

THE LAST IDLER.

AND OTHER POEMS.

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BY
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AUTHOR OF "DREBY LANE LYRICS," ETC.

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RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED WITH PERMISSION

TO THE

RT. HON. MARQUIS OF RIPON, K.G.,

IN RECOGNITION OF

HIS LIFE-LONG SERVICES ON BEHALF OF

FREEDOM AND JUSTICE.

CONTENTS.

THE LAST IDLER	9
LIBERTY	81
MY FATHER'S SWORD	85
A MODERN INFERNO	88
TEMPUS FUGIT	94
THE STAIN ON THE CEILING	95
THE CHILD MOTHER	98
YES, I WILL WAKE THE LYRE ANEW	100
THE WORLD IS MOVING	103
THE CUCKOO AND CUCKOO'S MATE	109
CONTENTMENT	112
IN MEMORIAM	115
THE AGNOSTIC CREED'S	118
ON RECEIVING A PRIMROSE	121
DESERTED	123

THE LAST IDLER.

PROLOGUE.

Would'st know the purport of my untaught song,
The secret musings of my solitude ?
'Tis mine to tell the fearful tale of wrong
That Labour suffered ; how iron might subdued
The manly efforts of the toiling brood ;
How the supporting hand of Time doth bear
The life of nations, Labour, from the rude
And dismal regions of unfeigned despair—
To conquer for all time the realms of Doubt and Care.

'Tis mine to show how slothful men will die,
'Till one lone man shall their existence prove ;
How he shall range among mortality,
Devoid of sympathy, regard, or love ;
How earth shall mock him, and the skies above
Cast endless shadows on his sinful way,
While every look shall chasten and remove
His want of action in the light of day,
Till all earth's grandeur change, and leave him in dismay.

Take this rude song as friendship's offering,
Nor gold nor precious gems have I to share ;
The grateful robin heraldeth fair spring,
Whose presence he awaiteth year by year,
With sweet wild notes ; and are they not as dear
As gold, when gold has failed to purchase song
Like his ? I dare not mine with his compare ;
At best, 'tis simple, rudely wove, and strong,
Ay, rugged like the path that I have moved along.

Amid the Babel sounds of ceaseless toil,
I hear a song of purest harmony ;
A low, faint warble ; but, a little while,
And it shall echo through the earth and sky
In loud hosannahs ! wider spreads the cry
Of suffering millions, who have long, long fought
Against the crushing force of destiny.
It can not, must not, will not end in nought,
When that coherent cry by banded slaves is caught.

A new light bursts upon the old world's track ;
Rich, mellowing light ! Men ruled by gain,
Who love their gold, and, smiling, turn their back
On those who dwell on Poverty's domain,
Shall mourn like monarchs who have ceased to reign,
Or, owl-like, startled at the new-born light,
Inveigh, as they behold its wondrous power constrain
The ebon fragments of defeated night,
And strive with golden dross to bribe the Infinite !

Within the depths of crude philosophies,
The stubborn ignorance of 'parted years,
In earthly creeds and worn-out sophistries,
One truth, an ever-living truth, appears.
Neglected prophets, and long-suffering soers,
Half read, half guessed, its strange omnipotence ;
But clothed its meaning in strange mysteries,
For thus, alone, they dared to influence
The lawless acts and deeds of unchecked violence !

That living truth is writ on earth and sea,
And none can miss it but the mental blind ;
Through all, beyond, this world's immensity,
In the blue heavens, go, seek ! and ye shall find.
I hear it whispered by the passing wind,
By rustling leaves, by streamlets as they flow—
'Tis "Justice is God's law to all mankind !"
And when the world shall this grand secret know,
The charters men have made a breath shall overthrow.

INTRODUCTORY.

My theme is Labour, Famine's deadliest foe,
The proud man's scoff, the honest man's delight ;
My aim to strike a fierce and deadly blow
At men whose gaze has stricken like a blight,
And left the land as though a locust flight
Had covered all the earth. The time has come
When men who toil must rouse up in their might,
(Scorning to sink like beggars to their tomb,)
And take what they have earned, a comfortable home.

A cupboard lined with plenty of good cheer,
A larder filled with food from stall and sty,
A cellar stocked with honest home-brewed beer—
Meat for the hungry, liquor for the dry ;
Good wholesome beds where honest men may lie
And rest their weary bones at close of day,
Till the bright sunbeams fill the morning sky.
Such homes await ye, poor men in dismay,
When ye have strength to drive your ancient foes away.

Show me the weak are treated like the strong,
 That scales of Justice are for ever true,
 That her administrators, 'voiding wrong,
 From her just lines will never turn askew,
 Nor sway her beams in favour of the few,
 Then I'll recant, and joyfully proclaim
 That 'tis a mirage I've been passing through ;
 Then will I go and wrap myself in shame
 And tremble, as though cursed, when men pronounce my name.

I would that I could think as some have thought,
 That Justice, only Justice, ruled the land ;
 That, like a flower never known to sport,
 It held all vagaries in strict command ;
 That my conclusions have been built on sand,
 To vanish like the fabric of a dream :
 But, come what may, on this I take my stand—
 That wealth in England has a power supreme,
 And scales withouten gold will ever kick the beam.

What mockery to prate of Mother Earth
 To men who daily walk abroad in fear :
 The greatness of the laud that gave them birth,
 To those who plainly are not wanted here ;
 Of Nature's kindness to her children dear,
 To those who never lose the sense of wrong,
 And burthens bear from suffering year to year.
 What mockery to feed men with a song,
 When nought of joy or mirth to such poor souls belong.

Go ! learn what laws they've passed in England's name,
To justify the dark deeds they have done ;
How bishops trading in Religion's name,
Have called to witness, God, and Christ, his Son,
To doings prompted by the Evil One.
Go ! tell the truth, unmindful of their rage,
Of men whose lust has turned their hearts to stone,
How banded thieves in every clime and age,
Have stripped the sons of toil of God's great heritage.

Go ! seek in vain for acres that were free,
That no man living dared to call his own,
Free as the air we breathe, the bounding sea,
The gladd'ning rain, that bursting storms let down ;
Go ! search to find how prickly edges, grown,
Shut in the rich, and barricade the poor ;
Then to the world their cruel deeds make known,
How parks have grown from common, marsh, and moor,
And honest men are forced to seek the workhouse door.

I write to warn, and not to kindle wrath,
To further Justice in this land of ours,
To check the brambles growing in man's path,
And comfort it with incense-bearing flowers.
I've seen a storm descend in fruitful showers,
That looked as low'ring as the one now near,
I've seen it lose its devastating powers,
And pass away without a trait of fear,
Leaving the sky above from threat'ning dangers clear.

I've often stood and watched the shifting glass,
And tried to read the portents of the sky ;
I've longed and longed to see the dark clouds pass
That dim the future, and, with tear and sigh,
I've conjured men to hesitate, and try
To deal with fairness to all human kind.
Alas ! alas ! they one by one passed by,
As through, like Justice' self, they all were blind,
And every word I spoke was but a breath of wind.

Why talk of conscience leading men aright,
As though the world was, like the gospel, pure ;
As though 'twere free from enmity and spite,
And not gone rotten to its inmost core.
Give me the proof that rich men love the poor,
Or, conscience-stricken, turn aside from sin ;
That men are better than in days of yore,
And feel the tie of universal kin ;
That wrong, in peace or war, is never known to win.

Go ! list to all the lecherous, treacherous cant,
From pulpits built on earthly heresies ;
Now heaven is credited with waste and want,
How God made drones to rob the working bees,
And laws to give them competence and ease.
Mark how religion, of its virtues shorn,
Becomes the pimp to man's iniquities ;
How countless toilers, wearing crowns of thorn,
Are taught the truthless lesson " Man was made to mourn."

Who curses those with every want supplied,
The God-denounced, who trample on his laws,
The men who batten on their lust of pride,
Whose carnal promptings know nor break nor pause
Why should they revel in the world's applause,
And dance to death that beggars reach in pain !
Tell me, ye canting hypocrites, the cause—
Why God has split the human race in twain
The one to sow, the other reap the hurricane !

Out of the way, ye tinselled sons of pride,
Whose every thought has been to swell your store ;
To float, like rainbow-bubbles, on the tide,
Unmindful of the cries of England's poor.
The wrongs that fed your revelries of yore,
The robberies that made your merriment,
Are doomed to pass away, in peace or gore.
Those gathering tones of wakening discontent
Proclaim a people's wrath in anger may be spent.

Why preach of bounteous riches unto those
Whom misery follows wheresoe'r they go ?
Of mines of wealth that splintered rocks disclose
To those who share not in their overflow ?
Whose lives are one consistent round of woe !
These cannot feel the sense of gratitude,
Whatever riches Nature may bestow.
'Twixt life and death, the poor and needy brood
Know no surcease of pain—no cheering interlude.

All labour tends to truth. The shuttle flies,
The millwheel turns, the prow, the pick and spade,
With startling force lay open to the skies
The mysteries of earth and sea. By trade
The nations of the world are wiser made,
And commerce, with her flying pennant, brings
Forth new revealments, to the constant aid
Of truth and knowledge. Honest wealth that springs
From toil, stands first in heaven of all love's offerings.

To do a deed, is both to think and act.
A flash of thought that leads not to a blow
Must die, and, like a vessel wracked,
Lie hidden with its kindred down below.
Though on the surface other thoughts may plough,
That thought is dead, and will not rise again.
The storm may beat, the waves tempestuous flow,
And shake the world by one vast hurricane ;
But thoughts that prompt no deed, are numbered with the slain.

The man who toils not, robs the sick and maimed,
The lonesome widow, and the mental blind,
And he, who, doing this, is not ashamed,
Forfeits the love of all of human kind—
The love of him who tempers the rude wind
To the shorn lamb, within whose gospel's found
The spur to labour, " Seek, and ye shall find ;"
The parable that Sloth may well confound,
" The tree that bears no fruit encumbereth the ground."

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To justify the dark deeds they have done ;
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The measure of the world lies in its growth—
Productive growth—not stretch of sea or land ;
Within the riches that are held by both.
The fool alone will measure barren sand,
And seas that stubbornly resist the wand
That Labour wields to serve the common good.
The space is lost that lists to no command,
And will not bend to serve the multitude,
Who, starving, cry aloud, “ Give us our daily food.”

The world has grown, the world must ever grow,
Where Labour treads, it conquers soon or late ;
There's many spots where golden harvests show,
And reapers armed with sharpened sickles wait,
That human kind were wont to execrate.
'Twas Toil that built the tanks and turned the stream,
And added acres to the world's estate:
The strength of Intellect and Toil supreme,
Combined, possess the pow'r to fashion, like a dream.

Brave workers of the world, God speed thy race !
Your lives alone are truly worth their cost ;
Our mother, Earth, reveres the faintest trace
Of all thy footsteps ; until these are lost,
Her memory will cling to ye as most
Exalted of her sons. Often in pain,
She prayed for ye, and cursed the greedy host,
Whose presence is an everlasting stain,
Born of the guilty hand that wrought the crime of Cain.

The flowers bloom wherever ye have trod,
 The birds sing sweeter by thy cultured groves,
 The rain falls softer, and the living God
 Counts ye among the children whom he loves.
 His spirit's with ye ; day and night, it moves
 Over the footpath of your wandering ;
 Coincident to thine, as thine to his, it roves.
 While hovering angels, ever on the wing,
 Come laden with heaven's gifts, and earthly comforting.

If Heaven, in wrath, should sacrifice the world,
 And leave one toiler but to mark his race,
 The banneret of Toil would float, unfurled,
 And in earth's ruins, he would quickly trace
 How he might live and labour to efface
 The marks of punished sin and God's displeasure,
 And, from the debris, weave and interlace
 Another world, of fully equal measure,
 A fitter, better globe, to hold King Labour's treasure.

He would be fruitful as the fruitful seed
 From which he sprang, and fail not to prove true
 The gospel of his race, in word and deed ;
 The gospel that was writ for me and you.
 What though its worth has failed to reach the few
 Who laugh at Toil, and dare its deeds asperse ?
 Go ! mark how wasted cities rose and grew,
 How Toil, alone, can gather and disburse ;
 How dissipate the lie that Labour is a curse.

Ye who have fought fell Famine with success,
And driven back man's most invet'rate foe,
Shall win your guerdon, earthly happiness,
And conquer all ye fain would overthrow.
"The slave that would be free, must strike the blow,"
Is lisped no longer by the tongue of Fear,
The new-born boldness of the crowd shall grow,
Still gath'ring strength from rolling year to year,
Till, in the dark'ning distance, crime shall disappear.

THE BIRTH OF LABOUR.

No matter how we strain our eyes to see,
The thick'ning mists, upgathered, cheat our sight,
And all beyond is clothed in mystery—
In darkness, denser than the blackest night ;
The stretch of canvas and the line of light
Contain the drama, but the prologue's lost
In ebon darkness, drear and infinite.
Ambitious pride may blindly, vainly boast ;
But Time has barriers raised, that vision never crossed.

