

For



Love's



Sake

POEMS
of
Faith and Comfort

*THE Spirit's trailing garments that have swept
Through all the week along the dusty way,
Catching assoilment from the griming day,
(Though oft aside the foot in voidance stept,) —
Gather them up to-night: they have not kept
Immaculate their whiteness from the clay;
The delicate weftage, fretting troubles fray;
The broidered hem — oft caught by cares that crept,
Brier-like, along the path — is rent apart,
Ravelled and stained. Wherefore, disheartened one,
Loosen these work-day vestments from thee, lest,
Uncleansed by Meditation's holy art,
Thy soul be found unfitted to put on
The pure, fair linen of the Sabbath rest.*

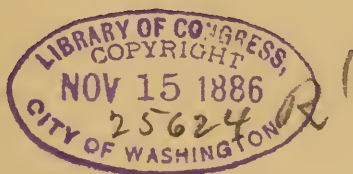
FOR LOVE'S SAKE

POEMS OF FAITH AND COMFORT

BY

unthin
MARGARET J. PRESTON

AUTHOR OF "SILVERWOOD," "OLD SONG AND NEW,"
"CARTOONS," ETC.



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TO

MY SISTER JULIA.

A VERY few of the poems included in this collection have been withdrawn from two former volumes, in order that the present book may bring together such Religious Verse as the writer may care to preserve.

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FOR LOVE'S SAKE.

P O E M S.

I. H. S.

I.

THOU art the Way! I never should have found Him
Whom long my soul had sought
(By reason of the dazzling rays around Him,
Wrapped far beyond my thought);
I never should have dared invade His glory
With my low, grovelling prayers,
Nor come before Him with the piteous story
Of all my sins and cares, —
Hadst Thou, divinest One, not condescended
To Thine incarnate form,
Wherein the majesty of Godhead blended
With human passions warm.
For Thou hast taught me, when I fall before Thee
In reverence, worship, love,
I am adoring, as I thus adore Thee,
The God supreme above.

II.

Thou art the Truth, — the Logos, the eternal
Reason and source of all ;
The support, wisdom, guidance, light supernal,
That round Thy creatures fall.
Thou art the satisfying explanation
Of all that was and is ;
The Father's wondrous secrets of creation
Are Thine no less than His.
One hand He holds, and Thou dost lay Thine other,
(Dear hands that once have bled !)
With just such human touch as any brother
Might lay his, on my head.
And I can trust my ignorance unto Thee,
All unashamed, and bring
My heart, that it may be enlightened through Thee,
Who knowest everything.

III.

Thou art the Life ! When earth sprang into being,
Thy word pronounced it fair ;
When systems ranged themselves, at God's decreeing,
In orbit, Thou wert there.
All joy, all peace, all hope beyond forecasting,
All creatures' vital breath,
Spring from the pangs that wrenched life everlasting
Out of the heart of death.

All good that ever came to cheer the ages,
 All providential grace,
All alchemy of Nature that presages
 Grand futures for our race, —
From first to last by Thee are generated :
 Yea, from a senseless clod,
This soul that praises Thee, Thou hast created,
 Thou very God of God !

IV.

Therefore I yearn to walk that way behind Thee,
 By which Thy saints have gone,
Through light, through dark, assured that I shall find Thee
 Near, if I follow on.
Therefore I crave that truth to clear my vision
 From error's blinding blight,
Whose mists o'ercloud, at times, the pure elysian
 So haloed with Thy light.
Therefore I seek that Life, so through Thy merit
 To me vouchsafed, that I,
Heir to supreme possessions, may inherit
 The life that cannot die.
O Way, O Truth, O Life ! No declaration
 From Thy dear lips could fall,
Fitted to fill, with loftier exultation,
 The soul that grasps it all !

TO THE UTTERMOST.

O F His high attributes, beyond the most,
I thank my God for that Omniscient Eye
Beneath whose blaze no secret thing can lie,
In His infinitude of being, lost.
I bless my God, I am not wrecked and tossed
Upon a sea of doubt, with power to fly
And hide, somewhither in immensity,
One single sin, out of His reckoning crossed.
For even there, self-conscious of its thrall,
Might spring the terror: "If He knew the whole,
And tracked this skulking guilt out to its goal,
He could not pardon!" But, or great or small,
He knows the inmost foldings of my soul,
And, knowing utterly, forgives me all!

INASMUCH.

THE day with all its fervid hours
Of golden possibility,
Went down behind the sapphire sea,
And that dull sense of squandered powers,
Before whose waste the conscience cowers,
Was all those hours had left for me.

Remorsefully I bowed my head,
And sighed : “ Ah, Lord, Thy heart doth know
I would not have the record so
Written above the day that ’s dead, —
Its doing and undoing done. Instead,
My love had fanned a zeal whose glow

“ Waited my touch to leap to flame ;
I felt the inbreathed power to write
Words that Thy spirit should indite ;
And when I named Thy sacred Name,
The cloven inspiration came,
As with a pentecostal might.

“ I had no other thought to sing
Than for Thy glory ; since I knew
No bird went breasting up the blue,
With throb of throat and strain of wing,
That did not in its measure bring
Accepted service, pure and true.

“ That rapture past, I planned a deed
Of costly effort for Thy sake,
In which I charged that self should take
No slightest share, nor flesh have heed,
Nor shrinking will have let to plead,
Nor heart betray a conscious ache.

“ And now the day within whose scope
I set my deeds is dead and done,
And all my aims are missed. Not one
Of those with which I thought to cope
In dauntlessness of faith and hope,
Has even so much as been begun.”

As thus I moaned my self-complaint,
Across the midnight seemed to loom
A vision, and athwart the gloom
A whisper fell, so sweet, so faint,
That I looked up with strange constraint,
And lo ! a brightness swam the room.

I sank o'erawed; and as I lay
With downward face, a dream of voice
Drifted above. It said: "Rejoice!
Thy dead day, wept for, lives, — a day
Vital with action, though it may
Have brought but failure to thy choice.

"Thy work undone, I take as though
Wrought to completion; and the strain
That throbs, unsung, within thy brain,
I hear in all its overflow,
And know as thou canst never know
The silent music born of pain.

"'T was *I* who bade the hindrance stir
Thy soul from singing; *I* who laid
My hand upon thy hands, and stayed
Their chosen purpose, while to her
Who suffered, as a minister
I sent thee, errand mine aid.

"And inasmuch as thou hast brought
Thy draught of water, deemed so small;
And inasmuch as at My call
Thou didst the work thou hadst not sought, —
As double deeds, wrought and unwrought,
I, needing none, accept them all."

RABBONI.

I.

OF all the nights of most mysterious dread,
This elded earth hath known, none matched in gloom
That crucifixion night when Christ lay dead,
Sealed up in Joseph's tomb!

II.

No faith that rose sublime above the pain,
Remembered in its anguish what He said :
“ After three days, and I shall rise again,” —
Their hopeless hearts were dead.

III.

Throughout that ghastly “ preparation-day ”
How had the stricken mother dragged her breath !
Like all of Adam born, her God-given lay
Beneath the doom of death.

IV.

The prophecy she nursed through pondering years
Of apprehension, now had found its whole
Fulfilment, infinite beyond her fears, —
The sword *had* pierced her soul !

V.

The vehement tears of Peter well might flow,
Mixed with the wormwood of repentant shame ;
Now would he yield his life thrice told, if so
He might confess the name

VI.

He had denied with curses. Fruitless were
The keen remorse now, the gnawing smart ;
A heavier stone than sealed the sepulchre
Was rolled above his heart.

VII.

Surprise and grief and baffled hopes sufficed
To rush as seas, their souls and God between ;
Yet none of all had mourned the buried Christ
As Mary Magdalene.

VIII.

When all condemned, He bade her live again ;
When all were hard, His pity poured above
Her penitent spirit, healed it, cleansed its stain,
And made it pure with love.

IX.

And she had broken all her costliest store
O'er Him whose tenderness, so new, so rare,
Stood like a strong, white angel evermore
'Twixt her and mad despair.

X.

And He was dead ! Her peace had died with Him !
The demons who had fled at His control,
With seven-fold chains within their dungeons dim,
Would henceforth bind her soul.

XI.

How slowly crept the Sabbath's endless week !
What aching vigils watched the lingering day,
When she might stagger through the dark and seek
The garden where He lay !

XII.

And when she thrid her way to meet the dawn,
And found the gates unbarred, a grieving moan
Brake from her lips : " Who " — for her strength was gone —
" Will roll away the stone ? "

XIII.

She held no other thought, no hope but this :
To look, — to touch the sacred flesh once more, —
Handle the spices with adoring kiss,
And help to wind Him o'er

XIV.

