indeed To see the heavenly
herdsman call his white-fleeced flock to feed.

Then sing to me thou tuneful chorister,

Though what thou sing'st be thine own requiem!

Tell me thy tale thou hapless chronicler

Of thine own tragedies! do not contemn These unfamiliar haunts,
this English field,

For many a lovely coronal our northern isle can yield,

Which Grecian meadows know not, many a rose,

Which all day long in vales Aeolian

A lad might seek in vain for, overgrows

Our hedges like a wanton courtesan

Unthrifty of her beauty, lilies too

Ilissus never mirrored star our streams, and cockles blue

Dot the green wheat which, though they are the signs

For swallows going south, would never spread

Their azure tents between the Attic vines;

Even that little weed of ragged red,
Which bids the robin pipe, in Arcady
Would be a trespasser, and many an unsung elegy
Sleeps in the reeds that fringe our winding Thames
Which to awake were sweeter ravishment
Than ever Syrinx wept for, diadems
Of brown bee-studded orchids which were meant
For Cytheraea's brows are hidden here
Unknown to Cytheraea, and by yonder pasturing steer
There is a tiny yellow daffodil, The butterfly can see it from afar,
Although one summer evening's dew could fill
Its little cup twice over ere the star
Had called the lazy shepherd to his fold
And be no prodigal, each leaf is flecked with spotted gold
As if Jove's gorgeous leman Danaé
Hot from his gilded arms had stooped to kiss
The trembling petals, or young Mercury

Low-flying to the dusky ford of Dis
Had with one feather of his pinions
Just brushed them! – the slight stem which bears the burden of its suns
Is hardly thicker than the gossamer,
Or poor Arachne's silver tapestry, –
Men say it bloomed upon the sepulchre
Of One I sometime worshipped, but to me
It seems to bring diviner memories
Of faun-loved Heliconian glades and blue nymph-haunted seas,
Of an untrodden vale at Tempe where
On the clear river's marge Narcissus lies,
The tangle of the forest in his hair,
The silence of the woodland in his eyes,
Wooing that drifting imagery which is
No sooner kissed than broken, memories of Salmacis
Who is not boy or girl and yet is both,
Fed by two fires and unsatisfied

Through their excess, each passion being loth

For love's own sake to leave the other's side Yet killing love by
staying, memories

Of Oreads peeping through the leaves of silent moonlit trees,

Of lonely Ariadne on the wharf

At Naxos, when she saw the treacherous crew

Far out at sea, and waved her crimson scarf

And called false Theseus back again nor knew

That Dionysos on an amber pard

Was close behind her, memories of what Maeonia's bard

With sightless eyes beheld, the wall of Troy,

Queen Helen lying in the carven room,

And at her side an amorous red-lipped boy

Trimming with dainty hand his helmet's plume,

And far away the moil, the shout, the groan,

As Hector shielded off the spear and Ajax hurled the stone;

Of wingèd Perseus with his flawless sword

Cleaving the snaky tresses of the witch,
And all those tales imperishably stored
In little Grecian urns, freightage more rich
Than any gaudy galleon of Spain
Bare from the Indies ever! these at least bring back again,
For well I know they are not dead at all,
The ancient Gods of Grecian poesy,
They are asleep, and when they hear thee call
Will wake and think 't is very Thessaly,
This Thames the Daulian waters, this cool glade
The yellow-irised mead where once young Itys laughed and played.
If it was thou dear jasmine-cradled bird Who from the leafy stillness of
thy throne
Sang to the wondrous boy, until he heard
The horn of Atalanta faintly blown
Across the Cumner hills, and wandering
Through Bagley wood at evening found the Attic poets' spring, –

Ah! tiny sober-suited advocate That pleadest for the moon against the
day!

If thou didst make the shepherd seek his mate

On that sweet questing, when Proserpina

Forgot it was not Sicily and leant

Across the mossy Sandford stile in ravished wonderment, –

Light-winged and bright-eyed miracle of the wood!

If ever thou didst soothe with melody

One of that little clan, that brotherhood

Which loved the morning-star of Tuscany

More than the perfect sun of Raphael

And is immortal, sing to me! for I too love thee well,

Sing on! sing on! let the dull world grow young, Let elemental things
take form again,

And the old shapes of Beauty walk among

The simple garths and open crofts, as when

The son of Leto bare the willow rod,

And the soft sheep and shaggy goats followed the boyish God.

Sing on! sing on! and Bacchus will be here Astride upon his gorgeous
Indian throne,

And over whimpering tigers shake the spear

With yellow ivy crowned and gummy cone, While at his side the
wanton Bassarid

Will throw the lion by the mane and catch the mountain kid!

Sing on! and I will wear the leopard skin, And steal the moonèd wings
of Ashtaroth,

Upon whose icy chariot we could win

Cithaeron in an hour e'er the froth

Has overbrimmed the wine-vat or the Faun

Ceased from the treading! ay, before the flickering lamp of dawn

Has scared the hooting owlet to its nest,

And warned the bat to close its filmy vans,

Some Maenad girl with vine-leaves on her breast

Will filch their beechnuts from the sleeping Pans

So softly that the little nested thrush

Will never wake, and then with shrilly laugh and leap will rush

Down the green valley where the fallen dew

Lies thick beneath the elm and count her store,

Till the brown Satyrs in a jolly crew

Trample the loosestrife down along the shore,

And where their hornèd master sits in state

Bring strawberries and bloomy plums upon a wicker crate!

Sing on! and soon with passion-wearied face Through the cool leaves
Apollo's lad will come,

The Tyrian prince his bristled boar will chase

Adown the chestnut-copses all a-bloom, And ivory-limbed, grey-
eyed, with look of pride,

After yon velvet-coated deer the virgin maid will ride.

Sing on! and I the dying boy will see Stain with his purple blood the
waxen bell

That overweighs the jacinth, and to me

The wretched Cyprian her woe will tell,

And I will kiss her mouth and streaming eyes,

And lead her to the myrtle-hidden grove where Adon lies!

Cry out aloud on Itys! memory That foster-brother of remorse and pain

Drops poison in mine ear, – O to be free,

To burn one's old ships! and to launch again Into the white-plumed
battle of the waves

And fight old Proteus for the spoil of coral-flowered caves!

O for Medea with her poppied spell!

O for the secret of the Colchian shrine!

O for one leaf of that pale asphodel

Which binds the tired brows of Proserpine,

And sheds such wondrous dew at eve that she

Dreams of the fields of Enna, by the far Sicilian sea,

Where oft the golden-girdled bee she chased

From lily to lily on the level mead,

Ere yet her sombre Lord had bid her taste

The deadly fruit of that pomegranate seed,

Ere the black steeds had harried her away

Down to the faint and flowerless land, the sick and sunless day.

O for one midnight and as paramour The Venus of the little Melian
farm!

O that some antique statue for one hour

Might wake to passion, and that I could charm

The Dawn at Florence from its dumb despair

Mix with those mighty limbs and make that giant breast my lair!

Sing on! sing on! I would be drunk with life, Drunk with the trampled
vintage of my youth,

I would forget the wearying wasted strife,

The riven vale, the Gorgon eyes of Truth,

The prayerless vigil and the cry for prayer,

The barren gifts, the lifted arms, the dull insensate air!

Sing on! sing on! O feathered Niobe, Thou canst make sorrow
beautiful, and steal

From joy its sweetest music, not as we

Who by dead voiceless silence strive to heal

Our too untented wounds, and do but keep

Pain barricadoed in our hearts, and murder pillowed sleep.

Sing louder yet, why must I still behold

The wan white face of that deserted Christ,

Whose bleeding hands my hands did once enfold,

Whose smitten lips my lips so oft have kissed,

And now in mute and marble misery

Sits in his lone dishonoured House and weeps, perchance for me.

O memory cast down thy wreathèd shell!

Break thy hoarse lute O sad Melpomene!

O sorrow sorrow keep thy cloistered cell

Nor dim with tears this limpid Castaly!

Cease, cease, sad bird, thou dost the forest wrong

To vex its sylvan quiet with such wild impassioned song!

Cease, cease, or if 'tis anguish to be dumb

Take from the pastoral thrush her simpler air,

Whose jocund carelessness doth more become

This English woodland than thy keen despair,

Ah! cease and let the northwind bear thy lay Back to the rocky hills of

Thrace, the stormy Daulian bay.

A moment more, the startled leaves had stirred,

Endymion would have passed across the mead

Moonstruck with love, and this still Thames had heard

Pan splash and paddle groping for some reed

To lure from her blue cave that Naiad maid

Who for such piping listens half in joy and half afraid.

A moment more, the waking dove had cooed,

The silver daughter of the silver sea

With the fond gyves of clinging hands had wooed

Her wanton from the chase, and Dryope

Had thrust aside the branches of her oak

To see the lusty gold-haired lad rein in his snorting yoke.

A moment more, the trees had stooped to kiss

Pale Daphne just awakening from the swoon

Of tremulous laurels, lonely Salmacis

Had bared his barren beauty to the moon,

And through the vale with sad voluptuous smile

Antinous had wandered, the red lotus of the Nile

Down leaning from his black and clustering hair To shade those
slumberous eyelids' caverned bliss,

Or else on yonder grassy slope with bare

High-tuniced limbs unravished Artemis

Had bade her hounds give tongue, and roused the deer

From his green ambushade with shrill halloo and pricking spear.

Lie still, lie still, O passionate heart, lie still!

O Melancholy, fold thy raven wing!

O sobbing Dryad, from thy hollow hill

Come not with such desponded answering!

No more thou wingèd Marsyas complain,

Apollo loveth not to hear such troubled songs of pain!

It was a dream, the glade is tenantless,

No soft Ionian laughter moves the air,

The Thames creeps on in sluggish leadenness,

And from the copse left desolate and bare

Fled is young Bacchus with his revelry,

Yet still from Nuneham wood there comes that thrilling melody

So sad, that one might think a human heart

 Brake in each separate note, a quality

Which music sometimes has, being the Art

 Which is most nigh to tears and memory,

Poor mourning Philomel, what dost thou fear?

Thy sister doth not haunt these fields, Pandion is not here,

Here is no cruel Lord with murderous blade,

 No woven web of bloody heraldries,

But mossy dells for roving comrades made,

 Warm valleys where the tired student lies With half-shut book, and
 many a winding walk

Where rustic lovers stray at eve in happy simple talk.

The harmless rabbit gambols with its young

 Across the trampled towing-path, where late

A troop of laughing boys in jostling throng

Cheered with their noisy cries the racing eight;
The gossamer, with ravelled silver threads,
Works at its little loom, and from the dusky red-eaved sheds
Of the lone Farm a flickering light shines out
Where the swinked shepherd drives his bleating flock
Back to their wattled sheep-cotes, a faint shout
Comes from some Oxford boat at Sandford lock,
And starts the moor-hen from the sedgy rill,
And the dim lengthening shadows flit like swallows up the hill.
The heron passes homeward to the mere,
The blue mist creeps among the shivering trees,
Gold world by world the silent stars appear,
And like a blossom blown before the breeze,
A white moon drifts across the shimmering sky,
Mute arbitress of all thy sad, thy rapturous threnody.
She does not heed thee, wherefore should she heed,
She knows Endymion is not far away,

'Tis I, 'tis I, whose soul is as the reed

Which has no message of its own to play,

So pipes another's bidding, it is I,

Drifting with every wind on the wide sea of misery.

Ah! the brown bird has ceased: one exquisite trill
About the sombre
woodland seems to cling,

Dying in music, else the air is still,

So still that one might hear the bat's small wing

Wander and wheel above the pines, or tell

Each tiny dewdrop dripping from the blue-bell's brimming cell.

And far away across the lengthening wold,

Across the willowy flats and thickets brown,

Magdalen's tall tower tipped with tremulous gold

Marks the long High Street of the little town,

And warns me to return; I must not wait,

Hark! 'tis the curfew booming from the bell at Christ Church gate.