I, longing, gazed, deep, deep, into the past,
To see Great Hercules in infant guise ;
O'er wastes of time, o'er plains and antres vast,
I strained my weary, aching, yearning eyes :
I strove to sunder all my earthly ties,
To learn how Labour passed its infancy ;
But, all in vain ; still, stretched before me lies
The same dead wall that closes history,
And renders all beyond an unsolved mystery.

The sum and substance that I've learnt is this :
Man in his infancy contrived to live,
Knew nought of comfort, nought of human bliss,
Had not the gift, that spiders have, to weave,
Nor feed like worms and sustenance receive
From earth alone ; could only hunt and swim,
And yet, with no one who could lend or give,
He kept the spark of life from growing dim,
And warded off the dangers that long threatened him.

The spring of Labour—man's necessities,
The love of life and bitter throes of want,
Desire to clutch whatever satisfies,
A leaf, a stem, a blossom or a plant.
Not man alone, the busy bee, the ant,
Was each so taught to labour and to toil—
The tempting food, the tempted supplicant,
The treasure trove revealed above the soil—
The soothing pleasure won ; the appetite for spoil.

Not dearth alone, the bitter winds that blew,
The falling shower, the want of warmth and light,
From each and all new promptings rose and grew,
The food that conquered forced the appetite—
The finite swallowed in the infinite !
Who now can count the needs of cultured taste,
The logging thirsts of hearing, smell and sight,
That science, art and physics have outpaced :
The growth of human wants—of artificial taste ?

When fettered fingers wrote for fettered slaves,
 The truth meant danger, and remained untold ;
 Then chronicles, like epitaphs on graves,
 Left worth to perish in the bitter cold.
 Read "sneaking coward" for "the brave and bold,"
 Read "blood stained despot" for "the friend of right."
 The smooth, round lie has, like the pebble, rolled.
 The truth we seek is hidden from the sight—
 Lost in the folds of death—or hid in depths of night.

Who honoured Labour in the "good old days,"
 Ere Freedom dawned, or light and learning rose ?
 No harp was strung to sound the toiler's praise,
 Or draw forth pity for his cuffs and blows.
 What poorer scribe who wrote in humble prose,
 Would turn aside to starving themes like these !
 'Twas his to tell of carnivals and shows,
 To celebrate new honours and degrees,
 And fill his beggar's script by pleasing sophistries.

In vain we ask, Who formed the potter's wheel ?
 The hammer, chisel, mallet, and the plane ?
 The venturing vessel, with its narrow keel ?
 The cunning net for harvesting the main,
 And the forerunner of the swift-winged train ?
 And vainly, too, of those who formed the spade,
 The sharp-edged sickle for the golden grain,
 The hundred instruments of help and aid,
 That multiply our wealth and swell the sails of trade ?

The coward has no heart to tell the truth,
And fools alone rely upon his word ;
Let him who fain would compass Labour's youth
Take for his guide the relics chance has stored—
The tools of flint, to cunning purpose scored,
And those of bronze. The wise are bound to see
Much yet may come of half truths thus assured.
Why trust to those who shrank from verity,
And serve up twisted facts in tomes called history.

Go, search thyself for instruments of aid,
And many a worthy pattern shall be found
Of lever, pulley, hammer, pick and spade,
Of ligament, and joint, and column crowned ;
Here we alone can stand on solid ground,
And learn how Nature fitted man to toil.
Man is a lesson unto man. A mound
That rears its head above the neighb'ring soil,
May yet in secret hold the Testament of Toil.

The truth is ours, if we but search aright,
And quarry deep to find the starting stone ;
We've ta'en for teachers men who shunned the light,
Or guessed at truth, and counted it as won.
Make it thy will, and let thy will be done ;
Get truth from truth ; as lie revealeth lie,
So shall the foremost truth when hit upon,
Call forth another in the by-and-by,
And shame the coward thought that truth was born to die.

Call Reason to thy aid, and she will come,
For those who seek the truth, must share her love ;
If we have gathered light from out the tomb,
By aid of light, that cometh from above,
Why, why, despair ? and why, inconstant, rove
From settled purpose ? Trust ye, nevermore,
The Jack-o'-Lanterns who have ever strove
To lead astray and misdirect the poor.
The path the planet steers reveals its path before.

One day, I closed my book in discontent,
And, weak and weary, threw my pen aside :
In vain, I asked, Can nothing supplement
The few faint traces, scattered far and wide,
Of broken veins, with naught to coincide ;
Nothing to lead me on, nor compensate
For loss of purpose, dignity, or pride ?
Year after year I strove, content to wait :
But not a sign appeared to swell the aggregate.

Outspent with anxious thought, I fell asleep,
And Labour's heroes, in a dream, passed by :
The first to venture on the mighty deep,
The first to scale the rocks that pierce the sky,—
Brave men, whose mission 'twas to do or die.
These two passed first, the pink of bravery,
With "Dauntless," written in each clear, calm eye.
Their dower to man, the power to move more free
Thro' dangerous paths on land, and storm-swept leagues of sea.

Then, bent by age, and long, laborious toil,
Came he who first discovered Nature's store,
Who tracked the secret of her hidden spoil—
Her veins of precious gold and silver ore ;
Then, following, the first to leave the shore
In search of brillants, hidden by the waves,
To grace the diadems old monarchs wore
When earth was peopled by a crowd of slaves,
And ruled by kings and kinglets, murderers and knaves.

Next in succession came the pioneer
Who first cast nets upon the open sea ;
The brave adventurer who knew no fear,
Of whom no record lives, whose history
Lies hidden in the blotted past. 'Twas he
That gave another world for men to reap,
To rich men power to fare more sumptuously.
Long may the angels steady vigil keep
On those whose lives are spent in harvesting the deep.

Then Jubal followed with his tuneful train,
And songs of heartfelt joy were heard afar,
With blended voices, strengthening the refrain—
Greeting the conqueror's return from war ;
And noisy crowds came through the city bar
To swell his triumph—strew his path with flowers.
I saw the conquered lashed unto the car,
The streamers flying from the crowded towers,
And gifts of precious gold that fell like April showers.

'Twas but a dream by fickle fancy led,
That Jubal's visioned form called into view—
A dream within a dream—that strangely led
Me back and back, the withered ages through ;
Back to the time when this old world was new ;
When Jubal's harp first into being sprung,
And dancers' feet with new-born rapture flew
To its strange melodies, and love and song
Were mated to the music of the harp first strong.

Then Tubal Cain, that wondrous man of old,
Who planned the ploughshare and the keen-edged sword ;
Who taught how stubborn blows can knit and weld,
And render supple as a silken cord
The hardest metal ever yet disoared :
And, following Tubal, greater Belzaleel,
Whose wondrous works in metals blocked and scored,
To this, our day, doth Holy Writ reveal ;
Then he whose fertile brain, produced the potter's wheel.

I saw Uriculus with rule and line,
Survey the spot where ancient Tyre arose ;
Hugh blocks of stone, fresh quarried from the mine,
Strewn o'er the banks where swift Leonties flows ;
And then I saw Hyperbus dealing blows
On them, and labourers crowding in the rear,
Toiling, like slaves, with swarthy, beaded brows,
In untold agony—everlasting fear,
With only meek-eyed Hope their drooping souls to cheer.

I saw Archimedes who formed the screw,
 And Euclid with his problems hurrying by ;
 Blind Homer, Cecrops, and those brothers two,
 Whose Tyrian fame in ambered fables lie ;
 Then, following closely, Cadmus did espy,
 And Moses with his tables and his code ;
 Then those who gifted thought with power to fly—
 Faust, Guttenburg and Schoeffer, and explode
 The harmless sophistries that Ignorance bestowed.

Then, following a crowd in old world guise,
 Whose beetled brows proclaimed them men of mind ;
 Each one, in turn, I strove to recognise,
 But not a trace to aid me could I find.
 Each one looked starved and cold, and some were blind ;
 And yet I knew, if I could read aright,
 There was not one who had not blessed mankind
 With some created power to expedite
 The will of Him who filled the spacious heaven with light.

With bloodshot eyes, and marks of ceaseless care,
 I saw men pass with heavy beetled brows ;
 With all the traits the over-burthened bear—
 Ay, crippled, like the walnut trees by blows
 Dealt by the robbers of its laden boughs,
 And, like it, rudely plundered. Mine eyes wept tears—
 I failed to realise how fast time flows,
 And how their fellows' fate had changed by years :
 How men and customs alter—constant friction wears.

I saw men toiling with the brand of slaves,
And kicked and cuffed by masters in their pride ;
I saw them stripped and robbed by crafty knaves,
Who never mentioned justice but they lied .
I saw them manacled and crucified,
The men who did God's work from day to day !
I saw Injustice ruling far and wide,
And cheated suitors, empty sent away,
Fleeced by a show of right—spoiled by the law's delay.

The rack and manger filled to overflow,
The palfrey clothed in trappings rich and rare,
While he whose hands were made to guide the plough,
And whose strained back would heavy burthens bear,
Had not a rag to warm, nor crust to share.
I saw him freed ! oh ! world of mockery !
Stripped of the collar that he used to wear—
His labour his ; but what it bought, not free ;
'Twas not the manumission of the jubilee !

I saw him freed to range from town to town,
To beg for food, while tears bedimmed his eyes ;
I saw the vagrant tracked and hunted down,
The law approved, with all its mockeries ;
The stern-faced judge complacently arise,
The wretch condemned, the jailor by his side ;
Heard words of pity, mixed with sophistries,
About the justice of the law applied--
Its majesty, its grandeur, and its stern-faced pride !

I marked the tariff of the toiler's pay,
The penalties attached to taking more,
The prospect blacken with each passing day,
The wrongs he felt, the miseries he bore ;
The hardships ever pressing on the poor,
And then, in pain, I turned my eyes askant,
And asked myself, " Are these the days of yore ?
Is this the golden age of which men rant,
Where men were left to die, within the grip of want ?"

There's no re-living, though they lived for truth,
The dead are dead, and cannot re-arise,
Those gallant souls who perished in their youth,
And to their labours fell a sacrifice,
Must find their recompense beyond the skies.
Yet, while unconscious, they for judgment wait,
Let all who claim to rank among the wise,
Strive night and day their deeds to emulate,
And so wipe off the debt we owe the good and great.

'Twas then, methought, a friendly voice, and clear,
Cried, " Labour sprang from man's vicissitude ;
Its early life is lost ; though e'er so dear,
'Tis past recall, and little understood."
Yet, still, day after day, I interviewed
Departed ghosts, and bade them con me o'er
All they had learned by ghostly interlude.
Save scattered fragments, culled from ghostly lore,
The story of Toil's youth is lost for evermore.

In the pure spirit of eternal love,
I see men mingle, friends for evermore,
Their only God, the God who dwells above ;
Their only care, to grip yet more secure
The good they've gained, to live a life more pure,
A life that sanctifies mortality !
I hear them chant the names their martyrs bore,
The deeds they did to set their brethren free
From old world disregard and lack of sympathy.

HISTORIC REFLECTIONS ON LABOUR.

Utopian dreamers ! men have laughed their fill,
And I laughed with them in my ignorance ;
Martyrs whom tyrants for their sport would kill.
Far-reaching souls that scanned the broad expanse,
And severed Truth's alliance with Romance,
Sleep on ! th' untired world is moving still,
The streams of love, strong in their confluence,
To happier shores are wending their swift way
To scenes as free from storm as any land-locked bay.

I would that I could rouse ye, but the sleep
Of death is long, and Time wakes not the dead ;
Sleep on ! 'twas thine to climb the mountain steep,
And meet the banded slaves that tyrants led :
To battle with the storms that burst o'erhead,
And bridge the gulfs impeding Pisgah's path.
The foysterers who danced about your bed,
Will dance no more ; with halting, panting breath,
Thy foes and ours, in turn, have danced the dance of death.

THE LAST IDLER.

Brave men, who wrote your gospels in your blood,
And feared no pain,—who, fettered to the cross,
So died for man, 'midst man's ingratitude.
Fain would I strip your graves of mould and moss,
Granting ye lives of gain for lives of loss ;
Show ye old battle fields with gold bestrewed,
And flowers blooming in the once-armed foss ;
But rest ! your work is done, the seed once sown,
All, save the new life springing, Death claims for his own.

Ye brave Essenes, forerunners of the Word,
Who preached the gospel, ere its ink was shed ;
Ye glorious souls, who pioneered the Lord,
And truth for its own sake long nourishèd,
I would recal you from your earthy bed,
And show ye how new life dry bones has stirred ;
But who, alas ! can hope to wake the dead ?
So, sleep the sleep of peace ; your troubles o'er,
Ye are not lost, brave souls, but only gone before.

