

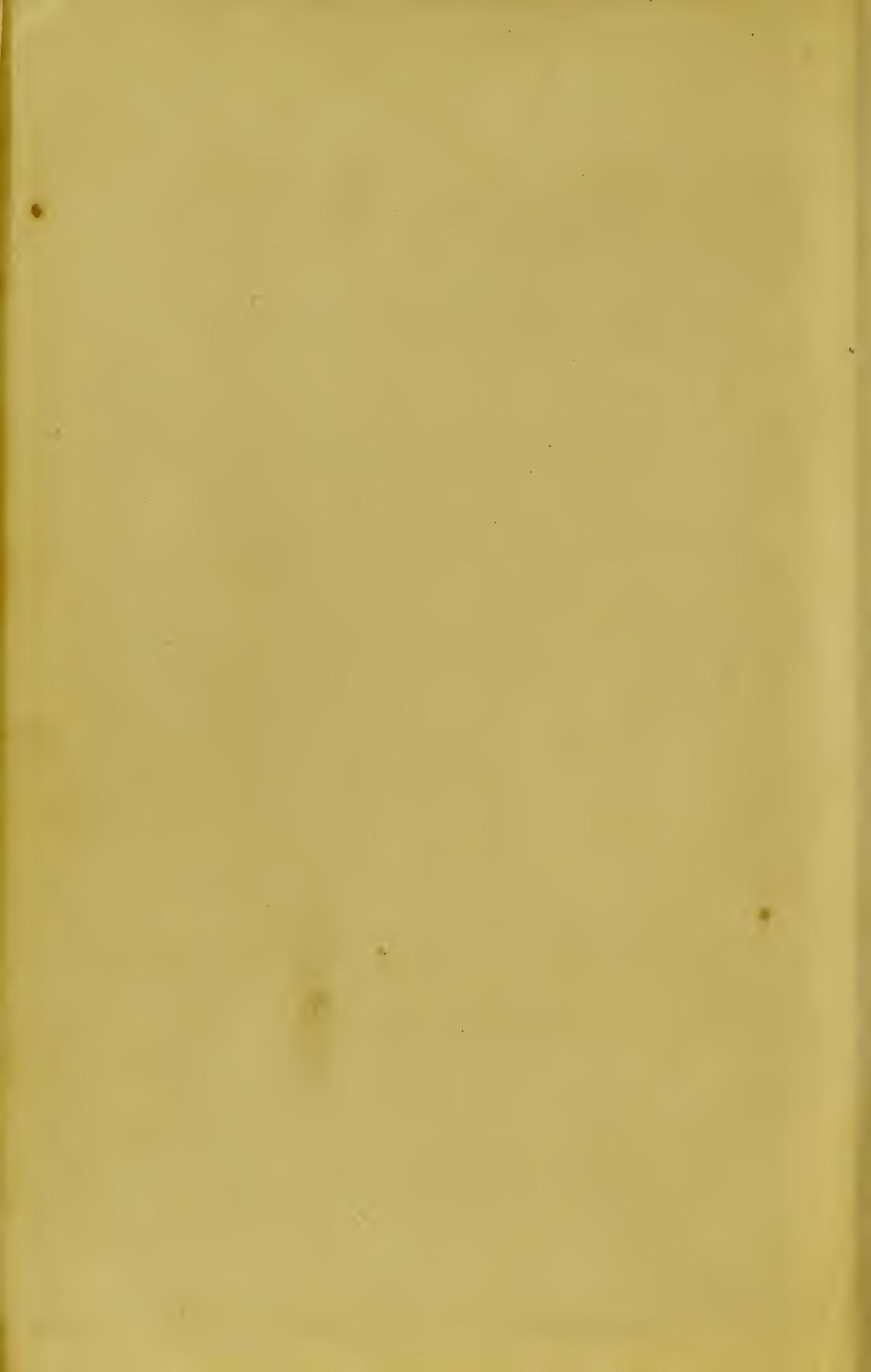
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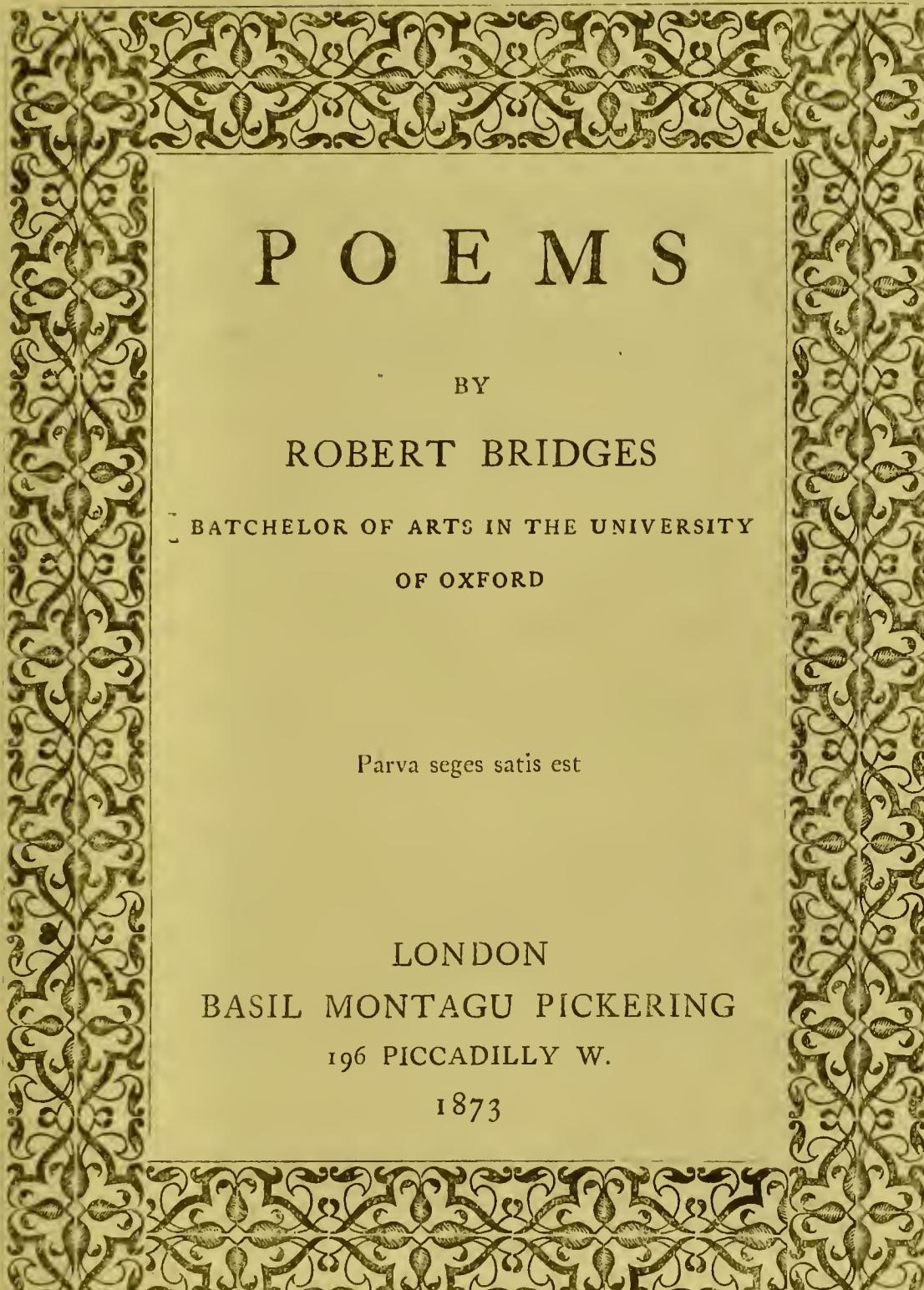
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Samuel Gee
1873

See author's autograph at back of title-page.







P O E M S

BY

ROBERT BRIDGES

BACHELOR OF ARTS IN THE UNIVERSITY

OF OXFORD

Parva seges satis est

LONDON
BASIL MONTAGU PICKERING
196 PICCADILLY W.

1873

Indagatione diligentissimo, multaque
experientia et eruditione doctissimo
viro Samuele Gee, dandini in
Academiam rei medice Doctori, in
Vescomio S. Bartolomai Medico
et Professori, amico et preceptor meo,
libellum hunc auctor obtulit RB.

2



DEDICATION.

TO

HARRY ELLIS WOOLDRIDGE, Esq.

MY DEAR FRIEND,



ERE are some of the verses you praised. I hope that on reperusal you will not repent of the encouragement you gave me to print them. At the present time, when men seem to affect to have outgrown the rules of art, it is natural

in one who turns to the great masters for satisfaction to exaggerate the success of any attempt to work in their manner, and I know that it is where these poems aim at nothing else that they best please you; but my estimate of your taste and judgment, which, in the many pleasant hours we have spent together, I have seen tested in nearly all the branches of art, is so high and firmly fixed that I am unwilling to think that you have in this instance allowed it to be perverted, either by your love for art in its simpler and unaffected forms, or by the more subtle bias of a friendship from which I have hitherto derived only advantage.

I must thank you again for the assistance such criticism has been to me, and also for your allowing me to dedicate this book to

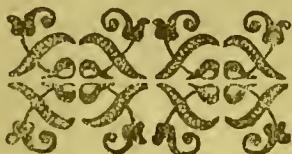
you. . Conscious, however, of so many of its imperfections, and so sure of the existence of many more that must escape me, I am half ashamed of accepting the favour ; because I feel that in so doing I am offering my homage at the feet of the old masters, for in the art which you profess you are in every way their true follower and disciple.

Yours ever,

ROBERT BRIDGES.

50, Maddox Street, Hanover Square ;

August 30, 1873.