IMPRESSION DU MATIN

The Thames nocturne of blue and gold

Changed to a Harmony in grey:

A barge with ochre-coloured hay

Dropt from the wharf: and chill and cold

The yellow fog came creeping down

The bridges, till the houses' walls

Seemed changed to shadows, and St Paul's Loomed like a bubble
o'er the town.

Then suddenly arose the clang

Of waking life; the streets were stirred With country waggons: and a
bird

Flew to the glistening roofs and sang.

But one pale woman all alone,

The daylight kissing her wan hair,

Loitered beneath the gas lamps' flare, With lips of flame and heart
of stone.

MAGDALEN WALKS

The little white clouds are racing over the sky,

And the fields are strewn with the gold of the flower of March, The
daffodil breaks under foot, and the tasselled larch

Sways and swings as the thrush goes hurrying by.

A delicate odour is borne on the wings of the morning breeze,

The odour of leaves, and of grass, and of newly upturned earth, The
birds are singing for joy of the Spring's glad birth,

Hopping from branch to branch on the rocking trees.

And all the woods are alive with the murmur and sound of Spring, And
the rosebud breaks into pink on the climbing briar,

And the crocus-bed is a quivering moon of fire

Girdled round with the belt of an amethyst ring.

And the plane to the pine-tree is whispering some tale of love Till it
rustles with laughter and tosses its mantle of green, And the
gloom of the wych-elm's hollow is lit with the iris sheen Of the
burnished rainbow throat and the silver breast of a dove.

See! the lark starts up from his bed in the meadow there, Breaking the
gossamer threads and the nets of dew,

And flashing a-down the river, a flame of blue!

The kingfisher flies like an arrow, and wounds the air.

ATHANASIA

To that gaunt House of Art which lacks for naught Of all the great
things men have saved from Time, The withered body of a girl
was brought

Dead ere the world's glad youth had touched its prime And seen by
lonely Arabs lying hid

In the dim womb of some black pyramid.

But when they had unloosed the linen band

Which swathed the Egyptian's body, – lo! was found Closed in the
wasted hollow of her hand

A little seed, which sown in English ground

Did wondrous snow of starry blossoms bear,

And spread rich odours through our springtide air.

With such strange arts this flower did allure

That all forgotten was the asphodel,

And the brown bee, the lily's paramour,

Forsook the cup where he was wont to dwell,

For not a thing of earth it seemed to be,

But stolen from some heavenly Arcady.

In vain the sad narcissus, wan and white

At its own beauty, hung across the stream,

The purple dragon-fly had no delight

With its gold dust to make his wings a-gleam,

Ah! no delight the jasmine-bloom to kiss, Or brush the rain-pearls
from the eucharis.

For love of it the passionate nightingale Forgot the hills of Thrace, the
cruel king,

And the pale dove no longer cared to sail

Through the wet woods at time of blossoming,

But round this flower of Egypt sought to float,

With silvered wing and amethystine throat.

While the hot sun blazed in his tower of blue

A cooling wind crept from the land of snows,

And the warm south with tender tears of dew

Drenched its white leaves when Hesperos uprose

Amid those sea-green meadows of the sky

On which the scarlet bars of sunset lie.

But when o'er wastes of lily-haunted field

The tired birds had stayed their amorous tune,
And broad and glittering like an argent shield

High in the sapphire heavens hung the moon,
Did no strange dream or evil memory make
Each tremulous petal of its blossoms shake?

Ah no! to this bright flower a thousand years Seemed but the lingering
of a summer's day,

It never knew the tide of cankering fears

Which turn a boy's gold hair to withered grey,
The dread desire of death it never knew,
Or how all folk that they were born must rue.

For we to death with pipe and dancing go,

Nor would we pass the ivory gate again,
As some sad river wearied of its flow

Through the dull plains, the haunts of common men, Leaps lover-
like into the terrible sea!

And counts it gain to die so gloriously.

We mar our lordly strength in barren strife

With the world's legions led by clamorous care, It never feels decay
but gathers life

From the pure sunlight and the supreme air,

We live beneath Time's wasting sovereignty,

It is the child of all eternity.

SERENADE

(for music)

The western wind is blowing fair

Across the dark Aegean sea,

And at the secret marble stair

My Tyrian galley waits for thee.

Come down! the purple sail is spread, The watchman sleeps within the
town,

O leave thy lily-flowered bed,

O Lady mine come down, come down!

She will not come, I know her well,

Of lover's vows she hath no care,

And little good a man can tell

Of one so cruel and so fair.

True love is but a woman's toy,

They never know the lover's pain,

And I who loved as loves a boy

Must love in vain, must love in vain.

O noble pilot tell me true

Is that the sheen of golden hair?

Or is it but the tangled dew

That binds the passion-flowers there?

Good sailor come and tell me now

Is that my Lady's lily hand?

Or is it but the gleaming prow,

Or is it but the silver sand?

No! no! 'tis not the tangled dew, 'Tis not the silver-fretted sand,

It is my own dear Lady true

With golden hair and lily hand!

O noble pilot steer for Troy,

Good sailor ply the labouring oar,

This is the Queen of life and joy

Whom we must bear from Grecian shore!

The waning sky grows faint and blue,

It wants an hour still of day,

Aboard! aboard! my gallant crew, O Lady mine away! away!

O noble pilot steer for Troy,

Good sailor ply the labouring oar,

O loved as only loves a boy!

O loved for ever evermore!

ENDYMION

(for music)

The apple trees are hung with gold,

And birds are loud in Arcady,

The sheep lie bleating in the fold,

The wild goat runs across the wold,

But yesterday his love he told,

I know he will come back to me.

O rising moon! O Lady moon!

Be you my lover's sentinel,

You cannot choose but know him well,

For he is shod with purple shoon,

You cannot choose but know my love,

For he a shepherd's crook doth bear,

And he is soft as any dove,

And brown and curly is his hair.

The turtle now has ceased to call

Upon her crimson-footed groom,

The grey wolf prowls about the stall,

The lily's singing seneschal

Sleeps in the lily-bell, and all

The violet hills are lost in gloom.

O risen moon! O holy moon!

Stand on the top of Helice,

And if my own true love you see,

Ah! if you see the purple shoon, The hazel crook, the lad's brown hair,

The goat-skin wrapped about his arm, Tell him that I am waiting
where

The rushlight glimmers in the Farm.

The falling dew is cold and chill,

And no bird sings in Arcady,

The little fauns have left the hill,

Even the tired daffodil

Has closed its gilded doors, and still

My lover comes not back to me.

False moon! False moon! O waning moon!

Where is my own true lover gone,

Where are the lips vermilion,

The shepherd's crook, the purple shoon?

Why spread that silver pavilion,

Why wear that veil of drifting mist?

Ah! thou hast young Endymion, Thou hast the lips that should be
kissed!

LA BELLA DONNA DELLA MIA MENTE

My limbs are wasted with a flame,

My feet are sore with travelling,

For calling on my Lady's name

My lips have now forgot to sing.

O Linnet in the wild-rose brake

Strain for my Love thy melody,

O Lark sing louder for love's sake,

My gentle Lady passeth by.

She is too fair for any man

To see or hold his heart's delight,

Fairer than Queen or courtesan

Or moon-lit water in the night.

Her hair is bound with myrtle leaves, (Green leaves upon her golden
hair!) Green grasses through the yellow sheaves Of autumn corn
are not more fair.

Her little lips, more made to kiss

Than to cry bitterly for pain,

Are tremulous as brook-water is,

Or roses after evening rain.

Her neck is like white melilote

Flushing for pleasure of the sun,

The throbbing of the linnet's throat

Is not so sweet to look upon.

As a pomegranate, cut in twain, White-seeded, is her crimson mouth,

Her cheeks are as the fading stain

Where the peach reddens to the south.

O twining hands! O delicate White body made for love and pain!

O House of love! O desolate Pale flower beaten by the rain!

CHANSON

A ring of gold and a milk-white dove Are goodly gifts for thee,
And a hempen rope for your own love To hang upon a tree.

For you a House of Ivory

(Roses are white in the rose-bower)!

A narrow bed for me to lie

(White, O white, is the hemlock flower)!

Myrtle and jessamine for you

(O the red rose is fair to see)!

For me the cypress and the rue

(Fairest of all is rose-mary)!

For you three lovers of your hand (Green grass where a man lies
dead)!

For me three paces on the sand

(Plant lilies at my head)!

CHARMIDES

I

He was a Grecian lad, who coming home

With pulpy figs and wine from Sicily

Stood at his galley's prow, and let the foam

Blow through his crisp brown curls unconsciously,

And holding wave and wind in boy's despite

Peered from his dripping seat across the wet and stormy night

Till with the dawn he saw a burnished spear

Like a thin thread of gold against the sky,

And hoisted sail, and strained the creaking gear,

And bade the pilot head her lustily

Against the nor'west gale, and all day long

Held on his way, and marked the rowers' time with measured song,

And when the faint Corinthian hills were red

Dropped anchor in a little sandy bay,

And with fresh boughs of olive crowned his head,

And brushed from cheek and throat the hoary spray,

And washed his limbs with oil, and from the hold
Brought out his linen tunic and his sandals brazen-soled,
And a rich robe stained with the fishes' juice
Which of some swarthy trader he had bought
Upon the sunny quay at Syracuse,
And was with Tyrian broideries inwrought,
And by the questioning merchants made his way Up through the soft
and silver woods, and when the labouring day
Had spun its tangled web of crimson cloud,
Clomb the high hill, and with swift silent feet
Crept to the fane unnoticed by the crowd
Of busy priests, and from some dark retreat
Watched the young swains his frolic playmates bring
The firstling of their little flock, and the shy shepherd fling
The crackling salt upon the flame, or hang
His studded crook against the temple wall
To Her who keeps away the ravenous fang

Of the base wolf from homestead and from stall;
And then the clear-voiced maidens 'gan to sing,
And to the altar each man brought some goodly offering,
A beechen cup brimming with milky foam,
A fair cloth wrought with cunning imagery
Of hounds in chase, a waxen honey-comb
Dripping with oozy gold which scarce the bee
Had ceased from building, a black skin of oil
Meet for the wrestlers, a great boar the fierce and white-tusked spoil
Stolen from Artemis that jealous maid
To please Athena, and the dappled hide
Of a tall stag who in some mountain glade
Had met the shaft; and then the herald cried,
And from the pillared precinct one by one
Went the glad Greeks well pleased that they their simple vows had
done.
And the old priest put out the waning fires Save that one lamp whose
restless ruby glowed

For ever in the cell, and the shrill lyres

Came fainter on the wind, as down the road

In joyous dance these country folk did pass,

And with stout hands the warder closed the gates of polished brass.

Long time he lay and hardly dared to breathe,

And heard the cadenced drip of spilt-out wine,

And the rose-petals falling from the wreath

As the night breezes wandered through the shrine,

And seemed to be in some entranced swoon

Till through the open roof above the full and brimming moon

Flooded with sheeny waves the marble floor,

When from his nook upleapt the venturous lad,

And flinging wide the cedar-carven door

Beheld an awful image saffron-clad

And armed for battle! the gaunt Griffin glared From the huge helm,
and the long lance of wreck and ruin flared

Like a red rod of flame, stony and steeled

The Gorgon's head its leaden eyeballs rolled,
And writhed its snaky horrors through the shield,
And gaped aghast with bloodless lips and cold
In passion impotent, while with blind gaze
The blinking owl between the feet hooted in shrill amaze.
The lonely fisher as he trimmed his lamp Far out at sea off Sunium, or
cast
The net for tunnies, heard a brazen tramp
Of horses smite the waves, and a wild blast
Divide the folded curtains of the night,
And knelt upon the little poop, and prayed in holy fright.
And guilty lovers in their venery
Forgot a little while their stolen sweets,
Deeming they heard dread Dian's bitter cry;
And the grim watchmen on their lofty seats
Ran to their shields in haste precipitate,
Or strained black-bearded throats across the dusky parapet.