And ye, who raised those pyramidal forms,
Not he who made a mockery of your toil,
Whose work has long withstood the raving storms,
And burning heat, that kills the neighb'ring soil,
Drying the land-springs up. I would despoil
Your tombs, and cheat the batt'ning worms ;
I would unmesh ye from the fatal coil ;
But there is no escape—no power can save—
The unloosed grip of Death extends beyond the grave.

No tomb can hide the record of the dead,
Though it were made as deep as deepest sea ;
'Tis earth alone we give to earthly bed,
The spirit leaves the flesh—the soul is free
To wander where it will : its majesty
Is not material : it cannot cease,
Nor lose an atom of vitality.
Why call on Death to give it lasting peace ?
There is no power on earth to stay its running lease.

In labour only lies life's sustenance,
And yet, in mother's milk, why seethe the kid ?
With new world wisdom and the world's advance,
Men need not slave as bygone toilers did,
While raising up the mighty pyramid,
Or like the bonded slaves of Rome and Greece,
Ere man had learned to close Pandora's lid ;
Ere mind took charge, and led the arts of peace,
The branded and oppressed could hope for no release.

With larger foresight, further grasp of day,
Our future path is fuller, clearer, seen ;
The mists of darkness that beset our way,
No longer bar the road, or intervene ;
The sunlight broadens, and a brighter scene
Strikes on the vision, and the landscape glows,
And gold commingles with the blue and green !
We all see farther, as the distance grows,
And poets cease to write the story of man's woes.

As forms of life, that haunt the clayey ground,
 With that same clay will surely disappear,
 So all of evil in the wide world found,
 Grows less and less with every passing year.
 Men who are happy, need no word to cheer ;
 With boundless wealth, they set no store on gold ;
 The worshipping of wealth was born of fear ;
 The herded sheep think lightly of the fold,
 The freeman of to-day rebukes the baron bold.

The slave is freed ; his mental food is changed ;
 The race that lives, diverging from the past,
 Has lost the qualities that once estranged ;
 Opinions differ ; but they form no caste :
 The gales that blow will leave no splintered mast,
 The waves that roll no wreckage in the way.
 The golden age, the dreamt of, come at last !
 In uncouth form, for years, the perfect lay :
 The outgrowth of the past is manifest to-day.

In infancy, how weak ! in manhood, who so strong
 As Labour, King of all the Universe ?
 Once shackled slave ! who dares to do thee wrong :
 Who dares to openly thy name asperse,
 Since God has taken off thy heavy curse ?
 Unarmed, they bound thee, spat upon thy face ;
 But, crowned, what tyrant ventures to coerce—
 Disrobe thee of thy grandeur, and abase
 Thy well-earned fame in presence of the populace ?

The world is thine by battles fought and won,
Thine by thy fitness and by heritage ;
Thine by the deeds thy followers have done—
Possessive right in ev'ry clime and age—
By earth's great fulness and its surplusage.
The testament is sealed. The law may fail ;
Be trampled on, or cast aside in rage.
But those who live, shall live to tell the tale,
That Justice, lodged in heav'n, is the true Holy Grail !

IN PRAISE OF LABOUR.

Fight on ! thou bloodless conqueror ! fight on !
Through rocky fastnesses, go, cleave thy way,
Till the decisive battle has been won,
And stubborn foes who dared thee yesterday,
Shall share the blessings of thy gentle sway.
Fight on ! the living God looks down and sees
How thou hast stripped the rocks of sterile grey,
And, in thy plenitude, bestowed on these
Now humbled foes of thine thy rich green liveries.

Arouse thy braves, who wait but for the word,
And bid thy chieftains lead them forth anew;
Fresh realms await thee, realms with treasure stored
For those who conquer ; not the lazy crew
Who poison by their presence ; not the few
Who live like robbers on their sins alone ;
But those who work to win ; the just and true.
Go forth ! Great King ! and let thy will be done,
Till not a spot, unconquered, races round the sun !

There is no victory beyond thy reach,
Almighty is thine everlasting power,
And those who scorned thee, flatter and beseech
Whene'er misfortunes round their turrets lower,
For he who gave can yet recall the dower,
And prove the piteous poverty of pride ;
As heaven wreaked vengeance on the scornful flower,
Withholding moisture till it drooped and died,
So thou canst wither hearts that dare thy strength deride.

There are no riches but thy hands shall clutch,
The ripe fruit hanging on the topmost bough,
Though high in heaven, is yet within thy touch ;
One sturdy shake, the tempting prize lies low,
With none save thee to raise it from the slough.
Ere thou hast reached thy manhood, the rich spoil
Of deepest seas shall decorate thy brow ;
But what, though, niggard-like, each wave recoil,
Thine ever-dauntless braves, they cannot hope to foil.

Deep mines of earth, and deeper mines of sea,
Contain no treasure but is marked as thine ;
When ye shall say, " Come, render up to me
Your hidden talents ; all ye have is mine,"
A host who heed thy summons as divine,
With all the fervency of heartfelt zeal,
Shall pierce the rock-bound earth, and cleave the brine,
Return with brimming hands and joyful peal,
Exulting in their deeds t'enrich the commonweal.

Great minds shall act as a divining rod
That tells of treasures buried from the sight,
While lowliest warriors, bearing arms from God,
Shall drag the hidden treasures to the light,
For, banded, they have more than Atlas' might,
And eyes so keen, each shines out like a star.
How mighty ! vast ! how grand ! how infinite !
What power on earth can thy great purpose mar ?
Or clog the pond'rous wheels of thy triumphal car ?

Then glory for the glorious deeds they've wrought,
For none but they are fit to wear a crown ;
The bravest warrior that ever fought,
And swam through seas of blood to win renown,
Or raised himself on high by trampling down,
Shall never win the gratitude of heaven,
Or live without the shadow of its frown.
All glory for the light for which they've striven,
For love of human weal : be all their sins forgiven.

I know no other conqu'ror of the world ;
No Alexander but the brave king, Toil ;
For he, alone, the thunderbolt has hurled,
From which its rocks and barrenness recoil ;
To him, alone, she yieldeth up her spoil,
Whose wondrous strokes o'er hill and dale resound,
Who bathes each wound with plenteous wine and oil,
Leaving the conquered with new glories crowned,
With bandages of gold to cover scar and wound.

The wily rogue, the base conspirator,
 The canting priest who tricked the human mind,
 The plund'ring knave who ruled in days of yore,
 Thy bitt'rest foes, are scattered to the wind,
 And thou'art free to bless all human kind ;
 Triumphant over force and subtlety,
 Men see thy worth, and are no longer blind.
 'Tis vain to search an equal power to see ; *
 Thou art indeed a God, and all men worship thee.

Lead me the pathway that a warrior trod,
 I care not what his cherished creed may be,
 And I will tell you if he struck for God,
 For man's redemption, or for slavery,
 To make men helots, or to make them free.
 Show me if flowers or ruins mark his way,
 Emblems of human love or enmity ;
 If he be thought of when the lowly pray,
 Tell me the untrained thoughts their heartfelt words betray

Shall deeds of blood win glory and renown,
 Or dwells the hero in the savage breast ?
 The floating wreck, the lorn, dismantled town,
 In whose torn tow'rs the vulture builds her nest,
 Are surely worthy relics, truest, best
 Mementos of such worthless hero's fame.
 Need Honour, in its affluence, molest
 The site where ruthless Valour won its name,
 And Reason mourns to see the traces of man's shame.

Wherever Labour treads, there I will go,
In forest, mine, the city, or the plain,
T'escape the with'ring curse of want and woe,
And men who gamble lives, where death's the main,
Where yeomen sorrow o'er the trampled grain,
Where hot tears fall around the burning stack,
And victors glory in the numbers slain.
Be mine to follow the more peaceful track,
Where fruitful Labour reigns, devoid of flame and wrack.

I know the honest brow with "dust besprent,"
Is oft bowed down by abject poverty ;
I know a life in Labour's service spent,
May ask in age from theft-fed Charity,
Who meets it with the cold and formal plea
That youth should gather for the days of want,
Culling a moral from the careful bee,
Who stores the honey gathered from the plant ;
Then closes door and heart against the supplicant.

I know the velvet hand of pampered Sloth
Will oft ignore the honest hand of Toil,
And yet 'tis Adam's blood that runs through both ;
But let the labourer calmly wait awhile,
And time shall tell which is the better soil.
If there's distinction in our mother clay,
And one hand from another must recoil,
I warn all idlers of a future day
When they shall proffer theirs, and Toil shall turn away.

Did God save idlers in the great world flood,
That sheep and oxen, and all things might die ?
No idler floated on the gopher wood,
All, all, were hurried to eternity ;
A few poor labourers, lifted to the sky,
Alone could clutch the saving hand of God,
Alone could tell the old world's history,
Alone construct a new and fit abode,
And help the world sustain a countless multitude.

The Son of God this lesson took to heart,
And all His followers were men of toil ;
He chose not one from palace, 'change or mart,
Nor one estranged from Labour, who, disloyal,
By force or fraud, had won his heaped-up spoil.
Sea-harvesters, and men with willing hands,
Simon the tanner, who lodged Paul awhile ;
Such were his messengers to many lands ;
Let Truth attest how they obeyed the Lord's commands.

Sure, had the idler been the friend of God,
He must have floated though the world had perished ;
The storm-beat ether, or the roaring flood,
In rivalry, his saintly form had cherished :
His progeny increasing, then had flourished,
And peopled all the earth, but 'twas not so,
The stalwart stock of Noah, alone, God-nourished,
Could live in such a tangled flood of woe,
And fearless look to heav'n in earth's wild overthrow.

When flood and storm abated, who but they
Could leave the shel't'ring ark, and make a home
Of wrecks and ruins of things passed away?
Who dare to dream of better days to come,
O'er the wild lands where Fancy bade them roam,
Save those whose heads and hands were free to toil
The loiterer would have stumbled o'er a tomb,
Finding his grave within the self-same soil
Where God's anointed few grew rich on buried spoil.

To him the sunshine had been wasted light,
To him the multitude of living things
Had been no gift. With future black as night,
Fair Hope, encumbered by the leaden wings
Of Doubt, had made no heaven-taught whisperings,
With index finger pointing to the ground,
Where toilers win the attributes of kings!
To him the world redeemless had been found,
The mountain tops, stripped bare, had never been recrowned.

With these few warriors, Labour took the field,
Once more his bloodless banner waved in air:
With "God and Justice" written on his shield,
Sustained by Hope, he never knew a care,
He went forth fighting, conquering everywhere!
What deeds they did, let mammoth ruins tell,
Still scattered o'er the eastern hemisphere;
Each barrier Nature raised before them fell,
As if the arms they bore were charmed by wizard spell.

Ay, westward, ever westward, lay their way,
O'er sun-parched plains, where man had seldom trod,
Ay, guided by the gorgeous lamp of day,
And raising altars to a grateful God,
Whose blessings fell upon the thirsty sod
In mingled sunshine, dews, and mellowing rains :
As time passed on, this small and chosen brood,
Sated with spoil, encumbered by their gains,
With palaces bestrewed these now deserted plains.

How fabulous now seem their ruins vast,
To those in science skilled, who tread the scene
Of man's first triumphs in the midnight past,
To those who, journeying far, have longing seen
Their glories perishing, where nothing mean
Remains, where living grandeur decks decay
With jewels fitted for a monarch's train.
Time has proved gentle in his unchecked sway,
And lightly touched these relics of a bygone day.

Here broken columns, prostrate capitals,
The crumbled lintel,—ruins manifold,
May teach how all the human mind extols,
Though built of marble, adamant, or gold,
May perish—how new life fattens on the old,
And wins new strength for triumphs yet to come ;
How Labour's deeds still, day by day, unfold
Yet grander lessons ; how, in spite of doom,
These glorious works of man unwillingly succumb.

For perishing, these mighty ruins preach
Important lessons reaching wide and far ;
Like tyrants they command, like slaves beseech,
Or lead men like the true and trusted star ;
They tell of peace, of famine bred by war,
Of sloth and luxury, and pomp and pride,
How evil passions meddle but to mar ;
How waste and want rule ever side by side,
How kings have conquered, and, like the conquered, died !

Still, still, they tell how Labour girt his loins,
How kingly mountains stooped and kissed his feet,
How wilderness, and rock, and quarried mine
Together strove his triumphs to complete ;
How he stood Lord of all ! how swift and fleet
He taught the elements his stern command,
His power to fashion, mould, almost create !
How scattered waters, and the drifted sand,
Grew into rocks anew beneath his Godlike hand.

Half thought, half action, muscle wed to mind,
God's attribute embracing living clay,
Each powerless for good, save when combined ;
Then all opposing force at once gives way,
And triumph following triumph marks Toil's sway,
Each greater than the last. The universe
Gives up her secrets in confessed dismay ;
But who their dear bought triumphs can rehearse ?
Or sum up what they bore when toil was one long curse ?

