

EVIL MAY - DAY

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EVIL MAY-DAY,

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EVIL MAY-DAY

To follow,  
BY THE SAME,  
In like form :  
*Ashby Manor : A Play.*  
—  
*Brambleberries.*  
—

EVIL MAY-DAY

&c

BY  
WILLIAM ALLINGHAM



London :

DAVID STOTT, 370, OXFORD STREET,

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To  
MY CHILDREN.



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## EVIL MAY-DAY.

## PART I.

SUDDENLY, softly, I awoke from sleep ;  
 My lattice open to the morning sun,  
 Call of a distant cuckoo, lyric notes  
 Of many a voice, leaf-whispers.

May, once more,

Her dewy fragrant kiss, and all the love  
 It wakes us to,—a joyous, beauteous world !  
 Long shadows lying on the luminous grass ;  
 The lilac's purple honeycombs enswathed  
 In freshest foliage ; snowy pear-tree bloom ;  
 Birds on our daisied lawn, or flitting swift  
 Through floating under-boughs to elmtops fledged  
 Against the tenderly translucent sky ;  
 And through the leafage glimpses of a realm  
 Of woodland slopes and vales, and distant hills  
 Of bright horizon. O the sweet old rapture !  
 May in my inmost soul awaking too.  
 This might be Earth's first morning, or the rise  
 Of that New Heav'n and Earth—

Ah pain ! ah grief !

The happy wingèd thing afloat on air

B

Smit with a cruel pang, down-fluttering, drops,  
Ev'n as my heart—

They say "There is no God!"

Evil May-day, by my account. Long since,  
Whispers of bale were rife; dark prophecies  
And dim forebodings brought a passing qualm,  
A momentary shiver; that was all;  
As peradventure may a man have heard  
Rumour of pestilence in Eastern lands,  
Of little import: "creeping westward" next:  
"Within our country's border" (this is grave):  
And then a pause, time slides, the man has turn'd  
To his affairs and pleasures; when one day  
What's this the mirror shows him?—Heaven and  
Hell!  
The plague-spot on his tongue! His lot is drawn.

Yes, look upon thy hands and touch thy head;  
'Tis thou—that wakedst oft in other Mays,  
Didst kneeling say thy pray'r, and look aloft  
As into thy dear Father's face, and see  
His handiwork all round thee, all done right:  
The lilies of the field and the seven stars,  
Beast, bird, and insect, and immortal Man;  
"These are Thy glorious works, Parent of good!"—  
"In wisdom hast Thou made them all."

Poor fool!

Gaze round now on the sunshine and the grass,  
Enjoy their brightness, hear the senseless birds—

Chatter and chirp, and be thou merry too.  
All's but a dream; and why torment thyself?  
—Because the plague is come. The bird is hit.  
A dream is *fled*; and now I wake aghast.  
I see this world a body without soul;  
I see the flow'rs and greenery of May  
A garland on a corpse. "There is no God."

Nay, courage! let the fearful mood pass by.  
Here is no plague. Behind these branching elms  
Our shady lane winds to the village green,  
Its ancient cottages, its ivied tower,  
With graves of twenty generations. Hark!  
The dial: sturdy Labour forth has trudged  
With tools in hand; Age on his doorstep greets  
The friendly sunshine; Childhood swarms to school  
And hums like bees in clover, till the song  
Heartily rises: and our week moves round,  
As weeks and years and centuries have moved,  
Over this English village in its vale,  
Secluded from the world,—not separate.  
There goes the flutter of a distant train  
Speeding to the great city full of men  
And men's accumulated thought and work,  
With ships from every sea along her wharves.  
Art thou delirious? or wilt thou count  
All this, insanity—the varied life  
In fields and cities, work and worship and love,  
Whate'er binds men together, linking past,  
Present, and future—

O let be ! let be !  
 No form of speech can do me any good,  
 My own or other men's devisal, fresh  
 As primrose, venerable as churchyard yew.  
 Having heard sentence pass'd, no other words  
 Can carry meaning ; one brief dismal phrase  
 Knolls on the air—"No God !" and still—"No God !"

Pretence of continuity ! talk, preach,  
 Write books ; build cities, churches, monuments ;  
 Patch up and varnish histories, pedigrees ;  
 Take childish titles, worship toyshop crowns ;  
 Sustain (save when alone or with a friend)  
 The masquerade of dignity ; pass on  
 Old phrases, teach them to the children ; make  
 Your little mark, or big, as one who scribes  
 Two letters, or full name, or date therewith,  
 Upon a tree, and dies, and in a while  
 The tree perishes also. Vain conceit !  
 Swim with me, fellow-bubbles, catch fine hues  
 And picture-like reflections, and then burst !  
 The swift stream flows, the shoreless sea of forms  
 Melting, reshaping, seeming (since our life  
 Is like a flash of lightning) permanent ;  
 But rolling ever from darkness into darkness.  
 God was behind that darkness once ;—that sea  
 His effluent power. But now, there is no God.

After the first sharp pain I wrote this down  
 To ease awhile my heart-ache. Count not these

But idle words ; for since I wotted first  
 Of my own being, never grief like that.  
 "Able to soothe all sadness but despair"  
 The poet sang : no finest solaces  
 Had any comfort. Through the dismal time  
 I dragged from sleep to sleep, groaning the while,  
 As one sore-wounded drags from pause to pause ;  
 And sleep was like a swoon, or else perturb'd  
 With shapeless terror.

But sleep grew more calm  
 (I know not when or how began the change)—  
 And all things with it ; wind and wave went down  
 And life took on its ordinary look  
 By slow gradations. All was as before ?  
 Not so. I was not in perpetual pain ;  
 Only half-paralysed. Month after month,  
 And after that sad year, another year,  
 And after this, another year. I went  
 And came and talk'd and laugh'd, like those around  
 me ;  
 Only I recollected now and then,  
 And shiver'd, whispering to myself "No God."

No God, no Soul : they are the self-same thought.  
 And I, that think it, turning into mire  
 To-morrow or next year, I care not much  
 What may befall a race of things like me,  
 A little better luck, a little worse,  
 As each flits by and vanishes for ever.

To-morrow will be nothing ; and To-day  
That leads to it, is next to nothing. Go !  
Laugh, weep, do what you will, eat, drink, and die—  
The sad old phrase found true.

Is't selfishness

Thus craves for God, that God may give us life  
After this life ? New life be as it may.  
That irks me nothing. It is this my life  
I would not lose, the life within this life.  
And I have lost it, if there be no God.

## EVIL MAY-DAY.

## PART II.

OF all pathetic things the most is this—  
A happy bright-eyed Child, some four years old,  
Making acquaintance with man's common world.  
Joy, wonder, eager questionings ; anon  
An anxious look, a swift and wide-eyed stare  
At his dear Oracle ; and merry laughs  
And low contented songs made by himself  
Are his ; and youthful strange imaginings !  
And sometimes you may see those innocent eyes  
Fix'd in a meditative trance, the while  
He strives to see some vaguest vapoury form  
Of thought within him.

O this world of ours !

I am your Prophet, Priest, and Oracle,  
My little Son ; whatever I respond  
Is fate. One only answer vexes you—  
" I do not know." You try and try again  
For something better, and are ill-content.  
But often must you hear those baffling words ;  
And often must you say them to yourself  
When manhood, which you deem omniscient,  
Is yours in turn,—is like what we have found.

A Prophet's highest care—not to mislead  
 His neophyte. The dream, the phantasy  
 I put into his mind, is truth for him,  
 Until he finds it untrue. This young soul  
 Tremulous with wonder, curiosity,  
 Imagination, (look but in his face)  
 Drinks in the world through every joyful sense ;  
 Sensation turns to thought, and thought revives  
 Sensation in the memory ; thus is built  
*The body of the mind* by slow degrees,  
 With order'd imagery, with habitudes  
 Of movement ; and the little world it lives in  
 Is its own making chiefly. All the while,  
 The great world lives around it, and includes  
 It with the rest of things. A word of mine,  
 Be it the emptiest breath, can take firm shape  
 In my son's world ; the herald's animals,  
 Insert them in his natural-history book,  
 Were just as credible as any there ;  
 Angel is no whit harder to conceive  
 Than eagle, and a Heaven above the clouds  
 (Reach'd by balloon perhaps) much easier  
 Than suns and planets and space without a bound.  
 You shall not build a false world, little Son,  
 If skill of mine can sift the follies out  
 Men have mix'd up with everything. My care  
 Is less to teach than save you from being taught  
 Half-truths and falsehoods in your tender time.

Beware, my Son, of words ! The Human Race

Hath stored its wisdom there, its errors there,  
 Mistakes and follies and duplicities.  
 Of words false gods are made, each doom'd at last  
 A worn-out idol to the lumber-loft  
 Or trim museum,—concourse wonderful,  
 Superb, grotesque, pathetic, and obscene !

Childhood will ask, "Who made all these things?"  
 "God."

"Where does God live?"—suppose I point and say,  
 "On that high mountain top;" my child regards  
 The peak with joyful awe; but one day climbs  
 And finds a barren frosty crag,—nor heeds  
 The wide-spread glory of things encircling it.  
 He hears of Heaven above the clouds; his book  
 At school confutes it: starry heaven goes blank.  
 Words said to children can be only true,  
 Or not, in their direct and simple sense.  
 "At such and such a place, God walked with men;  
 They saw and heard Him; what he said and did  
 Is warrant for your duties and your hopes."  
 The warm young spirit trustfully accepts,  
 Lies down, uprises, in a full belief,  
 From day to day, for many days and years;  
 Till one day comes the question "Is this true?"  
 Nay, teach the plans, ways, character of God,  
 With Man's relations to Him thence deduced,  
 In any form of words you will: how fence  
 The fatal question out—"But is this true?"  
 The answer "No!" smites all truth to the ground,

The vine and prop together ; Truth itself,  
Immortal Truth, lies murder'd !

Foolishness,  
Dishonesty and cowardice of men,  
What bitter pain, what cruel wrongs ye breed !  
As if our case were not perplex'd enough,  
And troublesome enough, and sad enough,  
But we must writhe in self-inflicted pangs !

But in the reign of Science you are born.  
Theology, with pomp and riches yet,  
Sits mumbling, droning, in his padded chair,  
Gouty, asthmatic, ailing every way.  
A young audacious voice rings through the land—  
“ Ask questions, men, where ye may hope reply  
By gauge of human faculties, may test  
Reply when found. First cause and final cause  
In every case being out of reach, henceforth  
Fix eye and thought upon the scrutable ;  
Travel, examine, and subdue throughout  
The great domain of Science ; step by step,  
Link after link, trace, test, confirm and fix  
The sequences of natural law ; reduce  
The complex to the simple ; thus control,  
So far as man may do so, human life,  
The race itself ; attain, whate'er it be,  
No twilight Land of Dreams, Fool's Paradise,  
Hid in a theologic labyrinth  
Or metaphysic jungle. How sublime  
In its simplicity, one single fact

In pure mechanic formula express'd  
(Shall it be call'd *Vibration* ?—possibly)  
And all phenomena its aspects merely !  
This we shall find at last.”

And then ? what then ?  
Are we at home henceforward in the world ?  
All comfortably settled in our minds,  
Knowing the immortal truth—*Vibration* ?  
Shall we spoonfeed our babes on science-pap,  
Till teeth find tougher work ? train them to scan  
The mechanism of all phenomena,  
To measure and set it down in proper form,—  
The *ne plus ultra* this, which cannot baulk ?  
Again I say, Beware of words, my son.  
Exact and systematic knowledge—good !  
But now, of what ? Of the true nature of things ?  
This is abjured. No step found possible  
In that direction. Of phenomena ?  
“ Surely.” But I deny it : very close  
We peer, and make our atoms very small,  
Yet after all 'tis but the coarser part  
Of any one phenomenon of nature  
Which we can measure and make record of.  
Science is measurement, no more, no less,  
Whatever sauce we add. Minds wholly fill'd  
With Physical Science (and a fond conceit  
That they alone know Nature) miss and lose  
The natural appearances of things  
Beyond all common ignorance. Day and night,  
Earth, ocean, sky, the seasons, peopled full

With countless forms of life ; a world imbued  
 With beauty and with wonder and with awe,  
 Powers inexpressible and infinite,  
 Whereto man's spirit exquisitely thrills,  
 Raised, rapt, and soaring on celestial wings,—  
 Which extasy begetteth Art in some,  
 In every sane soul Worship in some wise,  
 Voiceless or silent,—shall we see instead  
 The tall ghost of a pair of compasses  
 Stalking about a world of diagrams,  
 And algebraic regiments that march  
 And countermarch, and wheel ?