For round the temple rolled the clang of arms,
And the twelve Gods leapt up in marble fear,
And the air quaked with dissonant alarms
Till huge Poseidon shook his mighty spear,
And on the frieze the prancing horses neighed,
And the low tread of hurrying feet rang from the cavalcade.

Ready for death with parted lips he stood,
And well content at such a price to see
That calm wide brow, that terrible maidenhood,
The marvel of that pitiless chastity,
Ah! well content indeed, for never wight Since Troy's young shepherd
prince had seen so wonderful a sight.

Ready for death he stood, but lo! the air Grew silent, and the horses
ceased to neigh,
And off his brow he tossed the clustering hair,
And from his limbs he threw the cloak away,
For whom would not such love make desperate, And nigher came, and
touched her throat, and with hands violate

Undid the cuirass, and the crocus gown,

And bared the breasts of polished ivory,

Till from the waist the peplos falling down

Left visible the secret mystery

Which to no lover will Athena show,

The grand cool flanks, the crescent thighs, the bossy hills of snow.

Those who have never known a lover's sin

Let them not read my ditty, it will be

To their dull ears so musicless and thin

That they will have no joy of it, but ye

To whose wan cheeks now creeps the lingering smile,

Ye who have learned who Eros is, – O listen yet a-while.

A little space he let his greedy eyes

Rest on the burnished image, till mere sight

Half swooned for surfeit of such luxuries,

And then his lips in hungering delight

Fed on her lips, and round the towered neck

He flung his arms, nor cared at all his passion's will to check.

Never I ween did lover hold such tryst,

For all night long he murmured honeyed word,

And saw her sweet unravished limbs, and kissed

Her pale and argent body undisturbed,

And paddled with the polished throat, and pressed

His hot and beating heart upon her chill and icy breast.

It was as if Numidian javelins Pierced through and through his wild
and whirling brain,

And his nerves thrilled like throbbing violins

In exquisite pulsation, and the pain

Was such sweet anguish that he never drew

His lips from hers till overhead the lark of warning flew.

They who have never seen the daylight peer

Into a darkened room, and drawn the curtain,

And with dull eyes and wearied from some dear

And worshipped body risen, they for certain

Will never know of what I try to sing,
How long the last kiss was, how fond and late his lingering.

The moon was girdled with a crystal rim,

The sign which shipmen say is ominous

Of wrath in heaven, the wan stars were dim,

And the low lightening east was tremulous

With the faint fluttering wings of flying dawn,

Ere from the silent sombre shrine this lover had withdrawn.

Down the steep rock with hurried feet and fast

Clomb the brave lad, and reached the cave of Pan,

And heard the goat-foot snoring as he passed,

And leapt upon a grassy knoll and ran

Like a young fawn unto an olive wood

Which in a shady valley by the well-built city stood.

And sought a little stream, which well he knew,

For oftentimes with boyish careless shout

The green and crested grebe he would pursue,

Or snare in woven net the silver trout, And down amid the startled
reeds he lay

Panting in breathless sweet affright, and waited for the day.

On the green bank he lay, and let one hand

Dip in the cool dark eddies listlessly,

And soon the breath of morning came and fanned

His hot flushed cheeks, or lifted wantonly

The tangled curls from off his forehead, while

He on the running water gazed with strange and secret smile.

And soon the shepherd in rough woollen cloak

With his long crook undid the wattled cotes,

And from the stack a thin blue wreath of smoke

Curled through the air across the ripening oats,

And on the hill the yellow house-dog bayed

As through the crisp and rustling fern the heavy cattle strayed.

And when the light-foot mower went afield

Across the meadows laced with threaded dew,

And the sheep bleated on the misty weald,

And from its nest the waking corn-crake flew,

Some woodmen saw him lying by the stream

And marvelled much that any lad so beautiful could seem,

Nor deemed him born of mortals, and one said,

‘It is young Hylas, that false runaway

Who with a Naiad now would make his bed

Forgetting Herakles,’ but others, ‘Nay,

It is Narcissus, his own paramour, Those are the fond and crimson lips
no woman can allure.’

And when they nearer came a third one cried,

‘It is young Dionysos who has hid

His spear and fawnskin by the river side

Weary of hunting with the Bassarid,

And wise indeed were we away to fly

They live not long who on the gods immortal come to spy.’

So turned they back, and feared to look behind,

And told the timid swain how they had seen
Amid the reeds some woodland God reclined,
And no man dared to cross the open green,
And on that day no olive-tree was slain,
Nor rushes-cut, but all deserted was the fair domain.
Save when the neat-herd's lad, his empty pail
Well slung upon his back, with leap and bound
Raced on the other side, and stopped to hail
Hoping that he some comrade new had found,
And gat no answer, and then half afraid
Passed on his simple way, or down the still and silent glade
A little girl ran laughing from the farm
Not thinking of love's secret mysteries,
And when she saw the white and gleaming arm
And all his manlihood, with longing eyes
Whose passion mocked her sweet virginity
Watched him a-while, and then stole back sadly and wearily.

Far off he heard the city's hum and noise, And now and then the
shriller laughter where

The passionate purity of brown-limbed boys

Wrestled or raced in the clear healthful air,

And now and then a little tinkling bell

As the shorn wether led the sheep down to the mossy well.

Through the grey willows danced the fretful gnat,

The grasshopper chirped idly from the tree,

In sleek and oily coat the water-rat

Breasting the little ripples manfully

Made for the wild-duck's nest, from bough to bough

Hopped the shy finch, and the huge tortoise crept across the slough.

On the faint wind floated the silky seeds,

As the bright scythe swept through the waving grass,

The ousel-cock splashed circles in the reeds

And flecked with silver whorls the forest's glass,

Which scarce had caught again its imagery

Ere from its bed the dusky tench leapt at the dragon-fly.

But little care had he for any thing

 Though up and down the beech the squirrel played,

And from the copse the linnet 'gan to sing

 To her brown mate her sweetest serenade,

Ah! little care indeed, for he had seen The breasts of Pallas and the
 naked wonder of the Queen.

But when the herdsman called his straggling goats

 With whistling pipe across the rocky road,

And the shard-beetle with its trumpet-notes

 Boomed through the darkening woods, and seemed to bode Of
 coming storm, and the belated crane

Passed homeward like a shadow, and the dull big drops of rain

Fell on the pattering fig-leaves, up he rose,

 And from the gloomy forest went his way

Past sombre homestead and wet orchard-close,

 And came at last unto a little quay,

And called his mates a-board, and took his seat

On the high poop, and pushed from land, and loosed the dripping

sheet,

And steered across the bay, and when nine suns

Passed down the long and laddered way of gold,

And nine pale moons had breathed their orisons

To the chaste stars their confessors, or told

Their dearest secret to the downy moth

That will not fly at noonday, through the foam and surging froth

Came a great owl with yellow sulphurous eyes

And lit upon the ship, whose timbers creaked

As though the lading of three argosies

Were in the hold, and flapped its wings, and shrieked,

And darkness straightway stole across the deep,

Sheathed was Orion's sword, dread Mars himself fled down the steep,

And the moon hid behind a tawny mask

Of drifting cloud, and from the ocean's marge

Rose the red plume, the huge and hornèd casque,

The seven-cubit spear, the brazen targe!

And clad in bright and burnished panoply
Athena strode across the stretch of sick and shivering sea!

To the dull sailors' sight her loosened locks
 Seemed like the jagged storm-rack, and her feet

Only the spume that floats on hidden rocks,
 And marking how the rising waters beat

Against the rolling ship, the pilot cried
To the young helmsman at the stern to luff to windward side.

But he, the over-bold adulterer,
 A dear profaner of great mysteries,

An ardent amorous idolater,
 When he beheld those grand relentless eyes

Laughed loud for joy, and crying out 'I come'
Leapt from the lofty poop into the chill and churning foam.

Then fell from the high heaven one bright star,
 One dancer left the circling galaxy,

And back to Athens on her clattering car

In all the pride of venged divinity
Pale Pallas swept with shrill and steely clank,
And a few gurgling bubbles rose where her boy lover sank.

And the mast shuddered as the gaunt owl flew
With mocking hoots after the wrathful Queen,
And the old pilot bade the trembling crew
Hoist the big sail, and told how he had seen
Close to the stern a dim and giant form,
And like a dipping swallow the stout ship dashed through the storm.

And no man dared to speak of Charmides Deeming that he some evil
thing had wrought,
And when they reached the strait Symplegades
They beached their galley on the shore, and sought
The toll-gate of the city hastily,
And in the market showed their brown and pictured pottery.

II

But some good Triton-god had ruth, and bare
The boy's drowned body back to Grecian land,

And mermaids combed his dank and dripping hair

And smoothed his brow, and loosed his clenching hand,

Some brought sweet spices from far Araby,

And others bade the halcyon sing her softest lullaby.

And when he neared his old Athenian home,

A mighty billow rose up suddenly

Upon whose oily back the clotted foam

Lay diapered in some strange fantasy,

And clasping him unto its glassy breast,

Swept landward, like a white-maned steed upon a venturous quest!

Now where Colonos leans unto the sea

There lies a long and level stretch of lawn,

The rabbit knows it, and the mountain bee

For it deserts Hymettus, and the Faun

Is not afraid, for never through the day

Comes a cry ruder than the shout of shepherd lads at play.

But often from the thorny labyrinth And tangled branches of the

circling wood

The stealthy hunter sees young Hyacinth

Hurling the polished disk, and draws his hood

Over his guilty gaze, and creeps away,

Nor dares to wind his horn, or – else at the first break of day

The Dryads come and throw the leathern ball

Along the reedy shore, and circumvent

Some goat-eared Pan to be their seneschal

For fear of bold Poseidon's ravishment,

And loose their girdles, with shy timorous eyes,

Lest from the surf his azure arms and purple beard should rise.

On this side and on that a rocky cave,

Hung with the yellow-bell'd laburnum, stands,

Smooth is the beach, save where some ebbing wave

Leaves its faint outline etched upon the sands,

As though it feared to be too soon forgot

By the green rush, its playfellow, – and yet, it is a spot

So small, that the inconstant butterfly

 Could steal the hoarded honey from each flower

Ere it was noon, and still not satisfy

 Its over-greedy love, – within an hour

A sailor boy, were he but rude enow

To land and pluck a garland for his galley's painted prow,

Would almost leave the little meadow bare,

 For it knows nothing of great pageantry,

Only a few narcissi here and there

 Stand separate in sweet austerity, Dotting the unmown grass with
 silver stars,

And here and there a daffodil waves tiny scimeters.