His followers are free to do and dare.
Nature is conquered ; but man's wickedness
Is not yet dead. The lion needs his share !
The cunning fox still lives without a care,
On dainties fed, bedecked with jewels rare.
The light is breaking ; but the darkness lingers,
The voice of Hope rings cheery through the sky,
And gives new joy to all our treasure-bringers,
The men who mould, create, and clutch with out-stretched
fingers.

THE TRIUMPHS OF INVENTION.

I've read of fairies toiling in the night,
And workers waking up in strange surprise,
To find the task that taxed their wasted night,
To which they looked to win them fresh supplies,
Already done. I've seen, with wond'ring eyes,
Invention with her iron fingers weave
Her daintiest patterns for the kingliest eyes.
I've seen her fierce and fiery breath relieve,
And give the worn-out slave unlimited reprieve.

Old fairies may be dead and part forgot ;
But one remains, with yet more marvellous power ;
She lightens labour in the humblest cot,
She joins her forces and assists the grower.
Taking the seed-lip from the broadcast sower,
With measured strength she sprinkles loam and clay,
There, to await the sunshine and the shower,
The pregnant grain in measured spaces lay,
To rot and rise in glory on th' appointed day.

Don't say this fairy land's a small domain ;
This Mab's dominion has no latitude ;
It compasseth the land, it grasps the main ;
The solid earth, the shifting, surging flood,
The space around wherein the feath'ry brood
Enjoy a life they dare to call their own ;
She knows no favourite of caste or blood—
From her no special favour's to be won :
She is the friend of all who dwell beneath the sun.

She does not hide her deeds in darkest night,
Like unto those who magic wrought of old ;
She takes her stand within the blazing light,
With the dark curtain of the sky uprolled.
Invention's gifts to man are manifold,
But treachery, intervening, robbed the poor.
That tyrant of the world, close-fisted gold,
Once clipped her in his giant grasp secure,
And fiercely swore to hold her tight for evermore.

Why stay at seven great wonders of the world,
When countless wonders rise to greet the eye ?
Yon anchored ship, with all its sails unfurled,
A bird of passage, ready plumed to fly !
Look at yon vessel swiftly passing by,
Without a stitch of sail to catch the breeze ;
With one small pennant waving upon high,
Armed with the screw that famed Archimedes,
How readily she cleaves her passage through the seas.

But not on seas alone are wonders found ;
The mightiest ship that breasts the hurricane
Is but a tortoise, handicapped and bound,
And cannot live against the swift-winged train.
Go ! see it dash through storm of wind and rain,
Leap o'er a valley at a single stride,
Or flash like lightning through a field of grain !
And, envying not its maker's place of pride,
Confess he's tutored man on thunderbolts to ride.

Go ! mark how mechanism's taught to play
The sweetest melodies that notes can form,
Can call up all the merriments of May,
And all the tumult of the fiercest storm !
Can imitate the hopeless sigh, the warm
And softened tones of sacrificial love,
The monotone that marks the truant swarm
Of queen-led bees when they in concert rove,
And all the rapture sounds that seraphs chant above.

Learn how the forces are in turn subdued,
How heat and light are tethered and controlled,
And made to labour for the common good ;
The fierce flame-flash that startled men of old,
Marking the track through which the thunder rolled,
No longer terrifies. By science taught,
The smallest infant in the world can hold
This fiery steed, and, harmless, toy and sport
With the mysterious power with which the gods once fought.

The brain of man is fairly surfeited,
 And eyes are dazed by marvels manifest,
 The wonder-working mind, by wonders fed,
 In day or night knows naught of sleep or rest ;
 But ever eager for the coming quest,
 Leaps like a flame when nourished by new fire.
 Invention's soul, by fierce ambition lead,
 Has ta'en to climbing higher and still higher,
 E'en to the heights of heaven 'twill shrink not to aspire.

What wealth we owe the untaught minds that first
 Conceived the thought of arming man anew !
 That saw the value of invention ; nursed
 It into life, and watched it as it grew ;
 The uncrowned kings who swelled the revenue
 Of states undreamt of ; states undreamt of now,
 In which the many shall outlive the few !
 Who can compute the blessings nations owe
 To those who foremost taught production how to grow ?

Though but an infant, mark what she has done !
 To cheer man's darkness, mark her gift of light,
 That palls the lustre of the noonday sun,
 And leaves in shadow ev'ry orb of night.
 To her belongs the pow'r to expedite
 The speed of time ; to pierce the skies,
 And bring new worlds within the range of sight,
 To give sweet converse with the friends we prize,
 Though death and distance in the midway lies.

Who can compute the worlds that she will store
With riches richer than the richest mines ;
The springs of wealth that she will tap and bore,
That sleeping lie beneath the Appennines,
And mountain crowns where snow, eternal, shines ?
Who can, by Fancy aided, satisfy
The wish to know ? or point the boundary lines
Of her dominions ? Earth, sea, and sky,
And still, beyond, a multiplied immensity !

SLOTH, THE BETRAYER.

What idols men have worshipped in their time !
What pinchbeck things mistaken for pure gold !
A petted vice, an ignominious crime,
In turn, as deities have been extolled,
The fashion changing as the ages rolled.
I know not which to call man, base or blind ;
The proofs that he is one are manifold ;
Go ! search the list of gods and there thou'lt find
The motley thoughts that led and governed humankind.

Of all man's enemies, I know but one
Who strengthens as the wheel of time goes round,
The serpent, Sloth, whose presence wise men shun ;
It cometh with no sudden spring or bound ;
But stealeth on, in silence so profound,
It cheats the listening ear. This mortal foe,
Whose blinded victims die without a wound,
Are dead in life ! The poison works so slow,
That death and sleep commingle in the overthrow.

But surely man who learns from what he knows,
And educates his eye by what he sees,
Has seen how folly upon folly grows,
That Sloth's most killing bait is sensuous ease ;
He must have grasped such living truths as these.
The past is not a blank: Amid confusion,
Imperial Rome, Cesarian dynasties,
The cause of wreck and immature conclusion
Is writ by far too plain to perish in elusion.

The tale of Samson, and the dalliance
Of Rome's great warrior with the harlot queen,
With time and place, and gift of circumstance,
Are not wiped out. Though years have rolled between,
The moral is not blunted ; sharp and keen,
It pictures Sloth spinning her serpent coils,
With feignèd love and ever-smiling mien ;
We learn what treachery lurks, what dangerous wil
Are safely hidden in her everlasting smiles.

A sluggard hocused with his own delight,
An empire stricken by its selfish ease,
A slumb'rous day, a ling'ring, lengthened night,
The long drawn shadows of the upas trees,
The deadly silence of the unstirred breeze,
A ruined paradise with weeds o'errun,
The slow, sure spread of ranc'rous leprosy,
The waste of wealth from duties left undone,
And fields of golden corn left withering in the sun.

The rotting plough, the rusting, unused share,
The silent mill-wheel, and the book unread,
The soul contented in a narrow sphere,
The waters stagnant in their shallow bed ;
Can such base things indeed be coveted
By men who know the terrors of the past—
How slothful ways to sure destruction led ?
If so, alas ! the fatal die is cast,
And cultured lands will turn to arid deserts vast.

Let beauty perish in the wreck of time,
There is no antidote to life's decay ;
But who would see men idle in their prime,
Failing to rub the stains of rust away,
Or grasp how Sloth, in order to betray,
Has strewn her path with incense-breathing flowers ;
Or, like the fowler, eager for his prey,
Who plies the brace-bird's all-enticing powers ;
Pulling, with practiced art, the string that lifts or lowers.

Experience alone can make men wise,
And yet to learn how many still are loth ;
Against the truth, they madly shut their eyes,
And think that happiness is born of Sloth ;
They cling to pleasure, like the foolish moth,
Till ruin comes, and they've no power to move,
Till death o'ertakes them, as it often doth,
While dancing round in circles they so love,
That wise men quit in haste, and none but fools approve.

Yon cannot teach a man who lacketh thought ;
The path that leads astray, he will not quit,
Till, like the fly, within the meshes caught,
He finds in grief the rubber of his wit.
Experience teaches we must give to get,
The horse that moveth needs a loosened rein,
Yet golden lessons, such as these, when met,
Are passed by folly with a cold disdain
That pleases little minds, until it turns to pain.

From what we have, we judge the aftergrowth,
Each fresh discovery leading on and on ;
Thus progress is an ever-living truth ;
From wealth now clutched, shall future wealth be won,
From deeds accomplished start the deeds undone,
From knowledge gleaned, our future knowledge grow.
All moving worlds get credit from the sun,
And, by their labours, pay back what they owe,
With increment of power to start new worlds below.

To rest, to move ; to die, and so to live ;
The running brook alone is ever clear ;
The power to take is found in what we give.
If time should slacken for a single year,
The future would be lost ; each hemisphere
Would fall within a centre not its own,
And so, in scattered fragments disappear !
The steadiest column is the first o'erthrown,
The sluggish, sleeping king the first to lose his throne.

"Have faith in time!" I hear an angel cry,
 "The human mind grows stronger day by day;
 Old superstitions in their turn must die;
 Old faiths, old shrines, old gods, shall pass away,
 And with them Sloth, the breeder of dismay;
 Toil on! brave hearts! ye have not toiled in vain,
 The dark, black clouds are changing into grey,
 The people counsel though the king may reign;
 The seed bedewed with tears is ripening into grain.

No man is safe against Sloth's subtle wiles,
 If he neglect the inward monitor;
 Let him once bask within her wanton smiles
 And though his limbs outvie those Samson bore,
 He is her bonded slave for evermore;
 Till death, whose debt, in turn, all men must pay;
 The wise, the simple, and the rich and poor.
 Not man alone, but nations, led astray
 By Sloth, like ancient Rome, will wither and decay.

To fraud and lust; to murder men have bowed,
 To untamed might and base ingratitude;
 To each, in turn, like slaves, th' insensate crowd,
 With guilt-fed fears, their fealty renewed:
 Till each fair land intended for man's good,
 For freedom, happiness, and endless glee,
 Has, like a shamble, reeked with kindred blood;
 Till there's no spot that God above can see
 Unsullied with the stain of human slavery.

What sins have men not worshipped in the past !
Have they not bowed their necks to Sloth and Pride ?
Have they not turned on each Iconoclast
And shouted " Death !" till their best friends have died ?
Or, is it true that history has lied,
And I, like others, have been led astray ?
Is it, too, false, that slaves were crucified,
And men, like tigers, marked men for their prey ?
That bloodhounds track the path of honest men to-day !

Yet, why lament the certainty of fate,
The rust of Sloth, the wear of passing years,
The power of Time to spoil and desecrate
The grandeur purchased by a nation's tears ?
Ay, why lament ! A host of coward fears
Avail you nought. At ev'ry passing gust
What most you prize, decaying, disappears !
A peasant's love, a monarch's pampered lust,
Shall see their cherished idols mingled with the dust.

THE CONVERSION OF THE LAST IDLER.

I stood upon the dreariest spot on earth,
A barren space between two stagnant seas,
The soil too weak to give a flower birth
To glad mine eyes, or scent the passing breeze.
The sun-bleached trunks of long since withered trees
Stood up like monuments to perished souls.
I could have fallen on my bended knees,
And crawled as men have crawled when claiming doles,
Or grasped the earth as cowards when loud thunder rolls.

No sound of labour fell upon mine ear,
Nor hum of insect, nor the song of bird,
Nought that the heart of living man could cheer ;
Nought, nought, save pulses that alarm had stirred,
And that short, doleful and despairing word,
To which my fear-moved tongue gave utterance,
And its own echo, that cut me like a sword,
Making my life a thing of sufferance.
Oh ! how I loathed my fate, and cursed each vile mischance !

There was no path, and yet each step I took
Seemed leading into hell itself direct ;
No sound, alas ! the deathlike stillness broke ;
The awful eye of Heaven's Great Architect
Bade me of life be wary, and protect
It by retreat. Still, courage urged me on
Across the sea of sand, yet, circumspect,
I bore towards the western horizon,
Making my God my guide by following the sun.

When all is like, man cannot trace his way ;
'Tis true there's sun in front and none behind ;
And yet 'tis day, and not half night, half day ;
Still, if he find not in his wanderings
Continual change, he might as well be blind,
For joy and knowledge spring from difference.
If there is nought dialike, there's nought to mind ;
Where nought shall vary, nought shall recompense
The waste of precious time and torturing of sense.

Thus, wearily I wandered ; but, alas !
I could not find a nation but had changed !
The self-elected few, the toiling mass,
Were blended into one. Where'er I ranged,
I found no fellow. I, alone, estranged,
Sought unity, and fellowship, and love.
Oh ! was it thus the poor should be avenged ?
And was I doomed for evermore to rove ?
Or was it but a dream by fickle fancy wove ?

Thus, day by day, my pride grew less and less,
 (An unfeeling passion passes to decay),
 New thoughts arose, and struggled to outpress
 The cherished thoughts that ruled but yesterday,
 Daring all comers by their strong array ;
 What revolutions sweep across the mind,
 Where thoughts, like monarchs, reign and pass away ;
 And yet what ghosts these wrecked thoughts leave behind
 To trouble future thoughts and baffle humankind !