O learn all this—

If so thou fail not to come back at last,  
 My son, to nature's own rich symbolism !  
 Value *appearances*, and study these  
 To see them well,—your first relationship,  
 Your last and truest too, with circumstance ;  
 More excellent by far to apprehend  
 Than all disclosures of analysis.  
 Upon the surface earthly Beauty blooms,  
 Yielding itself to every loving eye,  
 Known heavenly in its correspondences  
 When Seer or Poet comes ; immortal flow'r,  
 Beloved of Man's soul, no trivial thing,  
 No fleeting thing, as flimsy proverbs wail !  
 Inferior truths are good in their degree,  
 But the first-met is first, nor ever can  
 Be weigh'd or measured. That the world is fair  
 Concerns us more than that the world is round,

(Though this, like every truth, be well to know) ;  
 The rose, the primrose, and the hawthorn-flow'r,  
 The colours of the dawn or evening air,  
 The woodlands, and the mountains, and the meads,  
 Lakes, rivers, rivulets and rocky springs,  
 The varying ocean and the starry night,  
 Have in their beauty more significance  
 Than tabulated light-waves which impinge  
 On optic nerves and yield the brain a sense  
 Of red, blue, yellow—Science knows not how.  
 Science can but afford a pitying smile  
 If you forget that just where warmth begins  
 Of human interest in a question, there  
 Science stops short. And let her have the praise  
 Of keeping in her limit, if she keep,  
 And lack not limitation's humbleness.

Beware, I say, of words, warm, wide, and loose ;  
 Beware of cold and rigid formulæ  
 No less : both full of power—they are not things,  
 Nor even thoughts, but shadowings-forth of thoughts,  
 Wearing a phantom dignity themselves.  
 True, that we think by these : most men by words,  
 The grave mathematician by his signs,  
 Expressing a mechanic universe,  
 Yet giving irrepressible Fancy room  
 To sport in magical curves and deem herself  
 Almost creative in mechanic wise,  
 Leaving out life and beauty merely. Words  
 Have melody and colour, and therewith

The Poet's art can build a lovelier world,  
 Nay, truer than the common, for the gold  
 Is smelted from the dross that made it dull.  
 Be ever thankful of poetic truth,  
 And hold it fast. Value *Appearances*,  
 And let *Imagination* teach their worth,  
 Counting this practical. A sane clear mind  
 To see, and to imagine, is a mind  
 Of noblest rank: learning will nourish it,  
 But not to any show of learning: such  
 Are Seers and Poets. Through appearances  
 Beheld with keen and sympathetic eyes  
 Imaginative insight pierces deep  
 To something secret,—not mechanical  
 But spiritual, and wholly beyond reach  
 Of Science, which too often is so vain  
 As therefore to deny it scornfully;  
 Spiritual, and not contain'd or circumscribed  
 In any science ever formulated,  
 Or any creed that is or will be made,  
 Or aught that eye can see, or ear can hear;  
 For subtler, dearer, more delicious beauty  
 Lives in the soul than in the outer world,  
 And therefore fact is poor to hopes and dreams,  
 Child-fancies beggar all the famous things.  
 Ah, might we trust the Poets all in all!  
 Too often they divert themselves and us  
 With gambols in the air. Amorous of words,  
 Temptable by a rhyme or phrase, they make  
 Language their end not means; or sometimes stoop

To stroke the public ear and give those jaws  
 The food they gape for.

Men, in short, my son,  
 Speak truth by most imperfect signs at best,  
 And with it many follies, many lies,  
 Deceiving or deceived, being only men,  
 Weak, wavering, limited. Yet Men alone  
 See, note, explore, make record of, would fain,  
 But cannot ever, comprehend the world,  
 Life being a mystery, not a mechanism;  
 Orderly miracle, where some men see  
 The order, some the wonder, most, and shape  
 Their diagrams, their phantasies; the Wise,  
 Wedding experience and imagination—  
 Both; and lift up their eyes and hands to God.

As to the Future, that is God's affair.  
 I am not Ruler of the Universe,  
 Nor in His secrets; but I hold Him good,  
 His riches boundless, and His will to give.  
 Also that Man has share, whatever share,  
 In working out the Universal Plans,  
 And our own fate is partly in our power,  
 For each, for all; how far we cannot know.  
 This I do know, immortal thoughts alone,  
 Eternal things, have interest for my soul—  
 That which is truly me, my inmost self.

Man can help men, and also hinder them.  
 Men's evil and folly are to guard against,



Assuming many shapes; not dangerous least  
 In Books, pretended utterances of thought.  
 I say it who have loved books all my life.  
 The tongue may lie, or, self-deceiving, show  
 Folly as wisdom, may omit or add,  
 Transpose, misrepresent; more easily  
 The pen; and lo, by typographic art  
 What inky robes of grave authority  
 Do words put on, and in the library  
 The volume takes its seat among its peers,  
 Or quasi-peers. Nowhere such solemn shams  
 As pen and printer's ink can make! Man's tongue  
 Is flexible, but eye, face, voice, and gesture,  
 Body and whole demeanour help you well  
 To check or to corroborate his speech  
 (Put faith in physiognomy!); a Book  
 Wears deep disguise; may be a puppet-thing,  
 And not a man at all. The World of Books  
 Is full of glamour; evil, good, false, true,  
 Living and dead; enchanted wilderness  
 Where many wander, few can find a path,  
 Or gather what is good for them. My Boy,  
 I vow, shall not begin to read too soon!  
 Learning can nourish Wisdom, when good food  
 Is quietly digested; but, too oft,  
 Unfit, ill-cook'd, or overloaded meals  
 Lie crude and swell the belly with wind, or breed  
 Dull fat, mistook for portliness and strength.  
 And surely never since the world began  
 So many Learned Fools as now-a-days,

Or Learned Folly with so loud a voice.  
 Even the Wiser slip from sanity  
 At times, and swell the roaring storm of words.

I am your Oracle and Prophet now,  
 Young Mortal, weak and ignorant as I am  
 And fain to question rather than reply.  
 Yet have I journey'd on the road of life  
 Full many a mile, and bought experiences,  
 Have seen, done, joy'd and suffer'd, with a soul  
 Not timid, neither hard, sincere in grain,  
 Open to every influence, not engross'd  
 Of any, wishing well to all I met.  
 On foot, but not a beggar, have I fared,  
 Rested in huts and inns and palace halls,  
 Conversed on equal terms with many men,  
 Crept through dark valleys, climbed the mountain-  
 tops,  
 And known all kinds of weather. Here I sit  
 By fireside, with a baby on my knee.  
 A Boy with golden curls and grave blue eyes,  
 Asking me questions. Shall I tell him truth?  
 Yes, Dearest, now and ever! But to know  
 The needful questions is to be mature.  
 A child but asks as prompted—and alas  
 Mostly by Ignorance in Wisdom's mask;  
 She uses words unmeaningly, and crowds  
 Life's pathways with memorials of man's folly.  
 Prompt him I must, and honestly give answer.  
 "Who made the world?—(Sweep widely both your arms)

GREAT GOD, my son : this name we call Him by.  
 (Lift up your eyes and little hands to him.)  
 How do we know Him ? In the heart and soul.  
 (Put this hand on your brow, that on your breast.)  
 What is He ? (Place both hands across your eyes,  
 And bend your head.) No man hath power to  
 know."

This is enough to tell him at the time.

Man hath no thoughts to think what GOD is like,  
 And much less words to say ; but he can feel  
 At times the Presence great and wonderful  
 Beyond all words and thoughts and dreams, and yet  
 Wherein we live and move and have our being.  
 All great truths are incomprehensible ;  
 Much more the Living Centre of them all.  
 The clearest moments of the noblest men  
 Give insight thitherward, and what they see  
 Belongs to man, though some regard it not.  
 Soon the clouds roll together, the ground-fogs  
 Grow thick, and all the vision disappears ;  
 But what the best eyes at their best behold  
 Is Truth Divine ; the test whereof is this—  
 A lofty sanity of thought and life  
 In whoso doth receive it, harmony  
 Felt in his inmost being, nor wholly hid  
 From other men. But O impossible  
 To put the vision into words, nor weave  
 Therewith a snare ! O folly, to suppose  
 That speech, however wonderful it be,

Is more than makeshift ! Could I stop thine ears,  
 Till thou art somewhat ripened in thy mind,  
 My son, from all more free discourse of God,  
 Dogmatic, controversial, personal,  
 I would ; and I will do it, all I can.

It may be thou art born to a troublous time,  
 Retributive on nations for their sins,  
 Of darkness, earthquake, storm, an evil time.  
 At least, thou shalt escape one evil thing—  
 My Evil May-day, doleful to endure,  
 Sad to remember. Yet it pass'd ; I live ;  
 And God lives.

## EVIL MAY-DAY.

## PART III.

AND God lives. Yes, begin and end with that.  
 For, whichever way you turn your face  
 And journey through th' illimitable vast,  
 You come to Nothing or you come to God.

"We come to Matter," you reply, "more Matter,  
 Matter in many forms, ourselves being of them.  
 Man too is made of world-stuff."

Which contains

No mind, affection, moral principle,  
 Or ruling will ; yet breeds them in its dance  
 Of purposeless gyration, turns (O strange !)  
 At last to speculation on itself,  
 And finds at choice, dust or divinity.

—I say, we come to Nothing, or to God.

'Confront us then with Him. Who sees his face,  
 Or hears his voice ? They told us in our youth  
 He paced a garden, spoke from a certain hill,  
 And wore a man's true body for a time.  
 They painted Him, an Old Man propt on clouds,  
 A Young Man, flowing-hair'd, with aureole,  
 Walking on water, flying through the air ;  
 Much wondrous, much familiar circumstance.  
 But all this fading into fairy-tales,  
 What have we ?'

Truth. And know this well, once more,  
 Every high truth is inexpressible,  
 And God, the highest, absolutely. Men  
 Strive after some conception, symbol-wise,  
 But make too oft the symbol into idol ;  
 And all these idols forged by human brain,  
 Better or worse, and aiding more or less,  
 Misleading less or more, long-lived or short,  
 Are perishable things. The idol falls ;  
 And then it seems the pillars of the world  
 That break, the roof of heav'n that crashes in.  
 A little cloud of dust was in our eyes ;  
 Look up : God sits enthroned, thy lord and king ;  
 Look round, His earth is wide and beautiful.  
 If once thou hast that vision, treasure it,  
 Speak little of it, let it nourish thy life  
 In fair thoughts, just deeds, and self-harmony,  
 While the unceasing noise of human talk  
 Goes by, unheeded, and the multitude  
 Concerns itself with whatsoe'er it will.  
 Jove's thunderbolt, Apollo's fiery car,  
 Being phrases put aside, seems solar force  
 Less wonderful, or th' all-pervasive thrill  
 Of electricity ? The human mind  
 And moral laws, do these depend on names ?  
 The world is wider, deeper than our thought ;  
 We walk as if in twilight : but, at times,  
 How, whence, we know not, all is lighted up,  
 Transfigured. What is shown to us ? A glimpse  
 Of inmost truth.

So and not otherwise  
 Poetic and religious thoughts are born,  
 Nor else interpretable. This great Light,  
 More glorious than the sun's, this Divine Stream,  
 This emanation from the Life of Life,  
 Named or not named, and fittest received  
 With silent joy, these cloudless blissful hours  
 Or moments, who shall hope to represent?  
 The finest mesh of words being all too coarse,  
 The loftiest tones of poem or of creed  
 But distant echoes of the vibrant Soul  
 Throbbing and pulsing in its bath of Light,  
 Fill'd with the presence of the Living God,  
 One Power evolving multiformity,  
 Pervading and transcending every form.

Such vision you may keep, or you may lose.  
 And what destroys it, or prevents it? This—  
 The setting-up False Vision in its place,  
 By obsolete pretended evidence,  
 Untrue in fact, impossible in kind,  
 Still palm'd on innocent souls when full of trust  
 And love and wonder. Once these holy names  
 And emblems meant what now they cannot  
 mean,

As well thou knowest; yet thou teachest them  
 For absolute truth to tender longing souls,  
 Fastening their faith, their highest faculty,  
 To forms decay'd, worm-eaten through and through.  
 Vile coward! murderer of thy children's peace,  
 Preparing for them sick and crooked lives,

The end perhaps despair. But God's light shines,  
 Though men shut out, discolour, distort the ray.