Hither the billow brought him, and was glad

 Of such dear servitude, and where the land

Was virgin of all waters laid the lad

 Upon the golden margent of the strand,

And like a lingering lover oft returned

To kiss those pallid limbs which once with intense fire burned,

Ere the wet seas had quenched that holocaust,
That self-fed flame, that passionate lustihead,
Ere grisly death with chill and nipping frost
Had withered up those lilies white and red
Which, while the boy would through the forest range,
Answered each other in a sweet antiphonal counter-change.
And when at dawn the woodnymphs, hand-in-hand,
Threaded the bosky dell, their satyr spied
The boy's pale body stretched upon the sand,
And feared Poseidon's treachery, and cried,
And like bright sunbeams flitting through a glade,
Each startled Dryad sought some safe and leafy ambushade.
Save one white girl, who deemed it would not be
So dread a thing to feel a sea-god's arms
Crushing her breasts in amorous tyranny,
And longed to listen to those subtle charms
Insidious lovers weave when they would win

Some fencèd fortress, and stole back again, nor thought it sin
To yield her treasure unto one so fair, And lay beside him, thirsty with
 love's drouth,
Called him soft names, played with his tangled hair,
 And with hot lips made havoc of his mouth
Afraid he might not wake, and then afraid
Lest he might wake too soon, fled back, and then, fond renegade,
Returned to fresh assault, and all day long
 Sat at his side, and laughed at her new toy,
And held his hand, and sang her sweetest song,
 Then frowned to see how froward was the boy
Who would not with her maidenhood entwine,
Nor knew that three days since his eyes had looked on Proserpine,
Nor knew what sacrilege his lips had done,
 But said, 'He will awake, I know him well,
He will awake at evening when the sun
 Hangs his red shield on Corinth's citadel,

This sleep is but a cruel treachery

To make me love him more, and in some cavern of the sea

Deeper than ever falls the fisher's line

 Already a huge Triton blows his horn,

And weaves a garland from the crystalline

 And drifting ocean-tendrils to adorn

The emerald pillars of our bridal bed,

For sphered in foaming silver, and with coral-crownèd head,

We two will sit upon a throne of pearl,

 And a blue wave will be our canopy,

And at our feet the water-snakes will curl

 In all their amethystine panoply Of diamonded mail, and we will
 mark

The mullets swimming by the mast of some storm-foundered bark,

Vermilion-finned with eyes of bossy gold

 Like flakes of crimson light, and the great deep

His glassy-ported chamber will unfold,

And we will see the painted dolphins sleep
Cradled by murmuring halcyons on the rocks
Where Proteus in quaint suit of green pastures his monstrous flocks.

And tremulous opal-hued anemones

Will wave their purple fringes where we tread
Upon the mirrored floor, and argosies

Of fishes flecked with tawny scales will thread
The drifting cordage of the shattered wreck,
And honey-coloured amber beads our twining limbs will deck.'

But when that baffled Lord of War the Sun

With gaudy pennon flying passed away
Into his brazen House, and one by one

The little yellow stars began to stray
Across the field of heaven, ah! then indeed She feared his lips upon
her lips would never care to feed,

And cried, 'Awake, already the pale moon

Washes the trees with silver, and the wave

Creeps grey and chilly up this sandy dune,

The croaking frogs are out, and from the cave

The night-jar shrieks, the fluttering bats repass, And the brown stoat
with hollow flanks creeps through the dusky grass.

Nay, though thou art a God, be not so coy,

For in yon stream there is a little reed

That often whispers how a lovely boy

Lay with her once upon a grassy mead,

Who when his cruel pleasure he had done

Spread wings of rustling gold and soared aloft into the sun.

Be not so coy, the laurel trembles still

With great Apollo's kisses, and the fir

Whose clustering sisters fringe the sea-ward hill

Hath many a tale of that bold ravisher

Whom men call Boreas, and I have seen

The mocking eyes of Hermes through the poplar's silvery sheen.

Even the jealous Naiads call me fair,

And every morn a young and ruddy swain
Wooes me with apples and with locks of hair,
And seeks to soothe my virginal disdain
By all the gifts the gentle woodnymphs love;
But yesterday he brought to me an iris-plumaged dove
With little crimson feet, which with its store
Of seven spotted eggs the cruel lad
Had stolen from the lofty sycamore
At day-break, when her amorous comrade had
Flown off in search of berried juniper
Which most they love; the fretful wasp, that earliest vintager
Of the blue grapes, hath not persistency So constant as this simple
shepherd-boy
For my poor lips, his joyous purity
And laughing sunny eyes might well decoy
A Dryad from her oath to Artemis;
For very beautiful is he, his mouth was made to kiss,

His argent forehead, like a rising moon

Over the dusky hills of meeting brows,

Is crescent shaped, the hot and Tyrian noon

Leads from the myrtle-grove no goodlier spouse

For Cytheraea, the first silky down

Fringes his blushing cheeks, and his young limbs are strong and
brown:

And he is rich, and fat and fleecy herds

Of bleating sheep upon his meadows lie,

And many an earthen bowl of yellow curds

Is in his homestead for the thievish fly

To swim and drown in, the pink clover mead

Keeps its sweet store for him, and he can pipe on oaten reed.

And yet I love him not, it was for thee

I kept my love, I knew that thou would'st come

To rid me of this pallid chastity;

Thou fairest flower of the flowerless foam

Of all the wide Aegean, brightest star

Of ocean's azure heavens where the mirrored planets are!

I knew that thou would'st come, for when at first

The dry wood burgeoned, and the sap of Spring

Swelled in my green and tender bark or burst

To myriad multitudinous blossoming Which mocked the midnight
with its mimic moons

That did not dread the dawn, and first the thrushes' rapturous tunes

Startled the squirrel from its granary,

And cuckoo flowers fringed the narrow lane,

Through my young leaves a sensuous ecstasy

Crept like new wine, and every mossy vein

Throbbled with the fitful pulse of amorous blood,

And the wild winds of passion shook my slim stem's maidenhood.

The trooping fawns at evening came and laid

Their cool black noses on my lowest boughs

And on my topmost branch the blackbird made

A little nest of grasses for his spouse,

And now and then a twittering wren would light
On a thin twig which hardly bare the weight of such delight.

I was the Attic shepherd's trysting place,

Beneath my shadow Amaryllis lay,

And round my trunk would laughing Daphnis chase

The timorous girl, till tired out with play

She felt his hot breath stir her tangled hair,

And turned, and looked, and fled no more from such delightful snare.

Then come away unto my ambushade

Where clustering woodbine weaves a canopy

For amorous pleasaunce, and the rustling shade

Of Paphian myrtles seems to sanctify The dearest rites of love, there
in the cool

And green recesses of its farthest depth there is a pool,

The ouzel's haunt, the wild bee's pasturage,

For round its rim great creamy lilies float

Through their flat leaves in verdant anchorage,

Each cup a white-sailed golden-laden boat
Steered by a dragon-fly, – be not afraid
To leave this wan and wave-kissed shore, surely the place were made
For lovers such as we, the Cyprian Queen,
 One arm around her boyish paramour,
Strays often there at eve, and I have seen
 The moon strip off her misty vestiture
For young Endymion's eyes, be not afraid,
The panther feet of Dian never tread that secret glade.
Nay if thou wil'st, back to the beating brine,
 Back to the boisterous billow let us go,
And walk all day beneath the hyaline
 Huge vault of Neptune's watery portico,
And watch the purple monsters of the deep
Sport in ungainly play, and from his lair keen Xiphias leap.
For if my mistress find me lying here
 She will not ruth or gentle pity show,

But lay her boar-spear down, and with austere

Relentless fingers string the cornel bow,

And draw the feathered notch against her breast,

And loose the archèd cord, ay, even now upon the quest

I hear her hurrying feet, – awake, awake, Thou laggard in love's
battle! once at least Let me drink deep of passion's wine, and
slake

My parchèd being with the nectarous feast

Which even Gods affect! O come Love come, Still we have time to
reach the cavern of thine azure home.'

Scarce had she spoken when the shuddering trees

Shook, and the leaves divided, and the air

Grew conscious of a God, and the grey seas

Crawled backward, and a long and dismal blare

Blew from some tasselled horn, a sleuth-hound bayed,

And like a flame a barbèd reed flew whizzing down the glade.

And where the little flowers of her breast

Just brake into their milky blossoming,

This murderous paramour, this unbidden guest,
Pierced and struck deep in horrid chambering,
And ploughed a bloody furrow with its dart,
And dug a long red road, and cleft with wingèd death her heart.

Sobbing her life out with a bitter cry
On the boy's body fell the Dryad maid,
Sobbing for incomplete virginity,
And raptures unenjoyed, and pleasures dead,
And all the pain of things unsatisfied,
And the bright drops of crimson youth crept down her throbbing side.

Ah! pitiful it was to hear her moan, And very pitiful to see her die
Ere she had yielded up her sweets, or known

The joy of passion, that dread mystery
Which not to know is not to live at all,
And yet to know is to be held in death's most deadly thrall.

But as it hapt the Queen of Cythere,
Who with Adonis all night long had lain

Within some shepherd's hut in Arcady,

On team of silver doves and gilded wane

Was journeying Paphos-ward, high up afar

From mortal ken between the mountains and the morning star,

And when low down she spied the hapless pair,

And heard the Oread's faint despairing cry,

Whose cadence seemed to play upon the air

As though it were a viol, hastily

She bade her pigeons fold each straining plume,

And dropt to earth, and reached the strand, and saw their dolorous
doom.

For as a gardener turning back his head

To catch the last notes of the linnet, mows

With careless scythe too near some flower bed,

And cuts the thorny pillar of the rose,

And with the flower's loosened loveliness

Strews the brown mould, or as some shepherd lad in wantonness

Driving his little flock along the mead Treads down two daffodils
which side by side

Have lured the lady-bird with yellow brede

And made the gaudy moth forget its pride,

Treads down their brimming golden chalices

Under light feet which were not made for such rude ravages,

Or as a schoolboy tired of his book

Flings himself down upon the reedy grass

And plucks two water-lilies from the brook,

And for a time forgets the hour glass,

Then wearies of their sweets, and goes his way,

And lets the hot sun kill them, even so these lovers lay.

And Venus cried, 'It is dread Artemis

Whose bitter hand hath wrought this cruelty,

Or else that mightier may whose care it is

To guard her strong and stainless majesty

Upon the hill Athenian, – alas!

That they who loved so well unloved into Death's house should pass.'

So with soft hands she laid the boy and girl

In the great golden waggon tenderly,

Her white throat whiter than a moony pearl

Just threaded with a blue vein's tapestry

Had not yet ceased to throb, and still her breast

Swayed like a wind-stirred lily in ambiguous unrest.

And then each pigeon spread its milky van,

The bright car soared into the dawning sky,

And like a cloud the aerial caravan

Passed over the Aegean silently, Till the faint air was troubled with
the song

From the wan mouths that call on bleeding Thammuz all night long.

But when the doves had reached their wonted goal

Where the wide stair of orbèd marble dips

Its snows into the sea, her fluttering soul

Just shook the trembling petals of her lips

And passed into the void, and Venus knew

That one fair maid the less would walk amid her retinue,
And bade her servants carve a cedar chest
 With all the wonder of this history,
Within whose scented womb their limbs should rest
 Where olive-trees make tender the blue sky
On the low hills of Paphos, and the faun
Pipes in the noonday, and the nightingale sings on till dawn.
Nor failed they to obey her hest, and ere
 The morning bee had stung the daffodil
With tiny fretful spear, or from its lair
 The waking stag had leapt across the rill
And roused the ouzel, or the lizard crept
Athwart the sunny rock, beneath the grass their bodies slept.
And when day brake, within that silver shrine
 Fed by the flames of cressets tremulous,
Queen Venus knelt and prayed to Proserpine
 That she whose beauty made Death amorous

Should beg a guerdon from her pallid Lord,
And let Desire pass across dread Charon's icy ford.

III

In melancholy moonless Acheron,
Far from the goodly earth and joyous day,
Where no spring ever buds, nor ripening sun
Weighs down the apple trees, nor flowery May
Chequers with chestnut blooms the grassy floor,
Where thrushes never sing, and piping linnets mate no more,
There by a dim and dark Lethaeian well
Young Charmides was lying, wearily
He plucked the blossoms from the asphodel,
And with its little rifled treasury
Strewed the dull waters of the dusky stream,
And watched the white stars founder, and the land was like a dream,
When as he gazed into the watery glass
And through his brown hair's curly tangles scanned

His own wan face, a shadow seemed to pass

Across the mirror, and a little hand

Stole into his, and warm lips timidly

Brushed his pale cheeks, and breathed their secret forth into a sigh.

Then turned he round his weary eyes and saw,

And ever nigher still their faces came,

And nigher ever did their young mouths draw

Until they seemed one perfect rose of flame,

And longing arms around her neck he cast,

And felt her throbbing bosom, and his breath came hot and fast,

And all his hoarded sweets were hers to kiss, And all her maidenhood
was his to slay,

And limb to limb in long and rapturous bliss

Their passion waxed and waned, – O why essay

To pipe again of love too venturous reed!