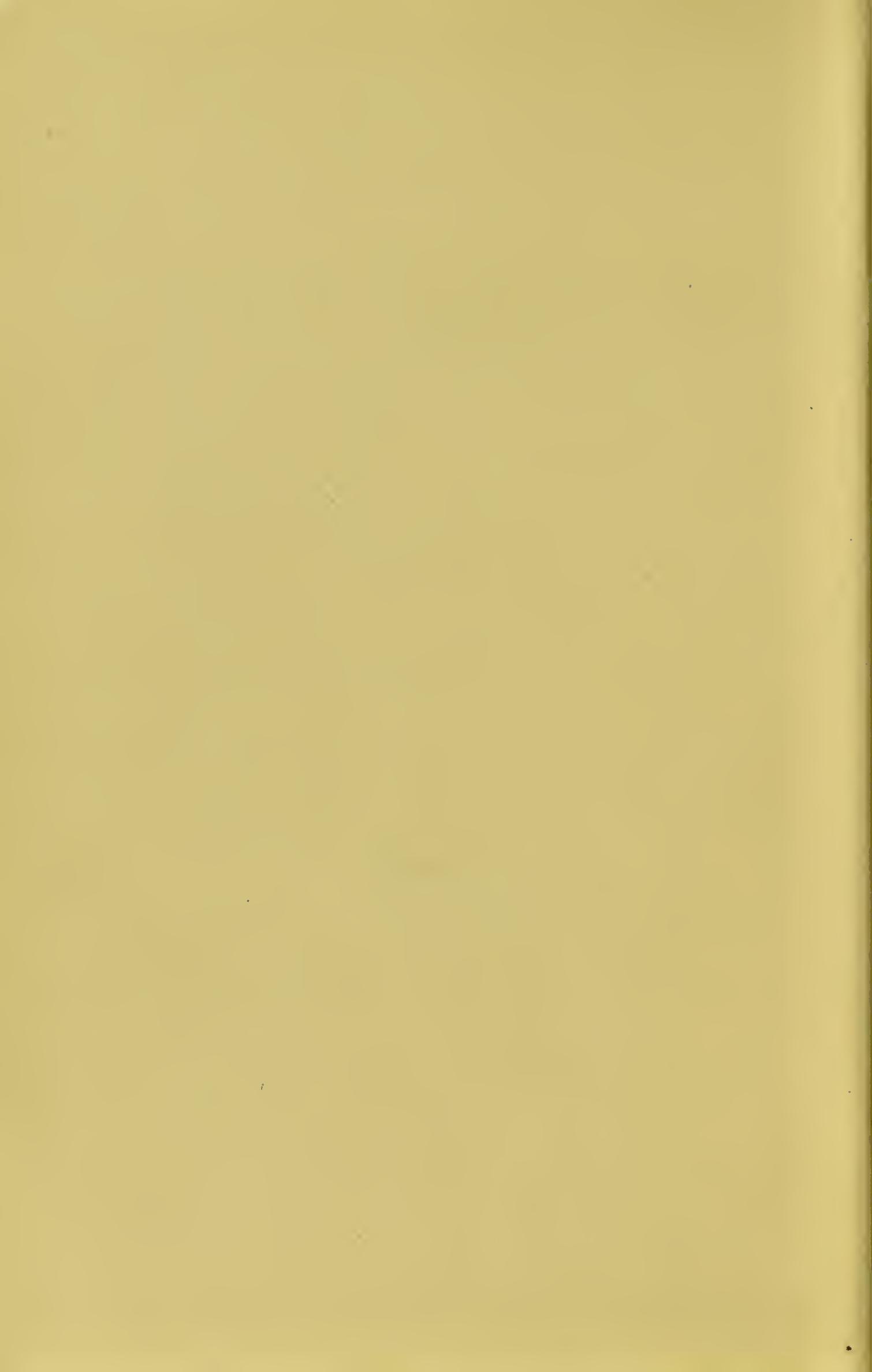




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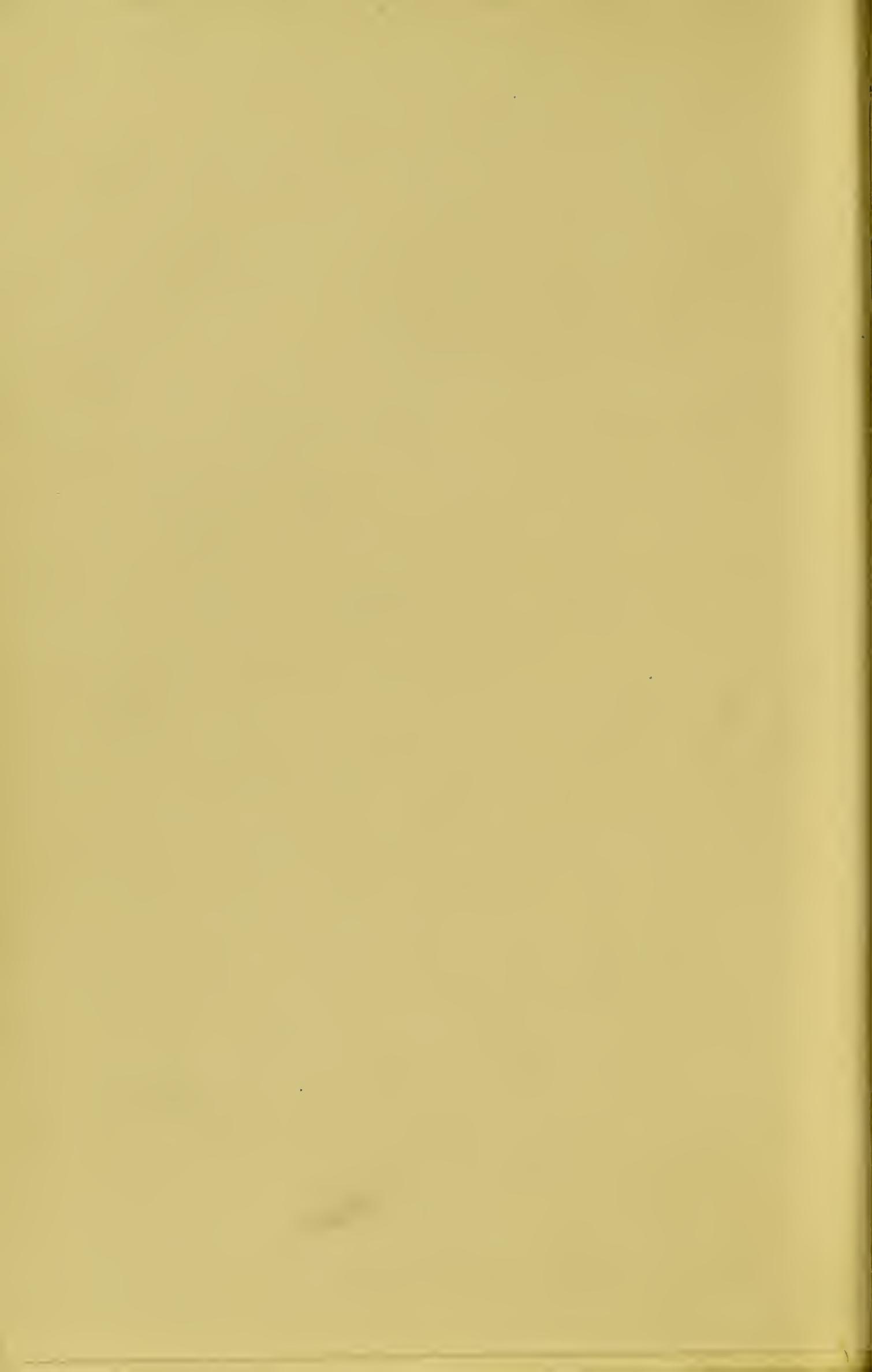
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THE POEMS





I.

H

ER eye saw, her eye stumbled :
Her fingers spread and touched it :
It was so ripe it tumbled
Off in her hand, that clutched it.

She raised it up to smell it :
Her jealous tongue ran o'er it :
Ere the thought rose to quell it,
Her keen teeth closed and tore it.

There, as she stood in wonder,
And smacked the flavour fruity,
She scanned it o'er and under,
And marvelled at its beauty.

“ It’s fair,” she said, “ and fairest
Just where the sun’s rays strike it ;
The taste’s the strangest, rarest ;
It’s bitter, but I like it.”

To man she brought it, bitten,
She brought it, she the woman,
The fruit, of which ’tis written
The eating should undo man.

“ Taste, taste !” she cried, “ thou starvest ;
Eat as I ate, nor fear it,
For of all the garden’s harvest
There’s nothing like or near it.

“ Fair to the eyes, and fairest
Just where the sun’s rays strike it :
But oh ! the taste’s the rarest,
It’s bitter, but thou’lt like it.”

3

He took the fruit she gave him,
Took it for pain or pleasure :
There was no help could save him,
Her measure was his measure.

Through her teeth's print, the door of it,
He sent his own in after ;
He ate rind, flesh, and core of it.
And burst out into laughter.

“ ‘Tis fair,” he cried, “ and fairest
Just where the sun’s rays strike it :
The taste’s the strangest, rarest,
It’s bitter, and I like it.”

II.

IN wooing and in winning
Short is the longest day ;
And sweet is love's beginning
Among the flowers of May.
Too swift the hours did pass
To lover and to lass.

The church her glad bells sounded
To seal their vows divine,
And friends the board surrounded
To pledge their health in wine.
Sing Ho ! and well betide
The bridegroom and the bride.

But now—ah woe and wonder !
Their own eyes weep to see
How daily rub mines under
Love's tower built hastily.
A disenchanting life
For husband and for wife.

III.

SHAME on his name, for he left his duty
For his selfish love, his secret pleasure ;
Forswore his soul at the shrine of beauty,
And drank of her poisoned cup without measure.

He sold his fame for the base fruition
Of all that is commonest and dullest ;
And his warped will won a strange ambition
To perfect his bodily sense to the fullest.

Glory is labour, he said, and hateful
Is labour to me, who am sick of serving
The idle world, that is most ungrateful
To those of its slaves the most deserving.

I know of a market where toil is reckoned
By other scale than by hour and minute ;
A voice has called, and a hand has beckoned,
Too long from the door, and I enter in it.

So he left his friends who had made him leader,
To toil more hopelessly without him ;
And the good cause lacked for a time a pleader
In those that had never dreamed to doubt him.

Shame on his name, for his soul must wander,
And drag in the mire her spotless clothing,
Till he dare no more on his joy to ponder,
For a black remorse and a huge self loathing.

For it is not fit that the will should suffer
The mind to stray without rein or measure,
That the soul forsake her sphere, and offer
Her strength to the charm of a brutish pleasure,

That to every man, the most unholy,
The dullest and basest-born, is given,
To look to the love of a mistress solely
For his joy on earth, and his hope in heaven.

IV.

DEEP in the inner prison thrust,
He crouches in the darkened dust,
Struck by a sentence stern and just.

On his cell floor untasted lies
His bitter food : his staring eyes
Speak of his silent agonies.

Aware of every moment's flight,
He counts his heart-beats, that aright
Throb out the watches of the night.

The prick of every past event
But adds sting to his punishment,
That looms of infinite extent.

It seems an irresponsive force
Urged him to sin with such slow course
He cannot breed a quick remorse,

Now retribution, so long time
Asleep, has met him at his prime,
To match his final crime with crime.

His penalty seems too akin
Unto his fault, as welded in
To clench the horror of his sin.

At break of dawn his prison-gate
Upon its rusty hinge will grate,
And he be led to meet his fate.

Courage may not atone disgrace ;
With pinioned arms, and shrouded face,
He must attend the public place :

And there one bitter stroke of pain
Will sever head and trunk in twain,
Body and soul,—to meet again ?

He knows not, and his past is such
He hopes not ;—at the fatal touch
All will be nothing or too much.

No grief in this world has perplexed
His mind, nor pain his being vexed,
As this old terror of the next.

V.

ELEGY.

ON A LADY, WHOM GRIEF FOR THE DEATH OF
HER BETROTHED KILLED.

ASSEMBLE, all ye maidens, at the door,
And all ye loves assemble ; far and wide
Proclaim the bridal, that proclaimed before
Has been deferred to this late eventide :

For on this night the bride,
The days of her betrothal over,
Leaves the parental hearth for evermore ;
To night the bride goes forth to meet her lover.