Man, in a sense, makes God. In the same sense  
 Man makes the World: his world is what he makes it.  
 Each man his World, his God. But tell me now:  
 The natural, true, and most miraculous World,  
 Which no man ever saw, can ever see,  
 The Living Absolute Eternal God,  
 Whom no man ever saw, can ever see,—  
 Do these depend on how a man shall think  
 Or picture them, or any set of men?  
 The God a man hath made he may pull down;  
 The World a man makes alters with himself;  
 The true, the everlasting Life remains,  
 Surest of all things,—personal, universal,  
 Ineffable, incomprehensible,  
 Perceived, received, as with the flower of the soul.  
 God rules us whether we take heed or no.  
 'Tis duty less than privilege and joy  
 To recognise Him; nor such boon to all  
 In equal measure. Judge its potency  
 In the few most receptive, not the crowd.

Were all born blind, then who would guess the  
 light?  
 All deaf, then who imagine any sound?  
 And many see the light who nothing know  
 Of the Sun's greatness, only dimly see  
 The beauty it gives birth to; many have ears  
 And yet by music's magic no more touch'd  
 Than carven figures by the organ-storm

Shaking their substance atoms. Must thou gain  
 These other men's impossible consent  
 Before thou tremblest to the mystic joy  
 That frees thy spirit with a gift of wings  
 In Music's atmosphere? or give account  
 To them of how and why thou thus art moved  
 By Beauty, natural or interpreted?  
 Doubt, or distrust, or disbelieve, since some  
 With ears that hear not, eyes that cannot see,  
 Bring scales to measure and weigh your conscious-  
 ness?

Nay, know'st thou Love?—a Love sublime and pure,  
 The world's transfiguration, through thy soul's.  
 If thou hast ever been assured of this,  
 Shall icy hearts or sneering tongues convict  
 High Love, and not themselves, of foolishness?  
 Consider then: if that most glorious Power  
 Far beyond audible and visual sense,  
 Felt at the inmost of thy soul of souls  
 In moments clear and rare, at other times  
 Be thickly veil'd from thee or quite obscured,  
 Wilt thou accept the bright hour or the dark  
 To teach thee truth? If certain other men  
 Deny the vision wholly, wilt thou choose  
 Negation for thy having? and because  
 Of the great glory and wonder of the light  
 That shone upon thee, say it was a dream,  
 No truth at all? Forget Him if thou wilt.  
 Deny Him. Thou art free. Nor will He strike  
 With angry flash; not so the world is made.

No penalties are set for unbelief,  
 Except the natural and inevitable  
 Contain'd in not believing. Count these nothing,—  
 Who shall refute, gainsay thee? go thy ways;  
 The loss is in thyself; and if unfelt,  
 The greater. Even as the man devoid  
 Of music misses nothing, loveless man  
 Pines not for lack of love, so he to whom  
 This world is empty of Divinity  
 From earth's dark centre to the Milky Way,  
 Sees his world full as other men's, and seems  
 To live in the same world. O marvellous!  
 Here walk two human creatures side by side:  
 But seest thou in what kind of world each moves?  
 Not with the bodily eye. Each makes his own,  
 And counts his own the only. To but few  
 Is given the Poet's, Prophet's ecstasy;  
 Yet theirs the witness we accept at last.

Many are dull and scarcely heed at all.  
 But some turn all to question:—'What is Life,  
 This marvel of all marvels? Show to us  
 Without delay, Whence, How, and What it is,  
 Or must we not affirm it meaningless?  
 At most, a puzzle fit to stretch our wits,  
 The whilst we eat, drink, fight, laugh, propagate,  
 And play at reason, virtue, and so forth?  
 Guess it a dustheap, somehow grown alive,  
 Or else a sort of mental phantasy?  
 Surely, if we can't sift things, we have right

To rate them as we choose.' There wisdom spoke.  
 What peevish fools, what froward babes are we !  
 But this at least is true beyond a doubt,—  
 Man's Life *has* meaning, else the world has none,  
 This Universe is but a puff of smoke  
 Floating in whirls about the gulf of space,  
 We atoms in the midst, and all our thoughts  
 Are less than nothing.

What Life is, I know not,  
 Nor claim the right to know ; but gladly accept  
 The highest hints and intimations given,  
 As likest truth. I know not what God is,  
 Nor count it reasonable to suppose  
 A man could know ; but that God lives and rules,  
 My soul in times of pure and tranquil vision  
 Sees without effort ; which great central truth  
 Sways into order all the world of thought,  
 That else were chaos. And, since I am I,  
 To me, a person, He, a person, lives ;  
 A Living God, of power immeasurable,  
 Nature incomprehensible, and plans  
 Inscrutable ; of whom I know by faith ;  
 A reasonable and necessary faith  
 Correlative to ignorance, and yet  
 No way self-contradictory, a clue  
 In a prodigious labyrinth, a lamp  
 In a great darkness.

Why no more is known ?  
 Enough it is the nature of things ; and how

In sooth could I conceive it otherwise,  
 Create a different world ? What use this faith ?—  
 What use wide-sweeping universal thoughts ?  
 Nay what use is the universe itself ?  
 At least we'll take for granted it exists,  
 Though questions may lack answers ! ' Matter,'  
 ' Spirit,'

What may these be ? one thing, or separate ?—  
 I care not which ; for how should that concern ?  
 All is, of need, connected, up and down,  
 And grossest link'd with subtlest. We must live  
 In a material world, must therein work,  
 Thereby be wrought upon. I am conjoin'd—  
 This personal I, (invisible as God)—  
 To my own bodily organs first of all ;  
 Related strictly to the beast, the bird,  
 The blade of grass, the clod of earth, the cloud,  
 The faintest haze of suns within the sky.  
 That nearest fiery orb makes flow my blood ;  
 Electric ether vivifies my brain ;  
 And I, made up of these, who am not these,  
 Exist in personal being, think, enquire,  
 Reason, imagine, feel, and nothing know ;  
 But in my clearest moments I think—God.  
 Ask you, What use is Faith ? Faith is like Health ;  
 Which, if you have in full serene possession,  
 You feel it every moment of the day,  
 In every fibre of your frame, each mood  
 And movement of your mind, yet for most part  
 Unconsciously. Inherit health and lose it,

Then shall you know its worth. But some poor men  
 Have never had it, and their seeming life  
 Is three parts death ; some fling away their share  
 To buy diseases, or, when sense is dull'd,  
 Count dulness armour, take defect for strength ;  
 Few have full measure : O to be like them !  
 For health is life, tho' sickness in a sort  
 Lives on, and nearly all the world is sick ;  
 And Faith is higher wider subtler health,  
 What ether is to air, a harmony,  
 A pure truth inexpressible in words,  
 All the great truths being measureless, and God  
 Greatest.

O spend not life in questions : live !  
 Go on thy way and find there what thou may'st.  
 The past is past and had its own beliefs,  
 To-day lies round, pours in, miraculous,  
 And in man's soul the springs of prophecy  
 Well up from their unfathomable source  
 Unceasingly, while he has faith in God.  
 Belief in God—here is the fountain-head  
 Of all religion, and, could that run dry  
 To all the human race, then human life  
 Were but a sandy desert full of asps.  
 No God—No Man. Blind matter all without ;  
 Within, delusive shadows. Hold God fast.

May-Day was evil when I miss'd my God :  
 Earth, sea and sky fall'n empty of a sudden,

All the wide universe a dismal waste  
 Peopled with phantoms of my fitting self,  
 And mocking gleams chance-kindled and chance  
 quench'd,  
 All meaning nothing. Natural May-Day  
 Revived to me when I found God again ;  
 World full of beauty and significance  
 Wisely and justly govern'd, and I too  
 Part and partaker of the wondrous whole ;  
 Made capable to feel, enjoy, adore,  
 To think and reason, not to comprehend.

Manhood is Freedom,—O to use it well,  
 Acting upon the element where I move  
 According to its nature and my own,  
 (Obscurely folded in the germ at first,  
 Form'd by successive subtle acts of will)  
 Acting to greater purpose than appears,  
 Nor too much sorrowing over seeming loss  
 Nor anxious for security of gain,  
 Mild, equal-minded, fearless! To such level  
 Rise I in happy hour, spring-tide of soul,  
 Aware, without words, and beyond all words,  
 That God was, is, and evermore remains ;  
 The Living Centre of this Universe,  
 Itself imagined only and not seen ;  
 Always the Centre, reach'd by various roads  
 From many points by many different minds.  
 Who move tow'rds Him, converge. Who move from  
 Him

Diverge, and wander out to lonely Space,  
 Where they see nothing and hear nothing, save  
 A hollow echo of their own voice return'd  
 As from the Cavern of Eternal Death.  
 But from the Centre, Everlasting Life  
 Expands and pulses in perpetual waves.

Man's property is Will ; and he thereby  
 Can turn his face to God, change his own world ;  
 For some things must be fix'd, and some left free.  
 Is there not Good and Bad ? and Best and Worst ?  
 And art thou sure there is no Heaven and Hell ?  
 Methinks we may have foretaste of them both.

## IN A COTTAGE GARDEN.

**B**ETWIXT our apple-boughs, how clear  
 The violet western hills appear,  
 As calmly ends another day  
 Of Earth's long history,—from the ray  
 She with slow majestic motion  
 Wheeling continent and ocean  
 Into her own dim shade, wherethrough  
 The Outer Heavens come into view,  
 Deep beyond deep.

In thought conceive  
 This rolling Globe whereon we live,  
 (For in the mind, and there alone,  
 A picture of the world is shown)  
 How huge it is, how full of things,  
 As round the royal SUN it swings,  
 In one of many subject rings,—  
 Carrying our Cottage with the rest,  
 Its rose-lawn and its martin's nest.

But, number every grain of sand,  
 Wherever salt wave touches land ;  
 Number in single drops the sea ;  
 Number the leaves on every tree ;  
 Number Earth's living creatures, all  
 That run, that fly, that swim, that crawl ;  
 Of sands, drops, leaves, and lives, the count  
 Add up into one vast amount ;



And then, for every separate one  
 Of all those, let a flaming SUN  
 Whirl in the boundless skies, with each  
 Its massy planets, to outreach  
 All sight, all thought : for all we see,  
 Encircled with Infinity,  
 Is but an island.

Look aloft,  
 The stars are gathering. Cool and soft  
 The twilight in our garden-croft  
 Purples the crimson-folded rose,  
 (O tell me how so sweet it grows !)  
 Makes gleam like stars the cluster'd white ;  
 And Beauty too is infinite.

---

**E**VERYTHING passes and vanishes ;  
 Everything leaves its trace ;  
 And often you see in a footstep  
 What you could not see in a face.

---

## SONNET : DAFFODIL.

**G**OLD tassel upon March's bugle-horn,  
 Whose blithe reveille blows from hill to hill  
 And every valley rings,—O Daffodil !  
 What promise for the season newly born ?  
 Shall wave on wave of flow'rs, full tide of corn,  
 O'erflow the world, then fruited Autumn fill  
 Hedgerow and garth ? Shall tempest, blight, or  
 chill,  
 Turn all felicity to scathe and scorn ?  
 Tantarrara ! the joyous Book of Spring  
 Lies open, writ in blossoms ; not a bird  
 Of evil augury is seen or heard :  
 Come now, like Pan's old crew we'll dance and sing,  
 Or Oberon's ; for hill and valley ring  
 To March's bugle-horn,—Earth's blood is stirr'd.

---

## NE QUID NIMIS.

**Y**E that love astounding phrases,  
 As the fashion of these days is,  
 Fiery colour, fierce contortion,  
 Dazzle, glare, and disproportion,  
 Elsewhere turn you. *Ne quid nimis* :  
 Such the motto of my rhyme is.

---

## THE HONEST FARMER.

HAPPY I count the Farmer's life,  
 Its various round of wholesome toil ;  
 An honest man with loving wife,  
 And offspring native to the soil.

Thrice happy, surely !—in his breast  
 Plain wisdom and the trust in God ;  
 His path more straight from east to west  
 Than politician ever trod.

His gain's no loss to other men ;  
 His stalwart blows inflict no wound ;  
 Not busy with his tongue or pen,  
 He questions truthful sky and ground.

Partner with seasons and the sun,  
 Nature's co-worker ; all his skill  
 Obedience, ev'n as waters run,  
 Winds blow, beast, herb their laws fulfil.

An active youthhood, clean and bold ;  
 A vigorous manhood ; cheerful age ;  
 His comely children proudly hold  
 Their parentage best heritage.