Enough, enough that Eros laughed upon that flowerless mead.

Too venturous poesy O why essay

To pipe again of passion! fold thy wings O'er daring Icarus and bid
thy lay

Sleep hidden in the lyre's silent strings,

Till thou hast found the old Castalian rill,

Or from the Lesbian waters plucked drowned Sappho's golden quill!

Enough, enough that he whose life had been

A fiery pulse of sin, a splendid shame,

Could in the loveless land of Hades glean

One scorching harvest from those fields of flame

Where passion walks with naked unshod feet

And is not wounded, – ah! enough that once their lips could meet

In that wild throb when all existences

Seem narrowed to one single ecstasy

Which dies through its own sweetness and the stress

Of too much pleasure, ere Persephone

Had bade them serve her by the ebon throne

Of the pale God who in the fields of Enna loosed her zone.

IMPRESSIONS

I: Les Silhouettes

The sea is flecked with bars of grey

The dull dead wind is out of tune,

And like a withered leaf the moon

Is blown across the stormy bay.

Etched clear upon the pallid sand

The black boat lies: a sailor boy

Clambers aboard in careless joy

With laughing face and gleaming hand.

And overhead the curlews cry,

Where through the dusky upland grass

The young brown-throated reapers pass, Like silhouettes against the
sky.

II: LA FUITE DE LA LUNE

To outer senses there is peace.

A dreamy peace on either hand,

Deep silence in the shadowy land,

Deep silence where the shadows cease,

Save for a cry that echoes shrill

From some lone bird disconsolate;

A corncrake calling to its mate;

The answer from the misty hill.

And suddenly the moon withdraws Her sickle from the lightening
skies,

And to her sombre cavern flies,

Wrapped in a veil of yellow gauze.

THE GRAVE OF KEATS

Rid of the world's injustice, and his pain,

He rests at last beneath God's veil of blue:

Taken from life when life and love were new

The youngest of the martyrs here is lain,

Fair as Sebastian, and as early slain.

No cypress shades his grave, no funeral yew,

But gentle violets weeping with the dew

Weave on his bones an ever-blossoming chain.

O proudest heart that broke for misery!

O sweetest lips since those of Mitylene!

O poet-painter of our English Land!

Thy name was writ in water——it shall stand:

And tears like mine will keep thy memory green, As Isabella did her
Basil-tree.

ROME

THEOCRITUS

A Villanelle

O Singer of Persephone!

In the dim meadows desolate

Dost thou remember Sicily?

Still through the ivy flits the bee Where Amaryllis lies in state;

O Singer of Persephone!

Simaetha calls on Hecate

And hears the wild dogs at the gate; Dost thou remember Sicily?

Still by the light and laughing sea Poor Polypheme bemoans his fate:

O Singer of Persephone!

And still in boyish rivalry

Young Daphnis challenges his mate: Dost thou remember Sicily?

Slim Lacon keeps a goat for thee, For thee the jocund shepherds wait,

O Singer of Persephone!

Dost thou remember Sicily?

IN THE GOLD ROOM

A Harmony

Her ivory hands on the ivory keys

Strayed in a fitful fantasy,

Like the silver gleam when the poplar trees

Rustle their pale leaves listlessly,

Or the drifting foam of a restless sea

When the waves show their teeth in the flying breeze.

Her gold hair fell on the wall of gold

Like the delicate gossamer tangles spun

On the burnished disk of the marigold,

Or the sun-flower turning to meet the sun

When the gloom of the jealous night is done, And the spear of the
lily is aureoled.

And her sweet red lips on these lips of mine Burned like the ruby fire
set

In the swinging lamp of a crimson shrine,

Or the bleeding wounds of the pomegranate, Or the heart of the
lotus drenched and wet With the spilt-out blood of the rose-red
wine.

BALLADE DE MARGUERITE

Normande

I am weary of lying within the chase

When the knights are meeting in market-place.

Nay, go not thou to the red-roofed town

Lest the hooves of the war-horse tread thee down.

But I would not go where the Squires ride,

I would only walk by my Lady's side.

Alack! and alack! thou art over bold, A Forester's son may not eat off
gold.

Will she love me the less that my Father is seen, Each Martinmas day
in a doublet green?

Perchance she is sewing at tapestry, Spindle and loom are not meet for
thee.

Ah, if she is working the arras bright

I might ravel the threads by the fire-light.

Perchance she is hunting of the deer,

How could you follow o'er hill and meer?

Ah, if she is riding with the court,

I might run beside her and wind the morte.

Perchance she is kneeling in St Denis,

(On her soul may our Lady have gramercy!)

Ah, if she is praying in lone chapelle,

I might swing the censer and ring the bell.

Come in my son, for you look sae pale,

The father shall fill thee a stoup of ale.

But who are these knights in bright array?

Is it a pageant the rich folks play?

'Tis the King of England from over sea,

Who has come unto visit our fair countrie.

But why does the curfew toll sae low

And why do the mourners walk a-row?

O 'tis Hugh of Amiens my sister's son

Who is lying stark, for his day is done.

Nay, nay, for I see white lilies clear,

It is no strong man who lies on the bier.

O 'tis old Dame Jeannette that kept the hall, I knew she would die at
the autumn fall.

Dame Jeannette had not that gold-brown hair,

Old Jeannette was not a maiden fair.

O 'tis none of our kith and none of our kin,

(Her soul may our Lady assoil from sin!)

But I hear the boy's voice chaunting sweet, 'Elle est morte, la
Marguerite.'

Come in my son and lie on the bed,

And let the dead folk bury their dead.

O mother, you know I loved her true:

O mother, hath one grave room for two?

THE DOLE OF THE KING'S DAUGHTER

Breton

Seven stars in the still water,

And seven in the sky;

Seven sins on the King's daughter,

Deep in her soul to lie.

Red roses are at her feet,

(Roses are red in her red-gold hair) And O where her bosom and
girdle meet Red roses are hidden there.

Fair is the knight who lieth slain

Amid the rush and reed,

See the lean fishes that are fain

Upon dead men to feed.

Sweet is the page that lieth there,

(Cloth of gold is goodly prey,)

See the black ravens in the air,

Black, O black as the night are they.

What do they there so stark and dead?

(There is blood upon her hand)

Why are the lilies flecked with red?

(There is blood on the river sand.)

There are two that ride from the south and east, And two from the
north and west,

For the black raven a goodly feast, For the King's daughter rest.

There is one man who loves her true, (Red, O red, is the stain of gore!)
He hath duggen a grave by the darksome yew, (One grave will do
for four.)

No moon in the still heaven,

In the black water none,

The sins on her soul are seven,

The sin upon his is one.

AMOR INTELLECTUALIS

Oft have we trod the vales of Castaly

And heard sweet notes of sylvan music blown From antique reeds to
common folk unknown:

And often launched our bark upon that sea

Which the nine Muses hold in empery,

And ploughed free furrows through the wave and foam, Nor spread
reluctant sail for more safe home Till we had freighted well our
argosy.

Of which despoilèd treasures these remain,

Sordello's passion, and the honied line

Of young Endymion, lordly Tamburlaine

Driving his pampered jades, and more than these, The seven-fold
vision of the Florentine,

And grave-browed Milton's solemn harmonies.

SANTA DECCA

The Gods are dead: no longer do we bring

To grey-eyed Pallas crowns of olive-leaves!

Demeter's child no more hath tithe of sheaves, And in the noon the
careless shepherds sing,

For Pan is dead, and all the wantoning

By secret glade and devious haunt is o'er:

Young Hylas seeks the water-springs no more;

Great Pan is dead, and Mary's Son is King.

And yet – perchance in this sea-trancèd isle, Chewing the bitter fruit of
memory,

Some God lies hidden in the asphodel.

Ah Love! if such there be then it were well For us to fly his anger: nay,
but see

The leaves are stirring: let us watch a-while.

A VISION

Two crownèd Kings, and One that stood alone

With no green weight of laurels round his head, But with sad eyes as
one uncomforted,

And wearied with man's never-ceasing moan

For sins no bleating victim can atone,

And sweet long lips with tears and kisses fed.

Girt was he in a garment black and red,

And at his feet I marked a broken stone

Which sent up lilies, dove-like, to his knees.

Now at their sight, my heart being lit with flame I cried to Beatricé,
'Who are these?'

And she made answer, knowing well each name,

'Aeschylus first, the second Sophokles,

And last (wide stream of tears!) Euripides.'

IMPRESSION DU VOYAGE

The sea was sapphire coloured, and the sky

Burned like a heated opal through the air,

We hoisted sail; the wind was blowing fair

For the blue lands that to the eastward lie.

From the steep prow I marked with quickening eye Zakynthos, every
olive grove and creek,

Ithaca's cliff, Lycaon's snowy peak,

And all the flower-strewn hills of Arcady.

The flapping of the sail against the mast,

The ripple of the water on the side,

The ripple of girls' laughter at the stern,

The only sounds: – when 'gan the West to burn, And a red sun upon
the seas to ride,

I stood upon the soil of Greece at last!

THE GRAVE OF SHELLEY

Like burnt-out torches by a sick man's bed

Gaunt cypress-trees stand round the sun-bleached stone; Here doth
the little night-owl make her throne, And the slight lizard show
his jewelled head.

And, where the chaliced poppies flame to red,

In the still chamber of yon pyramid

Surely some Old-World Sphinx lurks darkly hid, Grim warder of
this pleasaunce of the dead.

Ah! sweet indeed to rest within the womb Of Earth, great mother of
eternal sleep,

But sweeter far for thee a restless tomb

In the blue cavern of an echoing deep,

Or where the tall ships founder in the gloom

Against the rocks of some wave-shattered steep.

ROME

BY THE ARNO

The oleander on the wall

Grows crimson in the dawning light,

Though the grey shadows of the night

Lie yet on Florence like a pall.

The dew is bright upon the hill,

And bright the blossoms overhead,

But ah! the grasshoppers have fled, The little Attic song is still.

Only the leaves are gently stirred

By the soft breathing of the gale,

And in the almond-scented vale

The lonely nightingale is heard.

The day will make thee silent soon,

O nightingale sing on for love!

While yet upon the shadowy grove

Splinter the arrows of the moon.

Before across the silent lawn

In sea-green mist the morning steals, And to love's frightened eyes
reveals The long white fingers of the dawn

Fast climbing up the eastern sky

To grasp and slay the shuddering night, All careless of my heart's
delight,

Or if the nightingale should die.

IMPRESSIONS DU THÉÂTRE

Fabien dei Franchi

The silent room, the heavy creeping shade,

The dead that travel fast, the opening door,

The murdered brother rising through the floor,

The ghost's white fingers on thy shoulders laid,

And then the lonely duel in the glade,

The broken swords, the stifled scream, the gore, Thy grand
revengeful eyes when all is o'er, – These things are well
enough, – but thou wert made For more august creation!
frenzied Lear Should at thy bidding wander on the heath

With the shrill fool to mock him, Romeo

For thee should lure his love, and desperate fear Pluck Richard's
recreant dagger from its sheath – Thou trumpet set for
Shakespeare's lips to blow!

PHÈDRE

How vain and dull this common world must seem

To such a One as thou, who should'st have talked At Florence with
Mirandola, or walked

Through the cool olives of the Academe:

Thou should'st have gathered reeds from a green stream For Goat-foot
Pan's shrill piping, and have played With the white girls in that

Phaeacian glade

Where grave Odysseus wakened from his dream.

Ah! surely once some urn of Attic clay
Held thy wan dust, and thou
hast come again

Back to this common world so dull and vain,

For thou wert weary of the sunless day,

The heavy fields of scentless asphodel,

The loveless lips with which men kiss in Hell.

PORTIA

I marvel not Bassanio was so bold

To peril all he had upon the lead,

Or that proud Aragon bent low his head,

Or that Morocco's fiery heart grew cold:

For in that gorgeous dress of beaten gold

Which is more golden than the golden sun,

No woman Veronese looked upon

Was half so fair as thou whom I behold.