Reach down the wedding vesture, that has lain
Yet all unvisited, the silken gown :
Bring out the bracelets, and the golden chain
Her dearer friends provided : sere and brown

Bring out the festal crown,
 And set it on her forehead lightly :
 Though it be withered, twine no wreath again ;
 This only is the crown she can wear rightly.

Cloke her in ermine, for the night is cold,
 And wrap her warmly, for the night is long,
 In pious hands the flaming torches hold,
 While her attendants, chosen from among
 Her faithful virgin throng,
 May lay her in her cedar litter,
 Decking her coverlet with sprigs of gold,
 Roses, and lilies white that best befit her.

Sound flutes and tabors, that the bridal be
 Not without music, nor with these alone ;
 But let the viol lead the melody,
 With lesser intervals, and plaintive moan
 Of sinking semitone ;
 And, all in choir, the virgin voices
 Rest not from singing in skilled harmony
 The song that aye the bridegroom's ear rejoices.

I I

Let the priests go before, arrayed in white,
And let the dark stoled minstrels follow slow,
Next they that bear her, honoured on this night,
And then the maidens, in a double row,
 Each singing soft and low,
 And each on high a torch upstaying :
 Unto her lover lead her forth with light,
With music, and with singing, and with praying.

'Twas at this sheltering hour he nightly came,
And found her trusty window open wide,
And knew the signal of the timorous flame,
That long the restless curtain would not hide
 Her form that stood beside ;
 As scarce she dared to be delighted,
 Listening to that sweet tale, that is no shame
To faithful lovers, that their hearts have plighted.

But now for many days the dewy grass
Has shown no markings of his feet at morn :
And watching she has seen no shadow pass
The moonlit walk, and heard no music borne

Upon her ear forlorn.

In vain has she looked out to greet him ;
 He has not come, he will not come, alas !
 So let us bear her out where she must meet him.

Now to the river bank the priests are come :
 The bark is ready to receive its freight :
 Let some prepare her place therein, and some
 Embark the litter with its slender weight :

The rest stand by in state,
 And sing her a safe passage over ;
 While she is oared across to her new home,
 Into the arms of her expectant lover.

And thou, O lover, that art on the watch,
 Where, on the banks of the forgetful streams,
 The pale indifferent ghosts wander, and snatch
 The sweeter moments of their broken dreams,—

Thou, when the torchlight gleams,
 When thou shalt see the slow procession,
 And when thine ears the fitful music catch,
 Rejoice ! for thou art near to thy possession.

VI.

A POPPY grows upon the shore
Bursts her twin cup in summer late :
Her leaves are glaucous green and hoar,
Her petals yellow, delicate.

Oft to her cousins turns her thought,
In wonder if they care that she
Is fed with spray for dew, and caught
By every gale that sweeps the sea.

She has no lovers like the red,
That dances with the noble corn :
Her blossoms on the waves are shed,
Where she sits shivering and forlorn.

VII.

NIGHT by night as I lie
I hear the voice of the sea :
Divine is his lullaby,
And sweetest of songs to me.
Sing O voice of the deep,
Strong sea, sing us to sleep.

Secrets hath he to tell,
That suit the silence of night :
And sorrows that usher well
The dreams of a lost delight.
Sing O voice of the deep,
Strong sea, sing us to sleep.

How he urges alone
 His lion purpose to win
 The gay green earth for his own,—
 And how God bridles him in.

Sing O voice of the deep,
 Strong sea, sing us to sleep.

Triumph he tells of then,
 And how he clasps to his breast
 Whole cities of buried men
 Where now his monsters may nest.—

Sing O voice of the deep,
 Strong sea, sing us to sleep.

Then black ships, how they lie
 With all their crews in his caves :
 That echo the dying cry
 Of fresh prey caught in his waves.—
 Sing O voice of the deep,
 Strong sea, sing us to sleep.

All is sad that he saith,
 And all with passion is blent :

His endless complaint of death
Is passionate discontent.

Sing O voice of the deep,
Strong sea, sing us to sleep.

Solemn is sleep, O sea,
When thou art nigh to the bed :
And Death is terror to me,
When thou dost talk of the dead.

Sing O voice of the deep,
Strong sea, sing us to sleep.

VIII.

RONDEAU.

Je ne verrai jamais
pareille dame.

I SHALL not see her like again,
Nor live to rue such keen disdain ;
In face of which I love no less.
Since nought my passion could repress,
Nothing my sorrow can restrain.

Surely my hot tears fall in vain,
And my complaints refresh my pain,
In picturing the happiness
I shall not see.

The tears of heaven in April rain
Renew the young flowers on the plain
But no spring doth my sorrow bless,
My youth flies by, and no redress,
My pleasant springtide, that again
I shall not see.

IX.

ELEGY.

THE wood is bare : a river-mist is steeping
 The trees that winter's chill of life bereaves.
 Only their stiffened boughs break silence, weeping
 Over their fallen leaves :

That lie upon the dank earth brown and rotten,
 And glued together with their cold death-sweat :
 Forgotten with the spring, that is forgotten
 By them that can forget.

Yet it was here we walked when ferns were springing,
 And through the mossy bank shot bud and blade :—
 Here found in summer, when the birds were singing,
 A green and pleasant shade.

'Twas here we loved in sunnier days and greener ;
 And now, in this disconsolate decay,
 I come to see her where I most have seen her,
 And touch the happier day.

For on this path, at every turn and corner,
The fancy of her figure on me falls.
Yet walks she with the slow step of a mourner,
Nor hears my voice that calls.

So through my heart there winds a track of feeling,
A path of memory, that is all her own :
Whereto her ghostly figure ever stealing
Haunts the sad spot alone.

About her steps the trunks are bare, the branches
Drip heavy tears upon her downcast head ;
And bleed from unseen wounds now arms sun staunches,
For the year's sun is dead.

And dead leaves wrap the fruits that summer planted:
And birds that love the South have taken wing.
The wanderer, loitering o'er the scene enchanted,
Weeps, and despairs of spring.

X.

POOR withered rose and dry,
 Skeleton of a rose,
Risen to testify
 To love's sad close.

Treasured for love's sweet sake,
 That of joy past
Thou might'st again awake
 Memory at last.

Yet is thy perfume sweet,
 Thy petals red
Yet tell of summer heat,
 And the gay bed.

Yet yet recall the glow
 Of the gazing sun,
When at thy bush we two
 Joined hands in one.

But, rose, thou hast not seen,
Thou hast not wept
The change that passed between
Whilst thou hast slept.

To me thou seemest yet
The dead dream's thrall :
While I live and forget
Dream truth and all.

Thou art more fresh than I,
Rose, sweet and red :
Salt on my pale cheeks lie
The tears I shed.

XI.

RONDEAU.

HIS poisoned shafts, that fresh he dips
 In juice of plants that no bee sips,
 He takes, and with his bow renown'd
 Goes out upon his hunting ground,
 Hanging his quiver at his hips.

He draws them one by one, and clips
 Their heads between his finger-tips,
 And looses with a twanging sound
 His poisoned shafts.

But if a maiden with her lips
 Suck from the wound the blood that drips,
 And drink the poison from the wound,
 The simple remedy is found
 That of their deadly terror strips
 His poisoned shafts.

XII.

RONDEAU.

FOR too much love 'tis soothly said
 There is no cure will stand in stead :
 Deadly the baits that first decoy ;
 And where we look to find our joy
 Is all our pain and sorrow bred.

Think not thyself the first misled !
 Many ere thou have fought and bled,
 Or pined away of slow annoy
 For too much love.

And who has not the old tale read,
 Of how the flower of Hellas shed
 Their hearts' blood on the plains of Troy,
 And that fair city did destroy,
 And laid her heroes with the dead
 For too much love ?

XIII.

ELEGY.

Cristalino rio,
 Manso y sosegado,
 Mil veces turbado
 Con el llanto mio,
 Oye mis querellas
 Amorosamente,
 Sin que tu corriente
 Se turbe con ellas.

CLEAR and gentle stream !
 Known and loved so long,
 That hast heard the song,
 And the idle dream
 Of my boyish day ;
 While I once again
 Down thy margin stray,
 In the selfsame strain
 Still my voice is spent,
 With my old lament,
 And my idle dream,
 Clear and gentle stream !

Where my old seat was
Here again I sit,
Where the long boughs knit
Over stream and grass
A translucent eaves :
Where back eddies play
Shipwreck with the leaves,
And the proud swans stray,
Sailing one by one
Out of stream and sun,
And the fish lie cool
In their chosen pool.

Many an afternoon
Of the summer day
Dreaming here I lay ;
And I know how soon,
Idly at its hour,
First the deep bell hums
From the minster tower,
And then evening comes,
Creeping up the glade,
With her lengthening shade,
And the tardy boon,
Of her brightening moon.

Clear and gentle stream !
Ere again I go
Where thou dost not flow,
Well does it beseem
Thee to hear again
Once my youthful song,
That familiar strain
Silent now so long :
Be as I content
With my old lament,
And my idle dream,
Clear and gentle stream !

XIV.

SONNET.

SICK of my joyless journey, I looked round
To view the past I left so warm and bright,
When full in face I met the level light.
Of that dear face my sun, those days that crown'd.
And when again I took my way, I found
My future country all encumbered quite
With my own shadow, that turned day to night,
And with its monstrous shape blotted the ground.

And straight I thought of how Odysseus saw
Tityos in Hades: bulk incredible
Covering nine roods he lies, two vultures gnaw
His bleeding heart, that his hands pinioned well
Can save not from the work of beak and claw,
And thunderous moanings scare the ghosts of Hell.

XV.

SONNET.

LOVE, that is king of all, administers
His realm capriciously : some he ordains
To bear from house to house in his domains
His secret sealed, these are his messengers :
Others that know his will, his brave soldiers,
That drink and sing between their hot campaigns,
Laugh Death in the face: but some he binds with chains,
And harshly treats, these are Love's prisoners.

Their days are sorrow, and their nights are spent
In combat with the ghosts they cannot lay ;
Who, if they scarcely sleep, will represent
The phantom bliss for which they pine away,
Quicken their sense with cruel nutriment
For the fresh sting of the relentless day.

XVI.

SONNET.

INTO thy young heart, boy, scorn Death admission :
 Thy poor conception no wise will repay thee,
 And know that, if he come, he will waylay thee
 Ere thou canst profit by an admonition.
 And when thou shalt arrive at man's condition,
 Regard him as a friend that may betray thee ;
 Strong to reproach him not if he shall slay thee,
 Too proud to foul thy heart with base suspicion.

But are thy best years past,—no longer quell
 A natural awe of his omnipotence :
 To do as greybeards and as sick men tell,
 To arrange thy house, and stand as in defence,
 Preparing for defeat,—this may be well ;
 But I myself have no experience.

XVII.

SONNET.

WOE to the friend I loved, the friend I trusted,
He has forsaken me, forsaken, forsaken ;
Tho' by the treacherous blow my strength is shaken,
Though helm and shield with long delay are rusted,
Though with forgotten blood my sword is crusted,
Shall my old armour from the shelf be taken,
And like a giant from sleep will I awaken,
Though I go forth to battle ill-adjusted.