Unhealthy work, false mirth, chicane,  
 Guilt, needless woe, and useless strife,—  
 O cities, vain, inane, insane !—  
 How happy is the Farmer's life !

---

SEE what lives of mortals are  
 On our foolish little star !  
 Toils unceasing, pleasures flying,  
 Aspirations fall'n to sighing,  
 Old deceits in garbs newfangled,  
 Angel-wings with cobwebs tangled,  
 Selfish comfort, drugg'd with sense,  
 Ambition's poverty immense,  
 Tender memory, sad in vain,  
 Flickering hope and haunting pain,  
 Cries of suffering, sweat of strife,—  
 But where the strong victorious life ?  
 Perchance its deeds make little noise ;  
 No record of its pains and joys,  
 Save in mystic forms enscroll'd,  
 Spiritual eyes behold,  
 Seeing what lives of mortals are  
 On our foolish little star.

---

MAN'S found by his event. Not whirlwind Chance  
 Blows round the mystic multitudinous dance,  
 But Music, heard by ear the finest touch,  
 Sways all in order : Wisdom's ear is such.

---

## SONNET.

LOVE, after long exilement from my breast,  
 Came as of yore last night, and gave to view  
 ('Twas only in a dream) the face I knew  
 And loved so well. Ah me, that time was best !  
 O pure and perfect joy, when I possess  
 Thy soul in mine, when life was love of you,  
 And all the fairness of the world most true,  
 Love being God's truth and chief among the rest !  
 Was I through ignorance or folly glad  
 In those lost days, not having found as yet  
 The secret of the world, which drives men mad,  
 With one cold poison-drop for remedy ?  
 Or have the Powers of Darkness gripe on me  
 Because I flung away mine amulet ?

---

“ WHY, yes,—we've pass'd a pleasant day ;  
 While life's true joys are on their way.”  
 —Ah me ! I now look back afar,  
 And see that one day like a star.

---

## A SAD SONG.

LOVE once kiss'd me,  
 Unfolded his wings, and fled.  
 Hath friendship miss'd me ?  
 Is faith in all friendship dead ?  
 If a spell could summon  
 These phantoms that come and go,  
 Of men and women,  
 Their very selves to show,  
 I might find (alas me !)  
 My seeking both night and day.  
 But I pass them, they pass me,  
 And each on a lonely way.

Soul, art thou friendless,  
 A loser, sorrowful, weak ?  
 Life is not endless,  
 Death is not far to seek.  
 Thou sailest ever,  
 Each moment, if sad or kind,  
 Down the great river ;  
 It opens, it closes behind ;  
 Far back thou seest  
 The mountain-tops' faint azure ;  
 Below, as thou fleest,  
 The ripple, the shadow's erasure.

Why dost thou, weeping,  
 Stretch forth thine arms in vain ?  
 It breaks thy sleeping ;  
 O drop into trance again.  
 In dream thou may'st go where  
 Child's Island is flowery grass'd,  
 Deep-skied,—it is nowhere  
 Save in the Land of the Past.  
 Time is dying,  
 The World too ; forget their moan ;  
 The sad wind sighing  
 Let murmur, this alone.

---

 SLEEPY.

**O** LEAVE me quiet for a thousand years !  
 No duties, troubles, pleasures, hopes or fears,  
 No sun or moon with sad returning beam,  
 Only a faintly glimmering world, half dream,  
 To faintly touch my senses : rest I would,  
 Forget the tangled life, the bad and good,  
 And everything that has been,—drinking deep  
 The freshness of regenerating sleep,  
 Ages and æons of celestial rest ;  
 To wake—I know not when,—sleep now were best.

**A**RT thou Lord of the World ? Was it all made for  
 thee,  
 Child of Time, Child of Clay ?  
 Thinkest thou, skies will ever bend o'er thee,  
 Bland and friendly as those of to-day ?  
 Every joy its savour keep,  
 Night o'erflow with happy sleep,  
 Pain and sorrow shun thy roof,  
 Sad Old Age keep well aloof,  
 Life go smoothly on its way,  
 Brain control, and hand obey,  
 To-morrow be like yesterday ?  
 Things only wait, they only wait,  
 They lie in ambush for thy fate.  
 Days go, and nights go,  
 Years run away, and lo !  
 Now the end is coming fast  
 The proud foolish dream past ;  
 See the brand, so brightly kindled,  
 To a fading ember dwindled ;  
 All thy pleasures, all thy riches,  
 Vanish like a dance of witches !

Is this indeed the revolt thou wert fearing,  
 Child of the Infinite, Child of Hope ?  
 Or is it the lower world disappearing  
 Whilst thou art lifted to higher scope ?  
 Thou art gently drawn away.  
 Think,—truly,—would'st thou stay ?  
 Nothing has been given thee yet  
 So good, but better thou may'st get.

## SONNET : A FLOWER (IN TIME OF WAR).

**F**AIR Maid of February,—drop of snow  
 Enchanted to a flow'r, and therewithin  
 A dream of April green,—who without sin  
 Conceived wast, but how no man may know ;  
 I would thou mightest, being of heavenly kin,  
 Pray for us all (thy lips are pure, altho'  
 The soil be soak'd with tears and blood), to win  
 Some ruth for human folly, guilt, and woe.

A fitting phantasy and fond conceit !  
 Yet mark this little white-green bell, three-cleft,  
 And muse upon it. Earth is not bereft  
 Of miracles ; lo, here is one complete :  
 And after this the whole new spring-time left,  
 And all the roses that make summer sweet.

---

**D**ENY not Love and Friendship, tho' long and  
 vainly sought ;  
 Thy sad perpetual craving with deepest proof is  
 fraught.  
*Thou* canst be friend and lover ; else why thy long-  
 ing now ?  
 Canst *thou* be true and tender ?—of mortals, only  
*thou* ?

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## NEWS FROM PANNONIA.

A.D. 180.

DRUSILLUS.                      PROBUS.

*Dru.* **H**AIL, Probus !  
*Pro.* Hail, Drusillus !—thou in Rome !  
 Pale too, by Hercules ! Art sick, or wounded ?

*Dru.* Neither, my Probus. From Pannonia, I ;  
 A twelve days' journey. Now the Senate cons  
 My message, and I hurry to the bath.  
 Farewell, my friend ; I'll visit you to-morrow.

*Pro.* Nay, at this hour the public bath is throng'd,  
 And lo, my house at hand, and yours away  
 Beside the Vipsan Columns. Come, Drusillus,  
 Welcome awaits you, bath and robe and supper,  
 Not laid for guests, but large enough for two ;  
 And then, for March wind scours the dusty streets,  
 Home in my litter. Bravely said, old friend !  
 I will not ask your camp news, well content  
 To hear with Rome : we'll talk philosophy,  
 As many a night before—dispute, agree,  
 And taste again the likeness in unlikeness  
 Friendship is mix'd of.

*Dru.* Thou may'st ask my news.  
 All Rome, indeed, will shortly ring with it.

*Pro.* Another victory and triumph ? Nay,  
 Not a defeat ? Why look you at me thus ?

*Dru.* Cæsar ——

*Pro.* Is dead ?

*Dru.* He is.

*Pro.* Aurelius dead !

O friend, a weighty message in two words !  
So heavy hath not fall'n into mine ear  
Since when, a youth, I heard men whispering  
"Good Antoninus is no more !" — How long  
Is that ago ? — He was thy father's friend  
I think, Drusillus, as Aurelius thine.

*Dru.* He was. — Exactly nineteen years this  
month.

My father was that captain of the guard  
Who came to Antoninus, lying sick,  
For the night's watchword, and the Emperor,  
Fixing his mild majestic eyes on him,  
Said "*Equanimity*." At dawn of day  
My father saw th' imperial face again  
Pale, silent, and with eyes for ever closed.  
And now his great adopted Son hath join'd  
The shadowy multitude. No Quadic spear  
Dethroned him ; it was fever's poison'd arrow  
Flying invisible through the camp. He shared  
The legionaries' food and long fatigues,  
And every chance of war.

*Pro.* Thou too, Drusillus,  
Or I mistake thee. Therefore do not scorn  
This amber liquor from my own hill-slope ;  
Thou hast sat beneath the vines there. As thou  
wilt.

Himself was not more temperate. Was his age  
Twelve lustra ?

*Dru.* Save a year.

*Pro.* Too short a life !

*Dru.* Aurelius thought not so. He ask'd my age  
One day, and when I told him, "At two-score" —  
He said—"a wise man knows what life is like,  
And, though he lived a thousand years, would see  
Old things in new masks merely. Why not die ?  
I soon shall notch a third score on the stick,  
Nor wish the game spun wearisomely out.  
The Roman death," he said, "a man's free choice,  
Is rational, bold ; great men have chosen it ;  
But I for my part rather will await  
Th' appointed hour of natural release,  
Patient of life, not fearing death at all ;  
A sentry at his post."

*Pro.* Go on, Drusillus !

*Dru.* "Why," said the Emperor, "should death  
be dreadful ?

Since it is nothing but a natural change,  
One other needful movement in a world  
Where all things always move, and nothing stays,  
Yet nothing is destroy'd. Why shrink from change ?  
That Power which governs all things, changes all,  
And makes from out their substance, other things,  
From these things others yet, continually ;  
And by the flow of this perpetual change  
Keeps universal nature always young."

*Pro.* Thy memory's good.

*Dru.* I noted down his words.  
 "The world, could'st thou but see it, would be seen  
 Shifting incessantly, but nothing lost,  
 And the great Whole continuing : the Gods  
 Also continuing, as I well believe."

*Pro.* Would that we might have clearer news of  
 them !

In Rome, as well thou knowest, many men  
 Scoff at the Gods and count them fables merely.  
 What would they say to this ? ' Assuredly  
 Cæsar must keep the temples up !'—or else,  
 ' Old-fashioned ! Out of date !'

*Dru.* But here indeed  
 No Pontiff spoke : for one thing stay'd with him  
 Since Verus was his name, and Hadrian  
 Who loved the boy call'd him *Verissimus* ;  
 From youth to age, truth was his very nature,  
 Nor custom nor tradition master'd him,  
 All was digested in his mind, which took  
 Its proper nutriment ; nor he the fool  
 To think, like many, truths wear out with time—  
 Being more substantial than the sea and land.

*Pro.* I trust his moderate and measured phrase  
 Beyond all flourishes.

*Dru.* He hated those.  
 "The Gods," he said, "we name them as we will :  
 They stand above my knowledge : but I feel  
 A Power Divine within me and without  
 Whereby all things are govern'd, changed, preserved."  
 And on another day these words were his :

"All from the Gods is full of Providence,  
 Nor Fortune separate from Nature ; all  
 Being interwoven in one mighty web.  
 Why therefore should I fear to quit the earth,  
 If this be so ? And if it be not so,  
 Why should I care to live in such a world,  
 Empty of Gods and void of Providence ?"

*Pro.* Wise words !—and here no trivial theorist,  
 But Roman Cæsar, mightiest of men.  
 What will his son be like ?

*Dru.* As the Gods please.  
 High man or low man, wise man is the man.  
 Marcus himself would many a time declare,  
 "Great Alexander, Julius, and Pompeius,  
 Count I but small, if match'd with Socrates,  
 Or Heraclitus, or Diogenes,  
 Or that Greek Slave."

*Pro.* Ay, noble Epictetus.  
 Aurelius would have made that slave his friend.  
 But let us talk of Commodus awhile.  
 Where is he ?

*Dru.* In the camp. Aurelius turn'd  
 By nature to philosophy. He said  
 "The Senate gave me empire, not desired,  
 Much better loving shady silent paths  
 Of peaceful meditation, than to roll  
 On dusty highway in triumphal car.  
 But all things moved together to that end,  
 Adoption, training, much experience gain'd  
 In public functions, most of all the wish—

Of him my more than father ; and with these—  
The driving-wheel of all—sense of man's place  
And work, as social and for general use.”

*Pro.* A noble nature !

*Dru.* Well brought-up withal.  
He loved to praise his tutors—“Thanks to them  
For what I am.” But he was ever humble.  
“I know,” he said, “being prince, and train'd thereto,  
I've miss'd much man-lore simple men have gain'd  
Simply, as husbandmen grow weatherwise  
And fishers wary.”

*Pro.* There is truth in that.  
Alp sees not close but wide. Nor can the great  
Well know the teasing troubles of poor men.  
Was he a bookish man ?