With the fair linen Joseph had prepared, —
Lift reverently the wounded hands and feet,
And gaze, awe-blinded, on the features bared,
And drink the last, most sweet,

XV.

Divine illusion of His presence there ;
And then, the embalming done, with one low cry
Of utmost, unappeasable despair,
Seek out her home, and die.

XVI.

Lo ! the black square that showed the open tomb !
She sprang, — she entered unafraid, — and swept
Her arms outstretching, groping through the gloom,
To touch Him where He slept.

XVII.

Her trembling fingers grasped the raiment cold,
Pungent with aloes, lying where He lay :
She smoothed her hands above it, fold by fold, —
Her Lord was stolen away !

XVIII.

And others came anon, who wept Him sore, —
Simon and John, the women pale and spent
With fearful watchings ; wondering more and more,
They questioned, gazed, — and went.

XIX.

Not thus did Mary. Though the lingering gloom
Pearled into brightness, and the city's stir
Came floating upward to the garden tomb,
There was no dawn for her :

XX.

No room for faintest hopes nor utmost fears ;
For when she, sobbing, stooped, and saw the twain
White-clothed angels, through her falling tears,
Sit where her Lord had lain,

XXI.

And ask, "Why weepest thou?" there brake no cry,
But she with deadened calm her answer made :
"Because they have taken away my Lord, and I
Know not where He is laid."

XXII.

Was it a step upon the dewy grass ?
Was it a garment rustled by the wind ?
Did some hushed breathing o'er her senses pass,
And draw her looks behind ?

XXIII.

She turned and saw — the very Lord she sought, —
Jesus, the newly risen ! . . . but no surprise
Held her astound and rooted to the spot ;
Her filmed and holden eyes

XXIV.

Had only vision for the swathèd form ;
Nor from her mantle lifted she her face,
Nor marvelled that the gardener's voice should warm
With pity at her case ; —

XXV.

Till sprang the sudden thought, "If *he* should know" —
And then she turned full quickly: "Sir, I pray,
Tell me where thou hast borne Him, that I may go
And take Him thence away."

XXVI.

The resurrection morning's broadening blaze
Shot up behind, and clear before her sight
Centred on Jesus its transfiguring rays,
And haloed Him with light.

XXVII.

"*Mary!*" — The measureless pathos was the same
As when her Lord had said, "Thou art forgiven:"
Had He, for comfort, named her by her name
Out from the height of heaven?

XXVIII.

She looked aloft, — she listened, turned, and gazed;
A marvellous revelation swept her brow;
One moment, — and she prostrate fell, amazed,
Raptured — "*Rabboni!* — *Thou!*"

CHISEL-WORK.

I.

'T IS the Master who holds the mallet,
And day by day
He is chipping whate'er environs
The form, away :
Which, under His skilful cutting,
He means shall be
Wrought silently out to beauty
Of such degree
Of faultless and full perfection,
That angel eyes
Shall look on the finished labor
With new surprise
That even His boundless patience
Could grave His own
Features upon such fractured
And stubborn stone.

II.

'T is the Master who holds the chisel ;
 He knows just where
Its edge should be driven sharpest,
 To fashion there
The semblance that He is carving ;
 Nor will He let
One delicate stroke too many,
 Or few, be set
On forehead, or cheek, where only
 He sees how all
Is tending, and where the hardest
 The blow should fall,
Which crumbles away whatever
 Superfluous line
Would hinder His hand from making
 The work divine.

III.

With tools of Thy choosing, Master,
 We pray Thee, then,
Strike just as Thou wilt ; as often,
 And where, and when
The vehement stroke is needed.
 We will not mind,
If only Thy chipping chisel
 Shall leave behind

Such marks of Thy wondrous working
And loving skill,
Clear carven on aspect, stature,
And face, as will,
When discipline's ends are over,
Have all sufficed
To mould us into the likeness
And form of Christ.

UNTIL THE END.

TO do God's will — that 's all
That need concern us : not to carp or ask
The meaning of it ; but to ply our task,
Whatever may befall,
Accepting good or ill as He shall send,
And wait until the end.

What if a spire of grass
Should dare assert itself against His power,
And question wherefore He withheld the shower,
Or let the tempest pass
To shred its stem and pour its juices out,
Or shrivel it with drought !

Each atom God hath made
Yields to His primal law, obedience true,
Whether it be a star, or drop of dew,
Forest or ferny blade.
Should one resist, the world would feel the spell :
“ Behold ! a miracle ! ”

If Nature thus can bow,
With acquiescence absolute, profound,
Before the mysteries that gird her round,
Nor ever disallow
The pressure of the Hand above her, why
Should not this conscious *I*?

Wherefore is man so loath,
Without presumptuous quest into the cause
Of this or that, in God's inviolate laws,
To trust, as Nature doth,
Content, although he may not comprehend,
To wait until the end!

COMFORTED.

THERE are who tell me I should be
 So firm of faith, so void of fear,
 So buoyed by calm, courageous cheer,
(Assured, through Christ's security,
 There is a place prepared,) that I
 Should dare not be afraid to die.

They question of the nameless dread,
 With lifted brow, as if I let
 Unreasoning foretastes overfret
My soul unduly, while I tread
 A path self-clouded, underneath
 The ever-conscious chill of death.

They babble of the fuller life,
 Unswaddled of the mummied clay,
 Whose cerements hide the upper day,
That shines serene above the strife
 Of this poor charnel crypt, and cry,
 That they are happiest still, who die.

Who holds it cowardice to shrink
Before the fearful truth, that none
Of all Time's myriads, — never one
Whose feet have crossed the fatal brink,
Has ever come to breathe our breath
Again, and tell us what is death ?

We know that into outmost space,
Snatched sheer of earth, the spirit goes
Alone, stark, silent ; but who knows
The awful whitherward ? — the place
Which never deepest-piercing eye
Had glimpse of, into which we die ?

Who knows ? — God only. On His word
I wholly rest, I solely lean, —
The single voice that sounds between
The Eternities ! No soul hath heard
One whisper else, one mystic breath
That can reveal the why of death.

I think of all who've passed the strife :
Pale women, who have failed to face
With bravery of common grace
Their daily apprehensive life,
Who yet, with straining arms stretched high
Through ecstasy, could smile, and die ; —

Of little children, who would scare
To walk beneath the dark alone,
Unless some hand should hold their own,
Who've met the terror unaware,
Nor knew, while breathing out their breath,
The angel whom they saw was Death!

And I am comforted : because
The love that bore these tremblers through
Can fold its strength about me too,
And I may find my quailing was,
As theirs, a phantom that will fly,
Dawn-smitten, when I come to die.

Therefore I cleave with simple trust,
Amid my hopes, amid my fears,
Through the procession of my years, —
The years that bear me back to dust,
And cry, " Ah, Christ, if Thou be nigh,
Strong in Thy strength, I dare to die ! "

IN THE HEREAFTER.

I SOMETIMES ask myself if I could be
Happy in heaven, were all
Life's holiest memories blotted out for me,
That hold my heart in thrall ;

The hour of rapture, the supreme delight
That thrilled some rarest day,
The sacrament of love, too marvellous bright
Ever to pass away ;

The rapt and fine elation, when the mind
Seemed caught away as far
As if we left all earthly things behind
And touched some distant star ; —

If all be swept from memory, and no more
A recognition win
Than if no breathing life had gone before —
Than if they had not been.

I think the heavenly heights would shine more fair,
 Its waters softer flow,
If you and I could walk together there,
 And talk of long ago.

No spirit from amid the seven-fold band,
 That nearest sees the Throne,
Could hold such converse — know or understand
 What you and I have known.

Angelic sinlessness would seem to me
 A something too divine,
Touched with no feeling of infirmity
 As links your soul with mine.

Amid the splendors, wondrous, manifold,
 That sight and sense would fill,
I think, — I think the simple bliss of old
 Would even haunt me still.

As sometimes when our life's supremest power
 Has reached its acme, then
We would surrender all, just for one hour
 To be a child again ;

So in some dim and quiet spot of rest,
 With the far Throne in view,
I dare to feel 't would sometimes seem the best
 To sit and talk with you ;

And there unravel all the mystic skein
Of joy and pain and woe,
And read, as on a tablet written plain,
All we have pined to know.

The tender things, the nameless ministries
That once made life so fair, —
The sweet experience of a thousand things, —
Could any angel share?

Nay, let me hold the sweet conclusion fast,
That the pure memories given
To help our joy on earth, when earth is past,
Shall help our joy in heaven !

VEILED VISION.