If I kept peace it was but for a season,
Deep in my heart my vengeance did I treasure,
And now to the full will I requite this treason,
Until mine anger taste her utmost pleasure :
For as the wrong itself was without reason,
So shall revenge o'er take it without measure.

XVIII.

SONNET.

IN my most serious thoughts o' wakeful nights,
When my sad spirit in a solemn trance
Views herself stripped of earthly circumstance,
And severed from the round of day delights :
When the blank silence of the dark invites
The dreamy ghosts, with faded countenance,
And noiseless movement, round my bed to dance,
Till their weird company no more affrights :

Then in the presence of the long-departed,
Aghast in wonder at my well-known sorrow,
Oft to my sleepless eyes the tears have started ;
Nor know I whence my secret hope I borrow,
That I should care to rise as if light-hearted,
And deck my soul and body for the morrow.

1868.

XIX.

WHEN I sit to write,
All my thoughts will fly
To a long-loved face,
That is ever by
In the selfsame place,
At this hour of the night,
When I sit to write.

When I kneel to pray,
Steals its image there
Hiding God from me.
Vain are plaint and prayer :
It is all I see,
It turns all I say,
When I kneel and pray.

When I go to bed,
Still it flits above.

Often hours I pass
Thinking on old love :
How it hopeful was
Yet how fast it fled,
As I lie in bed.

Ah, but in my dreams
At my side she stands,
As she used to be,
I can hold her hands,
Question her, and she
Answers as beseems
These ideal dreams.

And I cannot tell,
Rising, when the morn
Wrestles with the mist,
Whether she has sworn,
Whether we have kissed,
Whether all is well,—
Ah ! I cannot tell.

1869

D

XX.

Venga ya la dulce muerte.

COME gentle Death, stay not,
 Defer not, tarry not,
 To consummate my lot,
 Come gentle Death.

Sure rescuer and strong,
 To right the bitter wrong
 That time hath wreaked so long,
 Come gentle Death.

To bid a last adieu,
 Without hope of review,
 To all I loved or knew:
 Come gentle Death.

Adieu to populous towns,
 Still woods, and breezy crowns
 Of high hills, and broad downs,
 Come gentle Death.

Let the fond eye go blind,
The curious ear dull, bind
The currents of the mind,
 Come gentle Death.

Let all ambition willed
Or hope dreamt, unfulfilled
Perish, be passion stilled,
 Come gentle Death.

Quench the brain's aching heat,
Quiet the wild heart beat,
And cool the weary feet,
 Come gentle Death.

The secret to reveal,
Whether this stern ordeal
Prelude my woe or weal,
 Come gentle Death.

Unveil thy gracious face,
Grant me the last embrace,
And lead to the last place,
 Come gentle Death.



XXI.

THE GOLDEN MAID.

ROMANCE.



SAT one winter's night in gloom,
By firelight in my lonely room:
Dreaming of memories half forgot,
And sweet desires that yet were not.

When strangely I became aware
A subtle motion stirred the air.
And as I turned, a tremulous light
Of nascent glory met my sight:

And as it bright and brighter grew,
 A golden form there sprang to view,
 A beauteous maid, whose body's glow
 Was warm with life man does not know.

Fair was the vision, fair beyond
 All beauty that makes mortals fond ;
 And quite to win my sense amazed
 She drew anear me while I gazed,

And stood as Aphrodite stood
 By Paris in the Idean wood :
 Until I trembled with the fear
 Immortals bring when they appear.

“ Dreamer !” she said, for I was dumb,—
 “ Straight from thy loving gods I come :
 For once they give me power to grant
 Thy dearest wish, thy chiefest want,

“ Know me for Queen by ancient right
 Of realms thou treadest night by night :
 For throned am I, and I command
 The people of thy fair dreamland.

“ There on my shore the dead are warm,
 And fancies wear a solid form ;
 The mind is rich, the will is free,
 Speak but thy wish, and it shall be !”

There was no doubting what she said,
 She spake so well, the golden maid ;
 And so I set myself to task,
 To find the thing that I should ask.

First, wealth I thought,—the golden key
 Shall open after all for me :
 And I shall enter door on door
 Was closed so fast to me before.

Quick trim the sail ! my bark shall fly,
 And bear me to a warmer sky.
 Ho to the South ! for here is gold
 Shall buy me back the age of gold.

—But better yet than wealth, a place
 In some renowned and ancient race :
 A noble lineage, with a dower
 Of duty reverence and power :

To rule a nation well, and then
 Live after on the lips of men :
 Shadow the present with wide wings,
 And sleep among the storied kings.

— Yet what is glory, power, or wealth
 Without the homely gift of health ?
 Nay ! rather live in any sort
 With body sound than sick at court.

I will choose health, content with this
 No sober pleasure can I miss ;
 And I will thus before men's eyes
 Grow old, and with my age grow wise.

— Nay ! let the fools grow grey that can,
 I said, 'tis wit that makes the man ;
 Give me but genius, set all by,
 Give me but wit, and let me die.

But quick my heart, that lay in wait
 To silence this perplexed debate,
 Leapt to my mouth, and sang above
 All argument the praise of Love.

I laughed outright, I had forgot
 Mine ancient boy forget-me-not.
 Nay, love for aye, and cast all out !
 We're all for love beyond a doubt.

So my old dream comes true at last,
 My troubles to the winds I cast :
 For I will up at break of day
 To hear the words my love must say.

Must?—This I said will kill the charm :
 Better is doubt—and, waxing warm,
 I rose, and spake with outstretched hand,
 “ Better to win than to command.”

No sooner was my sentence said,
 Than sweetly smiled the golden maid :
 Fresh beauty did her figure take,
 And thus with loving voice she spake.

“ For this, because thou dost not choose
 To grasp the joys that man pursues,
 Therefore, howe'er thy lot be masked,
 Thou shalt have all thou hast not asked.

“ If thou hadst chosen, then had I straight
 Shut on thy path my golden gate.
 But since not choosing is thy choice
 Greater is thy reward—rejoice !

“ For often in thy dreams will I
 Here to thy cell for pleasure fly,
 And when thou comest to my land
 Lo I am thine who all command.”

Even while she spake I sat alone,
 For ere her voice died she was gone.
 And gazing in her place I stayed,
 But saw no more the golden maid.

But in my ears still rang her voice
 Of promise, and I blessed my choice,
 And wondered in what hour divine
 The vision should again be mine.

’Tis well, I said, the soul rings true
 With what the gods would have us do :
 And after all, the golden maid
 Says of them as the wise man said,

“ He who desires but what they send
Sits at their table as their friend :
But he that makes no wish his own
Shares in their kingdom, and their throne.” *Epic. Ench.*

XXII.

ROMANCE.

A LADY sat high on a castle-tower,
In anxious, mute contemplation :
She looked on the roadway, and watched hour by hour
The traveller passing her station :
For down from the North wound the road to the East,
Where king knight and bishop and soldier and priest
Were fighting for Christ and salvation.

All day she kept looking out over the moat
On soldier farmer and trader.
Of peace-seeking people she took little note,
Returned not the reverence made her.
But knights that rode eastward she eagerly scann'd,
And waved the white kerchief she held in her hand,
To full many a brave Crusader.

One morn she spied, riding out into the East,
 A knight, who, like many that passed her,
 Had girt on his sword at bidding of priest,
 Forfending eternal disaster.

His mien it was mournful, his gait was so slack,
 His squire that rode after had pain to keep back
 On his palfrey in pace with his master.

His long hair was black, and his countenance pale,
 His chin and cheek were unshaven,
 His helmet was black and his coat of chain mail
 Was black as the breast of a raven :
 What joy or delight could the lady have seen
 In one of such mournful and desolate mien
 That she beckoned him into her haven ?

The knight look'd up at the castle wall,
 And turned his steed's head when he spied her,
 He rode to the gateway and sounded a call,
 The bridge rattled down to the rider :
 And when the next traveller gazed passing by
 To see the fair lady that watched from on high,
 Lo ! the black knight was seated beside her.

She told him her tale, and the while it was told
 He sat at her feet and surveyed her ;
 She spake of her sorrow that made her so bold
 To call the stranger to aid her.
 A knight so sad-hearted and black as the grave
 Must feel for her woe, and be eager to save,
 Like a noble and brave Crusader.

“ ‘Tis long since my sire and my brothers went out
 To fight with the Mussulman stranger,
 No tidings they send—of their safety I doubt,
 I fear for their peril and danger.
 O were I a man and my years but sufficed, [Christ,
 With them had I fought for the wronged tomb of
 And the spot where he lay in the manger.”

The knight as he listened gazed into her eyes,
 Forgot his sin’s need of contrition,
 Forgot his gloom in his love’s surprise,
 Forgot his unearthly commission :
 And swore that whatever she bade him to do
 He there would adventure, and carry it through,
 Though it brought him to hell and perdition.

“ Go seek out my kinsmen, and bring me back word
 If they’re smit of the pestilent fever,
 Or slain in the battle, or yet draw the sword
 In fight with the dark unbeliever.
 Be only thy tidings swift happy and true !
 So little I ask my brave servant to do.”
 But ’twas much that she bade him to leave her.

She bade him be served as a true knight should dine,
 With dishes of choicest savour,
 She with her own hand brimmed his beaker with wine
 Of ripest, mellowest flavour ;
 Bade saddle his charger, and ere he was up
 She kissed with her own lips his red stirrup cup,
 And bound on his left arm her favour.

So riding away with his back to the West,
 To accomplish the vow that he made her,
 He felt the gay spirit that sat in his breast
 Her gift that she gave him to aid her.
 His sins he forgot on his soul that had weighed,
 For love is a preacher and priest that hath made
 Ah ! full many a gay Crusader.

XXIII.

AS in our arbour all the spring
We sat, our youthful joys at best,
There broke one morn within our ring,
Bold and unasked, a lady guest.

Flashed from her stranger eyes a glance
That stirred up hopes unknown before,
That woke me from my idle trance,
And bade me know my peace was o'er.

I rose, I had no choice but rise,
As through the green her figure fled,
Rose to obey the glancing eyes,
Follow the dancing steps that led.

I heard their voices call me back,
My friends, I bid no last adieu,
Their cries came after on my track,
And fainter still, and silent grew.

But still I followed on, nor swerved
Once from my purpose to possess;
Followed, obeyed, awaited, served,
Nor doubted of her will to bless.

But hour by hour, and day by day
I got no nearer to my prize:
And all my service won for pay
Was the same glance of her strange eyes.

Whether 'twere months or days or years
I know not, but the whole amount
Was shorter than the night of tears
Ended at last the sad account.

For when I saw my fine pearl melt,
For which I left home and sold all,
My stricken heart went cold, and felt
Hard as the rock that bruised its fall.

XXIV.

I HEARD a linnet courting
 His lady in the spring ;
His mates were idly sporting,
 Nor stayed to hear him sing
 His song of love.—
I fear my speech distorting
 His tender love.