*Dru.* His books were few.  
I've heard him say, “Much reading is but vain.  
In contemplation and experience  
The wise man will discover what he needs,  
Unmesh'd in subtleties and speculations  
Thin-spun by curious busy-idle wits.  
The sense of things is plain to healthy minds,  
The nature of them deep beyond all ken ;  
Of qualities we learn ; of essence nothing ;  
Nor do I deem, in myriad years to come,  
Though many little truths they pick or delve  
And put in storehouse, men are like to know  
One atom more of Life, Death, or the Gods  
Than we do now ; nor shall they profit much  
In happiness, perchance, by all they learn.

To view the daily earth and nightly heavens,  
Feeling their beauty and magnificence ;  
To know there's good and evil, choose the good ;  
Let reason govern thee, not appetite ;  
Learn to be true, just, diligent, and brave ;  
Count all men brothers, work for general use ;  
Obey God, help men, and be not perturb'd,  
Taking thy lot with equanimity ;  
These are the main things, and must always be ;  
What more we add, not much, though we should set  
The sun and moon in scales, see the grass grow,  
And fly with better than Icarian wings  
From Rome to Thule.”

*Pro.* Had he any guess  
Of how the world was made ?

*Dru.* “Too deep for thought,”  
He said, “much more for language.” Yet he mused  
And question'd thus, “The nature of the Whole  
Moved, and began the order'd Universe ;  
And everything must be continuous  
From that prime impulse. Shall we deem this force,  
Ev'n in the highest things whereto it tendeth,  
Void of a rational principle ?—or all  
From one divine inscrutable First Cause,  
Whence too our rational being must derive  
Its powers ? The order that subsists in thee  
Is under rule of reason. Can this rule  
Be absent in the Universe ? Not so.  
One Living Mind rules all.”

*Pro.* Remember'd well !



I see this as I never saw before.  
His words are precious gems. Doth Commodus  
Set forth at once to Rome? What think'st thou of  
him?

The slaves are out of hearing.

*Dru.* Grant me this,  
Dear friend, no word of politics to-night!

*Pro.* So be it. Tell me more then of our Prince  
Who now is with the Gods.

*Dru.* Oft in his tent  
Or by a watchfire on the battle-field,  
I saw him take a little parchment-scroll  
Out of his bosom; and on a certain night  
He let me look therein, close-writ in Greek;  
Saying, "I put these thoughts upon my tablets  
As they came to me, wrote them fairly out,  
And turn to them again from time to time;  
Since what is written, even by oneself,  
Becomes a force, takes place in the world of things,  
And may be found again and scann'd again;  
Thus wise mood and clear insight come in aid  
Of weak dark moments, and hold judgment firm.  
The most," he said, "were written long ago;  
I read in them my brighter healthier self;  
Now, things grow wearisome, and seldom seem  
Worth the style's labour—yet are they no worse,  
No better than of old." With leave, I conn'd  
The sentences, and copied many down  
In our own tongue, from memory. Words are  
seeds.

Here is my scroll, if thou art not yet tired.  
But much he spoke was to the same effect.

*Pro.* Nay, read, Drusillus.

*Dru.* Thus Aurelius:  
"Whate'er it be, this Universe,—myself  
Am part thereof, related intimately  
To other parts like me, my fellow-men.  
Let me be thankful and content, and seek  
The common good; for happy he alone  
Who, wise in contemplation, just in action,  
Resigns himself to universal nature,  
Expecting, fearing, and disliking nothing,  
And puts his ruling faculty to use.  
Ask this—how doth the ruling faculty  
Employ itself? All else is but as smoke."—  
"What is this hubbub that goes on around?  
Vain pomp and stage-play, weapon-brandishings;  
Sheep following sheep (poor men!), herds driv'n  
along,  
Dogs rushing to a bone, fish to a crumb,  
Labours of ants, hurry of frighten'd mice,  
The posturing of puppets pull'd by strings!  
View it all quietly, good-naturedly,  
And not with scorn; but clearly understand  
A man is worth so much as that is worth  
He busies himself in. Yet, all are brethren:  
Turn not away from any man or thing."—  
"Wrong-doers must be, therefore marvel not  
To meet one; he's in error; on thy part  
Seek to amend him kindly: if thou'rt anger'd

Give thyself blame, not him. Be not perturb'd.  
 If a man hate thee, that is his affair,  
 Thine, that he have no cause. Upon thyself  
 Depends thy happiness ; thy will is free ;  
 Obey the voice of God."—Mark this, my friend :  
 " If God hath planned it all—enough : art thou  
 Wiser than God ? But certain men surmise  
 Chance ruleth all, or Fate : be thou at least  
 Not rulèd so, and having cared for this,  
 Be tranquil." Note that, Probus—" Thou at least  
 Be not so rulèd." Often would he say,  
 " What is the dearest, most essential thing  
 Whereof no man rob us ? Our Free-Will !"

*Pro.* A grand word ! But, how choose therewith ?

*Dru.* He held,

That, as our lungs inhale the atmosphere,  
 A subtler spiritual force pervades the world,  
 Which he who wills may draw into his mind.

*Pro.* Strange !—yet my soul breathes freer at his  
 words.

Read on.

*Dru.* In this the perfect Stoic speaks :  
 " Rule thy opinion, and thou rulest all  
 Comes from without ; esteem that as it is,  
 Nothing—the Ruling Faculty untouched."

*Pro.* I am too weak for that !

*Dru.* Again he writes :

" Value not life at any costly rate.  
 Reflect : the Past a dream, the Future nothing,  
 The Present is the only thing thou hast,

Therefore the only thing which thou can'st lose,  
 And what is that ?—a point."

*Pro.* The sophist here  
 Methinks, Drusillus—subtlety for wisdom !  
 The Past is *in* the Present, and the point  
 Is moving, therefore measureless.

*Dru.* Well said !  
 No man is always right.

*Pro.* And then, " Opinion ?"  
 Suppose at some bad inn I drink sour wine,  
 How shall opinion make me taste and feel  
 Falernian ? Or should angry Neptune toss  
 My wretched body, hath opinion power  
 To comfort me ?

*Dru.* Some men are tougher made  
 No doubt, than others ; for the perfect Stoic  
 Too nice a palate is unapt, too weak  
 A stomach ; yet the main point lies not here.  
 Make by our Ruling Faculty the least  
 And not the most of adverse accident,  
 The best and not the worst of all our gifts,  
 We're followers, though with feeble step it be,  
 Of Zeno, Epictetus, and Aurelius.  
 Live but to gratify our lower selves  
 And study these, we're on the hateful road  
 With Nero and his parasites.

*Pro.* A gloss  
 On Stoicism !—a good one I allow.  
 I fear I'm of the sons of Epicurus—  
 The later sons, degenerate from his doctrine !

*Dru.* Nay, thou malign'st thyself—in vain to me.  
 No two men are alike, nor no two Stoics.  
 But here are maxims fit for every man :  
 "Act as thy nature leads, observing justice.  
 Rate everything according to its value.  
 Bear what the common nature brings to thee."  
 "Study not what thy neighbour says, does, thinks,  
 But live thine own life rightly. Talk no more  
 Of how a man should live, but so live thou."—  
 "The Soul's a sphere, and keeps her proper shape  
 If not stretch'd forth to outward things too far,  
 Contracted inward, sunken, or disperst."—  
 "Seek imperturbably to live a life  
 Of wisdom, justice, temperance, fortitude ;  
 Be ever friendly, mild, benevolent ;  
 And follow thy eudæmon—God within thee."

*Pro.* Gold words! The sweetest of the Stoics, he.  
 Unless it were his Father.

*Dru.* Nay, for him  
 Good life sufficed, without philosophy.

*Pro.* Little have I of either! But note this ;  
 Marcus's nature, that was rational,  
 Mild, kind and sociable; the voice within  
 Counsell'd him good not evil things. We all  
 Are not so made. Some men are idly given,  
 Care but for feasts and flowers and fluteplayers ;  
 Why should they baulk their fancies? Others  
 thirst  
 For glory, praise, and power; and why not seek  
 them,

Such being their nature? How fit every man  
 To Marcus?

*Dru.* Ay, or any other pattern?  
 I said, no two alike, each his own life ;  
 And yet must none live solely for himself.  
 The idle and the grasping miss true life,  
 Through error; help them; for, as Plato wrote,  
 Willingly is no soul deprived of truth ;  
 Count all amendable.

*Pro.* Nay, some I know  
 In whom a cacodæmon surely whispers !  
 How deal with these?

*Dru.* Shun, guard against, repress,  
 At utmost need, expunge them solemnly,  
 As curs'd by fate or their perverted wills.  
 Aurelius could be stern—but ever sadly.  
 Yet, tho' in his self-judgment strict, and all  
 That touch'd the State, to other men at times  
 (Perhaps because he did not rate them high)  
 And women, he was far too mild, too easy ;  
 His only fault. Witness his former colleague.  
 Witness his — But enough. His life was pure,  
 His death was tranquil. May our souls tread firm  
 To follow his !

*Pro.* Alas, I would the Gods,  
 My Drusus, plainlier spoke to us poor men  
 On life and death ! How should our souls be firm  
 When oracles are doubtful? Will new Cæsar  
 Follow the fierce Bellona's flashing helm?

*Dru.* Not if he hold his father's counsel dear.

"Jove grant my son," Aurelius used to say,  
 "Have little need and no desire of war.  
 War I detest. Yet I have lived in war,  
 To keep Augustus Cæsar's legacy,  
 Our empire's bounds, unbroken—on the west  
 The Atlantic Ocean, on the north the Rhine  
 And Danube, with Euphrates to the east,  
 Africa's burning deserts to the south ;  
 The savage isle of Britain join'd to these  
 By later outpulse of imperial force,  
 And Hadrian's Dacia afterwards. War—war—"  
 Would he exclaim, "I hate war—could not shun it !  
 O happy Antoninus, fitly named  
 The Pious, three-and-twenty peaceful years  
 The lifting of thy sceptre sway'd the world,  
 No further journeying than Lanuvium !"

Two months ago, as many times before,  
 He spake in this wise ; and on that same evening  
 Came I for orders to the Emperor.  
 And found him pacing lonely on the bank  
 Of the broad Danube in a wintry dusk.  
 My business done, he lifted up his eyes,  
 And seeing great stars rising in the east,  
 "Think of the courses of the heavens," he said,  
 "The boundless gulf of past and future time,  
 And what our little lives are. This whole Earth,  
 We move upon, is but a point." He stept  
 Silent some way, then stopping short exclaim'd—  
 "Who can believe that good and noble souls,  
 The highest things we wot of, when they leave us

Perish and are extinguished, or that God  
 Will not preserve them, if the general scheme  
 Allow thereof? This body is not me ;  
 'Tis but the vessel and the instrument  
 Of an imperishable essence ; yea,  
 Myself and God are under one same law."  
 He ceased ; then added in a lower voice—  
 "Shall man dispute with God ? O reverence

Him,  
 Confide in Him who governs everything !  
 The perfect living Being, good and just  
 And beautiful, who generates, who holds  
 Together all things, who contains them all,  
 Continually dissolved and reproduced,  
 Himself not changed ; from whom the soul of  
 man

Is drawn, an efflux of the Deity."  
 When next I saw Marcus Aurelius,  
 He lay in fever.

*Pro.* Did it long endure ?

*Dru.* I'll tell thee, Probus. On the fifteenth day  
 I watch'd him, kneeling by the couch. His mind  
 Had wander'd, but he now lay motionless,  
 As in a trance, from noon till the fifth hour.  
 All unexpectedly, he look'd upon me.  
 Forth came his hand. I kiss'd it. My heart leapt  
 With a pang of fleeting joy. He merely said—  
 "Farewell, Drusillus. Bear the news to Rome."  
 Then his eyes closed again ; and no more words.

*Pro.* Young Commodus, I think —

*Dru.* I think, my friend,  
He had a virtuous and most noble Father.

*Pro.* Truly. And I for my part recollect  
Caligula's father was Germanicus,  
Domitian's Titus. But—Hail, Commodus !  
Cæsar and Emperor, seventeenth in count  
From shrewd Augustus—some amongst them great  
And many vile. Fortune hath strangely throned  
Pernicious human monsters, gorging blood  
Until it choked them.

*Dru.* Yea, but Rome endures ;  
Jove's oak, whereon some carrion vultures perch'd ;  
Empire that was, and is, and will be great ;  
Never before so powerful and so happy  
As under Trajan, Hadrian, Antonine,  
And our beloved Aurelius.

*Pro.* And yet,  
All things, Drusillus, have their term. Jove's oak  
Rock-rooted, wide-arm'd, after many years  
Grows hollow, one day crumbles. Shall men see  
Great Rome a ruin ?