Day after day, a citadel o'erthrown,
 And thoughts, like armies, scattered far and wide ;
 All that I knew, before the newly known,
 Fast drifting outward with the drifting tide.
 " Well, be it so," I said. " Let Love preside,
 Love for the lowliest and the long despised.
 What have I gained by vain conceits of pride,
 That I should thus bewail, or be enticed
 To give up all for her, and see Love sacrificed ? "

All new-born passions give the soul delight,
 And Love, sweet Love, above, beyond them all ;
 Beneath its influence all eyes wax bright,
 Th' embittered heart distilleth less of gall.
 I trace its magic workings in the fall
 Of morning dew and fruitful summer shower ;
 I see it in the stars that pierce the pall
 Of night, the moon that gilds the tower,
 The wild bird's untaught song, the sweetness of the flower.

As nations see when plunged in murd'rous war,
The charms of peace by contrast made more plain,
So I beheld Love's virtues, ever rare,
And sought to grasp them ; but, alas ! in vain ;
Pride ruled my heart, and with a rude disdain
Bade Love to quit, or tamely stand aside,
And ne'er presume to trespass so again.
Still Love and Peace are not to be denied,
For, strengthened by repulse, they conquer like the tide.

While musing in a crowded street one day,
I met a child with flowing, flaxen hair,
A little angel in its own sweet way,
That had not felt the weight of worldly care.
Her envied happiness I longed to share,
And took her proffered hand within mine own,
And looking in her blue eyes, soft and clear,
I sought her answer in the kindest tone,
If she could ever love me ? for I was all alone.

“ I do,” she said, “ for I've been taught to love,”
And Love looked kindly through her smiling mien ;
I know not how they hailed the faithful dove,
But I, in rapture, pressed this God-sent queen,
And hailed her as my saviour ; and the green
Branch of the dove could not have been more prized
By them, than was this child by me. Unseen,
Though often looked for, often sacrificed ;
The joys of Hope deferred were more than realised.

With many loving words to cheer our way,
Hand locked in hand, we trod the crowded street ;
The passers-by oft kindly bade her stay,
In words of love that cut off all retreat ;
A spaniel capering round her tiny feet,
Would pull her frock, and say in dumb-show, " Come !"
And then, unheeded would again repeat
The stern command. At length, we reached her home,
Bedecked with eglantine and roses in full bloom.

Her parents thanked me for I scarce knew what,
I simply knew how much I owed the child ;
How few, indeed, the thanks that I had got,
Had my poor deeds with hers been reconciled ;
Still, still, my heart with gratitude was filled,
And I, at last, felt grateful to the poor,
The turbulence of pride now fully stilled.
" Kind heaven," I cried, " let this new life endure,
And pride, and scorn, and envy, cease for evermore."

The board was spread with plain and wholesome fare,
And drinks that would not steal away the sense,
Yet, ere the feast began, a simple prayer
Was offered up to heaven in recompense
For all its wondrous gifts and diligence
In serving man—how homely, heartfelt, brief,
How full of love and rare intelligence,
Was that short prayer, giving the soul relief,
And manumitting man from every tie of grief.

The idle words of idle prayers are lost,
While prayers, like this, re-echo round God's throne,
Filling the ears of all heaven's mighty host,
Enforcing blessings from both Sire and Son ;
But not alone by prayer can man atone ;
By acts that follow prayer ; by labour, love,
By active, living faith, redemption's won.
The eye of God must watch us and approve,
Ere we can hope to win forgiveness from above.

How poor the preacher, if he preach by rote,
How rapidly his words embrace man's ear ;
Though not a flaw be found in trill or note,
How flat and dull the singer doth appear,
When Art bids Nature to be less sincere.
Have you not listened to a village quire,
Led by a peasant in a ploughman's gear,
Whose music sat the list'ner's soul on fire,
And made the meanest clod to holiest things aspire ?

The strength of prayer is not the strength of words,
For words are weak to picture what we feel ;
If they vibrate not on the inner chords,
The ears of heaven are deaf to the appeal.
The fearful mockeries of a borrowed zeal,
The heartless drones of men in saintly guise,
Who measure words to price ; and cant, and kneel,
And lift their hands, appealing to the skies,
And call on God to bless their woven web of lies.

Though knave and fool, and hypocrite may kneel,
And mutter words like parrots in a cage,
There is no help for those who only feel.
The cant of creeds that desecrates the age.
The cringing priest who bows to equipage,
The hollow mockeries and the waste of words,
That thoughtless minds and carnal souls engage,
Will never strike the keynote of the chords
Of unison in faith, or mingle with the Lord's.

But I am wandering in the light of day,
Or why of priests should I thus idly rave ?
Each man's a priest, since priests have passed away :
The landmarks of our progress, wave by wave,
Succumb, and are no more—the silent grave
Is for the dead—the present robs the past :
The hermit in his solitary cell,
The hooded monk in cloisters drear and vast,
Gave thee a something that has grown to what thou hast.

Night after night had passed in dire unrest,
Sleep would not lay its finger on mine eyes,
And, with a magic touch, make manifest
A power which man has failed to analyse :
Hour after hour, the stars that lit the skies,
And she, the argent mistress of the night,
Beheld me prostrate—heard by dolorous cries
To numb my senses and shut out the light
With opiates gathered from the deadly aconite.

Sleep will not come, where Trouble's crownèd king,
No gold can tempt her, if all peace has fled ;
But she will come, on swift and certain wing,
E'en to a prison with its stony bed,
By Innocence and sweet Compassion led,
Though shapeless goblins dance in fetters grim,
Or walk the dismal cell with noiseless tread,
Taunting the guilty soul, till morning's chime
Or full Confession plucks the pois'nous sting from crime.

That night I slept as I ne'er slept before,
The stars shone brightly, but I saw no gleam ;
The moon that shapes the tide on ev'ry shore,
Poured down its flood of light in one huge stream
Upon the earth ; but drowsy sleep, supreme,
Held me in fetters stronger far than steel,
Till not a thought escaped to make a dream,
Or free the master-spirit, 'clept the will,
That very soul of mind, its rudder, prow, and keel.

A fairer day ne'er burst through night's dark cloud,
A holier day no calendar e'er knew,
Gay peals of laughter shook the motley crowd
That Toil, or Barter, Art, or Learning drew ;
The thirsty sun drank up the morning dew,
The lark's blithe carol shook the perfumed air ;
A new-born strength, a keen desire to do,
To join with Labour, and its triumphs share,
Possessed my inmost soul, and filled me like a pray'r.

At noon, I wandered through the harvest field,
And saw the reapers naked to the waist ;
The Tempter, Sloth, implored me not to yield ;
Of fashion talked, of birthright, and of taste.
I answered, " What of these, with life debased ?
Shall pregnant seeds, and promised harvests die ;
Are heaven's best gifts to man to be disgraced ;
Is earth's elixir, falling from the sky,
To swell the channelled flood and profitless pass by

I saw the kine in endless meadows graze,
The ruddled sheep on hill-side, mound and moor ;
I felt the best of pray'rs were work and praise,
And heartfelt thanks that issue from the poor ;
The ship that carries men from shore to shore,
The plough, the spade, the sickle, and the flail,
The laden wain, the safely garnered store,
The fisher's net, the milkmaid's brimming pail,
The lusty woodman's axe and strong-backed miller's sail.

I longed to join the busy, toiling crew,
To swell the ranks of Labour's honoured corps ;
My keen desire to resolution grew,
And I, long slave, was free for evermore ;
Free from the gyves that pressed so hard of yore.
The worldly things to which in pride I clung,
All, all, on which my heart had once set store,
With ready hand away from me were flung,
As though, like snakes, they each in turn had stung.

I grasped the sickle, and I swore to live,
And wreath my manhood in the bays of toil,
By giving back while I had strength to give,
The hoarded labour plundered from the soil.
From honest work no mortal should recoil ;
The golden rule of life in this is found,
In this, I find, exists the only foil
To ward off famine : " Give unto the ground,
And strip the knave with spurious honour crowned."

From ev'ry stroke, I won fresh confidence,
Till all timidity in haste had fled ;
The steaming earth, distilling frankincense,
In plenitude its pleasant odours shed,
While swift-winged Time on cleaving pinions sped,
And moved, or seemed to move, with lightning speed ;
With liquors blent, my life seemed comforted,
And active thought that prompts the honest deed,
No longer failed to serve me in the hour of need.

I sang in chorus with the joyful strain,
That cheered the reapers toiling by my side ;
In swaths, I strewed the land with golden grain ;
From early morn till dusky eventide,
The sickle I had mated, was my bride
For evermore, to toil in harmony.
From that blessed hour in brotherhood allied.
With independence, equitably free,
I walked abreast with those who once had pitied me.

In tuneful time, stroke followed after stroke,
Long unused muscles calling into play,
Their stubbornness by repetition broke ;
Their torpor, like a dream, all passed away ;
Thus, not in death, their gen'rous freedom lay,
But in their new-born life ; in active force
And the abandonment of foul delay.
The child that led me from my evil course,
Freed me from idleness, repentance and remorse.

Oh ! what a perfect instrument is man :
How fitted ev'ry part to serve the whole ?
And yet no more so than the general plan
Discloses. Greater stars the less control,
The larger waves cause lesser waves to roll,
And, mid confusion, serve some hidden spring,
That we, in man, are pleased to call the soul.
If we aside all mystery could fling,
The sight revealed would set the whole world wondering.

The mid-day pause was spent beneath an oak,
Whose branches lent a cool and pleasant shade,
Where wholesome fare was sweetened by a joke,
And whispered words from loving youth and maid.
The heart of that old tree had long decayed,
But not a dancing leaf showed sign of age,
And sturdy vigour ev'ry branch displayed.
The old trunk still would stubborn warfare wage,
Daring the rush of winds, though hissing in their rage.

With merry hearts, we left the scene of toil,
With strengthened limbs, we hastened to renew
The honest work of gathering in the spoil ;
Swifter and surer still, the sickle flew ;
As nearer to the homing hedge we drew,
The tune seemed brisker, though, perchance, the same,
And wider ev'ry swath the sickle threw ;
It seemed that nothing could our ardour tame,
And as we laboured on, the sense of triumph came.

No bloodstained conqueror felt a thrill of pride
That stirred the blood to higher leaps than I,
As home we journeyed on that eventide.
The setting sun illumed the western sky,
The speckled throstle from a bush hard by,
Filled all the welkin with a joyous song,
And nought was seen or heard to start a sigh,
Or cause a tear, or lingering griefs prolong ;
The meanest spirit met the challenge of the strong.

The homing word was sounded by our chief,
And passed along the thin, extended line ;
Though not outspent, we welcomed the relief,
And none more heartily than I did mine.
“ Now, now,” he cried aloud, “ pour out the wine,
And let us kiss away its beads of joy,”
And, one by one, as stars began to shine,
We took the goblet from the serving boy,
And pressed it to our lips, to cherish, not to cloy.

We passed the gateway leading to the lane,
Where autumn flowers with fragrance filled the air,
And sought anew the village on the plain,
The gladdened eyes we knew would greet us there.
What happy homes and hearths lie clustered near,
What blissful hearts, what fountains of pure love ;
No fear of want and parting in despair,
No hateful pride, that once asunder clove
The golden links of love a wise Creator wove.

Thus passed the hours that timed my second birth,
And freed me from the bondage of my pride ;
That threw a new light over this old earth,
And wakened thoughts sweet love had purified ;
Thus passed the hours that gave me a new guide
To train my footsteps in the perfect way,
And warn me if I chanced to step aside.
Thus led, my life is one perpetual May,
Without a thought to breed regret for yesterday.

Day followed day, I ranged among mankind,
To find contentment reigning everywhere ;
The old estrangements I could nowhere find :
Each beating heart was severed from despair,
I blessed my God that I had lived to share
A world so full of human brotherhood ;
So free from want and ev'ry carking care,
So wisely governed and supremely good ;
In ecstasy my tongue bespoke my gratitude.

Since our old laups have been exchanged for new,
 I've read afresh the tomes that gave delight,
 And laughed my fill at half the learned crew ;
 And their attempts to lead the world aright !
 Yet who dare blame those dreamers of the night,
 Or treat with scorn brave men who did their best ?
 Their toils at least were meant to expedite
 The forward march of man : their want of rest,
 And labours manifold, their struggles yet attest.

I do not mock men's efforts in the past,
 Nor treat with scorn their lack of victory,
 I know their lot on dismal lines was cast,
 That some at least were wiser men than we :
 Time has revealed the truths they failed to see,
 That laughed to scorn each effort of their mind.
 Had the old world revolved more speedily,
 The men whom fools have charged with being blind
 Had won the credit of redeeming human kind.