IF suddenly there stood to us revealed
The world of spirits, that may be so near, —
Not, as we dream, some far, unreckoned sphere,
But close to us as heart-beat, though concealed
As were the fiery chariots all afield,
Girdling the prophet, till a touch made clear
His curtained sight, to what ignoble fear,
And shame, and self-reproach our souls would yield !

We might behold our darling dead, their eyes
Clouded through wonder at our empty days ;
Sad with vast pity for our waste and woe,
Our mad mistakes, our blind and grovelling ways,
Our cold forgettings ! Yet God's angels so
Do watch us with a mystery of surprise.

QUESTIONINGS.

I.

WITH such a grovelling heart, how can I dare
Ask Thee, my Lord, to make Thy dwelling there?
— Because the Bethlehem stable Thou didst share.

II.

With restless passions surging like a sea,
How can I think to find repose from Thee?
— Because Thy voice hushed stormy Galilee.

III.

With guilt's defilement stained without, within,
How can I hope Thy cleansing grace to win?
— Because Thou saidst, "I have forgiven thy sin."

IV.

With earth's poor, caresome toilings tired, oppressed,
What right have I to lean upon Thy breast?
— Because Thou offeredst to the weary, rest.

V.

With soul-affections stony-cold and dead,
What claim have I to plead for life instead?
— Because in Joseph's tomb was laid Thy head.

AGAINST THE COLD.

Peter stood and warmed himself. — SAINT JOHN.

THE very Christ for whom he bore
Such brave, bold witness, but a few
Brief days ago — the Christ he knew
Had raised from death one week before
His friend at Bethany — he saw
Now in the clutch of Roman law,
Reproached, dishonored, helpless, lone,
Dragged rudely o'er the pavement stone,
And — stood and warmed himself!

He watched the jeering soldiers strip
Away the robe the Marys made,
Tear off the inner garment frayed
By brutal wrenchings; marked the lip
Quiver, as o'er the flesh made bare
Blew gusts of chilling midnight air;
Yet by the sight not stricken dead,
Above the brazier's coals he spread
His hands — and warmed himself!

He heard a maid say, "Here, behold!
One of this man's disciples: see,
He speaks the speech of Galilee."
Ah then — ah then his blood ran cold,
And as the leaping flame rose higher,
Amid the crowd that girt the fire,
With sharp, reiterate, angry "Nay!"
He thrust his arms, and pressed his way,
And crouched — and warmed himself!

"Yea, thou art one of them," — he heard
The charge come back and back again,
Tossed from the mouth of mocking men;
And as with oaths he flung the word
Straight in their teeth, he sudden turned —
And oh, that look! It burned and burned,
As if Gehenna's hottest coal
Had down into his central soul
Dropped, while he warmed himself!

His hands he could no more uphold,
Remorse, despair, self-loathing, woe,
Clutched at his heart; he did not know
If it were night, — if it were cold;
He cast no gaze behind, before,
Nor cared that she who kept the door
Said, "Surely this was he who drew
The sword on Malchus, — Malchus knew,
The while he warmed himself!"

Remorseful on the ground he lay,
So sunk in self-aborrent shame
He dared not breathe the Master's name,
Recounting, till the dawn of day,
How through that mystic anguish dim,
He had not spoken a word for Him,
Forsaken in the high-priest's hall,
But midst the mocking, watched it all,
And stood and warmed himself !

So do we still : we skulk afar,
With scarce the scoffed-at Christ in sight,
Nor dare the wrong, nor brave the right,
Poor, cowardly cravens that we are !
And while we see our Lord betrayed,
We linger mid his foes, afraid
To own Him ; yet like him of old,
We comfort us against the cold,
And stand and warm ourselves !

THE PRINCE'S HONEYCOMB.

I WAS discomfited and sick and sad,
By reason of the way ;
For God's exhaustless store of promise had
Been overlooked that day.

And I was weak to faintness with the weight
Of trials undergone ;
This way and that I looked disconsolate,
And blindly stumbled on.

Within my hand I held the pilgrim's rod,
But in my hunger-grief,
Disusing it, I had forgotten God,
In sudden unbelief.

When all at once, amid the jagged ways
Through which I panting clomb,
I found right in my footpath, with amaze,
A dropping honeycomb.

I asked not who had sent it : all I knew
 Was that my need was sore ;
I dipped my rod, and from its sweetness drew,
 And I was faint no more !

O hearts that yearn, like princely Jonathan's,
 O'ermastered by the strife
That starves the aims and circumvents the plans
 Of all the loftier life ; —

O souls that stagger under doubt's eclipse,
 Let but some promise be
The Prince's honeycomb unto your lips —
 And how your eyes will see !

THE GRANDEST DEED.

I.

THE myriad messengers of God
Before the central throne
Waited, attent to fly abroad
And make His errands known
Wherever foot of man had trod
Or angel wing had flown.

Nor any asked, if great or small
The task, his portioned share ;
A kingdom's or a sparrow's fall
They held an equal care ;
His work, the same, supreme in all,
Who governs everywhere.

II.

One spirit to a world afar
In utmost ether went ;
And one to seek a new-born star,
On mission vast intent ;
And one, where circling systems are
Uncatalogued, was sent.

Came one, — the mightiest. O'er his face
He spread his veiling wing,
To soften the effulgent blaze
Of God's forthshadowing,
And craved that he to heaven's high praise
Some added joy might bring.

III.

To him the errand fell : "Thou seest
Where yonder spark doth shine
Beneath thee, — one among the least
Of these fair worlds of Mine ;
Yet honored even above the rest
By gifts the most divine.

"Go tell its dwellers how My Christ,
Through human guise, made dim
The glory that in heaven sufficed
To dazzle cherubim ;
And bid them, other faiths despised,
Believe alone in *Him*."

I.

Again before the emerald throne,
The messengers of God
Stood flushed with tidings ; they had gone
Through worlds on worlds abroad,

Wherever angel wing had flown,
Or foot of man had trod.

And one had triumphs strange to tell,
By infinite Wisdom wrought ;
And one had works ineffable,
To grand achievement brought ;
And one had mystic lore, to swell
Seraphic bound of thought.

II.

“ Who hath believèd *thy* report ? ” —
And at the questioning word,
Throughout the vast celestial court
Uplifting wings were heard,
As if some news of gladder sort
Their crowding hosts had stirred.

And as the throb of silence sank
Where loud the song had been,
They parted, seven-fold rank on rank,
To let the angel in,
Who backward from the radiance shrank,
Nor audience sought to win.

III.

Lowly he spake : “ Thy word I bore
To men by sin enslaved ;

And thousands heard it o'er and o'er,
Nor grace nor pardon craved ;
Yet one who never heard before, —
One heathen soul was saved.”

Then through the circling ranks serene,
The joy that thrilled the whole,
Brake forth in rapture, while between
Ten thousand harpings stole :
— The grandest deed of all had been
To save that heathen soul !

THE STIRRED NEST.

TOO much on earth, — too much on what must sway
With every oversweeping gust of time,
I've set my hopes, where no rude care might climb,
Fond thought! to spoil my nest, or steal away
The cherished singers that for many a day
Had cheered me with their song. But the rough wind
Again and yet again has wrenched the bough,
And driven my clinging fledglings far and wide,
To wail the refuge which they fail to find,
And fill my ear with plaintive moaning now.
Where shall the scattered, homeless wanderers hide
And build once more? Not here, where storms are
rife, —
Not here, my heart! — but where no ills betide,
In the safe shelter of the Tree of Life!

LEFT BEHIND.

I.

I CANNOT chide away the pain,
I cannot bid the throb be still,
That aches and aches through heart and brain,
And leaves them pulsing to the thrill
Of overmastering memories. They
Who never saw the eyelids close,
Beneath whose shadowing fringes lay
All that had given to life repose,
Or charm, or hope, or ease, or joy,
Or love clear molten from alloy, —
Who have not, tear-blind, watched the breath,
That only breathed to bless them, come
Slower and fainter, till the dumb
Unanswering lips grew white with death, —
They cannot know, by grief untaught,
What an unfathomed depth I find,
Of ebbless anguish in the thought
That I am left behind.

II.

What matters it that other eyes
Have smiles to give me just as sweet,
Or softly other tongues repeat
Endearments of as gentle guise?
I only feel, that whatso'er
Its melting tenderness may be,
'Tis not the smile whose gracious cheer
Was more than all the world to me :
I only feel, though winning-kind
Is every word that voice may say,
'Tis not the one that passed away,
When I was left behind.

III.