Yet fairer when with wisdom as your shield

The sober-suited lawyer's gown you donned

And would not let the laws of Venice yield

Antonio's heart to that accursèd Jew –

O Portia! take my heart: it is thy due: I think I will not quarrel with
the Bond.

QUEEN HENRIETTA MARIA

In the lone tent, waiting for victory,

She stands with eyes marred by the mists of pain, Like some wan
lily overdrenched with rain:

The clamorous clang of arms, the ensanguined sky, War's ruin, and the
wreck of chivalry,

To her proud soul no common fear can bring: Bravely she tarrieth
for her Lord the King,

Her soul a-flame with passionate ecstasy.

O Hair of Gold! O Crimson Lips! O Face Made for the luring and the
love of man!

With thee I do forget the toil and stress,

The loveless road that knows no resting place,

Time's straitened pulse, the soul's dread weariness, My freedom
and my life republican!

CAMMA

As one who poring on a Grecian urn

Scans the fair shapes some Attic hand hath made, God with slim
goddess, goodly man with maid,

And for their beauty's sake is loth to turn

And face the obvious day, must I not yearn

For many a secret moon of indolent bliss,

When in the midmost shrine of Artemis

I see thee standing, antique-limbed, and stern?

And yet – methinks I'd rather see thee play

That serpent of old Nile, whose witchery

Made Emperors drunken, – come, great Egypt, shake Our stage with
all thy mimic pageants! Nay, I am grown sick of unreal passions,
make

The world thine Actium, me thine Antony!

PANTHEA

Nay, let us walk from fire unto fire,

From passionate pain to deadlier delight, –

I am too young to live without desire,

Too young art thou to waste this summer night

Asking those idle questions which of old

Man sought of seer and oracle, and no reply was told.

For, sweet, to feel is better than to know,

And wisdom is a childless heritage,

One pulse of passion – youth's first fiery glow, –

Are worth the hoarded proverbs of the sage:

Vex not thy soul with dead philosophy,

Have we not lips to kiss with, hearts to love, and eyes to see!

Dost thou not hear the murmuring nightingale

Like water bubbling from a silver jar,

So soft she sings the envious moon is pale,

That high in heaven she is hung so far

She cannot hear that love-enraptured tune, –

Mark how she wreathes each horn with mist, yon late and labouring
moon.

White lilies, in whose cups the gold bees dream,

The fallen snow of petals where the breeze

Scatters the chestnut blossom, or the gleam

Of boyish limbs in water, – are not these

Enough for thee, dost thou desire more?

Alas! the Gods will give nought else from their eternal store.

For our high Gods have sick and wearied grown

Of all our endless sins, our vain endeavour

For wasted days of youth to make atone

By pain or prayer or priest, and never, never,

Hearken they now to either good or ill,

But send their rain upon the just and the unjust at will.

They sit at ease, our Gods they sit at ease,

Strewing with leaves of rose their scented wine,

They sleep, they sleep, beneath the rocking trees

Where asphodel and yellow lotus twine,
Mourning the old glad days before they knew
What evil things the heart of man could dream, and dreaming do.
And far beneath the brazen floor they see
Like swarming flies the crowd of little men,
The bustle of small lives, then wearily
Back to their lotus-haunts they turn again
Kissing each other's mouths, and mix more deep
The poppy-seeded draught which brings soft purple-lidded sleep.
There all day long the golden-vestured sun,
Their torch-bearer, stands with his torch a-blaze,
And when the gaudy web of noon is spun
By its twelve maidens through the crimson haze
Fresh from Endymion's arms comes forth the moon, And the immortal
Gods in toils of mortal passions swoon.
There walks Queen Juno through some dewy mead
Her grand white feet flecked with the saffron dust

Of wind-stirred lilies, while young Ganymede

Leaps in the hot and amber-foaming must,

His curls all tossed, as when the eagle bare

The frightened boy from Ida through the blue Ionian air.

There in the green heart of some garden close

Queen Venus with the shepherd at her side,

Her warm soft body like the briar rose

Which would be white yet blushes at its pride,

Laughs low for love, till jealous Salmacis

Peers through the myrtle-leaves and sighs for pain of lonely bliss.

There never does that dreary north-wind blow

Which leaves our English forests bleak and bare,

Nor ever falls the swift white-feathered snow,

Nor doth the red-toothed lightning ever dare

To wake them in the silver-fretted night

When we lie weeping for some sweet sad sin, some dead delight.

Alas! they know the far Lethaeon spring, The violet-hidden waters

well they know,

Where one whose feet with tired wandering

Are faint and broken may take heart and go,

And from those dark depths cool and crystalline

Drink, and draw balm, and sleep for sleepless souls, and anodyne.

But we oppress our natures, God or Fate Is our enemy, we starve and
feed

On vain repentance – O we are born too late!

What balm for us in bruised poppy seed

Who crowd into one finite pulse of time

The joy of infinite love and the fierce pain of infinite crime.

O we are wearied of this sense of guilt,

Wearied of pleasure's paramour despair,

Wearied of every temple we have built,

Wearied of every right, unanswered prayer,

For man is weak; God sleeps: and heaven is high:

One fiery-coloured moment: one great love; and lo! we die.

Ah! but no ferry-man with labouring pole
Nears his black shallop to
the flowerless strand,

No little coin of bronze can bring the soul

Over Death's river to the sunless land,

Victim and wine and vow are all in vain,

The tomb is sealed; the soldiers watch; the dead rise not again.

We are resolved into the supreme air,

We are made one with what we touch and see,

With our heart's blood each crimson sun is fair,

With our young lives each spring-impassioned tree

Flames into green, the wildest beasts that range

The moor our kinsmen are, all life is one, and all is change.

With beat of systole and of diastole

One grand great life throbs through earth's giant heart, And mighty
waves of single Being roll

From nerve-less germ to man, for we are part Of every rock and bird
and beast and hill,

One with the things that prey on us, and one with what we kill.

From lower cells of waking life we pass

To full perfection; thus the world grows old:

We who are godlike now were once a mass

Of quivering purple flecked with bars of gold,

Unsentient or of joy or misery,

And tossed in terrible tangles of some wild and wind-swept sea.

This hot hard flame with which our bodies burn

Will make some meadow blaze with daffodil,

Ay! and those argent breasts of thine will turn
To water-lilies; the
brown fields men till

Will be more fruitful for our love to-night,

Nothing is lost in nature, all things live in Death's despite.

The boy's first kiss, the hyacinth's first bell,

The man's last passion, and the last red spear

That from the lily leaps, the asphodel

Which will not let its blossoms blow for fear

Of too much beauty, and the timid shame

Of the young bride-groom at his lover's eyes, – these with the same

One sacrament are consecrate, the earth

Not we alone hath passions hymeneal,

The yellow buttercups that shake for mirth

At daybreak know a pleasure not less real

Than we do, when in some fresh-blossoming wood
We draw the spring into our hearts, and feel that life is good.

So when men bury us beneath the yew

Thy crimson-stainèd mouth a rose will be,

And thy soft eyes lush bluebells dimmed with dew,

And when the white narcissus wantonly

Kisses the wind its playmate, some faint joy

Will thrill our dust, and we will be again fond maid and boy.

And thus without life's conscious torturing pain

In some sweet flower we will feel the sun,

And from the linnet's throat will sing again,

And as two gorgeous-mailed snakes will run

Over our graves, or as two tigers creep

Through the hot jungle where the yellow-eyed huge lions sleep

And give them battle! How my heart leaps up To think of that grand
living after death

In beast and bird and flower, when this cup,

Being filled too full of spirit, bursts for breath,

And with the pale leaves of some autumn day

The soul earth's earliest conqueror becomes earth's last great prey.

O think of it! We shall inform ourselves Into all sensuous life, the
goat-foot Faun,

The Centaur, or the merry bright-eyed Elves

That leave their dancing rings to spite the dawn

Upon the meadows, shall not be more near

Than you and I to nature's mysteries, for we shall hear

The thrush's heart beat, and the daisies grow, And the wan snowdrop
sighing for the sun

On sunless days in winter, we shall know

By whom the silver gossamer is spun,

Who paints the diapered fritillaries,

On what wide wings from shivering pine to pine the eagle flies.

Ay! had we never loved at all, who knows If yonder daffodil had lured
the bee

Into its gilded womb, or any rose

Had hung with crimson lamps its little tree!

Methinks no leaf would ever bud in spring,

But for the lovers' lips that kiss, the poets' lips that sing.

Is the light vanished from our golden sun,

Or is this daedal-fashioned earth less fair,

That we are nature's heritors, and one

With every pulse of life that beats the air?

Rather new suns across the sky shall pass,

New splendour come unto the flower, new glory to the grass.

And we two lovers shall not sit afar,

Critics of nature, but the joyous sea

Shall be our raiment, and the bearded star

Shoot arrows at our pleasure! We shall be Part of the mighty
universal whole,

And through all aeons mix and mingle with the Kosmic Soul!

We shall be notes in that great Symphony Whose cadence circles
through the rhythmic spheres,

And all the live World's throbbing heart shall be

One with our heart, the stealthy creeping years

Have lost their terrors now, we shall not die,

The Universe itself shall be our Immortality!

IMPRESSION

Le Réveillon

The sky is laced with fitful red,

The circling mists and shadows flee,

The dawn is rising from the sea,

Like a white lady from her bed.

And jagged brazen arrows fall

Athwart the feathers of the night,

And a long wave of yellow light

Breaks silently on tower and hall,

And spreading wide across the wold

Wakes into flight some fluttering bird, And all the chestnut tops are
stirred, And all the branches streaked with gold.

AT VERONA

How steep the stairs within Kings' houses are

For exile-wearied feet as mine to tread,

And O how salt and bitter is the bread

Which falls from this Hound's table, – better far That I had died in the
red ways of war,

Or that the gate of Florence bare my head,

Than to live thus, by all things comraded

Which seek the essence of my soul to mar.

'Curse God and die: what better hope than this He hath forgotten thee
in all the bliss

Of his gold city, and eternal day' –

Nay peace: behind my prison's blinded bars

I do possess what none can take away,

My love, and all the glory of the stars.

APOLOGIA

Is it thy will that I should wax and wane,

Barter my cloth of gold for hodden grey,

And at thy pleasure weave that web of pain

Whose brightest threads are each a wasted day?

Is it thy will – Love that I love so well –

That my Soul's House should be a tortured spot

Wherein, like evil paramours, must dwell

The quenchless flame, the worm that dieth not?

Nay, if it be thy will I shall endure,

And sell ambition at the common mart,

And let dull failure be my vestiture,

And sorrow dig its grave within my heart.

Perchance it may be better so – at least

I have not made my heart a heart of stone,

Nor starved my boyhood of its goodly feast,

Nor walked where Beauty is a thing unknown.

Many a man hath done so; sought to fence

In straitened bonds the soul that should be free, Trodden the dusty
road of common sense,

While all the forest sang of liberty,

Not marking how the spotted hawk in flight

Passed on wide pinion through the lofty air,

To where the steep untrodden mountain height

Caught the last tresses of the Sun God's hair.

Or how the little flower he trod upon, The daisy, that white-feathered
shield of gold, Followed with wistful eyes the wandering sun

Content if once its leaves were aureoled.

But surely it is something to have been

The best beloved for a little while,

To have walked hand in hand with Love, and seen

His purple wings flit once across thy smile.

Ay! though the gorgèd asp of passion feed On my boy's heart, yet
have I burst the bars,

Stood face to face with Beauty, known indeed

The Love which moves the Sun and all the stars!

QUIA MULTUM AMAVI

Dear Heart I think the young impassioned priest

When first he takes from out the hidden shrine

His God imprisoned in the Eucharist,

And eats the bread, and drinks the dreadful wine,

Feels not such awful wonder as I felt

When first my smitten eyes beat full on thee,

And all night long before thy feet I knelt

Till thou wert wearied of Idolatry.