*Dru.* Choose more lucky words,  
Dear Probus !—or indeed wilt thou forebode  
This Christian superstition, the crush'd worm,  
Lord of our seven hills, with superber shrine  
Than Jove's own temple now ? or dost thou fear  
The Britons may outrival us in arms,  
Wealth, power, and policy, and one day build  
A greater city than on Tiber's banks  
By some cold fenny river of the north ?

*Pro.* Nay, I love Rome. Live Rome !

*Dru.* She'll outlast us,  
Be who will Cæsar. May the Gods protect her !  
Thanks and farewell, my friend !

*Pro.* The slaves await you.  
Health and sound sleep, Drusillus ! Fare thee  
well !



SONNET. A NURSERY RHYME FOR  
THE ELDERS.

THE Masters of the World when we are gone  
 Play round our knees, look up to us with awe,  
 From our lips take their earliest deepest law ;  
 In jest we mould the clay that turns to stone,  
 Give little care what sort of seed is sown,  
 What weeds therewith, or venoms. If we saw  
 The Future, with our part distinctly shown,  
 Vulture Remorse might tear us, beak and claw.

Dolt ! Coward ! Rogue ! must Ages yet to be  
 Inherit, with Life's necessary griefs,  
 What thou thyself perceivest base in thee ?—  
 Factitious crimes and duties, sham beliefs,  
 Pride like a murderer's, pleasure like a thief's,  
 Man's very best besteept'd in falsity !

---

## THE FUNERAL.

SAY not we "bury him;" nor talk  
 Of "sleeping in the grave."  
 With foolish words we bind and baulk  
 The soul, and make it slave.

The mystic form whereby we knew  
 Our parent once, or friend,  
 Let this, indeed, have reverence due  
 For life's sake, though at end.

But this no more is man at all,  
 Mere water now and clay,  
 Fit to be purged by fire, or fall  
 Apart in slow decay.

Life—Death—are hieroglyphics, writ  
 By one mysterious hand ;  
 Their meaning passes all our wit,  
 We may not understand.

Forget men's timid vain pretence,  
 Forget their babbling speech ;  
 Trust to thy Spirit's highest sense  
 The truest faith to reach.

---

NO funeral gloom, my dears, when I am gone,  
 Corpse-gazings, tears, black raiment, grave-  
 yard grimness ;  
 Think of me as withdrawn into the dimness,  
 Yours still, you mine ; remember all the best  
 Of our past moments, and forget the rest ;  
 And so, to where I wait, come gently on.

---

THIS patchwork world of things confus'dly named,  
 What voice a frank account thereof could give  
 And not be almost for a devil 's blamed ?  
 Dear trusting eager Spirits, how shall I  
 To your incessant questionings reply ?  
 Children ! they make me heartily ashamed  
 That we amid such rubbish-mountains live,  
 And true horizons hardly can espy.

---

## A WEEK-DAY HYMN.

ALMIGHTY-PLUTUS ! Lord of Earth,  
 And Giver of all Good,  
 Thou who hast bless'd me, from my birth,  
 With lodging, clothes, and food ;

Whose glory brightens every thought,  
 Inspirts every deed ;  
 In whose great name are wonders wrought ;  
 Whose smile is virtue's meed ;

Turn not Thy face from him who bends  
 Untiring at Thy throne !  
 Repute and station, wife and friends,  
 I owe to Thee alone.

Thou helping—man dilates in form,  
 And proudly looks around ;  
 Without Thee, he 's a two-legg'd worm,  
 But fit for underground.

The braggart sword, the subtle pen,  
 To Thee are dedicate ;  
 Yea, all the works and wits of men  
 Upon Thy service wait.

Barons and dukes are feeble things,  
 At Thy goodwill they shine ;  
 Mere vassals are the greatest Kings,  
 Their fleets and armies Thine.

Before Thy footstool Beauty bows,  
 And Rank is cheap as mud,  
 And thin as smoke the bands and vows  
 Of Honour, Love, or Blood.

His body in Thy service doom'd,  
 The Martyr's not afraid ;  
 Nay, gives his soul to be consumed  
 To cinders, undismay'd.

In every tongue and clime confest,  
 In many shapes adored,  
 From North to South, from East to West,  
 The nations own Thee Lord,—

Thou other and thrice-golden Sun  
 That dost the world illumine,  
 Bright'ning whate'er Thou look'st upon,  
 And gilding ev'n the tomb !

O may Thy sceptre, Plutus ! be  
 Supreme o'er land and wave—  
 So bless Thou *me*, and smile on *me*,  
 Thy subject, and Thy slave !

---

## A MODERN PLEASAUNCE.

OUR Garden is full of flowers and bowers ;  
 But the toll of a death-bell haunts the air.  
 We have tried to drown it with lute and voice,  
 Love-songs and banquet-songs for choice,  
 But still it is ever tolling there ;  
 And who can silence that dreadful bell ?

Take the grim key-note ; modulate well ;  
 Let us keep time and tune with the knell,—  
 Sing of mad pleasure and fierce despair,  
 Roses, and blood, and the fire of hell !  
 With pants and with sobs, with shrieks and moans,  
 Loud laughter mingled with dying groans ;  
 The death-bell knolling pitilessly  
 Through all, our key-note,—and what care we,  
 In our Garden full of bowers and flowers ?

---



## AN INVITATION.

**T**O the Wits thus writeth Cræsus :  
 Gracious Heav'n hath freely giv'n  
 Wealth, and now of Wit we're fain ;  
 Clever Talker,—Thinker,—Poet,—  
 Come and amuse us, lull us, please us ;  
 Let's each other entertain.  
 Never thwart us, never tease us ;  
 If you do, we'd have you know it,  
 Men of scanty dish and cup,  
 Not the least bit or sup  
 Of our feast shall fall your way.  
 Come, friends, come, talk and dine,  
 Drink our wine, and let's be gay !  
     Thought, song, and wit,  
     Are pretty things ;  
     With nimble wings  
     Around they flit,  
 Tame little birds, and gently sit  
 With pleasant twitter—wit-wit-twit !  
*Our* world, the solid and the true,  
 Likes its decorations too,  
 And we embellish it with you,  
 When we've nothing else to do.  
 So honour us, dear friends, and come,  
 Eat, drink, make yourselves at home ;  
 Nothing ever do or say  
 Which might vex us, while you stay ;  
 Ere you bore us, go away ;  
 And come again, another day.

## THE FIRST ENGLISH POET.

**D**WELT a certain poor man in his day,  
 Near at hand to Hilda's holy house,  
 Learning's lighthouse, blessed beacon, built  
 High o'er sea and river, on the head,  
*Streaneshalch* in Anglo-Saxon speech,  
*Whitby*, after, by the Norsemen named.  
 Cædmon was he call'd ; he came and went,  
 Doing humble duties for the monks,  
 Helping with the horses at behest ;  
 Modest, meek, unmemorable man,  
 Moving slowly into middle age,  
 Toiling on,—twelve hundred years ago.

Still and silent, Cædmon sometimes sat  
 With the serfs at lower end of hall ;  
 There he marvell'd much to hear the monks  
 Singing sweetly hymns unto their harp,  
 Handing it from each to each in turn,  
 Till his heart-strings trembled. Otherwhile,  
 When the serfs were merry with themselves,  
 Sung their folk-songs upon festal nights,  
 Handing round the harp to each in turn,  
 Cædmon, though he loved not lighter songs,  
 Long'd to sing,—but he could never sing.

Sad and silent would he creep away,  
 Wander forth alone, he wist not why,  
 Watch the sky and water, stars or clouds  
 Climbing from the sea; and in his soul  
 Shadows mounted up and mystic lights,  
 Echoes vague and vast return'd the voice  
 Of the rushing river, roaring waves,  
 Twilight's windy whisper from the fells,  
 Howl of brindled wolf, and cry of bird;  
 Every sight and sound of solitude  
 Ever mingling in a master thought,  
 Glorious, terrible, of the Mighty One  
 Who made all things. As the Book declared  
 " *In the Beginning He made Heaven and Earth.*"

Thus lived Cædmon, quiet year by year;  
 Listen'd, learn'd a little, as he could;  
 Work'd, and mused, and pray'd, and held his peace.

Toward the end of harvest time, the hinds  
 Held a feast, and sung their festal songs,  
 Handing round the harp from each to each.  
 But before it came where Cædmon sat,  
 Sadly, silently, he stole away,  
 Wander'd to the stable-yard and wept,  
 Weeping laid him low among the straw,  
 Fell asleep at last. And in his sleep  
 Came a Stranger, calling him by name:  
 "Cædmon, sing to me!" "I cannot sing.  
 Wherefore—wo is me!—I left the house."

"Sing, I bid thee!" "What then shall I sing?"  
 "Sing the Making of the World." Whereon  
 Cædmon sung: and when he woke from sleep  
 Still the verses stay'd with him, and more  
 Sprang like fountain-water from a rock  
 Fed from never-failing secret springs.

Praising Heaven most high, but nothing proud,  
 Cædmon sought the Steward and told his tale,  
 Who to holy Hilda led him in,  
 Pious Princess Hilda, pure of heart,  
 Ruling Mother, royal Edwin's niece.  
 Cædmon at her bidding boldly sang  
 Of the Making of the World, in words  
 Wondrous; whereupon they wotted well  
 'Twas an Angel taught him, and his gift  
 Came direct from God: and glad were they.

Thenceforth Holy Hilda greeted him  
 Brother of the brotherhood. He grew  
 Famedest monk of all the monastery;  
 Singing many high and holy songs  
 Folk were fain to hear, and loved him for:  
 Till his death-day came, that comes to all.

Cædmon bode that evening in his bed,  
 He at peace with men and men with him;  
 Wrapt in comfort of the Eucharist;  
 Weak and silent. "Soon our Brethren sing  
 Evensong?" he whisper'd. "Brother, yea."

“ Let us wait for that,” he said ; and soon  
 Sweetly sounded up the solemn chant.  
 Cædmon smiled and listen'd ; when it lull'd,  
 Sidelong turn'd to sleep his old white head,  
 Shut his eyes, and gave his soul to God,  
 Maker of the World.

Twelve hundred years

Since are past and gone, nor he forgot,  
 Earliest Poet of the English Race.  
 Rude and simple were his days and thoughts.  
 Wisely speaketh no man, howso learn'd,  
 Of the making of this wondrous World,  
 Save a Poet, with a reverent soul.

---

SONNET : IN A BOOK OF MAXIMS.

“ **M**AXIMS” of wisdom,—minims fittier named,  
 If wise in any sense ; the nobler part  
 Of human nature sneeringly disclaim'd,  
 The low put forward with malicious art !  
 Chicane at court and cheating in the mart  
 All see ; but now examine unashamed  
 The vanities and failings of the famed,  
 The selfishness of good folk : does your heart  
 Not feel its cockles tickled ? ‘ We pretend  
 To nothing, you and I, we know too well  
 How mean we are ; but just observe, my friend,  
 More closely these pretentions to excel,  
 And with a smile admit that, truth to tell,  
 You find us all poor creatures in the end !’

---

## THE STOLEN PATH.

HIGHWAYS, byways, such are my ways ;  
 Parks like this I detest,  
 Grumble to travel on miles of gravel  
 Through landscapes robb'd of their zest ;  
 Even through the gatelodge sentry  
 Yields us privilege of entry,  
 Lets us view, in passing through,  
 Lawns and groves whose loneliness  
 Doth imprisonment express  
 Not freedom, rhododendron flowers  
 Lording it over woodland bowers,  
 Wandering rill damm'd up to make  
 A lazy languid pleasure-lake,  
 (Who therein doth pleasure take ?)  
 Clipt yews ; geometric beds ;  
 All 'twixt gate and gate that spreads.  
 But where is that old Pathway's line,  
 Which, could we find it, is yours and mine,  
 Free from before King Alfred's day ;  
 A winding walk, a pleasant way,  
 By mead and heath, by grove and glen,  
 Belonging to the feet of men  
 Past, present, and to come ; that show'd  
 The prospect, saved the dusty road ?  
 Those who already have too much  
 Would fain get all into their clutch ;

The demon greed of robber kings  
 Is busy here in lesser things ;  
 The Path is gone ; not shut by law,  
 But filch'd with shameless cunning paw  
 And swallow'd : none at hand to dare  
 Beard the culprit in his lair,  
 The Great Man, to whose mind are known  
 No rights at all except his own,  
 Who fain would shut from every eye  
 Th' old landscape and more ancient sky,  
 Save upon sufferance. Honoured Sir,  
 Reflect ! Art thou indeed a cur,  
 A caitiff ? What, beneath the sun,  
 Hast thou, have those before thee, done,  
 To earn so huge an overshare  
 Of the world's good things ? Have a care,  
 Lest, when your Worship sits on high,  
 A pilferer of twigs to try,  
 Or casual poacher, some one cry  
 In accents of contempt and wrath,  
 "Who stole our ancient Public Path ?"  
 —A crime incomparably worse  
 Than his who merely takes a purse,  
 Poor devil ! with the treadmill near ;  
 No Magistrate, M.P., or Peer.