With many a joyful twitter
 He preluded his plea,
Too urgent to admit her
 A gap for modesty
 To mar their loves.—
I would my verse spake fitter
 Their tender loves.

One phrase was all his pleading,
 He spoke of love and home :
 To one he knew was heeding
 He sang his question, "Come."—
 His gay sweet notes,
 So sadly marred in the reading !
 His tender notes !

And when he ceased the hearer
 Re-echoed the refrain,
 And swiftly perching nearer,
 "Come, come," she sang again.—
 Ah for their loves
 Would that my voice were clearer,
 Their tender loves !

Blest union of twin creatures
 Unmarred by sense of doubt :
 All summer's dry misfeatures
 Such springtide trust bars out ;
 But of their loves
 Fall short our wiser natures :
 Their tender loves !

'Twas God's best, sweetest sample
 To maiden and to man :
Where doubt pleads doubt is ample :
 All ends as it began
 In tender love.
Fear not !—'tis truth's example
 In tender love.

1869.

XXV.

THE merry elves and fairies
 Are in the woods again,
 And play their mad vagaries,
 And wanton freaks amain. [and share
 Come out, come out, fond mortals, come ! they cry,
 Our pleasures rare !

And I that love gay June,
 Am out ere morn has driven
 Her loitering star from heaven,
 Or woke the first bird's tune.

Across the morning meadows
 I tread the pearly grass :
 They run out from the shadows,
 And mock me as I pass. [and share
 Come out, come out, fond mortals, come ! they cry,
 Our pleasures rare !

But when with sultry heat
 The sun, the day dividing,

Above the wood is riding;
 'Tis there they make retreat.

I hear them faintly blowing
 Their small horns down the glade ;
 They're chattering and crowing
 Their business in the shade. [and share
 Come out, come out, fond mortals, come ! they cry,
 Our pleasures rare !

I see on stream and pond
 The ripples of their making,
 Their restless stir is shaking
 Blade leaf and flower and frond.

I know their tiny voices,
 And every elf knows well
 My fancy, and rejoices
 To ply on me his spell. [share
 Come out, come out, fond lover, come ! they cry, and
 Our pleasures rare !

Their song is never mute ;
 Yet so they blurr their traces,
 And shift their hiding-places,
 They baffle my pursuit.

For when I pass, in cover
 Of bell and cup they lie :

Come out, come out, fond lover !

Come out, come out, they cry. [share

Come out, come out, fond lover, come ! they cry, and
 Our pleasures rare !

But still I seek in vain,
 And hear their merry laughter
 Pursue me mocking after,
 And bid me turn again.

Till in despair of finding

I pluck the flowers around,
 And in the hood's deep winding

Will run my prey to ground. [share

Come out, come out, fond lover ! still they cry, and
 Our pleasures rare !

For though the flower I win
 Yet trembles with their dances,
 My cunning never chances
 To catch the sprite within.

So erring oft and widely

I turn my steps aloof,

And fling my tired limbs idly

On moss and sweet woodroof. [and share
Come back, come back, fond lover, come ! they cry,
Our pleasures rare !

But I give up my search,
Content where I am lying
To watch the white clouds flying,
To mark the songbirds perch.

And at the sun's declension

I bend my footsteps home,
And give no more attention
To all their crying, Come, [and share
Come back, come back, fond lover, come ! they cry,
Our pleasures rare !

Too happy then if soon,
Her lilies contemplating,
I find my love awaiting
The rising of the moon.

XXVI.

SONNET.

A N idle June day on the sunny Thames,
Floating or rowing as our fancy led,
Now listening to sweet things the young birds said,
And choosing now a nosegay from the gems
That star the embroidery of the bank, that hem
The current, that our skiff from Henley sped
To where the Cliefden woods o'er Maidenhead
Bar its still surface with their mirrored stems ;

“ I would have life, thou saidst, all as this day,
Simple enjoyment calm in its excess,
With not a grief to cloud, and not a ray
Of passion overhot my peace to oppress :
With no ambition to reproach delay,
Or rapture to disturb its happiness.”

XXVII.

(FOR C. H. G.)

THE humble bee is a baron free,
That wears his fur in summer :
And the common bees all bow their knees
To the humble bee, the hummer.

His castle round is built underground,
With a winding entrance hidden :
So narrow and strait is his guarded gate,
That none dare pass unbidden.

Though baron he be, a trader is he,
And a shrewd distiller of honey :
For he will not fast when the day's o'ercast
At the price of sleep on the sunny.

His breastplate's keel and his helm are steel,
And his black plumes have no number :
But his chest and waist are girt and laced
With a belt of gold and umber.

And beneath it he stows his wealth as he goes,
 For his motto is "*Vello et velo.*"
 He's a double spur, and his wide wings whirr
 Round his back like a planet's halo.

He pushes up in the foxglove cup,
 And opens the bluebell wider; [springs
 Till the flower-stalk swings with his weight, and
 Like a steed with a gallant rider.

The highwayman sets his strongest nets,
 And hides in his path to waylay him:
 But he bursts them in two, and goes singing through,
 And does not stop to slay him.

He works all day, as a breadwinner may,
 And at eve you may often find him
 On the homeward road, afaint with the load
 He will not leave behind him.

All midsummer-tide he flies far and wide,
 Till the blooming months are ended:
 When he lingers before the cottager's door,
 Where the autumn flowers are tended.

But in winter he waits within his gates,
And feasts on his hoarded treasure :
Till the spring on his walls is warm, and calls
Him again to labour and pleasure.

XXVIII.

THE cliff-top has a carpet
 Of lilac gold and green :
 The blue sky bounds the ocean,
 The white clouds scud between.

A flock of sea-gulls twitter,
 And wheel around my seat ;
 Above my head the heaven,
 The sea beneath my feet.

The ocean speaks :

Were I a cloud I'd gather
 My skirts up in the air,
 And fly I well know whither,
 And stop I well know where.

As pointed the star surely,
 The legend tells of old,
 Where the wise kings might offer
 Myrrh, frankincense, and gold ;

Above the house I'd hover
 Where dwells my love, and wait
 Till haply I might spy her
 Throw back the garden-gate.

There in the summer evening
 I would bedeck the moon ;
 I would float down, and screen her
 From the sun's rays at noon ;

And if her flowers should languish,
 Or wither in the drought,
 Upon her tall white lilies
 I'd pour my heart's blood out :

So if she wore one only,
 And shook not out the rain,
 Were I a cloud, O cloudlet,
 I had not lived in vain.

A cloud speaks :

But were I thou, O ocean,
 I would not chafe and fret
 As thou, because a limit
 To thy desires is set.

I would be blue, and gentle,
 Patient, and calm, and see
 If my smiles might not tempt her,
 My love, to come to me.

I'd make my depths transparent,
 And still, that she should lean
 O'er the boat's edge, to ponder
 The sights that swam between.

I would command strange creatures,
 Of bright hue and quick fin,
 To stir the water near her,
 And tempt her bare arm in.

I'd teach her spend the summer
 With me : and I can tell,
 That, were I thou, O ocean,
 My love should love me well.

But on the mad cloud scudded,
 The breeze it blew so stiff ;
 And the sad ocean bellowed,
 And pounded at the cliff.

XXIX.

LOVE is up at break of day,
He climbs the hill-top singing :
Labourers on their early way
Have heard the echoes ringing
With his merry roundelay.

Whilst before their busy blade
At noon the tall corn rattles,
Love is sleeping in the shade
Beside the brook, that prattles
Dreamy music in the shade.

Where is Love at eventide ?
Ah, many a gentle maiden
Throws her garden casement wide
To breathe the night air laden
With the sighs that Love has sighed.

XXX.

DEAR lady, when thou frownest,
And my true love despisest,
And all thy vows disownest
That sealed my venture wisest ;
I think thy pride's displeasure
Neglects a matchless treasure
Exceeding price and measure.

But when again thou smilest,
And love for love returnest,
And fear with joy beguilest,
And takest truth in earnest ;
Then, though I sheer adore thee,
The sum of my love for thee
Seems poor, scant, and unworthy.

XXXI.

Vainement je cherche quel crime.

O H how have I offended ?
 What have I said, or what can I have done,
 That all I lately won
 Should be so quickly lost, my pleasure gone,
 My triumph ended ?

Oh how have I offended ?
 To-day so angry, so kind yesterday.—
 Yet only speak I pray,
 Not of the fault to tell, but how it may
 Be best amended !

Oh how have I offended ?
 I beg forgiveness : though my love acquit
 My heart, I must admit
 That innocence brings no content with it
 If thou'rt offended.

XXXII.

I WILL not let thee go.
Ends all our month-long love in this?
Can it be summed up so,
Quit in a single kiss?
I will not let thee go.

I will not let thee go.
If thy words' breath could scare thy deeds,
As the soft south can blow
And toss the feathered seeds,
Then might I let thee go.

I will not let thee go.
Had not the great sun seen I might:
Or were he reckoned slow
To bring the false to light,
Then might I let thee go.

I will not let thee go.
The stars that crowd the summer skies
Have watched us so below
With all their million eyes,
I dare not let thee go.

I will not let thee go.
Have we not chid the changeful moon,
Now rising late, and now
Because she set too soon,
And shall I let thee go?

I will not let thee go.
Have not the young flowers been content,
Plucked ere their buds could blow,
To seal our sacrament?
I cannot let thee go.

I will not let thee go.
I hold thee by too many bands :
Thou sayest farewell, and lo !
I have thee by the hands,
And will not let thee go.

XXXIII.

SINCE thou dost bid me to leave thee,
I that am sworn to obey,
Will it not anger or grieve thee,
Love ! should I venture to stay ?

Nay, thou hast taught me far better,
Taught me again and again,
Not to read love by the letter,
Therefore I dare to remain.

'Tis but fear's chill in love's fever
Ails thee ; it soon passes o'er
To leave the heart weaker than ever,
More helpless and fond than before.

XXXIV.

I FOUND to-day out walking
The flower my love loves best.
What when I stooped to pluck it,
Could dare my hand arrest?

Was it a snake lay curling
About the root's thick crown?
Or did some hidden bramble
Tear my hand reaching down?

There was no snake uncurling,
And no thorn wounded me;
'Twas my heart checked me, sighing
She is beyond the sea.

XXXV.

T'WAS midnight, and I started
From sleep in quick surprise.
The cold white moonbeams darted
Like ice into my eyes.

So strange the room around me
Whereon their light was shed;
I shuddered where I found me,
And sank back in my bed.

What ailed me that I started,
And turned where I had lain?
I dreamt we had not parted,
And wished to dream again.

XXXVI.

SOMETIMES when my lady sits by me
My rapture's so great, that I tear
My mind from the thought that she's nigh me,
And strive to forget that she's there.
And sometimes when she is away
Her absence so sorely does try me,
That I shut to my eyes, and assay
To think that she's there sitting by me.

XXXVII.

SONG.

O TRUST the eyes that win thee !
 And trust the lips that smile !
 And let no doubt within thee
 Trouble thy joy the while !