Ah! had'st thou liked me less and loved me more, Through all those
summer days of joy and rain, I had not now been sorrow's heritor,

Or stood a lackey in the House of Pain.

Yet, though remorse, youth's white-faced seneschal Tread on my heels
with all his retinue,

I am most glad I loved thee – think of all

The suns that go to make one speedwell blue!

SILENTIUM AMORIS

As oftentimes the too resplendent sun

Hurries the pallid and reluctant moon

Back to her sombre cave, ere she hath won

A single ballad from the nightingale,

So doth thy Beauty make my lips to fail,

And all my sweetest singing out of tune.

And as at dawn across the level mead

On wings impetuous some wind will come,

And with its too harsh kisses break the reed Which was its only
instrument of song.

So my too stormy passions work me wrong,

And for excess of Love my Love is dumb.

But surely unto Thee mine eyes did show

Why I am silent, and my lute unstrung;

Else it were better we should part, and go, Thou to some lips of
sweeter melody,

And I to nurse the barren memory

Of unkissed kisses, and songs never sung.

HER VOICE

The wild bee reels from bough to bough With his furry coat and his
gauzy wing.

Now in a lily-cup, and now

Setting a jacinth bell a-swing,

In his wandering;

Sit closer love: it was here I trow I made that vow,

Swore that two lives should be like one As long as the sea-gull loved
the sea, As long as the sunflower sought the sun, – It shall be, I
said, for eternity 'Twixt you and me!

Dear friend, those times are over and done.

Love's web is spun.

Look upward where the poplar trees Sway and sway in the summer air,
Here in the valley never a breeze Scatters the thistledown, but
there Great winds blow fair

From the mighty murmuring mystical seas, And the wave-lashed leas.

Look upward where the white gull screams, What does it see that we
do not see?

Is that a star? or the lamp that gleams On some outward voyaging
argosy, – Ah! can it be We have lived our lives in a land of
dreams!

How sad it seems.

Sweet, there is nothing left to say But this, that love is never lost, Keen
winter stabs the breasts of May Whose crimson roses burst his
frost, Ships tempest-tossed

Will find a harbour in some bay, And so we may.

And there is nothing left to do

But to kiss once again, and part, Nay, there is nothing we should
rue, I have my beauty, – you your Art, Nay, do not start,

One world was not enough for two Like me and you.

MY VOICE

Within this restless, hurried, modern world

We took our hearts' full pleasure – You and I, And now the white
sails of our ship are furled, And spent the lading of our argosy.

Wherefore my cheeks before their time are wan, For very weeping is
my gladness fled,

Sorrow hath paled my lip's vermilion,

And Ruin draws the curtains of my bed.

But all this crowded life has been to thee

No more than lyre, or lute, or subtle spell Of viols, or the music of
the sea

That sleeps, a mimic echo, in the shell.

TAEDIUM VITAE

To stab my youth with desperate knives, to wear This paltry age's
gaudy livery,

To let each base hand filch my treasury,

To mesh my soul within a woman's hair,

And be mere Fortune's lackeyed groom, – I swear I love it not! these
things are less to me Than the thin foam that frets upon the sea,

Less than the thistle-down of summer air

Which hath no seed: better to stand aloof

Far from these slanderous fools who mock my life Knowing me not,
better the lowliest roof

Fit for the meanest hind to sojourn in,

Than to go back to that hoarse cave of strife

Where my white soul first kissed the mouth of sin.

HUMANITAD

It is full Winter now: the trees are bare,

Save where the cattle huddle from the cold

Beneath the pine, for it doth never wear

The Autumn's gaudy livery whose gold

Her jealous brother pilfers, but is true

To the green doublet; bitter is the wind, as though it blew

From Saturn's cave; a few thin wisps of hay

Lie on the sharp black hedges, where the wain

Dragged the sweet pillage of a summer's day

From the low meadows up the narrow lane;

Upon the half-thawed snow the bleating sheep

Press close against the hurdles, and the shivering house-dogs creep

From the shut stable to the frozen stream

And back again disconsolate, and miss

The bawling shepherds and the noisy team;

And overhead in circling listlessness

The cawing rooks whirl round the frosted stack,

Or crowd the dripping boughs; and in the fen the ice-pools crack

Where the gaunt bittern stalks among the reeds

And flaps his wings, and stretches back his neck,

And hoots to see the moon; across the meads

Limps the poor frightened hare, a little speck;

And a stray seamew with its fretful cry

Flits like a sudden drift of snow against the dull grey sky.

Full winter: and the lusty goodman brings His load of faggots from the
chilly byre,

And stamps his feet upon the hearth, and flings

The sappy billets on the waning fire,

And laughs to see the sudden lightening scare

His children at their play; and yet, – the Spring is in the air,

Already the slim crocus stirs the snow,

And soon yon blanchèd fields will bloom again

With nodding cowslips for some lad to mow,

For with the first warm kisses of the rain

The winter's icy sorrow breaks to tears,
And the brown thrushes mate, and with bright eyes the rabbit peers
From the dark warren where the fir-cones lie,
 And treads one snowdrop under foot, and runs
Over the mossy knoll, and blackbirds fly
 Across our path at evening, and the suns
Stay longer with us; ah! how good to see Grass-girdled Spring in all
 her joy of laughing greenery
Dance through the hedges till the early rose,
 (That sweet repentance of the thorny briar!)
Burst from its sheathèd emerald and disclose
 The little quivering disk of golden fire
Which the bees know so well, for with it come
Pale boys-love, sops-in-wine, and daffadillies all in bloom.
Then up and down the field the sower goes,
 While close behind the laughing younker scares
With shrilly whoop the black and thievish crows,

And then the chestnut-tree its glory wears, And on the grass the
creamy blossom falls

In odorous excess, and faint half-whispered madrigals

Steal from the bluebells' nodding carillons

Each breezy morn, and then white jessamine,

That star of its own heaven, snapdragons

With lolling crimson tongues, and eglantine

In dusty velvets clad usurp the bed

And woodland empery, and when the lingering rose hath shed

Red leaf by leaf its folded panoply,

And pansies closed their purple-lidded eyes,

Chrysanthemums from gilded argosy

Unload their gaudy scentless merchandise,

And violets getting overbold withdraw

From their shy nooks, and scarlet berries dot the leafless haw.

O happy field! and O thrice happy tree!

Soon will your queen in daisy-flowered smock

And crown of flower-de-luce trip down the lea,

Soon will the lazy shepherds drive their flock

Back to the pasture by the pool, and soon

Through the green leaves will float the hum of murmuring bees at
noon.

Soon will the glade be bright with bellamour,

The flower which wantons love, and those sweet nuns

Vale-lilies in their snowy vestiture

Will tell their beaded pearls, and carnations

With mitred dusky leaves will scent the wind, And straggling
traveller's joy each hedge with yellow stars will bind.

Dear Bride of Nature and most bounteous Spring!

That can't give increase to the sweet-breath'd kine,

And to the kid its little horns, and bring

The soft and silky blossoms to the vine,

Where is that old nepenthe which of yore

Man got from poppy root and glossy-berried mandragore!

There was a time when any common bird

Could make me sing in unison, a time

When all the strings of boyish life were stirred

To quick response or more melodious rhyme

By every forest idyll; – do I change?

Or rather doth some evil thing through thy fair pleasaunce range?

Nay, nay, thou art the same: 'tis I who seek

To vex with sighs thy simple solitude,

And because fruitless tears bedew my cheek

Would have thee weep with me in brotherhood:

Fool! shall each wronged and restless spirit dare
To taint such wine
with the salt poison of his own despair!

Thou art the same: 'tis I whose wretched soul

Takes discontent to be its paramour,

And gives its kingdom to the rude control

Of what should be its servitor, – for sure

Wisdom is somewhere, though the stormy sea

Contain it not, and the huge deep answer 'Tis not in me.'

To burn with one clear flame, to stand erect
In natural honour, not to
bend the knee

In profitless prostrations whose effect

Is by itself condemned, what alchemy

Can teach me this? what herb Medea brewed
Will bring the unexultant
peace of essence not subdued?

The minor chord which ends the harmony,

And for its answering brother waits in vain,

Sobbing for incompleting melody

Dies a Swan's death; but I the heir of pain

A silent Memnon with blank lidless eyes

Wait for the light and music of those suns which never rise.

The quenched-out torch, the lonely cypress-gloom,

The little dust stored in the narrow urn,

The gentle XAIPE of the Attic tomb, –

Were not these better far than to return

To my old fitful restless malady,

Or spend my days within the voiceless cave of misery?

Nay! for perchance that poppy-crownèd God Is like the watcher by a
sick man's bed

Who talks of sleep but gives it not; his rod

Hath lost its virtue, and, when all is said,

Death is too rude, too obvious a key

To solve one single secret in a life's philosophy.

And Love! that noble madness, whose august And inextinguishable
might can slay

The soul with honied drugs, – alas! I must From such sweet ruin play
the runaway, Although too constant memory never can

Forget the archèd splendour of those brows Olympian

Which for a little season made my youth

So soft a swoon of exquisite indolence

That all the chiding of more prudent Truth

Seemed the thin voice of jealousy, – O Hence

Thou huntress deadlier than Artemis!

Go seek some other quarry! for of thy too perilous bliss

My lips have drunk enough, – no more, no more, –

Though Love himself should turn his gilded prow
Back to the troubled waters of this shore
Where I am wrecked and stranded, even now
The chariot wheels of passion sweep too near,
Hence! Hence! I pass unto a life more barren, more austere.
More barren – ay, those arms will never lean
Down through the trellised vines and draw my soul
In sweet reluctance through the tangled green;
Some other head must wear that aureole,
For I am Hers who loves not any man
Whose white and stainless bosom bears the sign Gorgonian.
Let Venus go and chuck her dainty page,
And kiss his mouth, and toss his curly hair,
With net and spear and hunting equipage
Let young Adonis to his tryst repair,
But me her fond and subtle-fashioned spell
Delights no more, though I could win her dearest citadel.

Ay, though I were that laughing shepherd boy Who from Mount Ida
saw the little cloud

Pass over Tenedos and lofty Troy

And knew the coming of the Queen, and bowed

In wonder at her feet, not for the sake

Of a new Helen would I bid her hand the apple take.

Then rise supreme Athena argent-limbed!

And, if my lips be musicless, inspire

At least my life: was not thy glory hymned

By One who gave to thee his sword and lyre

Like Aeschylus at well-fought Marathon,

And died to show that Milton's England still could bear a son!

And yet I cannot tread the Portico

And live without desire, fear, and pain,

Or nurture that wise calm which long ago

The grave Athenian master taught to men,

Self-poised, self-centred, and self-comforted,

To watch the world's vain phantasies go by with unbowed head.

Alas! that serene brow, those eloquent lips, Those eyes that mirrored
all eternity,

Rest in their own Colonos, an eclipse

Hath come on Wisdom, and Mnemosyne

Is childless; in the night which she had made

For lofty secure flight Athena's owl itself hath strayed.

Nor much with Science do I care to climb,

Although by strange and subtle witchery

She draw the moon from heaven: the Muse of Time

Unrolls her gorgeous-coloured tapestry To no less eager eyes; often
indeed

In the great epic of Polymnia's scroll I love to read

How Asia sent her myriad hosts to war

Against a little town, and panoplied

In gilded mail with jewelled scimeter,

White-shielded, purple-crested, rode the Mede

Between the waving poplars and the sea

Which men call Artemisium, till he saw Thermopylae

Its steep ravine spanned by a narrow wall,

And on the nearer side a little brood

Of careless lions holding festival!