The secret lay in treating caste with scorn,
 In judging man by deeds, and deeds alone ;
 Had the evolvment come ere we were born,
 No living man had dared to cast a stone
 At men who loved mankind in ages gone ;
 The victory we claim had then been theirs
 By prior claim—by right of labour done.
 They worked and prayed for us, and what man dares
 To laugh at those who toiled for—gave the world their pray'rs.

I smiled to see their defects in the light,
That none could see with darkness spread around,
How they, so blinded, took the wrong for right—
The vilely rotten for the truly sound—
The sinking quagmire for the solid ground.
I smiled to see how I had been misled
By old world notions, ignorantly frowned
On those to whom I owed my daily bread,
And how all thought of change had filled my soul with dread.

With tutored hate I thrust the poor aside,
And, loathing, cursed them as they passed along ;
Blind to all justice, in my uncurbed pride,
My only thought was for the rich and strong—
The favoured few whom I had moved among.
I failed to see the tie of brotherhood
That makes men shudder at another's wrong.
Thus, while my pride of birth was unsubdued,
I saw but lepers in the swarming multitude.

Still, there were men who made themselves part free,
Brave, gifted souls who struggled to do right,
Who strove to act, as far as they could see,
For man's redemption from the loathsome night
That bound him ; but from want of light
To penetrate the depth of doubt, in vain ;
Time's revelation's none can expedite.
I would that those brave souls who wrought in pain
To bless humanity were with us once again.

The last to learn the truth, I wandered on,
The wrong I did, seemed, then, no wrong to me ;
I failed to recognise I stood alone ;
The curse of idleness I did not see.
The child, alone, in her simplicity,
Had struck a chord that motionless had lain,
And called to life an unborn sympathy,
That started growth of love like summer rain,
Killing the prejudice that ripened to disdain.

The poor had vanished, and the sense of wrong,
That cast a shade across each cottage door,
Was felt no more. The busy, toiling throng
Who sowed and reaped, and trod the threshing floor,
No longer cursed the gruesome fate they bore,
Nor left their homes half mad with venom'd spite,
For those who could not toil, an ample store
Was set apart, and each possessed the right
To take at will therefrom, at morning, noon, and night'

In plenty's midst, I've heard the cry of want,
And old lawmongers held it right and just ;
Oh ! how I sickened at their heartless cant,
The sugary coating to their greed and lust.
Their love of economic law stood first,
Regard for human nature, last of all !
The store or granary alike might burst
From storage pressure on its outward wall,
But none would famine baulk in its high festival.

I've seen the greedy hand relaxed by fear,
The miser spirit in a moment cowed,
And, in hot haste, old monarchs disappear,
While pliant courtiers, bending to the crowd,
With whitened faces, cried out long and loud,
"Oh! spare us, brothers! we will sin no more."
I've seen their conqu'rors, stern and beetle-browed,
But just and honest to their inmost core,
Shaking the cruel hands that bound their own of yore.

I saw all this, and yet I did not see,
I see it now, though long since passed away:
How terrible it now appears to be,
In the glad light that brightens earth to-day,
In the redemption following dismay!
That loathsome darkness makes the light more clear,
That dungeon gloom makes greener ev'ry spray.
God's promise is fulfilled, and, in mine ear,
Ripple the joyous notes that thrill the atmosphere.

L A B O U R ' S A D D R E S S .

Methought I heard a giant from a mound,
Speaking in parables to crowds beneath,
Crying, " I am the life ! in me is found
The never-failing antidote to death !"
Around his brow, he wore a cruel wreath
Of thorns ; but sense of pain had died away
With passing years. Over the crowded heath
A million gladdened faces seemed to say,
' Behold the man of tears, who wept but yesterday."

Again, King Labour raised his son'rous voice,
" I count your future gains by those in store ;
You're here, to-day, with me, friends, to rejoice
At changes madmen can alone deplore ;
The light of freedom, spread from shore to shore,
Shall never shine upon a slave again !
There lie the fetters that your fathers wore—
The iron bands, the gyves ! What hells of pain
he sight of these base things doth conjure to my brain !

Go to your homes ! this is a day of days,
And with your joy make all the rafters ring !
Around each ingle, sing your songs of praise,
And fling aside all sense of suffering :
Forget old wrongs, nor suffer them to cling,
And warp the bonds of universal love.
The winter of the world has changed to spring ;
For this the good in long, dark ages strove ;
For this they lived and died, as blood-stained records prove.

Farewell ! " he cried, " and list my parting words :
Neglect no duty needed to be done ;
With your new pruning hooks, formed out of swords,
Arm ye, to-morrow, with the rising sun.
Once more, farewell ! Treasure what you've won,
For love of those who in the battle fell,
For those whose souls to Paradise have gone."
The last words spoken, acted like a spell,
And ev'ry tongue exclaimed, " Farewell ! great chief, farewell !"

Whether I heard or not, I cannot say,
Or whether it was fancy filled mine ear ;
I know a sense of sound held me in sway,
That seemed to cleave the noontide atmosphere ;
I heard th' impassioned words, the ringing cheer,
And echo through the hills that lay around,
I hear them now, and feel their impact clear ;
I see the speaker pointing from the mound,
To wrecks of things once prized encumbering the ground.

If true or false, the purport leaves no doubt,
The joy of vict'ry o'er the curse of woe,
The outburst of the speaker's soul, a shout
To mark Pride's everlasting overthrow,
The coming of the glorious afterglow.
The world was cleansed of man's impurities !
And I who, listless, wandered to and fro,
Lifted my hands in joy unto the skies,
For I was free from all my countless miseries.

The mind's alone the tablet that we read ;
If heard in truth, or fancy, what care I ?
The impress made is greater than the deed !
I still can conjure from my memory
The crowd below, the speaker upon high,
The lifted hands that rose in unison .
I failed to realise the reason why
The people shouted in that mighty tone—
The victory of victories that my redemption won !

POEMS

P O E M S .

LIBERTY.

Oh ! darling, darling, wife of mine,
Why art thou jealous of me ?
The love that I loved is far away, .
In a land beyond the sea,
And the love that I feel for the absent one
Should make me dearer to thee.

Why art thou jealous, my bonny bride,
Of her I have loved so long,
Of her I would paint with a magic touch
And sing with a poet's song—
Of one who has followed the steps of Christ
And never did mortal wrong.

I have worshipped her from my early youth,
When she sat my heart a-glow;
And fain would I follow the faultless one
Who tempted me long ago,
When I thought her an angel fresh from heaven,
As pure as the virgin snow.

I swore to love her, and love her still,
With a love that no tongue can tell;
In ecstasy I would give my soul,
Could I in her presence dwell,
And no earthly mandate has power to break
The force of that magic spell.

I would to heaven I could see her now,
Return, like the mystic dove,
With the olive branch of immortal Peace
And everlasting Love,
And power to drag to the light of day,
The long-lost treasure-trove.

There's a track of light as she moves along,
Like the sheen on the moonlit sea—
A star she follows, that leads the way
To an unfound Galilee,
With a burning glow that melts the chains
Of slaves and sets them free.

Shall I tell you the name, dear wife of mine,
Of her I loved so long ?
'Tis the name that has sharpened the keenest sword—
The name that true minstrels sung—
And filled the martyr-mouths of old
When Freedom's knell was rung.

'Twas shouted aloud at Marathon,
'Twas the cry at Thermopylæ,
The name that lit the fiery-cross
That passed from sea to sea,
And gathered the clans whom gallant Bruce
Led on to victory.

'Tis a name that fires the souls of men,
And teaches them to dare,
Inspired the brave Von Winkelried
To rush on the foeman's spear,
And struck the tyrant, Gesler, down,
With palsy and with fear.

It was breathed on the Mayflower's crowded deck
When she sailed from old England's shore ;
It cheered on the braves of Commonwealth
When they conquered at Marston Moor,
And rang when the patriot Hampden fell
At the height of the battle's roar.

It sounded on Warsaw's blood-stained walls,
On Italia's broad campaign,
On the marshy soil of the Netherlands,
Mid the vine-clad hills of Spain ;
And rang aloud when France was swept
By a blood-red hurricane.

It was heard when Venice was pressed in fight,
When Croat and Magyar met,
When the red shirts conquered in Sicily,
When the sun of Austria set,
The name of my love's resounded loud
To the beat of the castanet.

'Tis a name well-known as a rallying cry,
And blessed with a magic spell ;
A name that rose from the shattered host
When Kosciusko fell—
The name of the shrine where Hofer knelt—
The beacon light of Tell !

MY FATHER'S SWORD.

It hung upon my chamber wall,
The sword my father used to wear,
Its sheath had parted company,
And back and edge and sides were bare.
'Twas wide and long, and slightly curved,
And those who knew the soldier's trade,
Declared of all the swords they'd seen,
They ne'er set eyes on such a blade.

A veteran with grizzly beard,
A warrior from the wars of Spain,
Whene'er he caught a glimpse of it,
Would fight his battles o'er again.
With palsied hand he'd clutch its hilt,
And strike at some imagined foe,
Then lay it carefully aside,
And o'er his past achievements crow.

My father's sword ! how bright it gleamed !
No spot of rust, no stain of war,
A line of light ! a flash of fire !
A stolen ray from some bright star !
I longed to reach to man's estate,
To hear the bugle's rallying cry,
And realise my pictured dreams
Of routed foes and victory !

I longed to hear my charger neigh,
To wave a banner o'er my head ;
To ride through clouds of sulphurous smoke,
And strew my pathway o'er with dead.
I panted for a soldier's fame
Plucked from the fiery heat of war ;
A line of praise—promotion—rank,—
A wreath of laurel, or a star !

I never dreamed if right or wrong,
Should be my prompter in the fray ;
If heaven would smile, or heaven would frown,
Or whether Justice lead the way.
I cared not what the cause might be ;
I courted fame ! My sole desire
To clutch it from a sea of blood,
Or pluck it from a world of fire.

The years past by, and manhood came,
And with it sense of right and wrong ;
I saw 'twas better to be just,
Than, lacking justice, brave and strong.
With thoughts of peace and words of love,
In future let my mind be stored ;
To Justice, friend of all mankind,
I dedicate my father's sword.

A MODERN INFERNO.

A REALISTIC POEM.

Bring me pigments dark and deep,
The shadow that Rembrandt wove :
The infernal tints of a demon brush
That shall keep out the light of love—
The deep green tints and the crimson hues
Of a sacrificial grove !

Give me the power of Dante's pen,
The force of a fiend inspired,
And let me picture that horrid court
Where Famine and sin conspired,
Where clods of men from a horrid den,
Howl blasphemies untired.

Shut out all human sympathy
That would throw a glamour o'er me,
And cause me to picture a fairer scene
Than that which mine eyes can see ;
I want to startle the world with sin,
And must be stern and free !

I want no softening shades to blend
When ruggedness tells the tale ;
No pencil tipped with eiderdown
To cover the truth with a veil ;
My story should harrow the souls of men,
And turn the strongest pale.

No matter how dark be my deepest shade,
A darker must linger beneath ;
The laugh I am stretching my hand to paint,
Must come with a poisonous breath ;
The smile that I place on Delilah's cheek,
Must wither and scorch like death.

'Tis the dwelling spot of an outcast race,
In the midst of a Christian land,
Which the Spirit of Evil long ago
Subdued with her mighty wand—
Where every living soul is marked
With an everlasting brand !

'Tis a refuge where idleness loves to dwell,
A duct of infernal slime ;
The leper ground of a doomèd race,
The nestling place of crime—
Where clansmen tryst with robber chiefs
Of kindred race and clime !

'Tis a spot where the light of a Christian creed
Never enters except to die ;
Where storms of passion rise and roll,
With no power to purify,
And the Star of Hope floats dim and faint
In the midst of a leaden sky.

'Tis a crowded court, in a crowded street,
With an entrance narrow and mean,
With barely room for two abreast
To thread their way between—
And round its portal, from morn till eve,
An idle crew careen !

Its white-washed walls are dirty and smeared,
Bespattered with dust and rain ;
And children squat at each open door,
And peer through each open pane,
And every unwashed forehead is marked
With the curse of the outcast Cain !

There's a stench, like that of an open grave,
And curses like those of hell,
A slaughtering fight, in the midst of a mob,
A shout like a demon's yell—
A crash on the blood-stained paving-stone,
A rush where a bully fell !

There are wrecks of sin, that are floating still,
Of each fair proportion shorn,
With crippled limbs and bleary eyes,
And features haggard and worn,
And painted children that walk the street,
Whom Virtue has long foresworn.

There are sneaking, foul-mouthed hypocrites,
Who wander from town to town,
And women, with babies born in shame,
Whom fathers will never own.
And lazy bawds made fat by sin,
Like porpoises outblown.

There are infants whom parents have stricken blind,
In their lust for greed and gain,
A lawyer, tortured by day and night,
By demons that haunt his brain,
With bloodshot eyes, that hunger for rest
That never will come again.