Seize, and enjoy the present,
 'Tis all the wise can do.
 Could it make thine more pleasant
 To know thy love were true ?

If she prove true for ever,
 Can that increase thy bliss
 To-day ?—nay, thou wilt never
 Know truer joy than this.

And if she turn deceiver,
 Why should thy strong heart grieve ?
 Weep only if thou grieve her,
 And die ere thou deceive.

XXXVIII.

SONNET.

PARTED so long—by such a cruel fate torn,
And held beyond the range of sound and sight,
Shall not the desolate lover perish quite,
Sick with the fever of his heart forlorn ?
Nay, though with watching blinded, and outworn
By marshalled opposition, in despite
Of fate and foes, will I wait out the night
Shall crown my confident hope with sunny morn.

As when some fisher in his lonely skiff
Tacks to and fro in the gale, with vain resort
To weather the whistling headland of the cliff
That parts him from his loved ones, half in sport
He plies his skilful mastery, laughing, “ If
The wind but shift a point I shall make port.”

XXXIX.

LONG are the hours the sun is above,
But when evening comes I go home to my love.

I'm away the daylight hours and more,
Yet she comes not down to open the door.

She does not meet me upon the stair,—
She sits in my chamber and waits for me there.

As I enter the room she does not move:
I always walk straight up to my love;

And she lets me take my wonted place
At her side, and gaze in her dear dear face.

There as I sit, from her head thrown back
Her hair falls straight in a shadow black.

Aching and hot as my tired eyes be,
She is all that I wish to see.

And in my wearied and toil-dinned ear,
She says all things that I wish to hear.

Dusky and duskier grows the room,
Yet I see her best in the darker gloom.

When the winter eves are early and cold,
The firelight hours are a dream of gold.

And so I sit here night by night,
In rest and enjoyment of love's delight.

But a knock at the door, a step on the stair
Will startle, alas, my love from her chair.

If a stranger comes she will not stay:
At the first alarm she is off and away.

And he wonders, my guest, usurping her throne,
That I sit so much by myself alone.

XL.

WHO has not walked upon the shore,
And who does not the morning know,
The day the angry gale is o'er,
The hour the wind has ceased to blow ?

The horses of the strong south-west
Are pastured round his tropic tent,
Careless how long the ocean's breast
Sob on and sigh for passion spent.

The frightened birds, that fled inland
To house in rock and tower and tree,
Are gathering on the peaceful strand,
To tempt again the sunny sea;

Whereon the timid ships steal out
And laugh to find their foe asleep,
That lately scattered them about,
And drove them to the fold like sheep.

The snow-white clouds he northward chased
Break into phalanx, line, and band :
All one way to the south they haste,
The south, their pleasant fatherland.

Ye happy clouds ! could I but fly,
Would I not join your merry dance !
Would I not race with you on high,
To reach the streams and hills of France !

This island's summer days are sweet,
And a few autumn suns are warm :
But, ah ! I dread the approaching feet
Of winter, cloaked in mist and storm.

XLI.

RETURN.

SONG.

SHE is coming my love o'er the sea,
She is coming back once more ;
I will haste to the port, and be
The first she shall meet on shore.

 But oh be still my heart !
 Will she yet remember the day
 Her last farewell was for thee,
 The day that she went away ?

Where art and poetry were born
She has lingered, in palace and dome ;
She has sailed to the isles of the morn,
She has trodden the streets of Rome.

But oh be still my heart !
 Will she yet remember the day
 She spoke not with scorn of home,
 The day that she went away ?

She has drunk of the grape, where the vine
 On the purple hillside grows :
 She has passed the bound of the pine,
 And slaked her thirst in the snows.

But oh be still my heart !
 Will she yet remember the day
 She drew where thy lifeblood flows,
 The day that she went away ?

She has learnt the language of love
 From lips that laugh in the sun,
 Where the skies are so clear above,
 Her eyes fresh blue will have won.

But oh be still my heart !
 Will she yet remember the day
 Her tears o'er our kiss did run,
 The day that she went away ?

When she left she was slender and straight
As the youngest tree in the wood,
But now she will come back great
In the charms of her womanhood.

 But oh be still my heart !
 Will she yet remember the day
She promised a changeless state,
 The day that she went away ?

Her tall ship's sails are full
With the wind that blows from the south ;
The stalwart rowers pull
Her skiff from the harbour mouth.

 But oh be still my heart !
 Will she yet remember the day
I was here to see her depart,
 The day when she went away ?

XLII.

HURDY-GURDY MAN.

SONG.

A POOR old hurdy-gurdy man, my masters, stay !
 I'll take any thing from coppers up to crowns.
 I've lately come from London, and I make all day
 Merry music in the country towns. [spic and span,
 I've got more tunes than you wot of. Some are new,
 Some are old, some are fast, some are slow.
 Jingle jingle, chink a chink, rran tan tan,
 Ting a ting a tan tan to.

Give just a copper, ladies, for a tune, end to end ;
 I've been playing all the day without a bite,
 And now I haven't half-a-dozen pence to spend
 On my supper and my bed to-night.
 Have but pity in your pleasure on a poor old man ;
 See, my locks are as white as the snow.
 Jingle jingle, chink a chink, rran tan tan,
 Ting a ting a tan tan to.

Ye merry lads that laugh at me, I once was young,
 And my step was as light as yours, and gay :
 I worked through the daylight hours the whole year
 Nor complained of the length of the day ; [long,
 But I now am grown so feeble that I scarcely can
 Drag my hurdy-gurdy round as I go.
 Jingle jingle, chink a chink, rran tan tan,
 Ting a ting a tan tan to.

There's not a soul comes near me since my old woman
 For my son went off a lad to the sea, [died,
 And friends, what with poverty and what with pride,
 Don't concern themselves much about me.
 I've a lonely life, and bear it, sirs, as best I can,
 And I make you merry music as I go.
 Jingle jingle, chink a chink, rran tan tan,
 Ting a ting a tan tan to.

There's one thing that I've learnt, sirs, I would preach
 far and wide,
 'Tis that God don't measure man as we ;
 And happy in my heart, sirs, I can still take pride
 In my duty, whatever it may be.

For whatever chance may bring, to do the best we can
Is the work that God gives us here below.
Jingle jingle, chink a chink, rran tan tan,
Ting a ting a tan tan to.

XLIII.

SONG.

A BOY and a girl are come over the hill :
They walk hand and hand with each other.
They're the same I saw yesterday down at the mill ;
Mayhap they be sister and brother,
That take a walk on the hill,
To shame folks at home that sit scorning
The joys of a merry May morning.

They loiter so pleasantly over the hill :
Their footsteps stray hither and thither.
See they here pluck a flower and here linger at will ;
And now they sit down on the heather :
They take their seat on the hill,
To shame folks at home that sit scorning
The joys of a merry May morning.

They chatter and talk as they sit on the hill :
Young birds flutter by them fresh-feathered :
Now they play with each other, and now they sit still,
And look at the flowers they have gathered ;
The while they sit on the hill,
To shame folks at home that sit scorning
The joys of a merry May morning.

They nestle and coze as they sit on the hill :
And see ! he has stooped down and kissed her.—
Your pardon, young couple, my prying is ill,
Ye cannot be brother and sister,
That sit and kiss on the hill,
And shame folks at home that sit scorning
The joys of a merry May morning.

XLIV.

SONG.

I MADE another song,
In likeness of my love :
And sang it all day long,
Around, beneath, above ;
I told my secret out,
That none might be in doubt.

I sang it to the sky,
That veiled his face to hear
How far her azure eye
Outdoes his splendid sphere ;
But at her eyelids' name
His white clouds fled for shame.

I told it to the trees,
And to the flowers confest,

And said not one of these
Is like my lily drest ;
Nor spathe nor petal dared
Vie with her body bared.

I shouted to the sea,
That set his waves a-prance ;
Her floating hair is free,
Free are her feet to dance ;
And for thy wrath, I swear
Her frown is more to fear.

And as in happy mood
I walked and sang alone,
At eve beside the wood
I met my love, my own :
And sang to her the song
I had sung all day long.

XLV.

Dans dix ans d'ici seulement.

IN ten years hence, she said,
 Wilt thou love me then as now,
 When the bloom from my face has fled,
 And the crease is sunk on my brow ?

Dost think thou wilt reconcile
 Thy passion to charms worn weak,
 To the frozen eye, and the smile
 That wrinkles the faded cheek ?

I could win thee now with a glance
 Of love, were it half pretence ;
 'Twill not be the same perchance,
 How sayest thou ? ten years hence.

In ten years hence, I said,
 I shall love thee then as now,
 Though the bloom from thy face have fled
 And the crease be sunk on thy brow.

I shall kiss the cheek that I kissed,
And the smile that won me will win :
If never a day be missed,
Say how will the change begin ?

If well thou lovest me now,
I shall hold in memory then
Enough to last, I trow,
Though the years were ten times ten,

Be wise ! no longer delay !
No longer question and fence !
By thy measure of love to-day
Will I mete to thee ten years hence.



XLVI.

BEATUS ILLE.

PHILOSOPHICAL VERSES.



APPY the man, and highly blest
Above the order of mankind,
Whose healthful body is possest
By heaven with as sound a mind:

Whose reason early waked has known
In youth the jewel God has set
Within his frame of flesh and bone,
And having known cannot forget.

Therefore his purpose has set far,
In that his clean and tender age,
All low contagion, that might mar
The freshness of his heritage :

And, not immured from chance offence,
His ear awake to Siren's voice,
His eye alive to sights of sense,
Has made his glad heroic choice.

In the spring pasture of his youth
Closely his brightest hours may chime,
But he of all will note with truth
The uses of that happy time.

By daily action he will build
Within, both spacious and erect,
A holy shrine, as a well-skilled
And heaven-instructed architect :

And if his purpose be to frame
This temple beautiful as strong,
His passion will not bring him shame,
His error will not lead him wrong.

Him may young Love with azure eyes
 Entice into a slippery way,
 And masqued Truth in holiday guise
 May draw his eager zeal astray :

But he will free a copious fount
 Of virtue, careless of her price :
 Grow to be honest without count,
 And measure not self-sacrifice :

So that in after days, when all
 Seems calculation hard and real,
 His youthful impulse he'll recal
 And still pursue the true ideal :

And, turning to his secret cell
 Whene'er by trial or doubt opprest,
 Trust in his own clear oracle
 Will give him in his warfare rest.

There hidden from the strife of creeds
 That gender mischief and despair,
 “ Lo here ! ” he says, and never heeds
 The multitudes that cry “ Lo there ! ”

As one in a cathedral aisle
 May hear the city's coil and rout,
 The heavenly hymns within beguile
 His senses of the jar without.

And though at strife to lessen strife,
 In ardour to assuage the heat,
 He lives an independent life
 Of pleasure in his cool retreat ;

And in his own pursuits elate,
 Whatever change his times may bring,
 He in the truest estimate
 Is friend, philosopher, and king.

Examples of high character
 His study gleans from history's page
 Thrill through his soul, nor cease to stir
 His emulation in old age.