## PER CONTRA.

THIS old hereditary ground  
 Welcomes within its peaceful bound  
 All peaceful comers. Push the gate :  
 What miles of oak and fern await  
 Our footsteps ; unmolested space  
 As fair and free for you and me  
 As for His Grace who owns the place,  
 Whose ownership is not the same  
 As selfishness, with finer name,—  
 Long live such noble dukes as he !  
 In lieu of herald's meagre leaves,  
 The grateful Fancy richlier weaves,  
 And doth the whole wide woodland set  
 For garland round this coronet.

---

## THREE SISTERS.

THREE sisters, Charlotte, Emily, and Anne,  
 Afar in Yorkshire wolds they live together ;  
 Names that I keep like any sacristan,  
 The human registry of souls as pure  
 As sky in hermit waters on a moor,  
 Those liquid islands of dark seas of heather ;  
 Voices that reach my solitude from theirs ;  
 Hands that I kiss a thousand miles away,  
 And send a thousand greetings of my own—  
 But these, alas ! only the west wind bears.  
 —Nay, they are gone. The hills and vales are lone  
 Where Earth once knew them. What is now to say ?  
 Three strangers dead—'tis little to endure :  
 A crowd of strangers vanish every day.  
 Yet will I see those gravestones if I can.

---

## THE ADVENTURE OF THE LAMP.

SLOW-BURNING in the cavern's depth appears  
 The Talismanic Lamp which rules the spheres  
 Of men and spirits. Safely he hath pass'd  
 Swords, flames, ghouls, dragons, demons ; but at last  
 A Phantom, like his Mother, sadly stands  
 Full in the destined way, with warning hands.  
 He pauses, he forgets, he sinks, he sleeps,—  
 And in Elysium his true Mother weeps.

---

**M**INE—mine—  
 O Heart, it is thine—  
 A look, a look of love!  
 O wonder! O magical charm!  
 Thou summer-night, silent and warm!  
 How is it a glance  
 Can make the heart dance  
 Which was weary and dull before?  
 Hush! whisper and question no more;  
 Nor to wind, nor to wave, nor to starlight above  
 Tell thy joy; let it rest  
 Like a bird in the nest,  
 Fall asleep without thinking, content to be blest,  
 And to know that this world is divine.  
 It is mine—mine—  
 O Heart, it is thine—  
 A glance of love—of love!

---

**I** AND my Love together,  
 Deep in sunny sheen;  
 Raiment of white innocence  
 Clothed us on the green.

We reclined together,  
 Musing grave and sweet;  
 Golden air embraced us,  
 Blue waves nigh our feet.

Love be my guardian,  
 Dreams my heritage!  
 My Love and I together  
 In the golden age.

---

**W**HO could say that Love is blind?  
 Piercing-sighted, he will find  
 A thousand subtle charms that lie  
 Hid from every common eye.

You that love not, blind are ye,  
 Learn to love, and learn to see.  
 'Tis the insight of the lover  
 Beauty's essence can discover.

---

## POESIS HUMANA.

WHAT is the Artist's duty ?  
 His work, however wrought,  
 Shape, colour, word, or tone,  
 Is to make better known  
 (Himself divinely taught),  
 To praise and celebrate,  
 Because his love is great,  
 The lovely miracle  
 Of Universal Beauty.  
 This message would he tell.

Amid the day's crude strife,  
 This message is his trust ;  
 With all his heart and soul,  
 With all his skill and strength,  
 Seeking to add at length,  
 Because he may and must,  
 Some atom to the whole  
 Of man's inheritance ;  
 Some fineness to the glance,  
 Some richness to the life.

And if he deal perforce  
 With evil and with pain,  
 With horror and affright,  
 He does it to our gain ;

Makes felt the mighty course,  
 Our courage to sustain,  
 That sweepeth on amain,  
 Of law—whose atmosphere  
 Is beauty and delight ;  
 For these are at its source.

His work, however small,  
 Itself hath rounded well,  
 Even like Earth's own ball  
 Wrapt in its airy shell.  
 His gentle magic brings  
 The mystery of things ;  
 It gives dead substance wings ;  
 It shows in little, much ;  
 And by an artful touch  
 Conveys the hint of all.

## GREAT ANCESTRY.

WE sat within a cottage by the waves,  
 Harkening to music, voice and instrument,  
 That floated to the still autumnal night  
 Starr'd over downs and ocean; and between  
 Its pulses, boom'd the cadence of the sea  
 Surge after surge along our island shore.

Fair the musicians, and the listeners fair.  
 But I, apart, not merely saw and heard  
 Those living faces—songs—the sea—the stars;  
 For two majestic Shades were in the night:  
 Deep-sounding echoes out of England's past  
 Commingled vaguely with the murmuring flood;  
 John Milton's daughters made us melody,  
 And Cromwell's daughters listen'd while they sang.

[*Freshwater Bay.*]

AUTUMN and sunset now have double-dyed  
 The foliage and the fern of this deep wood,  
 The sky above it melting placidly  
 All crimsonings to gray. No sound is heard.  
 The Spirit of the Place, like mine, seems lull'd  
 In pensive retrospection. One more Spring,  
 And one more Summer past, and one more Year.

Anon the distant bell begins to chime,  
 And calls me homeward, calls me to a home  
 As lonely as the forest, peopled but  
 With memories, and fantasies, and shadows.  
 These wait for me this evening. What beyond? . . .  
 The silent sunset of a lonely life?

FOUR ducks on a pond,  
 A grass-bank beyond,  
 A blue sky of spring,  
 White clouds on the wing;  
 What a little thing  
 To remember for years—  
 To remember with tears!



‘**A**LAS, friend, since your journey was begun,  
 How many have outstript you in the race!’  
 I have not raced at all, nor even run,  
 But gone along my track at easy pace,  
 Look’d at the landscapes, gather’d berries, shared  
 Wayfaring talk, and barter’d song and tale ;  
 Loiter’d to hear the lark or nightingale ;  
 ’Twas for the journey, not the goal, I cared.

---

“QUE SCAIS-JE ?”

**O**LD Michael of the Mountain, strolling past,  
 Careless and quiet, now and then would cast  
 To right or left a penetrating look ;  
 And gather’d waifs and strays up with a hook  
 Shaped like the sign of query ; scrap and rag  
 In easy reach he clapt into his bag,  
 Idly assiduous, mocking his own whim  
 With twinkling eye, and took all home with him,  
 Where lazily he sorted them at last.  
 What skill or magic in his fingers lay,  
 What subtly added he, ’twere hard to say ;  
 But somehow, this took substance as a Book  
 That shines where all around hath fallen dim.

EQUALITY AT HOME.

“**A**NTOINE,” cries Mirabeau, returning gay  
 From the Assembly, “on and from to-day  
 Nobility’s abolish’d,—men are men,—  
 No title henceforth used but Citizen !  
 A new thrice-glorious era dawns for France !  
 And now, my bath.” “Yes, Citizen.” A glance  
 Of flame the huge man at his servant shot ;  
 Then, wallowing sea-god-like, “Antoine ! more hot,”  
 He growl’d. “Good, Citizen.” A hand of wrath  
 Gript Antoine’s head and soused it in the bath.  
 He spluttering, dripping, trembling,—“Rascal !  
 know”  
 His master thunder’d as he let him go,  
 “For you I still remain Count Mirabeau !”

---

A REMINISCENCE OF THE ISLE OF MAN.

**O**NE April found me upon Mona’s shore,  
 With daily prospect of the Cumbrian Hills,  
 Cloud-wreathed or sunlit, o’er the Irish Sea.  
 “A Man dwells there ; and one day I shall walk  
 Through landscapes that confess him suzerain

Under the SOVEREIGN LORD of earth and men,—  
 May see the Prince himself, may humbly meet  
 His venerable eye, may hear his voice.”  
 And day by day new Spring upon the fields  
 And waves grew brighter.

One day brought this word—  
 ‘The wise old Poet of the mountain-land  
 Is gone away for ever. You may seek  
 But never shall you find him any more  
 Among the shadows of the folded hills,  
 By lonely tarn or dashing rivulet,  
 Down the green valley, up the windy fell,  
 In rock-built pass, or under whispering leaves,  
 Or floating on the broad translucent mere  
 Between two heavens. You will but find his grave.’

I paced the strand, and clearer than till now  
 Saw the far coast across a glittering tide;  
 But how forlorn those faint-blue rocky peaks!  
 How emptied of its joy the enchanted ground!  
 I paced the strand, and raised mine eyes anew,  
 And saw as ’twere a halo round the peaks.  
 Something of Him abides there, and will stay.  
 Those Mountains were in WORDSWORTH’S soul;  
     his soul  
 Is on those Mountains, now, and evermore.

## DREAMS.

IN morning mist and dream I lay,  
 And saw, methought, two Babes at play  
 In a green garden, girl and boy;  
 With Lucy painting in her chair,  
 The sunshine catching golden hair  
 At moments when she lifts her head  
 To look at these.—

A dream?—Ah woe!  
 This used to be, long time ago.  
 The Mother and the Babes are dead,  
 And I am old and lonely: fled  
 Life’s pleasure now, itself a dream.

How long a dream lasts, who can say,  
 Or how it drifts, and intershifts?  
 I woke, I saw the sunny beam,  
 I heard the shrieking of the swifts,  
 Then flung my curtain back. Below,  
 Two merry faces all a-glow  
 Look up, “Good morning, dear Papa!  
 Mama is coming home to-day.”

Grant us to taste, ye Mystic Powers,  
 Our happy hours,—O how they haste!

## VIVANT !

NO need, I hope, to doubt my loyalty ;  
 From childhood I was fond of Royalty ;  
 To Kings extravagantly dutiful,  
 To Queens yet more, if young and beautiful.

How rich their robes ! what crowns they all had too !  
 And yet how friendly to a small lad too !  
 At glorious banquets highly gracing him,  
 Beside the lovely Princess placing him.

Their kingdoms' names I did not care about ;  
 They lay in Fairyland or thereabout ;  
 Their date, though, to forget were crime indeed,—  
 Exactly, " Once upon a time " indeed.

And still they reign o'er folk contented, there :  
 I hope to have my son presented there :  
 At every virtuous court in Fairyland,  
 Its Cave-Land, Forest-Land, and Airy-Land.

So down with democratic mania !  
 Long live great Oberon and Titania,  
 Imperial Rulers of those regions !—he  
 Be shot who wavers in allegiance !

And bless all Monarchs in alliance with them,  
 Who've no enchanters, dragons, giants with them,  
 To keep sweet ladies under lock and key,  
 And answer challenges in mocking key !

## BIRDS' NAMES.

OF Creatures with Wings, come now let us see  
 Which have names like you and me.  
 Hook-nosed Poll, that thinks herself pretty,  
 Everyone knows, of all birds most witty.  
 Daw our good friend, in grayish black,  
 If you ask him his name, will answer " Jack !"  
 Bold Philip Sparrow hopping you meet,  
 " Philip ! Philip !"—in garden and street.  
 Robin Redbreast perches near,  
 And sweetly sings in the fall of the year.  
 Grave Madge Owlet hates the light  
 And shouts " hoo ! hoo ! " in the woods at night.  
 Sweet Nightingale, that May loves well,  
 Old Poets have call'd her Philomel,  
 But Philomelus, *he* sings best,  
 While *she* sits listening in her nest.  
 Martin ! Martin !—tell me why  
 They call you so ; I know not, I ;  
 Martin the black, under cottage eaves,  
 Martin the small, in sandy caves.  
 Willy, Willy Wagtail, what runs he takes !  
 Whenever he stops, his tail he shakes.  
 Head and tail little Jenny Wren perks,  
 As in and out of the hedge she jerks.  
 Brisk Tom Tit, the lover of trees,  
 Picks-off every fly and grub he sees.  
 Kitty Wake on the sea-wave rides,

Her nest on the lofty cliff abides.  
 Mag, the cunning chattering Pie,  
 Builds her home in a tree-top high,—  
 Mag, you're a terrible thief, O fie!