There are merchants who traded themselves to jail,
And ranters bold and strong,
Who pray in the crowded thoroughfares
For aid to the heathen throng ;
The mighty troll of a drunken crew,
The refrain of a lecherous song !

There are those who sing in Puritan tones
The carols of olden times,
And slovens who chant of a want of work,
In well-worn dogg'rel rhymes ;
And others who wear from day to day
The liveries of their crimes !

It is not fit that so fair an earth
Should be tainted by scenes like these :
By festering pools of stagnant vice
Unstirred by a single breeze ;
The gangrene filth of a pestilence
Of spreading leprosy.

Oh ! God ! what horrors on horrors rise
In this dirty and dismal den !
What fungus growth and serpent slime,
To poison the souls of men ;
What tiger broods to re-people earth
And plague it again and again !

Let miracles be wrought once more,
Let leprosy seize each tongue,
Let angels come, with avenging swords,
And scatter the blighting throng ;
Let Mercy's hand stretch forth and save,
The innocent and young !

Go ! cleanse my brush for a fairer scene,
Get rid of each filthy stain ;
And let my easel be purified,
Ere I spread my colours again—
Wash out this soul polluting spot
With an everlasting rain.

TEMPUS FUGIT.

Time flies !
And prankish elves who sport beneath the skies
Will find to-morrow
That Pleasure's bark is drifting unto sorrow.

In youth,
How few can recognise the pregnant truth,
That lasting joy
Is never found on earth without alloy.

In age,
When we have squandered all our heritage,
We recognise
How we mistook the shadow for the prize.

How we,
Steering in the daylight, failed to see
The landing place,
Where Life and Death are ever face to face.

THE STAIN ON THE CEILING.

A dirty stain,
And yet how plain
A devil's face,
Straight overhead,
Above my bed,
Mine eyes can trace !

'Tis not affected by vagaries,
That demon face, it never varies.
Another's eyes may vainly stare,
No devil's face is painted there !
Why, then, alone, can I it see !
Surely the devil's not in me.
I shut mine eyes, I go to sleep,
I ope them for another peep,
And still in that same stain I trace
The features of a demon's face !
The same sardonic grin is there,
The same eternal, fiendish stare,
Now, if the devil is in me,
Why, eyes shut, do I fail to see !

And, if without, when others look,
 Why is that face a sealèd book !
 Have brains got eyes ! I think ; I see ;
 And what I think, appears to be !
 I ope mine eyes to see it clear,
 And what I saw's no longer there :
 The outward light is death to dreaming ;
 The closed eye kills the outward seeming ;
 The increated
 Dissipated,
 And the stain
 Looked for in vain,
 When light
 Forsakes the sight.
 Once more that taunting devil's face,
 Above me I can plainly trace !
 Lecherous,
 Traacherous.
 Once more I see its mouth and eyes ;
 Once more I am that foul fiend's prize
 Kill the stain, the outward stain,
 Let the mind light flood the brain,
 Let the inward vision see,
 Set me from that fiend face free.
 There's no hell within me now ;
 There's no face with hornéd brow ;
 There are flocks of angels flying,
 There's no anguish, there's no crying ;
 There are mountains capped with snow,
 There are peaks with sunshine glow ;

There are angels, train on train,
Crowding landscapes of the brain ;
There are forms without a shade,
Winding through a green arcade :
There, too, is an angel chief,
Seated on a lotus leaf ;
There are angels manifold,
Armed with white wings, tipped with gold.
Around, above, on earth, in sky,
Beauty fills the inward eye ;
The old world sin, the old world doubt,
The old world hell, shut out ! shut out !
With the fend-face of the devil,
Embodiment of earthly evil.
Open eyes ; yes, there, I see,
Lecherous still, it gloats on me !
Impure light has reached my brain,
Inside blot for outward stain ;
Stain of devil overhead,
Stain that haunts me in my bed ;
Face that, looking, seems to say,
“ Mine ! to-morrow ! mine ! to-day ! ”

THE CHILD MOTHER.

I watched a little sickly girl, as pale, as pale could be,
With a less and sicklier brother, fast asleep upon her knee :
She was sitting by the fountain, that you see across the way,
Where the arabs from the reeking courts are wont to drink and
 play ;
There were children all around her, ragged, dirty little elves,
That many dirty mothers loved far better than themselves ;
They were crying, shouting, romping, and as happy as could be,
But that little pale-faced creature alone attracted me.

Her face was like a mother's face, sore pinched with worldly
 care,
As casting up her future lot, I saw her sitting there !
Unmindful of the noise and fun, she sang a lullaby,
And then, methought, I saw a tear slide gently from her eye ;
She rocked the baby to and fro, she marked its hollow cough,
She then untied its little hood and gently took it off,
And as she fondled o'er the babe, and strove to soothe its pain,
She thought, "Ah ! me, 'twill never see its father's face again."

Not more than seven short summers of the older life had run,
And yet, 'tis very plain to me, its childhood days are done :
The canker-worm of worldly care has settled at its core,
And tainted every spring of joy for now and evermore ;
The careless hearts of those around are beating fast and free,—
Such throbs were never felt by him who rests upon her knee ;
Such joys were never known to fall on that sad watcher there,
The sadness of whose life is like a never-ending prayer.

The churchyard with its many graves is covered o'er with
flowers,
Whose lusty life is lustier made by falling summer showers ;
The churchyard grass and spreading moss have taken from the
grave
The life which all man's boasted skill had not the power to save.
Oh ! had I the magician's art, I'd sap the life of these,
And give it to the gasping babe that sleeps upon her knees ;
I'd take the rosy tinted flowers, and pluck out all their bloom,
To give that care-worn mother face new freshness from the
tomb.

YES, I WILL WAKE THE LYRE ANEW.

Yes, I will wake the lyre anew,
In praise of right and duty,
And strive to give this battered world,
A touch of youth and beauty.
My song shall, like a fairy spell,
Close up each seam and wrinkle,
And fill the dark clouds overhead
With stars to shine and twinkle.

I'll sing of honours won by toil,
Of kings enthroned by labour ;
Of him who fights to kill the hate
That rankles in a neighbour.
I'll picture Sloth in such a guise
That sluggards basking round her
Shall raise aloft the flag of Toil,
To flutter and confound her.

I'll fill my heart with courage new,
And wake a higher measure—
Inspire the poor with nobler thoughts,
And startle men of pleasure ;
Till palsied Wrong shall slink away,
Like yon dark cloud before us,
And earth shall tempt the angels down
To join in one grand chorus.

I'll wake a strain with all the force
That lives in buried martyrs,
A strain that calls to life afresh
The truth of blood-won charters—
A chord with power to pierce the gloom
Of crowded street and alley,
And, like a watch-fire, flood with light
The darkest, deepest valley.

For years my precious sands of life
I, like a spendthrift, wasted,
And thought the world's forgetfulness
Had flavoured all I tasted ;
But I will wake a nobler chord
In freedom's sacred numbers,
And startle kings upon their thrones,
And tyrants in their slumbers.

Give me the lyre with iron strings,
The drum to roll and rattle,
The trumpet with its voice of war
To call men to the battle :
And let me catch their tones ouce more,
Their music let it fire me,
Till I am strong to preach in song
The truths that now inspire me.

THE WORLD IS MOVING.

The world is moving, moving still,
It knows no rest nor station ;
The force is yet unspent by time,
That moved it at creation :
Around, around, and round again,
No thought to lend or borrow,
The revolution of to-day
Repeated on the morrow.

Who cares to ask for why it moves,
Or whence its moving spirit !
Ere man was made, our heritage
Was ready to inherit :
'Tis ours to live in and enjoy,
Sublime in every feature ;
Its mountains, plains ; its rivers, seas—
Its every moving creature.

We need no book, but nature's page
 To teach the soul devotion,
There is a psalm in every roll
 Of earth's expanse of ocean ;
There is a text in every tree,
 In every moss-clad boulder—
A lesson for a better life
 For every calm beholder.

And winds that gently fan your cheeks,
 And kiss you like a maiden,
Are like the famous Tyrian ships
 With countless riches laden ;
And flakes of snow, and drops of rain,
 And dews that gem the morning,
Are big with promises of love,
 And words of gentle warning.

The lichen on the garden wall,
 The weed that fills the furrow,
The swarms of life that flit around,
 The crowds that hide and burrow ;
There's naught so small that forms a part
 Of earth's grand panorama,
That speaks not to the soul of man
 In Nature's matchless drama.

Who cares for tongues that move in doubt,
Or souls for truth a-yearning?
A mightier lesson flashes forth
From stars for ever burning;
The highest pulpit in the land
Where priestly influence lowers,
Will never teach my longing soul
Like earth besprinked with flowers.

I want no creed of human birth
To teach me Nature's story;
In ocean, land and sky, I see
One everlasting glory;
My incense is the breath of flowers,
My prayers the thoughts that move me;
My psalm the song from hedge and bush,
And that sweet voice above me.

Show me the priest who ever taught
Like rivers born of fountains,
Or moved the soul with wondrous love,
Like hoary-headed mountains;
Bring me a crown like that of earth
Where planets shine and glisten—
A preacher filled with simple truths,
And I will look and listen.

My creed is love of human kind,
Of every clime and nation,
And on it, though I lose my own,
I'd stake the world's salvation,
No fear of Death, but fear of Sin,
No dread of jest or laughter,
My own soul points the righteous way
And fears no dread hereafter.

It bids me do an honest deed,
Or help a fallen brother,
It tells me that I help myself
Whene'er I aid another.
That every sin is want of love,
A wild, untrained, outreaching—
A deafness to the golden rules
That Nature's ever preaching.

I would not cry, God, gird your loins,
And make you firmer, stronger,
And give to you the happiness
For which you are a longer,
But gird yourself unto the good,
Be steadfast of endeavour,
And listen to the words of truth,
And cherish them for ever.

It is no virtue to possess,
The virtue's in the winning,
And he who shouts aloud for help
Will never leave off sinning.
Put out your strength, direct it well,
And shun each vile temptation,
And you shall find you're strong enough
To win your own salvation.

I live to think, I think to speak,
I fear no foul intrusion ;
'Tis slavery of thought and mind
That breeds earth's worst confusion ;
E'en freemen may be led astray
And breed, perchance, a sorrow,
But, being free, they see the wrong,
And right it on the morrow.]

The sites of fires that bigots raised,
And history remembers,
Are known by costly monuments
That hide their blood-stained embers ;
And words of wrath from priestly tongues
That made the whole world tremble,
Are now, like winds that idly blow,
Wherever men assemble.

Am I a rogue who preaches thus,
Unfed by priestly wages ?
Is there no bird that sings of truth,
But those in golden cages ?
Will those who preach the gospel, Love,
Dare treat me as a foeman ?
If so, let "Justice !" be the cry
Of every man and woman.

THE CUCKOO AND CUCKOO'S MATE.

While leaning over the garden gate,
I saw the cuckoo and cuckoo's mate
 Go sailing over the meadow ;
The cuckoo first and the mate behind,
Sailing along in the face of the wind—
 The cuckoo and cuckoo's shadow.

I watched them far as mine eye could see,
Over the meadow and over the lea,
 And down the sleepy hollow ;
Away, away, to the wood-crowned height,
Till cuckoo and mate were lost to sight—
 Till vision refused to follow.

Then tacking about, I saw them again,
Pass over the stream by the old green lane,
 And waste bedecked with heather ;
And, musing, I sought for the reason why
Two birds so strange kept company,
 And spent their days together.

Do syrens breathe in that simple song
That greets mine ear as they sail along,
Or perch on the white-leaved willow ?
Or is it the sound of a kindred woe,
A love-spell broke in the long ago,
Away o'er the surging billow ?

What magic spell, what unseen tie,
What fiendish glamour, or evil eye,
Doth Spring's own bird inherit ?
Is it love that strengthens as ages roll,
Or baser service that rots the soul,
And kills the unseen spirit ?

Can slavery exist with wings,
Or cast a spell on all living things
That hold the power of motion ?
In light, in dark, in earth and air,
In storm and calm, in foul and fair—
In depths that form the ocean ?

I saw the midges dance over the stream,
A minuet on a golden beam
From the sun's exhaustless quiver ;
I saw the Uhlans of night appear,
Each armed with a shadow by way of spear—
Unstayed by the rolling river.

I saw them steal up the woodland side,
And spread like a fan on the meadow wide,
While the light brigade retreated ;
And far away, where a multitude
Of dark pine trees, like an army stood,
The cuckoo and mate were seated.

And then, I thought, what a child am I,
To seek to discover the reason why—
The ties that bind creation !
The hidden links no mortal can see,
The forces controlling Destiny—
The power that gives salvation.

Enough, thought I, that cuckoos sing,
Wild notes that herald the coming spring,
And fairies, turned to flowers,
Rise up at the foot of bush and tree,
And live together in harmony,
And quaff the golden showers.

Enough, thought I, if the genial glow
Shall cause the life-giving sap to flow,
And clothe the world with gladness ;
If cuckoos command the dead to rise,
And bathe in the warmth of sunny skies,—
To think—to doubt—is madness.