I know, — I know that as of yore,
Nature is festive in her mirth ;
That still the sunshine shimmers through
The infinite, palpitating blue,
As goldenly as heretofore :
I know this green and billowy earth
Tides underneath the smile of God,
As to the moonlight tides the sea ;
I'm wounded by the mocking glee,
I'm hurt by all the joy abroad.
The smiting blow that grief has given,
So jars the mirror of my mind,

That everything of sweet or fair
Has but distorted reflex there ;
And oh, the tears, — the tears like rain
Upon its surface leave their stain,
Since my belovèd went to heaven, —
Since I was left behind !

IV.

There is a Hand that can restore
The spirit's equipoise, till true,
In faith's unwavering light once more,
His image trembles back to view.
Dear Christ ! when there Thy form appears,
Let me not blot it with my tears,
That are not murmuring tears, though sad ;
I would be patient, — I would find
How much the thought can reconcile,
Can lift me up and make me glad,
That only for a little while
Shall I be left behind.

ANISE AND CUMMIN.

WEARY with homely duties done,
Tired through treading day by day,
Over and over, from sun to sun,
One and the same small round alway,
Under her breath I heard her say :

“Oh for the sweep of the keen-edged scythe !
Oh for the swaths, when the reaping's o'er —
Proof of the toil's success ! I tithe
Anise and cummin — such petty store !
Cummin and anise — nothing more !

“Only a meagre garden-space,
Out of the world so rich and broad —
Only a strip of standing-place,
Only a patch of herb-strown sod,
Given, in which to work for God !

“Yet is my hand as full of care
Under the shine and frost and rain,
Tending and weeding and watching there,
Even as though I deemed a wain
Were to be piled with sheaves of grain.

“Then, when the work is done, what cheer
Have I to greet me, great or small?
What that shall show how year by year
Patient I’ve wrought at duty’s call?
Anise and cummin — that is all!”

Turning, I raised the drooping head,
Just as I heard a sob arise:
“Anise and cummin and mint,” I said,
Kissing her over her aching eyes,
“Even our Lord doth not despise.

“Think you He looks for headed wheat
Out of your plot of garden-ground?
Think you He counts as incomplete
Service that from such scanty bound
Yields Him the tithing He has found?

“What are to Him the world’s wide plains?
Him who hath never a need to fill
Even one garner with our small gains?
Yet, if the plot is yours to till,
Tithe Him the anise and cummin still!”

•

BY-AND-BY.

WHAT will it matter by-and-by,
Whether my path below was bright,
Whether it wound through dark or light,
Under a gray or a golden sky,
When I look back on it by-and-by?

What will it matter by-and-by,
Whether, unhelped, I toiled alone,
Dashing my foot against a stone,
Missing the charge of the angel nigh,
Bidding me think of the by-and-by?

What will it matter by-and-by,
Whether with dancing Joy I went
Down through the years with a gay content,
Never believing, — nay, not I,
Tears would be sweeter by-and-by?

What will it matter by and-by,
Whether with cheek to cheek I've lain
Close by the pallid angel, Pain,
Soothing myself through sob and sigh, —
“All will be otherwise by-and-by”?

What will it matter? — Nought, if I
Only am sure the way I've trod,
Gloomy or gladdened, leads to God,
Questioning not of the how, the why,
If I but reach Him by-and-by.

What will I care for the unshared sigh,
If, in my fear of lapse or fall,
Close I have clung to Christ through all,
Mindless how rough the road might lie,
Sure He will smoothen it by-and-by?

What will it matter by-and-by?
Nothing but this: That Joy or Pain
Lifted me skyward, — helped to gain,
Whether through rack, or smile, or sigh,
Heaven, — home, — all in all, — by-and-by!

A LITANY OF PAIN.

I.

SOMETIMES when my pulses are throbbing
With currents whose feverish flow
Sets all the strung spirit to sobbing
With speechless yet passionate woe,
I inwardly question and falter,
Though lips are too still to complain, —
What profit to lay on God's altar
Oblations of pain?

II.

Can He in the infinite gladness
That floods all His being with light,
Complacently look on the sadness
That dares to intrude on His sight?
Can He, in His rhythmic creation
Attuned to the chime of the spheres,
Bear the discord of moans, the vibration
Of down-dropping tears?

III.

Would I, wholly human, foreseeing
Some anguish my darling must face,
Not guard, at the risk of my being,
Its onset, or die in his place?
And yet can the Father who loves me
With love that's suppremer, foreknow
The soul-wrench impending above me,
Nor ward off its blow?

IV.

Be quiet, poor heart! — Are the lessons
Life sets thee so hard to attain,
That thou know'st not their potentest essence
Lies wrapped in the problem of pain?
Even Nature such rudiments teaches;
The birth-throe presages the breath;
The soul so high-destinied reaches
Its highest through death.

V.

No beaker is brimmed without bruising
The clusters that gladden the vine;
No gem glitters star-like, refusing
The rasp that uncovers its shine;
No diver who shuns the commotion
Of billows above him that swirl,
From out of the deeps of the ocean
Can bring up the pearl.

VI.

And He who is moulding the spirit
For ends that are grander than this,
Who is training it here to inherit
Such stores of ineffable bliss, —
He gauges the weight He is piling;
He tempers the surge with a touch;
There 'll not be a graze of *His* filing
Too little — too much!

VII.

Then patiently suffer, and trust Him
For all that thy cravings can ask;
Nor dare with thy murmurs to thrust Him
Aside from His discipline's task:
Nor question His goodness, nor falter,
Nor say that thy service is vain,
Though still thou must lay on His altar,
Burnt-offerings of pain!

A BIRD'S MINISTRY.

FROM his home in an Eastern bungalow,
In sight of the everlasting snow
Of the grand Himalayas, row on row,

Thus wrote my friend:—

“I had travelled far
From the Afghan towers of Candahar,
Through the sand-white plains of Sinde-Sagar ;

“And once, when the daily march was o'er,
As tired I sat in my tented door,
Hope failed me, as never it failed before.

“In swarming city, at wayside fane,
By the Indus's bank, on the scorching plain,
I had taught, — and my teaching all seemed vain.

“‘No glimmer of light,’ I sighed, ‘appears ;
The Moslem's Fate and the Buddhist's fears
Have gloomed their worship this thousand years.

“ ‘ For Christ and His truth I stand alone
In the midst of millions : a sand-grain blown
Against yon temple of ancient stone,

“ ‘ As soon may level it ! ’ Faith forsook
My soul as I turned on the pile to look :
Then rising, my saddened way I took

“ To its lofty roof, for the cooler air :
I gazed, and marvelled ; how crumbled were
The walls I had deemed so firm and fair !

“ For, wedged in a rift of the massive stone,
Most plainly rent by its roots alone,
A beautiful peepul-tree had grown,

“ Whose gradual stress would still expand
The crevice, and topple upon the sand
The temple, while o’er its wreck should stand

“ The tree in its living verdure ! Who
Could compass the thought ? The bird that flew
Hitherward, dropping a seed that grew,

“ Did more to shiver this ancient wall
Than earthquake, war, simoon, or all
The centuries in their lapse and fall !

“ Then I knelt by the riven granite there,
And my soul shook off its weight of care,
As my voice rose clear on the tropic air : —

“ ‘ The living seeds I have dropped remain
In the cleft : Lord, quicken with dew and rain ;
Then temple and mosque shall be rent in twain ! ’ ”

MYRRH-BEARERS.¹

THREE women crept at break of day,
A-grope along the shadowy way
Where Joseph's tomb and garden lay.

With deadly woe each face was white,
As the gray Orient's waxing light
Brought back upon their awe-struck sight

The sixth-day scene of anguish. Fast
The starkly-standing cross they passed,
And breathless neared the gate at last.

Each on her sobbing bosom bore
A burden of such fragrant store
As never there had lain before :

Spices the purest, richest, best,
That e'er the musky East possessed,
From Ind to Araby-the-Blest,

¹ In ancient Greek Art, *The Marys* were called *Myrrhopheres*, —
Myrrh-Bearers.

Had they, with sorrow-riven hearts,
Searched all Jerusalem's costliest marts
In quest of ; — nards whose pungent arts

Should the dead sepulchre imbue
With vital odors through and through :
'T was all their love had leave to do !

Christ did not need their gifts : and yet
Did either Mary e'er regret
Her offering ? Did Salomé fret

Over the unused aloes ? Nay !
They counted not as waste, that day,
What they had brought their Lord : the way

Home seemed the path to heaven ! They bare,
Thenceforth, about the robes they ware,
The clinging perfume everywhere !

Enough to know the deed was priced
By this one thought that all sufficed :
Their spices had been bruised for Christ !

FOR LOVE'S SAKE.

I.

YOU have read of the Moslem palace, the marvellous
fane that stands
On the banks of the distant Jumna, the wonder of all the
lands.¹

You have read of its marble splendors, its carvings of rare
device,
Its domes and its towers that glisten like visions of Para-
dise.