While from the friends he loves he learns
 The graces that have won his love,
 And by a constant service earns
 The wages he must best approve.

All admiration that his heart
 Warmly conceives, that knows no scorn,
 Will quick react with kindly art,
 And stamp a beauty where 'twas born.

Yet as a gardener does not spare
 In his rich plots his skilful toil,
 So he will check with patient care
 Weeds that love best his fertile soil.

The character that once he gained
 So easily he knew not how,
 Must now with courage be retained,
 With wisest art be strengthened now.

And many a practice, strong to storm
 The holds of sin he will invent,
 And never cease until he form
 A habit to oppose his bent.

Till striving thus he soon perceives
 That virtue is not part and part,
 But one ; which whoso once believes
 Must seek to gain with all his heart.

Then no bereavement will deter
 His aim, nor doubt his hope control ;
 No outward circumstance can stir
 The settled purpose of his soul.

Though he may sigh for love, and dream
 Of a sweet harbour of repose,
 Worst disappointments he will deem
 Of selfish plans wise overthrows.

Nor were he happier, should the full
 Fruition of his calm desires
 Tempt his keen ardour to grow dull
 In rest that aims not nor acquires.

The veteran soul may wisely dwell
 In contemplation, but the world
 Is a sore field, where swords are well
 Unsheathed, and banners best unfurled :

And to be armed is his high boast,
 And his desire and chief delight
 A foremost station in the host,
 Where he may use his strength to fight.

And if he fall where fight the brave,
 When hope and promise are most high,
 Example rescues from the grave
 His virtues, that can never die.

Or if the full term be his lot,
 He in his Autumn will repair
 To some bower in his garden plot,
 To tell the fruits his orchards bear.

There in quiet moments, by the light
 Philosophy and love confer,
 He will gaze on, and raise his sight
 Over death's silent barrier.

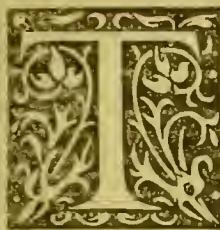
Whatever lies beyond that hedge,
 His life has been,—it is confess,—
 Best preparation and best pledge
 For all we fancy of the best.

The glorious sun he spies between
 The clouds that make death's morning gray,
 That, Lord of life no man hath seen,
 Quenches the fire of earthly day.



XLVII.

BALLAD.



HE king of a northern country
Sailed to the south for war :
And left his faithful people
And icy clime afar.

And when the war was over
And won, he made resort,
For rest and royal pleasure,
Unto a southern court.

But in that summer country
There ruled a maiden queen ;
She was the fairest lady
The king had ever seen.

He quickly grew to love her,
 And, as it soon befell,
 He was so strong and knightly,
 The brave king pleased her well.

All through the northern winter
 His coasts were bound with ice
 He let her grace allure him,
 And all her words entice.

But if she bade him tarry
 And share her southern throne,
 The king broke off, and told her
 That each must reign alone.

Yet when the south wind carried
 The birds of passage home,
 He wept full sore and sadly
 To find the spring was come.

Fain had he left his kingdom
 Unto his nearest heir,
 And burnt his towered galleys,
 And dwelt for ever there :

But so he prized his duty
 He set his face to go,
 For all she loved him truly,
 For all he loved her so.

He called a wise magician,
 “Contrive me cunningly
 Two rings of gold and rubies,
 And weave a charm thereby.

“One that on whoso’s finger
 Soever it be set,
 The wearer may the giver
 By slow degrees forget :

“But let the other strengthen
 Fond memories and restore,
 And guard the hand once plighted
 In faith for evermore.”

He heard, the wise magician,
 And made them, ring and ring :
 Inwove the spell with cunning,
 And brought them to the king :

The day of his departure
 He came before the throne,
 And told the queen his mistress
 He went to rule his own.

Keen was the word and sudden
 To stab her woman's heart:
 She thought the king so loved her
 That he could ne'er depart.

The courtly scene swam round her,
 She scarce could sense command:
 Aware but of his presence,
 And how he held her hand.

As kissing there her fingers,
 He said, "I prithee wear
 This gift in fond remembrance
 Of him that sets it there."

And as he kissed her fingers,
 He gently slid thereon
 The ring, whose potent magic
 Should work oblivion.

“ And I,” he said, “ I also
Will wear this ring for thee.”
And on his hand he showed her
The ring of memory.

He rose and would not venture
One tender word to speak ;
For all his will was kingly,
He knew his heart was weak.

Among his rough retainers
He bowed and hurried forth,
Stepped on his royal galley,
And steered her for the north.

XLVIII.

BALLAD.

HISTOIRE DE LA MÈRE JARY.

PART I.

TWO beds there were in the garret, on one
 The father lay a-dying :
 The mother on one, with her firstborn son,
 Her newborn babe was lying.

The wife had given the last of her strength
 To nurse her husband, and cheer him ;
 And now that her son was born at length,
 The breast was dry that should rear him.

“ Nay, give me the babe,” the father said,
 “ I know of a dame will have him ;
 In the village where I was born and bred
 They will care for my child and save him.

“ So give me the child,” he said, and rose
 From his bed, a corpse already :
 In his throat there rattled his first death throes,
 His steps were short and unsteady.

He took the child from the mother that wept,
 Did clumsily swaddle and wind him ;
 And down the stairs with his burden crept,
 And the door swung to behind him.

The village lay well six miles from the door,
 And he could not have reached it mounted :
 But he came back alone to the chamber, before
 Two hours were over and counted.

He sank on his bed nor spoke a word
 As he lay there panting and moaning ;
 And the mother that wept for her child, but heard
 Her dying husband’s groaning.

At last she said, “ You are back full soon,
 But you come back heavy-hearted :
 ’Tis four leagues’ walk, but ’tis not yet noon,
 And the sun was high when you started ! ”

“ ‘Tis well enough with the child,” he said,
 “ And ask me not about him ;
 Or ere the sun set I shall be dead,
 And you will be better without him.

“ What could you do without friend or nurse,
 Too poor and weak to feed him ?
 Believe me, wife, the child is no worse,
 And has those that will suckle and heed him.”

“ Nay, tell me,” the mother cried bereft,
 And but thought of her lost child’s danger,
 “ Before you die say where you have left
 My child,” and she spoke in anger.

“ For sure he is mine, the babe,” she said,
 “ So give me some sign or token
 By which I may find him when you are dead,
 That I too die not heart-broken.”

“ Then know that his name is John,” he cried
 With words that his life expended ;
 “ Our child is a foundling,” he said and died,
 And his earthly sorrows were ended.

PART II.

THROUGH street and square, in the public way,
 And in back lanes of the city,
 There wanders a woman night and day,
 That none can see without pity.

Not forty years have passed o'er her head,
 Yet time by sorrow to measure,
 She surely is nearer the term of the dead,
 Than the age of beauty and pleasure.

So long at the door of death she lay
 In pain, and grief, and dishonour ;
 She worked so long the charge to repay,
 That charity laid upon her.

And only arose from her couch of pain
 To labour, and save, and borrow :
 And only worked herself free, to gain
 Free course for her heavier sorrow.

She wanders in market, and street, and square,
 She gazes at seller and buyer ;
 She stands in corner-places, and there
 She watches all that pass nigh her.

But young men only she looks upon,
 Like a girl that has lost her lover,
 As one in the other world may con
 All faces a friend to discover.

A face there is graven deep in her mind,
 That serves her for model and measure ;
 And by the likeness she hopes to find
 Her loved and long-lost treasure.

Two faces on earth she has loved, and she
 Is searching with vain endeavour,
 To find in the one she yet may see
 The one she has lost for ever.

And both in her mind are one, and one,
 The husband, is dead, and the other,
 That smiles she knows not on whom, her son,
 Has never heard of his mother.

On some she will look not twice, and some
 She follows with hesitation ;
 And others she tracks with patience home,
 And asks of their name and station.

She has heard of the wondrous power of blood,
 Of Nature how nought can efface her ;
 And thinks if her son before her stood,
 He would surely run to embrace her.

To some she has thought most like her child
 She has spoken in accents tender :
 And some has accosted in frenzy wild,
 Who were silent not to offend her.

And judging her mad, men set aside
 Her tale as not worth believing,
 And with ill-guided kindness have tried
 To humour her by deceiving.

But she never has found her dearest son,
 Though up and down in the city,
 Of noblest, poorest, or basest, are none
 That see her and do not pity.

PART III.

IN a long, long room, in a building where
 Though the walls seem freshly painted,
 And windows are wide, and floors are bare,
 The air is strangely tainted.

Where beds are set in a double row,
 And the silence is scarcely broken :
 And women in black walk to and fro
 At a sign or a call low-spoken.

Where life is disease, which men transplant
 From the highways and the ditches,
 That science may gather her seed of want
 To reap her harvest of riches.

Where sickness the strength of the mind commands,
 And death is the thing most common,
 A doctor surrounded by students stands
 At the bed of a raving woman.

He questions her gravely of this and that,
 But she has not heard or recked him ;
 While he in turn is as deaf to what
 Seems talk that does not affect him.

For instead of answer, she asks the same
 Strange questions, and no other,
 "O tell me, good sir, is John your name ?
 And whether you have a mother ?"

He turns away in despair from the bed,
 And his words are few and prudent.
 "Both mind and body are sick," he said,
 And he spake thus much for the student ;

"No medicine there is that on earth is found
 A cure for the mind's disorders,
 Their lesion lies on the subtle ground
 Where the soul on the body borders.

"So spake the old Greek an axiom true
 Of the melancholic condition ;
 That there was nothing for man to do,
 But that love was the best physician."

And pointing to where the woman lay,
 He feared he could not restore her :
 And spoke of one that should come next day,
 And mentioned his name before her.

And then, when she heard the name of John,
 She seemed to forget her weakness,
 And leapt from her bed, and cried, " My son !
 He will come to me in my sickness.

" I shall see him, my son, my son, at last
 He will come to his dying mother :
 For surely my life is ebbing fast,
 And he can save, and none other."

But that very night, as the sleepers dreamt
 Of death, and the waking eyed it,
 It left her wasted body exempt
 From the spirit so sorely had tried it.

But the tale, as one told it me, did not say
 If her son were alive, or whether
 Her soul that awoke to a brighter day
 Met husband and son together.

I I I

XLIX.

TRIOLET.

WHEN first we met we did not guess
That Love would prove so hard a master ;
Of more than common friendliness
When first we met we did not guess.
Who could foretell this sore distress,
This irretrievable disaster
When first we met ?—We did not guess
That Love would prove so hard a master.

L.

TRIOLET.

ALL women born are so perverse
No man need boast their love possessing.
If nought seem better, nothing's worse :
All women born are so perverse.
From Adam's wife, that proved a curse
Though God had made her for a blessing,
All women born are so perverse
No man need boast their love possessing.

LI.

BALLAD.

Fures versi sunt in operarios.