Tom and Philip and Jenny and Polly,  
 Madge and Martin and Robin and Willy,  
 Philomelus and Kitty and Jack,—  
 Mag the rogue, half-white, half-black,  
 Stole an egg from every Bird;  
 Such an uproar was never heard;  
 All of them flew upon Mag together,  
 And pluck'd her naked of every feather!

---

I'M but a lowly gooseberry  
 Hanging on my native tree  
 Here i' the sunshine of the garden  
 (For which I humbly beg your pardon)  
 Just within the children's reach;  
 Don't be angry with me, pray,  
 Mister Critic,—did I say,  
 Ever say I was a peach?

---

AMY Margaret's five years old,  
 Amy Margaret's hair is gold,  
 Dearer twenty-thousand-fold  
 Than gold, is Amy Margaret.

"Amy" is friend, is "Margaret"  
 The pearl for crown or carkanet?  
 Or peeping daisy, summer's pet?  
 Which are you, Amy Margaret?

A friend, a daisy, and a pearl,  
 A kindly, simple, precious girl,—  
 Such, howsoe'er the world may twirl,  
 Be ever,—Amy Margaret!

---

I SAW a little Birdie fly,  
 Merrily piping came he;  
 "Whom d'ye sing to, Bird?" said I;  
 "Sing?—I sing to Amy."

"Very sweet you sing," I said;  
 "Then," quoth he, "to pay me,  
 Give one little crumb of bread,  
 A little smile from Amy."

"Just," he sings, "one little smile;  
 O, a frown would slay me!  
 Thanks, and now I'm gone awhile,—  
 Fare-you-well, dear Amy!"

---

## A MOUNTAIN ROUND.

TAKE hands, merry neighbours, for dancing the round!

Moonlight is fair, and delicious the air.  
From valley to valley our music shall sound,  
And startle the wolf in his lair.

From summits of snow to the forests below,  
Let vulture and crow hear the echoes—O ho!  
(O ho!)

While shadows on meadows in dancing the round  
Go whirligig, pair after pair!

## A MOUNTAIN ROUND.

*Allegretto.*

*dim.*

Take hands, mer-ry neighbours, for dancing the

*dim.*

round! Moonlight is fair and de-li-cious the air; From

*cres.*

val-ley to val-ley our mu-sic shall sound, And star-tle the

*dim.*

wolf in his lair. From sum-mits of snow to the

*p. Al Segno. dim.*

for-est be-low, Let vul-ture and crow hear the ech-oes, O-

*dim. Dal Segno Presto.*

ho! (O-ho!) While sha-dows on mea-dows in dancing the

round Go whir-li-gig pair af-ter pair!

## JOHN CLODD.

JOHN CLODD was greatly troubled in his mind,  
 But reason for the same could noways find.  
 Says he "I'll go to Mary; I've no doubt,  
 If any mortal can, she'll vind it out."  
 "Why, John, what is the matter? where dost ail?  
 In 'ead or stummick? eh, thou dost look pale.  
 Can't ait? can't sleep? yet nayther sick nor sore?  
 Ne'er velt the like in all thy life afore?  
 Why, lad, I'll tell 'ee what,—thou beest in love."

John look'd at Mary, gave his hat a shove,  
 And rubb'd his chin awhile, and mutter'd "There!  
 Only to think o' that!"—then from a stare  
 Broke by degrees into a smile, half-witted,  
 "Dang! Mary, I don't know but what you've hit it!  
 I thought on no sich thing, but now I see  
 'Tis plain as haystack. Yaas, in love I be!  
 But *who* be I in love wi, Mary? Come!"  
 "Why, can't yo tell that, John? Art blind, or dumb?  
 Is't Emma White? or Liz? or Dora Peak?  
 Or pirty little Sue? or Widow Sleek?  
 Or Tilda Ruddilip? or Martha's Jane?  
 Or Squire's new Dairymaid? or old Miss Blaine,  
 Wi' lots o' money? Don't be angry, John,  
 I've guess'd all round,—you hates 'em every one?  
 Still, you loves zumbody . . . Mayhap 'tis *me*?"

"Why, Mary, what a clever lass you be!  
 I never once took thought on sich a thing;  
 But you it is, and no one else, by Jing!"  
 "Well, John, that's settled; so Goodnight at last."  
 "No, Mary, don'tee run away so fast!  
 What next are we to do?"

"What next? O bother!  
 Get married, I suppose, sometime or other."  
 "Right, lass, again! I niver thought o' that.  
 How do'ee iver vind out things so pat?  
 But stop a minute, Mary,—tell me how  
 Does folk— . . . She's off! I'm fairly puzzled now!"

FAMILIAR EPISTLE TO A LITTLE BOY,  
With a Book of "Songs, &c."

I MUST own, my dear Sonny, 'tis likely but few,  
Will care for this book; but I count upon you  
For one reader, and hope you'll find something to  
please  
And nothing to plague you in verses like these.  
You've already a much truer taste in poetics  
Than many grown-up folk, and some famous critics;  
An "ear," which you have, is essential; but this  
The people most wanting in can't even miss.  
O give me the young! And at least you'll be mine;  
You'll sometimes remember a song or a line  
As the years travel round, as new mornings arise,  
New sunsets draw softly away from the skies,  
Like the old ones I saw? When your life-wheel  
shall bring  
The freshness, the flutter, the ripple of Spring,  
And Summer's broad glow, and grave Autumn be-  
dight  
In his tarnish'd gold russet; then bareness and white,  
And the clasp of sweet home in the long Winter's  
night,  
With their moods and their fancies;—"As I feel, he  
felt,"  
Perhaps you will say, "and was able to melt

Life's crudeness and strangeness, some part, into  
song,  
For his soothing and mine." Dearest Gerald, so  
long  
As a ghost may keep earth round him (not meaning  
clay)  
This will soothe too, to fancy 'Perhaps he will say.'  
Nor will that ghost be happy unless he may know  
Your footsteps have wander'd where his used to go  
In the young time and song-time—among those  
green hills  
And gray mossy rocks, and swift-flowing rills,  
On mountain, by river and wave-trampled shore,  
Where the wild region nourish'd the poet it bore,  
And colour'd his mind with its shadows and gleams.  
That lonely west coast was the house of his dreams  
And his visions,—O Future and Past that combine  
At a point ever shifting and flitting, to shine  
In the spark of the Present! Old stories re-sown  
Sprang to life once again, became part of my own,  
Like 'mummy-wheat' sprouting in little home-  
croft;  
The Ladder for Angels—it slanted aloft  
From our meadow; the Star in the East hung on  
high  
Where Fermanagh spreads dark to the midwinter  
sky;  
And the Last Trumpet sounded o'er Mullinashee  
With its graves old and new. And now tenderly,  
see,

They glide forward, and gaily, the sweet shapes of  
Greece,  
All natives and neighbours, for wonders don't cease ;  
Shy Dryads come peeping in woody Corlay,  
And surge-lifted Nereids in Donegal Bay.  
Olympus lay south, where the mists meet and melt  
Upon Truskar. My Helicon, drought never felt ;  
It was Tubbernaveka, that deep cressy well.  
A goddess-nymph kiss'd my boy-lips if I fell  
Into slumber at Pan's hour in fragrant June grass ;  
Processions of helmeted heroes would pass  
In the twilight ; I saw the white robes of the bard  
With his lyre. But the harp whose clear music I heard  
Was Irish, and Erin could also unfold  
Her songs and her dreams and her stories of old.  
See Ireland, dear Sonny ! my nurture was there ;  
And my song-gift, for which you at least are to care,  
Took colours and flavours unfitted for vogue,  
(With a tinge of the shamrock, a touch of the brogue,  
Unconsciously mingling and threading through all)  
On that wild verge of Europe, in dark Donegal.  
—"Dark," did I say !— Is there sunshine elsewhere ?  
Such brightness of grass, such glory of air,  
Such a sea rolling in on such sands, a blue joy  
Of more mystical mountains ?

O eyes of the Boy !  
O heart of the Boy ! newly waken'd from sleep.  
Might I sleep again, MASTER, long slumber and deep,  
To wake rested !

But go there, my Gerald, this book

In your pocket, with fresh heart and eyes take a look,  
At the poor lonely region,—ah, where will you see  
The heavenly enchantment that wrapt it for me ?

In any case, Laddie, I trust you will be as  
Good son as was formerly pious Æneas,  
Will carry your Daddie the poet right through  
This house-afire Present and hullabaloo,  
And, going on calmly when forward you've bent your  
eye,  
Set him down safe in the Twentieth Century.  
Strange feels that no-when ! I shiver at sight  
Of a realm like the North Pole, of icefields and night !  
Can the world and old England be yet living on ?  
Our Critics and Big-Wigs, O where are they gone ?  
Nay, courage ! methinks one may feel more at home  
By degrees there : a sweet chilly breath seems to  
come,  
Like new Spring's, from the Future. It won't be so  
bad ;  
In fact I believe it will suit me, my lad !  
We travel to new things in time as in space,  
And escape out of habitude's bonds that embrace  
And enjail us ; we win change of air for our thought,  
And that same with restorative virtue is fraught.  
Though knaves, fools, and humbugs no doubt there  
will be,  
They won't be the same we're accustom'd to see  
And be plagued with. 'Tis thinking about them  
offends ;

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But the new can't take hold. Nay, respectable friends

Often bore us—the crowd of relations, connections,  
Conditions, traditions, and foolish subjections ;  
(Small wonder if people run sometimes away,  
“Without any reason,” as dull neighbours say,  
Who themselves are the reason, with all the routine  
One got sick of)—Hurrah ! change of air ! change  
of scene !

“Number Twenty will have its own Poets, be sure,  
Its own Judges”—I hope so: do fashions endure ?  
They flow, eddy, try back, as one often has found ;  
And a thing out of favour—its turn may come  
round ;

Dear Public may long for the simple and plain  
For a change, too,—sound appetite come, or again  
Perhaps from a hot queasy stomach's sensations  
Demanding cool drink after fiery potations.  
Why care ? Just because there are people, a few,  
Scatter'd up and down space (perhaps more, if we  
knew)

Whom a flying word reaches, a force yet more subtle  
And swift than the ether's electrical shuttle,  
All-weaving ; a shaft thrilling muscle and marrow,  
Or lighting as softly as thistle-seed arrow,  
To comfort, to kindle, to help, to delight ;  
And our brave English speech has a far-reaching  
flight,  
(Though what may become of it soon there's no tel-  
ling

With novel and newspaper, slang and misspel-  
ling),—

A mere little Song—Yes, one's hardly content  
To think one's fine impulses, efforts, misspent,  
All the hopes and sweet fancies but blossom and  
cloud

Of an old merry Maytime, long stretch'd in its shroud.  
But enough to this tune. So *cushla-ma-chree*,  
(As my nurse used to say) and dear Reader to be,  
*Garait óg*, may God bless thee, my own little Son !  
—Look me up in the year Nineteen-hundred-and-one.

## THE WINTER PEAR.

IS always Age severe?  
 Is never Youth austere?  
 Spring-fruits are sour to eat;  
 Autumn's the mellow time.  
 Nay, very late i'th' year,  
 Short day and frosty rime,  
 Thought, like a winter pear,  
 Stone-cold in summer's prime,  
 May turn from harsh to sweet.

---

'NEW Heavens and New Earth,'—and must all  
 be new-created?  
 No. One touch to *your microcosm* may do what-  
 soever is fated.

---

WHEN I was young and fresh and gay,  
 Full moody oft I went;  
 The troubles of the passing day  
 So wrought me discontent;

Those flaws and fallings-short in life  
 Which every one must bear,  
 Oppressions, hints to rebel strife,  
 Enormous wrongs they were.

Whatever man could have or be,  
 Nay, every fancied boon,  
 Belong'd, I thought, as much to me  
 As share of sun and moon!

Whom Eden could not satisfy  
 Is thankful for a flow'r;  
 Who craved for earth and sea and sky  
 Loves most a quiet hour.

To run safe through this earthly lease,  
 Be kindly with one's kind,  
 Enjoy a little, part in peace,  
 Were rare good luck, I find.

---

## LIBER LOQUITUR.

**I**F perchance you like my look,  
Buy (don't borrow) me, little Book;  
Money I was never made for,  
But the printing must be paid for;  
If you purchase for a groat  
Per thousand lines, find one good thought  
Per thousand, am I dearly bought?



Donegal County Library Service