You have listened, as one has told you of its pinnacles
snowy-fair,
So pure that they seemed suspended, like clouds, in the
crystal air ;

Of the flow of its fountains, falling as softly as mourners'
tears ;
Of the lily and rose kept blooming for over two hundred
years ;

¹ The Taj, erected at the city of Agra, India, in 1635, by the Shah Jehán, to the memory of his best-beloved wife, Nourmahál.

Of the friezes of frost-like beauty, the jewels that crust
the wall,
The carvings that crown the archway, the innermost shrine
of all, —

Where lies in her sculptured coffin (whose chisellings
mortal man
Hath never excelled) the dearest of the loves of the Shah
Jehán.

They read you the shining legends, whose letters are set in
gems
On the walls of the sacred chamber, that sparkle like
diadems.

And they tell you these letters, gleaming wherever the
eye may look,
Are words of the Moslem Prophet, are texts from his
holy book.

And still as you heard, you questioned, right wonderingly,
as you must,
“Why rear such a palace, only to shelter a woman’s
dust?”

Why rear it? — The Shah had promised his beautiful
Nourmahál
To do it because he loved her, — he loved her, and that
was all!

So minaret, wall and column, and tower, and dome
above,
All tell of a sacred promise, all utter one accent, —
LOVE.

II.

You know of another temple, a grander than Hindoo
shrine,
The splendor of whose perfections is mystical, strange,
divine.

You have read of its deep foundations, which neither the
frost nor flood,
Nor forces of earth can weaken, cemented in tears and
blood.

That, chosen with skill transcendent, by the wisdom that
fills the Throne,
Was quarried, and hewn, and polished, its wonderful
Corner-stone.

So vast is its scale proportioned, so lofty its turrets rise,
That the pile in its finished glory will reach to the very
skies.

The lapse of the silent Kedron, the roses of Sharon fair,
Gethsemane's sacred olives and cedars are round it
there.

And graved on its walls and pillars, and cut in its crystal
stone,

Are the words of our Prophet, sweeter than Islam's hath
ever known : —

Texts culled from the Holy Gospel, that comfort, refresh,
sustain,

And shine with a rarer lustre than the gems of the Hindoo
fane.

Oh, not to the dead — to the Living, we rear on the earth
He trod,

This fane to His lasting glory — this Church to the Christ
of God !

“ Why labor and strive ? ” We have promised (and dare
we the vow recall ?)

To do it because we love Him, — we love Him, and
that is all !

For over the Church's portal, each pillar and arch above,
Is blazoned the royal signet, is graven the watchword, —
LOVE.

BLEMISHED OFFERING.

I.

“**I** WOULD my gift were worthier!” sighed the
Greek,

As on he goaded to the temple-door
His spotted bullock. “Ever of our store
Doth Zeus require the best; and fat and sleek
The ox I vowed to him (no brindled streak,
No fleck of dun) when through the breakers’ roar
He bore me safe, that day, to Naxos’ shore;
And now, my gratitude, how seeming weak !

“But here be chalk-pits. What if I should white
The blotches, hiding all unfitness so?
The victim in the people’s eyes would show
Better therefor; — the sacrificial rite
Be quicklier granted at thus fair a sight,
And the great Zeus himself might never know.”

II.

We have a God who *knows*. And yet we dare
On His consuming altar-coals to lay
(Driven by the prick of conscience to obey)

The whited sacrifice, the hollow prayer,
In place of what we vowed, in our despair,
 Of best and holiest ; — glad no mortal may
 Pierce through the cheat, and hoping half to stay
That Eye before whose search all souls are bare !

Nay, rather ; — let us bring the victim-heart,
 Defiled, unworthy, blemished though it be,
 And fling it on the flame, entreating, — “ See —
I blush to know how vile in every part
Is this my gift, through sin’s delusive art,
 Yet ’t is the best that I can offer Thee ! ”

A YEAR IN HEAVEN.

I.

A YEAR uncalendared ; — for what
Hast thou to do with mortal time ?
Its dole of moments entereth not
That circle, infinite, sublime,
Whose unreach'd centre is the throne
Of Him before whose awful brow
Meeting eternities are known
As but an everlasting *Now !*
The thought uplifts thee far away, —
Too far beyond my love and tears ;
Ah, let me hold thee as I may,
And count thy time by earthly years.

II.

A year of blessedness, wherein
No faintest cloud hath crossed thy soul ;
No throe of pain, no taint of sin,
No frail mortality's control :

Not once hath disappointment stung,
Nor care, world-weary, made thee pine ;
But rapture such as human tongue
Hath found no language for, is thine.
Made perfect at thy passing, who
Dare sum thine added glory now,
As onward, upward, pressing through
The ranks that with veiled faces bow,
Ascending still from height to height,
Fearless where, hushed, the seraphs trod,
Unflinching midst the circles bright,
Thou tendest inward unto God ?

III.

A year of progress in the lore
That is not learned on earth : thy mind,
Unclogged of clay, and free to soar,
Hath left the realms of doubt behind.
And mysteries which thy finite thought
In vain essayed to solve, appear
To thine untasked inquiries fraught
With explanations strangely clear.
Thy reason owns no forced control
As held it here in needful thrall,
God's secrets court thy questioning soul,
And thou mayst search and know them all.

IV.

A year of love ; thy yearning heart
Was always tender even to tears,
And sympathy's responsive art
Lent its warm coloring to thy years.
But love whose wordless ecstasy
Had overborne the finite, now
Throbs through thy saintly purity,
And burns upon thy dazzling brow.
For thou the hands' dear clasp hast felt
That show the nail-prints still displayed,
And thou before the face hast knelt
That wears the scars the thorns have made.

V.

A year without thee : — I had thought
My orphaned heart would break and die,
Ere time had meek quiescence wrought,
Or soothed the tears it could not dry.
And yet I live, — to faint, to groan,
To stagger with the woe I bear,
To miss thee so ! — to moan and moan
The name I dare not breathe in prayer !
Thou praising, while I weakly pine ;
Enraptured, while I sorrow sore, —

And thus betwixt thy soul and mine
The distance widening evermore !

VI.

A year of tears to me ; to thee
The end of thy probation's strife,
The archway to eternity,
The portal of thy deathless life :
To me, the corse, the bier, the sod ;
To thee, the palm of victory given :
Enough, my bruised heart ! Thank God
That thou *hast* been a year in heaven !

BROIDERY-WORK.

BENEATH the desert's rim went down the sun,
And from their tent-doors, all their service done,
Came forth the Hebrew women one by one.

For Bezaleel, the master, who had rare
And curious skill, and gifts beyond compare,
Greater than old Mizraim's greatest ware,

Had bidden that they approach at his command,
As on a goat-skin spread upon the sand
He sat, and saw them grouped on every hand.

And soon, as came to pass, a silence fell ;
He spake and said : " Daughters of Israel,
I bring a word ; I pray ye, hearken well.

" God's Tabernacle, by His pattern made,
Shall fail of finish, though in order laid,
Unless ye women lift your hands to aid ! "

A murmur ran the crouched assembly through,
As each her veil about her closer drew :
“ We are but women ! — what can women do ? ”

And Bezaleel made answer : “ Not a man
Of all our tribes, from Judah unto Dan,
Can do the thing that just ye women can !

“ The gold and broidered work about the hem
Of the priests’ robes, — pomegranate, knop and stem, —
Man’s clumsy fingers cannot compass them.

“ The sanctuary curtains that must wreathen be
And bossed with cherubim — the colors three,
Blue, purple, scarlet — who can twine but ye ?

“ Yours is the very skill for which I call ;
So bring your cunning needlework, though small
Your gifts may seem : the Lord hath need of all ! ”

THE BOY OF TARSUS.

A LEGEND OF SAINT PAUL.

THE rabbi stroked his beard of snow,
And reverently began to roll,
With careful foldings, calm and slow,
The wrappings round the sacred scroll.

The solemn ritual had been read ;
And, turning with an aspect meek,
“If any hath a word,” he said,
“Unto the people, let him speak.”

Whereon a youth with eagle eye,
And pallid vehemence of face,
Born of impatience stern and high,
Stepped forward for a little space.

With nostrils wide dilated, lips
He might not silence if he would,
Tense to his very finger-tips,
With fragile form erect he stood.

The people turned their wondering gaze
Upon him, till a waiting hush
Gathered on every upturned face ;
They saw that some keen passion's rush

Flooded his speech, as when the snows
Of his own Tarsus plunge amain
Upon the Cydnus as it flows
Across Cilicia's stretch of plain.

" Oh, men ! " he cried, " what time ye learn
Such truths, I marvel that your souls
Should not be fired, until they burn
With the white heat of altar coals !