AN Abbot once lived on the banks of the Po,
 Right wise in the mixing of sallet :
 His pride that all fruit in his garden should grow,
 And all herbs that are fit for the palate.
 With cabbage and spinach he was not content,
 On fast days his board 'neath the choicest fruit bent,
 With green peas and asparagus even in Lent.
 Could language but picture his table,
 'Twould read like a feast in a fable.

“ Shall only this Abbot, whose paunch is so big,
 Enjoy the rich fruits of the summer ?
 The grape, peach and apricot, melon and fig
 Yield their savour to any chance comer.”

They thought it, and spake it one midsummer night,
 Just twenty gay robbers, that stood in the light
 Of the moon that was painting the abbey walls white:

They stood there and vowed, all the twenty,
 They'd taste of his ripe fruit in plenty.

Hie over the wall, Fritz, and over you, Hans,
 And over you John, Dick and Thomas !
 What grows of itself, lads, is well any man's,
 And the Devil shan't keep God's gifts from us.
 So over they leapt, Dick, Fritz, Thomas and John,
 And Hans and the rest of them, every one,
 On a bed where saw by the moonlight that shone,
 Were set,—'twas the man of God's order,—
 Spades twenty upright in the border.

What's come to the ruffians? what makes them afraid?
 They tremble,—what terror can move them?
 Each runs for the border, and seizes a spade,
 And they dig as if Somebody drove them.
 The old abbey walls are woke up, and resound
 With a digging, and patting, and turning the ground,
 For no man there dissembled, each worked with a
 And dug, despite corn or carbuncle, [sound,
 As if 'twere the grave of his uncle.

The old abbey bell rang out one, two, and three ;
 They've turned all the ground wanted turning ;
 Sweat rolls from their foreheads as fast as can be ;
 All their mouths are dry, all their throats burning.
 Yet dig they, as soldiers dig trenches in war,
 And what they've dug once, dig again o'er and o'er ;
 Till the sound of the lazy old clock chiming four,
 Came over the abbey-moat waters,
 A quarter, half-past, and three qua'ters.

The Abbot woke up at a quarter to five,
 And smiled as he told his beads slowly :
 He looked from his bed, saw the garden alive,
 And blessed God, for the Abbot was holy.
 Then calling a monk, he bade, “ Fetch in the men
 That dig in the garden, their number's twice ten,
 Give them food, wine in plenty, and come here agen :
 Their sins may S. Jeremy pardon,
 They've worked all the night in my garden.”

The robbers came in, and saw platter and mug,
 And did not waste much time in thinking ;
 They set to, and ate, and they drank as they'd dug,
 As they'd never stop eating and drinking.

And while they were feasting the Abbot walked in,
And said how good labour good eating did win,
And he added some words on the danger of sin :

And then, for the tale is no fiction,
He gave them his best benediction.

LII.

ZOPYRUS.

'Αποταμών γὰρ ἐωυτοῦ τὴν φῆνα.

WHEN king Darius sat on the throne,
And ruled in golden Asia alone,
And under his state umbrella's shade
Received the tribute his servants paid,

The ancient city of Babylon,
That Cyrus twenty years since had won,
Threw off the yoke of his subject states,
Prepared for a siege, and shut her gates.

Darius summoned the Persian force,
And marched for the city with foot and horse,
And sat down before it with all his men
Among the canals to take it again.

But high were the walls for his ladders to scale,
Too thick for his biggest rams to avail,
And small account the defenders made
Of his firing, mining, and ambuscade.

He tried the plan stood Cyrus in stead,
 And turned the river out of its bed,
 But no success this time befell
 A trick that the citizens knew too well.

A year and seven months in vain
 His troops had lain encamped on the plain,
 But little the Babylonians cared,
 Because they were mightily well prepared.

And day by day grew the king more vexed,
 And his generals more and more perplexed :
 And all that had vowed to grow their hair
 Till the city was taken were in despair.

But one brave captain of all the host
 His Monarch's disgrace afflicted most :
 Herodotus with his name supplies us,
 Zopyrus the son of Megabyzus.

'Twas in the twentieth month he swore
 The rebels should mock their king no more ;
 He swore by Ahuromasda on high
 To take the city himself or die.

And so, as the Persian story goes,
 He cut off both his ears and his nose,
 And rent his clothes, and tore his hair,
 And scourged himself on his body bare.

With wounds all bleeding and garments torn,
 He entered the royal tent at morn :
 He stood in the royal tent alone
 Before Darius, who sat on his throne.

The king Darius wept to see
 Such mutilation of his grandee ;
 And cried in anger magnanimous,
 “ Zopyrus ! who hath treated thee thus ? ”

“ I know of none O king but thee
 Could dare to work such outrage on me ;
 And since thou hast not done this thing,
 I have wrought it myself on myself O king.”

“ Such conduct,” the king said, “ ill befits
 A satrap. I fear thou hast lost thy wits ;
 Since none have brought thee to this disgrace,
 Hast cut off thy nose to spite thy face ? ”

Zopyrus said, “ I have cut off my nose
 The better O king to bamboozle thy foes ;
 Have scourged my back for thy sake, my liege,
 And cut off my ears to end the siege.”

Darius said, “ Alas, it is plain
 That grief, Zopyrus, has turned thy brain ;
 As if it could matter to Babylon
 Whether thou have fifty noses or none.”

Zopyrus said, “ If I judge aright,
 Within the walls will I sleep to-night ;
 Within a month, if God so please,
 My hand shall handle the city keys.

“ But let thy troops, when they see their foes
 Are led by a man without ears or nose,
 No longer fight as the Persians fight,
 But fall in disorder and take to flight.

“ And when O king I shall open to thee
 The gates of the city, the world shall see
 How great an error it is to suppose
 A man’s wit lies in the point of his nose.”

Zopyrus went in his woeful state
 That night alone to the city gate,
 And cried aloud, " Babylonians, see
 The outrage the king has wrought on me!"

" Lo ! I a satrap, a prince, no less,
 Am bent on my vengeance and seek redress,
 Make use of a traitor's knowledge to bring
 Your troops to the very tent of the king ! "

An old man said, " Good citizens all,
 Admit not this man within the wall,
 Nor trust the more a prince of your foes
 Because he appear without his nose."

" O wisdom indeed !" the citizens cried,
 " For certain the white of thy beard is dyed.
 Whoever heard of such a thing,
 To cut off one's nose to please one's king ? "

The loss of his nose their credit did win,
 They opened the gates and let him in,
 And bade him at morn look round, and choose
 The bravest of all their troops to use.

The Persians met them as was their wont
 Until Zopyrus came to the front,
 When general, captain, and monarch ran
 At the sight of their noseless countryman.

And never, or after or before,
 Have such bold deeds been heard of in war :
 Darius with half a million of men
 Would fly from Zopyrus with ten times ten.

And since when Zopyrus the sallies led
 The citizens found that the Persians fled,
 They gave him command of the city outright,
 And made him guard of the walls by night.

And nothing so much did Zopyrus please
 As the sight of that massive bunch of keys ;
 And he sent a trusty prisoner straight,
 To tell Darius he held the gate.

The Babylonians soundly slept [kept :
 When they knew that Zopyrus the night-watch
 And Darius and all his men of war
 Went in by the gate that he left ajar.

And thus as the Persians love to tell,
 A second time Babylonia fell ;
 And all the credit the story throws
 On brave Zopyrus who cut off his nose.

Darius then and there did accord
 The city he won for his own reward :
 He gave it him all for his own to use,
 And make no account of the revenues.

And the Persians who love their bravest best
 And tell the tale, have ever confess
 That of all their heroes excepting Cyrus,
 Was never a braver man than Zopyrus.

And Darius himself was heard to swear
 He held the price of his victory dear ;
 And would twenty times give back Babylon,
 To have Zopyrus his nose set on.

For plastic surgery could not then
 Restore to a man his nose again :
 Though many a surgeon, as art now goes,
 Would give Zopyrus a cheaper nose.





EPITAPH

ON A GENTLEMAN OF THE CHAPEL ROYAL.

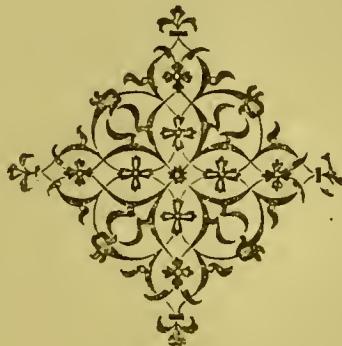


LD Thunder***s is dead, we weep for that,
He sings for aye his lowest note, B flat.
Unpursed his mouth, empty his mighty
chest,
His run is o'er, and none may bar his rest.
We hope he is not d—d, for if he be
He's on the wrong side of the middle sea.
Nay we are sure if weighed he will not fail
Against the Devil to run down the scale ;
While even three-throated Cerberus must retreat
From one that bellows from his sixteen feet :

Or should he meet with Peter at the door,
 He'll seize the proper key as heretofore,
 And by an easy turn he'll quickly come
 From common time straight to *ad libitum*.
 There in the equal temperament of Heaven,
 Sharps, crotchetts, accidentals, all forgiven,
 He'll find his place directly, and perspire
 Among the bases of the Elysian quire.

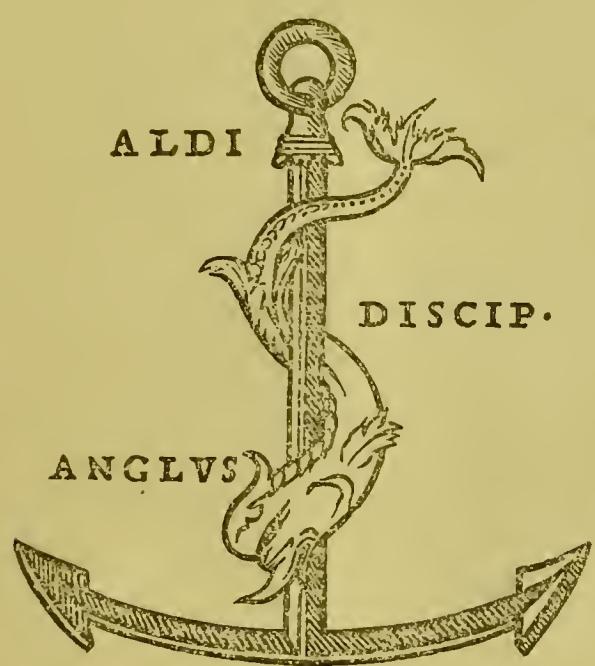
Fear, dwellers on the earth, this acquisition
 To the divine etherial ammunition ;
 A thunder is let loose, a very wonder
 Of earthborn, pitiless, Titanic thunder :
 We who remain below and hear his roar,
 Must kneel and tremble where we laughed before.

1869.



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE foregoing poems, with the exception of a few that have their proper dates affixed, were written between the summers of seventy-two and seventy-three. The quotations which are set at the headings of some of the poems are intended to remind the reader of the source from which the matter or form is taken. The last two stanzas of number three are a translation of two corresponding stanzas in a Spanish ballad. The epitaph at the end is printed at the desire of all the old Etonians who have seen it; and the singer whose memory it celebrates is so famous, that the author is convinced that he needs no further excuse.



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