CONTENTMENT.

They tell me I've relations living far across the seas,
Bigger brothers, bigger sisters, growing up like stately trees,
With leaves like banners, waving from the mountain tops on
 high,
And blossoms hung like censers in the temple of the sky.

They say they dwell on mountain tops, and song birds roost
 and sing,
And build their nests and rear their young on every branch in
 spring :
That festoons hang from every limb, and squirrels dance and
 play,
And slimy snakes and creeping things come courting all the
day.

They tell me they have giant limbs that shame such limbs as
 these,
That bend beneath a drop of rain, and tremble in the breeze ;
That every branch is clothed in mail, and armed like warrior
 true,
And those who ne'er such giants saw, are puzzled how they
grew.

They say they laugh at thunderstorms, and bravely hold their
 own,
And each a stately monarch stands, bedecked with golden
 crown ;
And little flowers, like you and me, are filled with fear and
 dread,
As they behold my mammoth kin rise towering overhead.

They tell me insects, large as birds, dive down in blossoms
 deep,
And feast on rich ambrosia, and lull themselves to sleep,
And, in the hollow of their trunks, strange forms of life are
 seen,
The web-winged bat, the hooded snake, and lizard long and
 green.

They say these brothers, proud and strong, forget their origin,
And, full of lusty life and pride, deem poverty a sin ;
And how, in scorn, they'd laugh at me, and ignominious treat,
Were I to sail across the sea, and bow down at their feet.

Let envious tongues say what they will, while firmly rooted
 here,
I'll wave my little scarlet flowers contented, once a year,
Or sport with bee and butterfly, till summer's passed away,
And never sigh, nor pout, nor cry, because it is not May.

I love the pelting rain and sleet, the white and feathery snow,
The storms that sweep the ocean, the winds that whistle low,
The lark that breathes his soul away, whose music courts the
 sun,
And wakes me from my slumbers ere night's dark course is
 run.

I love the full-mouthed nightingale, the cricket in the grass,
The myriad birds whose welcome notes thrill through me as they
 pass ;
The daisy growing on the knoll, the crocus at my side,
And the little snowdrop, hale and strong, that laughs at winter-
 tide.

I would not lose such loving friends to blossom in the west,
To hear my beauties, day by day, by endless tongues con-
 fessed,
I court the shade, I love it well, and ask no tropic sky,
Safe anchored to this little isle, I've lived, and so would die.

IN MEMORIAM.

Where is my dear little Willie,
My Willie, so bright and so fair ?
Where has he gone with his bonny blue eyes,
His smile and his silvery hair—
Where has he gone ?
They tell me he's gone on a journey,
That leads to a far distant shore ;
But Dolly went that way before him,
And Dolly came back nevermore !
She never came back to her mother,
Though vainly I waited and long,
To tease me, and please me, and ease me,
With mischief, and prattle and song.

Where is my dear little Willie ?
I miss him wherever I go ;
Will he never come back with his bonny blue eyes,
And solace my heart charged with woe ?
Where has he gone ?
They tell me he's gone on a journey,
That thousands have travelled before ;
But where has he gone with his bonny blue eyes ?
Will he never come back any more ?

Will he never come back to his mother,
Who has waited and waited so long,
To cheer me, when near me, and hear me
Sing "Lullaby, Sweet," in a song.

It may be that Dolly is married,
And asked little Willie to stay ;
And then I am sure he'll return nevermore,
For no one will drive him away.

Where has he gone ?

It may be they're both changed to angels,
And pity me now from afar,
That Willie's a bright shining planet,
And Dolly changed into a star.

Where is my dear little Willie,
So winsome, so fair, and so young ?
Will sadness and madness bring gladness,
And wailing give place to a song ?

Where is my dear little Willie ?
I call him and call him, in vain ;
Will he nevermore rest on his mother's lorn breast,
Nor fondle and kiss her again ?

Where has he gone ?

There's a fancy that haunts me for ever,
And comforts my soul like a spring ;
The snow that is falling so lightly,
Are feathers shook out of his wing.

Is it any use waiting for Willie,
For whom I have waited so long,
To tease me, and please me, and ease me,
With mischief, and prattle and song?

THE AGNOSTIC'S CREED.

“ Why was I born ? why live ? and, wherefore, die ? ”
“ I know not, child,” I answered with a sigh.
“ Seek not to know, but bravely do your best,
The grave is to the weary, freedom, rest.
We are but atoms of a mighty whole,
A part of something that is not the soul.
Weak-eyed, we see ; but little see or know ;
We grow, to live, and wither while we grow !
Death—life ; life—death ; remembered and forgot ;
We live, we are ; we die and we are not.
'Tis something to have lived, ourselves we prize ;
The world is not a hell ; but Paradise. ¶
There's pain in pleasure, pleasure in our pain ;
The thing that dies will never live again.
We live to die ; we do not die to live ;
We get by living, what we die to give.
The law of being, and the law of death,
Are not the laws that wither in a breath.
They're not man's laws that change at either pole,
Or at earth's centre ; they command the whole—
The tiniest creature, living for a day,
The monarch, man ; all life that turns to clay.
The flower lives, and drops its seed around,
And in its place another will be found !

'Tis not the same ; but may be just as fair,
And just as sweet a fragrance scents the air.
Day breaks, it ripens, and it fades away,
And that which follows is another day.
Why boast to know ? why covet or beseech
For knowledge that the wisest cannot reach ?
If we are ruled aright, then why be schooled ?
Be ye content, if ye are wisely ruled.
We're born to live ; we flourish, and we die,
Be ye content, and ask not wherefore ? why ?
No man was living when the world was made ;
If e'er it was. No man shall see it fade.
And what of memories ? Do they ceaseless run,
Unbroken, from the father to the son ?
Do they not share the mighty dower of death,
And pass away, as passeth man's own breath ?
And ere they die, in their enfeeblement,
Is not their virtue, like man's wisdom, spent ?
Then, wherefore could the knowledge that ye seek
Be found in man, whom memory taught to speak ?
To live, to die, and not to die to live ;
Be thankful for the comfort ye receive.
There may be strife, and struggle, and much pain ;
The life bestowed, may be recalled again ;
But if we hold, and with it we are blest,
And live for years upon the interest,
Why should we covet more ? why seek to know
Where, after death, mortality shall go ?
That loan is passed to others ; never spent ;
We pay with death, and cancel what is lent.

Why should we seek for life beyond the grave,
And be unthankful for the life we have ?
Why dream a heaven was made for us alone,
When countless creatures with this world are done ?
We know no other world, no heavenly shore :
To live again ! why not have lived before ?
Surely, the simplest dunce on earth must know
Far better where he's been, than where he'll go.
On what we know, we may philosophise ;
But who can see an inch beyond the skies ?
We know the present, but the future's sealed,
For what is knowledge to the dead revealed ?
Who made ? We know not. We o'ershoot the mark,
When, back and back, we wander in the dark.
And we who have not parted with our breath,
Know nothing of the path that leads from death.
We may presume to know, we may invent,
And feed our fancies on such nourishment.
The world beyond the world is nought to me !
I crave for nothing that I cannot see ;
I bow to laws to every man revealed,
And covet not the wisdom that is sealed.

ON RECEIVING A PRIMROSE.

All hail ! thou pale-faced harbinger of Spring,
Thou pale primrose !
What sunny memories doth thy presence bring,
To cheer life's close.
What fairy dales and daisy-mottled plains
Before me rise ;
Green shady nooks, and gipsy-haunted lanes,
'Neath sunny skies.

What subtle power lulls my soul to rest ?
I look on thee,
And scenes that I have loved, and do love best,
Encompass me.
Art thou a fairy, changed into a flower,
Whose dexterous skill
Endoweth thee with more than mortal power
To work thy will ?

I see the trefoil with its velvet leaves,
Woven so true ;
The filmy gossamer the spider weavés,
Beaded with dew—

The green grass field, the laughing cloudless sky,
The bursting thorn ;
And, far away, the clustered homesteads lie,
Where I was born.

I hear the silver tones of distant bells,
Float through the air ;
And gather violets from perfumed dells,
Without a care.
I scent their sweetness, hear the lowing herd,
And feel the breeze,
That o'er the brooklet, by the pebbles stirred,
Salutes the trees.

Again, dear primrose, I appeal to thee,
So, answer true :
Is there a power secreted yet in me,
I never knew ?
Have I to will and waft myself away
From tears and sighs
To fairy scenes, where quivering sunbeams play,
'Neath cloudless skies ?

DESERTED.

It was on a sunny Sabbath day,
In the springtime of the year,
When the garden hedge was white with may,
And the silence was broke by a roundelay
Of songsters who knew no care.

On a sunny morn, in the merry spring tide,
With the fruit trees in full bloom,
And the landscape stretching far and wide,
In tints of the richest jasper dyed,
Unmarred by a spec of gloom.

Oh, who has the heart to break a spell,
That belongs to the golden time,
When, pure as the sound from a heather bell,
The voices of angels ran through each dell
In the old world's prime ?

Can truth ever blot out a scene like this,
That never may come again?
Can a wafted word, like a lecherous kiss,
Make Beauty's smile and springtide bliss
Like mildewed grain?

There's a canker-worm in the budding flower,
A blight in the sunny sky ;
And a picture, that tells of the old world's woe,
In the hawthorn bush hard by.

Three little birds in a snug warm nest,
Have fretted their souls away,
For the want of those who went abroad
In the sunlight of yesterday.

Who went abroad in the merry sunlight,
In search of the scattered grain,
Till shattered by shot, all crimson they fell
In the slough of a neighbouring lane.

Three dauntless sons of a brave old race,
From the good ship "Victory,"
Are sailing away, in a little boat,
Through the icy northern sea.

Dreaming of home and their fair young wives
And their little ones far away,
Whom they hope to clasp in their brawny arms
In the glorious month of May.

Ere a year was spent, in that little frail boat,
Three corpses lay stiff and cold,
The olden tale of the Pentateuch
In a story of blood thrice told.

A flight of arrows from savage hands,
Then a loud triumphant cry ;
And far away from their cottage homes
Three English seamen die.

Three mothers with little ones sit by the beach,
Stretching their eyes o'er the sea,
Eagerly watching the coming sails
For the good ship "Victory ;"

But vainly they watch, and, for many a day,
From the rough and shingly shore,
They'll stretch their eyes o'er the silvery tide
For those they will see no more.

Oh! who has not wept for the heathen crew
Who dwell far away from God ?
In the comfortless lands by the frozen sea,
Where the Christian has seldom trod.

Let us talk to them of Galilee
And the gospel of peace and love :
And breathe not a word of the sharp-edged sword,
The talon that clings to the dove !

But whisper not of the two poor birds
Who left their nest to die,
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	PAGE		PAGE
<i>Æsthetic Movement</i> ...	6	Anglo-Saxon Delectus ...	14
Allingham's Poems ...	1	Anecdote, Dictionary of ...	19
Apocryphal Gospels ...	6	Ancient Faith and Modern ...	22
Arms and Armour ...	2	Blandford's Persia ...	24
Bosworth's Dictionary ...	1	Cards, Facts about ...	16
" Holy Gospels ...	1	Cornwall Dialect ...	18
City of Dreadful Night ...	13	Dramatic Literature ...	21
Commune, History of the ...	7	Evans's Heraldry ...	21
Crests, Book of ...	3	Freemasonry Obelisks ...	27
Essays and Phantasies ...	13	Glossary to Shakespeare, etc.	23
Freemasonry Books... ..	4&5	Haigh's Saxon Conquest ...	14
Hall Marks on Plate ...	2	" Saxon Sagas ...	14
Healing by Faith ...	4	Knocker's Shepway ...	22
Idyll of White Lotus ...	13	Library of Old Authors ...	28
Isle of Wight Dialect ...	8	Metallurgy, Manual of ...	23
Jesus of History ...	12	Philological Grammar ...	16
Keats's Poems, etc. ...	7	Peter Wilkins ...	27
Marks on Pottery ...	2	Poetical Illustrations ...	19
Montaigne Essays ...	8	Philosophy, Dictionary of ...	19
Manon Lescaut ...	10	Proverbs, English ...	21
Morris's, William, Works ...	9	Quotations, Practical ...	17
Oglander Memoirs ...	8	Reformation, History of the	16
Parodies, Collection of ...	6	Shakespearian Books ...	25
Praise of Folly ...	4	Somerset Dialect ...	18
Rural Rides ...	3	Suffolk, History of ...	20
Russia, History of ...	10	Tokens, Tradesmen's ...	15
Shelley's Poems ...	11	Topography, Book of British	15
" Primer ...	11	Tombs of London ...	23
" Society Publications	11	Violin, History of the ...	25
Five Years of Theosophy ...	13	Vernon's Anglo-Saxon Guide	14
Vane's Story... ..	13	Worcestershire, Heraldry of	20