" Why should we Hebrews hide our faith,
Trembling before the lictors' rods ?
No God but one, our Scripture saith ;
Yet Tarsus hath its thousand gods.

" Behold what temples crown our heights ;
What heathen shrines infest our ways !
See yonder sacrificial rites :
Hark, how they hymn Apollo's praise !

" While we whose hearts therewith grow sad,
Sit with dumb lips that make no moan,
Who craves the courage Moses had
Before the kingly Pharaoh's throne ?

“Who dares to show a David’s zeal
Right in our proud Proconsul’s eyes?
Who hath a Daniel’s strength to kneel
And own the power that Rome defies?”

“Would God that out of Shiloh now
The Prophet promised long might come,
To smite these altars, till they bow;
To strike these lying wonders dumb!

“Forgive me if I wrong you, though
My words are words of truth, yet wild;
For ye are ancient men and know
Wisdom, and I am but a child.”

The boy sank back. The people gazed
With curious eyes, as if they feared
Fanatic zeal his brain had crazed;
The rabbi stroked his snowy beard,

Saying: “Take heed: our faith one day
May feel a new reformer’s rule.
This stripling goes next moon, they say,
To study in Gamaliel’s school.”

WHATSOEVER.

ONE day in stress of need I prayed :
“ Dear Father, Thou hast bid me bring
All wants to Thee ; so, unafraid,
I ask Thee for this little thing
Round which my hopes so keenly cling ;
And yet remembering what Thou art —
So dread, so wondrous, so divine —
I marvel that I have the heart
To tell Thee of this wish of mine !

“ Thy heavens are strewn with worlds on worlds,
Thy star-dust powders reachless space ;
System on system round Thee whirls
Who sittest in the central place
Of Being, while before Thy face
The universe hangs like a bead
Of dew, upon whose arc is shown,
With but reflected flash, indeed,
Godhood’s magnificence alone.

“ And when I think, Our world is one,
But one amid the countless band

That in its daily course doth run
Its golden circuit through Thy hand,
And that its peopled millions stand
Always before Thee, even as I, —
Sad suppliants with their pleadings dumb,
Waiting for every hour's supply, —
I wonder that I dare to come!

“The thing I ask Thee for — how small,
How trivial, must it seem to Thee!
Yet, Lord, Thou knowest, who knowest all,
It is no little thing to me,
So weak, so human as I be!
Therefore I make my prayer to-day,
And as a father pitieth, then,
Grant me this little thing, I pray,
Through the one sacred Name. Amen!”

I had my wish. The little thing
So needful to my heart's content
Was given to my petitioning,
And comforted I onward went
With tranquil soul, wherein were blent
Trust and thanksgiving. For I know
Now, as I had not known before,
The *whatsoever's* meaning; so,
I cavil not nor question more.

IN SIMON'S HOUSE.

“**W**OE, woe is me!” the outcast said,
And drew her mantle o’er her head,
And moaned, “Would God that I were dead!”

“The women catch their robes aside
What time I pass; the men deride;
The children in the market chide.

“And dare I, then, to Him draw nigh,
Who lifted up His voice on high
With such a sweet, entreating cry?

“‘Come unto Me, ye weary,’ so
I heard Him say, as crouching low
Amid the throng I hid my woe.

“And when He spake of ‘rest,’ my breath
Came back, as from the jaws of death,
O blessed Christ of Nazareth!

“To-day He sups with Simon. Dare
I loosen all my lengths of hair,
And, thus concealed, adventure there;

“And see Him as He sits at meat,
And, creeping close, with unguents sweet
Anoint His sandal-fretted feet?

“*Oh, heavy-laden!*” If He be
That Christ come out of Galilee,
He meant this very word for me!”

So, swathed about, that none might say
Who walked untended forth that day,
To Simon's house she took her way.

Within the court she shrinking pressed
Among the menials, fearful lest
She should not find the Lord a guest.

And cowering in the lowliest place,
She drew her veil a hand-breadth's space,
And lo! that calm, majestic face!

She stole behind His cushioned seat;
She touched with touch of awe His feet;
She kissed them with her kisses sweet,

And o'er them poured the ointment rare,
And wiped them with her trailing hair,
And wept with wonder, that she dare, —

She, so abashed, despised, undone,
Whom publicans made haste to shun, —
Unchided, touch the Holy One.

“*Seest Thou this woman?*” — Wholly stirred
By contrite grief, she had not heard,
Till thus He spake, a single word.

O'erwhelmed, she snatched her hair outspread,
Wrapped quick her veil about her head,
And sank as one astound and dead.

He too would spurn her! Knowing all
The guilt and trespass of her fall,
For *her* He had not meant that call.

Thus bowed, self-loathing in her fear,
There struck across her muffled ear
A sound her soul rose up to hear,

As on her head she felt His touch,
“*Her sins are all forgiven, though such
Be many, — for she lovèd much.*”

The angels that bent down to see,
Beheld no heart from burdens free
As hers that night in Bethany.

HER PROMISE.

HE told me of her tender grace,
Her softly lifting eye,
The timid beauty of her ways,
So shrinking and so shy.

And then her inner loveliness —
“’T was like a saint’s,” he said;
“And I could see a halo press
About her golden head.

“And yet she went with life undrained,
Her morning in its dew,
Her hope’s young purpose unattained,
Her joys still fresh and new.

“Her nature was so quick to stir
At every sudden breath;
If life had power to startle her,
What would it be with death?

“I watched with sinkings of despair
The fading of her bloom ; \\
I questioned — should we ever dare
To warn her of her doom ?

“I wrung my lips at length to speak
The whispered word of woe ;
No added pallor blanched her cheek,
She simply said, ‘ I know.’

“Such faith had proved her comforter,
Such cheer, divine to see ;
My thought was how to solace her,
And she had solaced me.

“‘Why, father, I will watch and wait,
Till you the entrance win,
The first glad angel at the gate
To bid you enter in.’”

.

— Ah, sweetest promise surely kept !
For who may dare to say
She did not meet him as he stepped
Into the golden day ?

It helps to make us understand,
It quiets down the moan,
To think she took him by the hand
And led him to the throne.

WHEN SAINT CHRYSOSTOM PRAYED.

'T WAS not enough to kneel in prayer,
And pour his very soul away
In fervid wrestlings, night and day,
For those who owned his shepherd care ;
But faith and works went hand in hand,
As test of each petition made,
And saints were helped throughout the land
When Saint Chrysostom prayed.

Within the closet where he knelt,
A box of Bethlehem's olive-wood —
“ For Christ,” engraved upon it — stood ;
And ever as he daily felt
The pressure of the Church's need,
Therein the daily gift was laid ;
For word had instant proof of deed
When Saint Chrysostom prayed.

Beneath his folded hands he placed
Whatever gold was his ; and when
He travailed for the souls of men,
So long by Pagan rites debased,

The more he agonized, the more
The burden of his spirit weighed ;
And piece by piece went all his store,
When Saint Chrysostom prayed.

O golden-mouthed, let this thine alms
Rouse us to shame, who daily bow
Within our secret places now,
With outstretched yet with empty palms !
We supplicate indeed ; but has
Our faith brought answering works to aid ?
Have words by deeds been proven, as
When Saint Chrysostom prayed ?

THE EVERLASTING YEA.

THE first recorded words that brake
Across the silent Eden air —
The first that lips created spake
To man, the sinless dweller there —

Were words of covert doubt that veiled
Denial in their cautious breath
Right subtly, or they else had failed
To lure their listener on to death.

“*Yea, hath God said?*” One carping thought
Dropped with the tempter’s sinuous slur
Into the startled soul, and caught
With strange assent, had power to stir

Such dread negation, that its force
Was strong in might to overthrow
Faith at the race’s fountain source,
And overwhelm a sceptic world in woe.

“ *Yea, hath God said?* ” The primal doubt,
Wrought through the earliest sophist’s skill,
Is flung, like some new question, out
From the last lip that cavils, still.

Its echo sinks and swells along
The ages, with a spell accurst ;
Now arrogant, defiant, strong, —
Now cunning, crafty, as at first.

And fast and far the lava flood
Will roll its ruin deep and broad,
Unstayed by even atoning blood,
Till the millennium of God.

Then shall the unavailing Nay
Uttered in Eden first, become,
Before the Everlasting Yea
Breathed in the olive garden, dumb !

For God *hath* said, and He will show
His word confirmed all worlds before,
Till the whole universe shall know
His Yea is *Yea*, forevermore !

DOUBT.