And stood amazed at such hardihood,

And pitched his tent upon the reedy shore,

And stayed two days to wonder, and then crept at midnight o'er

Some unfrequented height, and coming down

The autumn forests treacherously slew

What Sparta held most dear and was the crown

Of far Eurotas, and passed on, nor knew

How God had staked an evil net for him

In the small bay of Salamis, – and yet, the page grows dim,

Its cadenced Greek delights me not, I feel

With such a goodly time too out of tune

To love it much: for like the Dial's wheel

That from its blinded darkness strikes the noon

Yet never sees the sun, so do my eyes

Restlessly follow that which from my cheated vision flies.

O for one grand unselfish simple life To teach us what is Wisdom!
speak ye hills Of lone Helvellyn, for this note of strife

Shunned your untroubled crags and crystal rills,

Where is that Spirit which living blamelessly

Yet dared to kiss the smitten mouth of his own century!

Speak ye Rydalian laurels! where is He Whose gentle head ye
sheltered, that pure soul

Whose gracious days of uncrowned majesty

Through lowliest conduct touched the lofty goal

Where Love and Duty mingle! Him at least The most high Laws were
glad of, he had sat at Wisdom's feast,

But we are Learning's changelings, know by rote

The clarion watchword of each Grecian school.

And follow none, the flawless sword which smote

The pagan Hydra is an effete tool

Which we ourselves have blunted, what man now

Shall scale the august ancient heights and to old Reverence bow?

One such indeed I saw, but, Ichabod!

Gone is that last dear son of Italy,

Who being man died for the sake of God,

And whose unrisen bones sleep peacefully.

O guard him, guard him well, my Giotto's tower,

Thou marble lily of the lily town! let not the lower

Of the rude tempest vex his slumber, or

The Arno with its tawny troubled gold

O'erleap its marge, no mightier conqueror

Clomb the high Capitol in the days of old When Rome was indeed
Rome, for Liberty

Walked like a Bride beside him, at which sight pale Mystery

Fled shrieking to her farthest sombrest cell

With an old man who grabbed rusty keys,

Fled shuddering for that immemorial knell

With which oblivion buries dynasties

Swept like a wounded eagle on the blast,

As to the holy heart of Rome the great triumvir passed.

He knew the holiest heart and heights of Rome,

He drove the base wolf from the lion's lair,

And now lies dead by that empyreal dome

Which overtops Valdarno hung in air

By Brunelleschi – O Melpomene

Breathe through thy melancholy pipe thy sweetest threnody!

Breathe through the tragic stops such melodies

That Joy's self may grow jealous, and the Nine

Forget a-while their discreet emperies,

Mourning for him who on Rome's lordliest shrine

Lit for men's lives the light of Marathon,

And bare to sun-forgotten fields the fire of the sun!

O guard him, guard him well, my Giotto's tower,

Let some young Florentine each eventide

Bring coronals of that enchanted flower

Which the dim woods of Vallombrosa hide,

And deck the marble tomb wherein he lies

Whose soul is as some mighty orb unseen of mortal eyes.

Some mighty orb whose cycled wanderings, Being tempest-driven to
the farthest rim

Where Chaos meets Creation and the wings

Of the eternal chanting Cherubim

Are pavilioned on Nothing, passed away

Into a moonless void, – and yet, though he is dust and clay,

He is not dead, the immemorial Fates

Forbid it, and the closing shears refrain,

Lift up your heads ye everlasting gates!

Ye argent clarions sound a loftier strain!

For the vile thing he hated lurks within

Its sombre house, alone with God and memories of sin.

Still what avails it that she sought her cave

That murderous mother of red harlotries?

At Munich on the marble architrave

The Grecian boys die smiling, but the seas

Which wash Aegina fret in loneliness

Not mirroring their beauty, so our lives grow colourless

For lack of our ideals, if one star

Flame torch-like in the heavens the unjust

Swift daylight kills it, and no trump of war

Can wake to passionate voice the silent dust

Which was Mazzini once! rich Niobe For all her stony sorrows hath
her sons, but Italy!

What Easter Day shall make her children rise,

Who were not Gods yet suffered? what sure feet Shall find their
graveclothes folded? what clear eyes Shall see them bodily? O
it were meet To roll the stone from off the sepulchre And kiss
the bleeding roses of their wounds, in love of Her

Our Italy! our mother visible!

Most blessed among nations and most sad,

For whose dear sake the young Calabrian fell

That day at Aspromonte and was glad

That in an age when God was bought and sold

One man could die for Liberty! but we, burnt out and cold,

See Honour smitten on the cheek and gyves

Bind the sweet feet of Mercy: Poverty

Creeps through our sunless lanes and with sharp knives

Cuts the warm throats of children stealthily,

And no word said: – O we are wretched men

Unworthy of our great inheritance! where is the pen

Of austere Milton? where the mighty sword Which slew its master
righteously? the years Have lost their ancient leader, and no word

Breaks from the voiceless tripod on our ears:

While as a ruined mother in some spasm

Bears a base child and loathes it, so our best enthusiasm

Genders unlawful children, Anarchy

Freedom's own Judas, the vile prodigal

Licence who steals the gold of Liberty

And yet has nothing, Ignorance the real

One Fratricide since Cain, Envy the asp

That stings itself to anguish, Avarice whose palsied grasp

Is in its extent stiffened, monied Greed For whose dull appetite men
waste away

Amid the whirr of wheels and are the seed

Of things which slay their sower, these each day

Sees rife in England, and the gentle feet

Of Beauty tread no more the stones of each unlovely street.

What even Cromwell spared is desecrated

By weed and worm, left to the stormy play

Of wind and beating snow, or renovated

By more destructful hands: Time's worst decay

Will wreath its ruins with some loveliness,

But these new Vandals can but make a rainproof barrenness.

Where is that Art which bade the Angels sing

Through Lincoln's lofty choir, till the air

Seems from such marble harmonies to ring

With sweeter song than common lips can dare

To draw from actual reed? ah! where is now The cunning hand which
made the flowering hawthorn branches bow

For Southwell's arch, and carved the House of One

Who loved the lilies of the field with all

Our dearest English flowers? the same sun Rises for us: the seasons
natural

Weave the same tapestry of green and grey:

The unchanged hills are with us: but that Spirit hath passed away.

And yet perchance it may be better so,

For Tyranny is an incestuous Queen,

Murder her brother is her bedfellow,

And the Plague chambers with her: in obscene And bloody paths her
treacherous feet are set;

Better the empty desert and a soul inviolate!

For gentle brotherhood, the harmony

Of living in the healthful air, the swift

Clean beauty of strong limbs when men are free

And women chaste, these are the things which lift

Our souls up more than even Agnolo's

Gaunt blinded Sibyl poring o'er the scroll of human woes,

Or Titian's little maiden on the stair

White as her own sweet lily and as tall,

Or Mona Lisa smiling through her hair, –

Ah! somehow life is bigger after all Than any painted angel could
we see

The God that is within us! The old Greek serenity

Which curbs the passion of that level line

Of marble youths, who with untroubled eyes

And chastened limbs ride round Athena's shrine

And mirror her divine economies,

And balanced symmetry of what in man

Would else wage ceaseless warfare, – this at least within the span

Between our mother's kisses and the grave

Might so inform our lives, that we could win

Such mighty empires that from her cave

Temptation would grow hoarse, and pallid Sin

Would walk ashamed of his adulteries,

And Passion creep from out the House of Lust with startled eyes.

To make the Body and the Spirit one With all right things, till no thing
live in vain

From morn to noon, but in sweet unison

With every pulse of flesh and throb of brain

The Soul in flawless essence high enthroned,

Against all outer vain attack invincibly bastioned,

Mark with serene impartiality

The strife of things, and yet be comforted,

Knowing that by the chain causality

All separate existences are wed

Into one supreme whole, whose utterance

Is joy, or holier praise! ah! surely this were governance

Of Life in most august omnipresence,

Through which the rational intellect would find

In passion its expression, and mere sense,

Ignoble else, lend fire to the mind,

And being joined with it in harmony

More mystical than that which binds the stars planetary,

Strike from their several tones one octave chord

Whose cadence being measureless would fly

Through all the circling spheres, then to its Lord

Return refreshed with its new empery

And more exultant power, – this indeed

Could we but reach it were to find the last, the perfect creed.

Ah! it was easy when the world was young To keep one's life free and
inviolable,

From our sad lips another song is rung,

By our own hands our heads are desecrate,

Wanderers in drear exile, and dispossessed Of what should be our
own, we can but feed on wild unrest.

Somehow the grace, the bloom of things has flown,

And of all men we are most wretched who

Must live each other's lives and not our own

For very pity's sake and then undo

All that we live for – it was otherwise

When soul and body seemed to blend in mystic symphonies.

But we have left those gentle haunts to pass

With weary feet to the new Calvary,

Where we behold, as one who in a glass

Sees his own face, self-slain Humanity,

And in the dumb reproach of that sad gaze

Learn what an awful phantom the red hand of man can raise.

O smitten mouth! O forehead crowned with thorn!

O chalice of all common miseries!

Thou for our sakes that loved thee not hast borne

An agony of endless centuries,

And we were vain and ignorant nor knew

That when we stabbed thy heart it was our own real hearts we slew.

Being ourselves the sowers and the seeds,

The night that covers and the lights that fade,

The spear that pierces and the side that bleeds,

The lips betraying and the life betrayed;

The deep hath calm: the moon hath rest: but we

Lords of the natural world are yet our own dread enemy.

Is this the end of all that primal force Which, in its changes being still
the same,

From eyeless Chaos cleft its upward course,

Through ravenous seas and whirling rocks and flame,

Till the suns met in heaven and began

Their cycles, and the morning stars sang, and the Word was Man!

Nay, nay, we are but crucified, and though

The bloody sweat falls from our brows like rain,

Loosen the nails – we shall come down I know,

Staunch the red wounds – we shall be whole again,

No need have we of hyssop-laden rod,

That which is purely human, that is Godlike, that is God.

ΓΛΥΚΥΙΙΚΡΟΣ ΕΡΩΣ

Sweet I blame you not for mine the fault was, had I not been made of
common clay

I had climbed the higher heights unclimbed yet, seen the fuller air, the
larger day.

From the wildness of my wasted passion I had struck a better, clearer
song,

Lit some lighter light of freer freedom, battled with some Hydra-
headed wrong.

Had my lips been smitten into music by the kisses that but made them
bleed,

You had walked with Bice and the angels on that verdant and
enamelled mead.

I had trod the road which Dante treading saw the suns of seven circles
shine,

Ay! perchance had seen the heavens opening, as they opened to the
Florentine.

And the mighty nations would have crowned me, who am crownless
now and without name, And some orient dawn had found me
kneeling on the threshold of the House of Fame.

I had sat within that marble circle where the oldest bard is as the

young,

And the pipe is ever dropping honey, and the lyre's strings are ever
strung.

Keats had lifted up his hymenaeal curls from out the poppy-seeded
wine, With ambrosial mouth had kissed my forehead, clasped the
hand of noble love in mine.

And at springtide, when the apple-blossoms brush the burnished
bosom of the dove,

Two young lovers lying in an orchard would have read the story of our
love.

Would have read the legend of my passion, known the bitter secret of
my heart,

Kissed as we have kissed, but never parted as we two are fated now to
part.

For the crimson flower of our life is eaten by the cankerworm of truth,

And no hand can gather up the fallen withered petals of the rose of
youth.

Yet I am not sorry that I loved you – ah! what else had I a boy to do, –
For the hungry teeth of time devour, and the silent-footed years
pursue.

Rudderless, we drift athwart a tempest, and when once the storm of
youth is past,

Without lyre, without lute or chorus, Death a silent pilot comes at last.

And within the grave there is no pleasure, for the blindworm battens
on the root,

And Desire shudders into ashes, and the tree of Passion bears no fruit.

Ah! what else had I to do but love you, God's own mother was less
dear to me, And less dear the Cytheraeon rising like an argent lily
from the sea.

I have made my choice, have lived my poems, and, though youth is
gone in wasted days, I have found the lover's crown of myrtle
better than the poet's crown of bays.

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