I LIFT weak hands in lowliest thankfulness,
That, as a little stumbling child who knows
Nought of the way he treads, but onward goes,
Happy, secure, unquestioning, reasonless,
Because he feels his father's fingers press
His own in steadfast guidance ; doubts impose
No cross-lights to confuse me or distress.
“*Is this the way ?*” If Christ but answer, “*Yes,*”
I am content. I would not have the trust
Of yearling prattlers shame me, while I stand
Demanding *how* the bridgeless gulf is crossed,
The scaleless mountain levelled with the dust,
The mist-swathe rent in which the path seems lost ;
What need to ask ? — *My Father holds my hand.*

THE WEDGE OF GOLD.

A LITTLE wedge of gold, O Lord! —
Thou wilt not miss it much
Amid Thy vast abundance stored, —
Thou hast not need of such ;
And didst Thou speak indeed the word
Forbidding me to touch ?

The nature Thou hast given to me
Must I suppress — deny,
And school its loves until they be
Foregone without a sigh,
For lack of just such ministry
As only gold can buy ?

This costly garment — Lord, forgive,
Beseech Thee, if I urge
That I can honor Thee and strive
My will in Thine to merge,
And truly for Thy service live,
In cloth-of-gold, as serge !

.

The goodly colors, thou hast wrought,
The lovely fashioning,
Which Thou some deftest hand hast taught
Across its web to fling, —
Can I persuade myself I ought
To count a “cursèd thing”?

I cannot comprehend it so,
How gain to Thee should fall,
Whether I keep the robe or no, —
To Thee who ownest all;
Thou dost not take account, I trow,
Of anything so small.

Have I not marched with even tread,
And kept the cloud in view?
Have I not on the manna fed,
Nor moaned, as others do,
Because they had but pilgrims' bread
The pilgrim journey through?

Since I am on thy Church's side,
Her banners to uphold,
Since 'mid her ranks I would abide,
In promised conquest bold —
Lord, be not wroth, though I should hide
This little wedge of gold!

UNTIL THE DAY BREAK.

I.

I OFTEN wondered, when at night
The curtained lids had shut from sight
Those eyes so over-brimmed with light, —

How I could sleep the long hours through,
As even the watchful-hearted do,
Nor have their violet once in view.

Sometimes, as love late vigil kept,
Hearing him stir, I've closer stepped,
Half-minded, if he lightly slept,

To test him with a whispered wile,
(Meant my own reason to beguile,)
To see if he would turn and smile.

Then I would hush my heart, and make
Myself ashamed, that I should break
Such sleep for love's own selfish sake.

“Wait till the morning,” I would say, —
“Wait till the slumber drifts away, —
Then, where are eyes so bright as they?”

II.

But now — how can I meet the sum
Of years that stretch, a martyrdom
Of yearning, till the dawn shall come?

Yet in this midnight of my woe
Starts forth the thought that shamed me so,
Beside his cradle, long ago.

“Oh, aching, anguished heart!” I say,
“‘Until the day break,’ watching stay,
‘Until the shadows flee away,’ —

“And thou shalt find that God has kept
The eyes whose closing thou hast wept,
All heaven the happier that they slept!”

THE DAILY DRILL.

O H, this battlefield vast of the world !
This trample and rush of the foe,
This gage that forever is hurled,
This ceaseless recoil of the blow !

This stringent command of the King,
Proclaimed through His armaments wide,
That none of His soldiers shall fling
Their armor, one moment, aside !

For those who are summoned to stand
In breaches that quicken the breath,
How can they, with weapons in hand,
Do other than dare to the death ?

But we who lie camping beyond,
A-halt from the shock of the fray,
Held close by that absolute bond,
The wearisome drill of the day, —

What need that *we* brace for the fight ?

What call that *our* courage be steeled ?

No leader would urge, if he might,

Reserves so untried to the field.

— Some morn, while we slumber at ease,

Too careless for question or glance,

A herald may startle the breeze

With the heart-stirring order, — “ *Advance !* ”

Then, what if our banners be tossed

Aside where the rubbish is thrust ?

And what if equipments be lost,

And lances be blunted with rust ?

Nay, better to practise complete

Our duty, with soldierly skill,

Though it only may fit us to meet

The daily demand of the drill.

“FOR THE LOVE OF GOD.”

READING a time-stained volume, ancient and vellum-bound,

Hid in the quaint black-letter, here is the tale I found :

Only a childish legend, you in your wisdom preach :
But is there never a lesson even a child may teach ?

Once, as a traveller journeyed over the Apennines,
Children and wife together, toiling beneath the pines ;

Hungry and hot with climbing, deep in a shady pass,
Pausing, they spread their noontide meal on the mossy
grass.

Just as the bread was broken, just as the wine was broached,
Slowly a band of pilgrims, weary and gaunt, approached.

Stretching their hands, they pleaded, “For the love of
God, we pray,
Give us to eat, for nothing has moistened our lips to-day !”

“Children and wife, ye hear them! — Giving God’s poor
our bread,
Say — shall we trust His bounty, travelling our way
unfed?”

Up from the grass the children sprang with the barley-cake;
“Here is the flask, untasted,” the wife said; “freely
take!”

Sated, the pilgrims blessed them, leaving them prayers for
gold —
“He for whose sake ye did it, pay you a hundred-fold!”

Ready to journey onward, gathering the wallet up,
One of the unfed children, dropping therein the cup,

Cried, with a look bewildered, “Father, I thought you
said
Nothing was left: why, only look at these loaves of bread!”

Stooping beside the fountain, dipping the empty flask,
The father o’erheard quick voices, eager with wonder,
ask —

“What has so reddened the water? Its drops like grape-
juice shine!”
He lifted the brimming bottle — lo! *it was filled with wine!*

THIRTY-FOLD.

“SOME sixty, — some an hundred.” — Why
Should not such reckoning have been mine ?
The seed itself was as divine,
The quickening power as strong : yet I
Bear witness to the increase told, —
“Some, thirty-fold.”

And was the fallow-ground prepared
By patient mellowing of the clod,
And were the precious rains of God,
So often by the furrow shared,
To yield, with sunshine's added gold,
But thirty-fold ?

And yet the tiller watched the growth,
And lopped with constant care away
The noxious tares that, day by day,
My heart-soil nurtured, nothing loath
Thereby the stinted gain to hold
To thirty-fold.

The strengthening of the winter frost
Was not denied, through which the root
Might strike with deeper, downward shoot,
And back and forth the blade was tossed ;
Yet what the count when all is told ?
Just thirty-fold !

O Sower of the seed divine,
Make it " an hundred ! " — Nevermore
May I be shamed in counting o'er,
Amid the swath, these grains of mine,
To see the harvest handsel hold
But thirty-fold !

WILLING.

A KING whose state was marvellous for splendor,
Whose royal city shone
Gorgeous with every grandeur that could render
Due honor to his throne,

Had kept his son from court for sterner training,
Through disciplines profound ;
The better so to perfect him for reigning,
What time he should be crowned.

And now the day was set for his returning
From that far province where
Had passed his nonage ; and the king was yearning
To hail the expectant heir.

So a proud embassy was missioned, bearing
Word that, probation done,
The monarch, who for years had been preparing
Fit empire for his son,

At length desired that he should take possession
Of his full birthright dower, —
The honor, glory, good beyond expression,
Withheld until that hour.

What said the banished ? — Did ecstatic pleasure
Give to his spirit wings,
Whose eagerness, in overmastering measure,
Outsoared the waiting king's ?

Nay ; when they told the message of the father,
There was a startled pause,
A strange, reluctant look, as though he rather
Would linger where he was.

Yet, since the embassy was urgent, stilling
Whatever secret throe
It cost to leave his exile, he was "willing,"
Half-sad, he said, "to go."

Ungracious heart ! — to wound with hesitation
Such love ! — to hear the call
Homeward without one rapturous exultation —
"Willing" — and that was all !

NOMINE DOMINI.

ALL the day upon the mountain,
From the earliest flush of dawn,
Till the stars in sudden splendor
Sank behind the Wetterhorn,
Had the herd-boy watched the pastures, till the silence
grew forlorn.

Awful seemed the sky above him,
With its blue so strangely deep ;
Far — how far ! — his master's *châlet*
Specked upon the distant steep ;
Not a sound to jar the stillness save the bleating of the
sheep.

In his loneliness, for solace,
He had counselled with the flowers :
He had welcomed, for their patter,
Even the passing thunder-showers ;
And had called the lambs to help him chase along the
loitering hours.

Now the dark was closing round him,
He must keep his flocks in sight,
Shepherding their foldless slumber,
All along upon the height :
And he felt his child-heart flutter as he watched the
waning light.

Aimlessly his fingers wandered,
Toying with the braid of hair
Which his mother hung in dying
Round his neck, and bade him wear,
For the legend's sake engraven on the coin suspended there.

And her words came back like echoes :—
“ Eric, hold thee to thy trust :
In the Lord's Name do thy doing ;
Then — for He is good and just —
He will keep thee safe from danger, when thy mother's
heart is dust.”

Nomine — he spelt the letters,
As he pressed his touch thereon ;
Domini — the Alpine darkness
Seemed to catch a streak of dawn ;
And the boy lay down to quiet slumber, for his fear was
gone.

TALITHA CUMI.¹

WAS it a marvel the maiden dead
Straightway should open her wondering eyes,
Soon as she heard what Jesus said, —
“Darling, I say unto thee, arise”?

Something like this the tender tone
Hid in the Hebrew's ancient guise,
As in His hand He took her own —
“Darling, I say unto thee, arise!”

Can she obey or understand,
Wrapped in her grave-clothes, as she lies?
Has she the strength to lift a hand?
“Darling, I say unto thee, arise!”

Calls she upon her dearest first,
Father and mother, from whose eyes,
Tears, as they heard, in gladness burst?
“Darling, I say unto thee, arise!”

¹ These words in the original embody a term of endearment.

“Nay, I am weak — I cannot” — was
 That what she said in humble wise,
After the words of Christ had pause?
 “Darling, I say unto thee, arise!”

Read what the Gospel saith: “*Straightway* ;”
 Never a word of vague surmise
Never a moment of delay —
 “Darling, I say unto thee, arise !”

If, as He touched, she *had* not stirred,
 Nor, as He spake, unclosed her eyes,
Think you the maiden had ever heard —
 “Darling, I say unto thee, arise” ?

READ TO SLEEP.

FOR threescore years and ten,
 Burdened with care and woe,
She had travelled the weary ways of men ;
 She is tired, and wants to go.

It has been so hard to live !
 And even her stinted store
It seemed as if fate had grudged to give,
 And she wishes her need was o'er.

So musing, one afternoon,
 With her knitting upon her lap,
She hears at her door a drift of tune,
 And a quick, familiar tap.

In flashes a child's fresh face,
 And her birdlike voice sounds gay,¹
As she asks in a tone of tender grace,
 " Shall I read you a Psalm to-day ? "

“ Ay, read me a Psalm, — ‘ *The Lord*
Is my shepherd,’ soft, not fast ;
Then turn the leaves of the Holy Word
Till you come to the very last, —

“ Where it tells of the wondrous walls
Of jacinth and sapphire stone,
And the shine of the crystal light that falls
In rainbows about the throne ; —

“ Where there never are any tears, —
You see how the verse so saith, —
Nor pain nor crying through all God’s years,
Nor hunger, nor cold, nor death ; —

“ Yes, read of it all ; — it lifts
My soul up into the light,
And I look straight through the leaden rifts,
To the land where there ’s no more night.”

So the little reader read,
Till the slow-going needles stopped,
And then as she saw that the weary head
On the wearier breast had dropped —

Rising, she nearer stepped ; —
How easy it all had been !
The gates had unclosed as the sleeper slept,
And an angel had drawn her in !

THAT DAY.

They abode with Him that day. — SAINT JOHN.

THE young disciples stood and heard
The wondrous prophet's wondrous word,
And strangely were their spirits stirred.

With outstretched finger raised to guide
Where He of Nazareth walked aside,
“Behold the Lamb of God!” he cried.

And John made answer: “Can it be
That Christ shall come from Galilee?
Nay, Andrew, let us go and see.”

And soon abreast, with eager mien,
And salutations shy yet keen,
They walked; and Jesus walked between.

Their rapid questions forth they pour;
But they have other — more and more —
To ask Him ere they reach the door

Of His abode : He craves their stay,
With words so full of grace, that they
Enter, and there abide that day.

Within the courtyard cool and dim,
Beside a fountain's mossy rim,
Withdrawn, they sit and talk with Him.

“ Rabbi, the Baptist voucheth so,
Till all our souls within us glow ;
But say — art Thou the Christ or no ?

“ We count the years' prophetic sum,
We kneel before our altars, dumb,
We watch until the Shiloh come ! ”

Then Jesus answers low and calm,
In words that drop like Gilead's balm,
And holier than the holiest psalm.

He lifts aloft their faith so weak ;
He solves the doubts they dare not speak ;
He grants the quest they come to seek.

The twilight falls : the fountain's shine
Grows dull beneath the day's decline ;
They only hear that voice divine.

O'erawed, at length they rise and go,
 Each to the other whispering low,
 "'T is *He!*" "Himself hath proved it so!"

.
 That day with Christ! In after years
 Did not its memory stanch the tears
 Of Andrew 'mid his martyr fears?

When John in Patmos exile lay,
 And wore the grinding hours away,
 Waiting, did *he* forget That Day?

AGED ELEVEN.

I.

UP in heaven,
When the angels led my own,
Inward to the central throne,
Past the seven
Golden candlesticks that stand
Radiantly on either hand,
Did the saints who saw the shy
Rapture of her wondering eye,
And the new ecstatic shine,
Making all her face divine,
Lean together, whispering,
“ Surely, ’t was a joyous thing
For that mother, down below,
From her bosom to let go
Yonder child before the blur
Of that marred earth blighted her ” ?
Yet, I pore with shuddering grief
O’er the words, cut sharp and brief,
“ *Aged Eleven !* ”

II.

Up in heaven,
Does the heart that 'mid the throes
Of its crucifixion woes,
 Wrung and riven,
Paused one awful moment there,
To uplift from stark despair
Her who bare Him, throb for *me*
With such solace? "Mother, see
Now thy child! Could any bliss
Earth might in reversion hold,
Multiplied ten thousand fold,
Reach the outmost bound of *this?*"
Yea, I *feel* the throb; and bless,
With a strange soul-quietness,
Christ's sweet grace; and through soft tears,
Calling up her few, bright years,
I can read, nor yet repine,
Though the mist *will* blur the line, —
 "*Aged Eleven!*"

To M. V. T.

SAINT ANSELM'S ANSWER.

SAINT ANSELM, of the ancient day,
With fasts and vigils worn away,
Upon his couch of hemlock lay.

And thus the stars had seen him lie,
With nothing, as the years went by,
Betwixt his forehead and the sky.

And as the seasons came and went,
He toiled on Christly errands bent,
Not thinking, in his grand content,

Of selfish ease, if only so
He might, in passing to and fro,
Lessen the weight of human woe.

This night (it may be that he dreamed),
As on the ground he lay, there gleamed
Such radiance round him that he deemed

(How glad the thought!) it might be some
Celestial spirit who had come
To call him from his exile, home.

He saw no form, but as his ear
He bent in reverent awe to hear,
He caught these accents, low and clear, —

“Have pity on thyself! Instead
Of aching on this cheerless bed,
Rear thou a roof to shield thy head.”

The saint made answer, — “It were well
I knew what space I have to dwell
Yet in the flesh, — if thou canst tell.”

“Seven toiling years.” . . . The tender wile
Anselm rebuked with patient smile, —
“Seven only? ’T is not worth the while!”

SANCTUM SANCTORUM.

ALL days are great Atonement days ;
All men who come and humbly bring,
As incense with their offering
Of broken hearts, true prayer and praise,
Are priests on God's Atonement days.

Their souls are sanctuaries where,
Close curtained from the world of sin,
The covering cherubs brood within,
Making, amid earth's deserts bare,
Holiest-of-holies everywhere.

The Spirit-lighted mercy-seat
To every alien's foot is free,
Whate'er his Gentile life may be,
If he but bring oblations meet
To lay before that mercy-seat.

He does not need the priestly dress,
The breastplate wrought of precious stone,
Urim or Thummim ; — Christ alone,
In His supreme, white righteousness,
Robes him as with the high-priest's dress.

He does not need to bear at all
The mystic blood of sacrifice
Within his hand as proffered price,
Before the absolving peace shall fall ;
One Lamb's was sprinkled once for all !

Each day may be a sacred day,
And every spot a holiest place,
Where Christ doth manifest His grace ;
Each day wherein men trust, obey,
And love, is an Atonement day !

THE FIG-MERCHANT.

“IN the name of the Prophet, figs !”

Through the drowse of the noon afar
Came droning the Arab vender's cry,
As he threaded the thronged bazaar.
With the courage that comes of faith,
He neither had thought nor care,
Though the lip of the scornful Greek might curl,
Or the insolent Frank might stare.

“In the name of the Prophet, figs !”

A traveller, loitering near,
Half screened in a niche's deep recess,
Turned languidly round to hear.
But scarce had the Arab passed,
Ere a ripple, that seemed a sigh,
Blurred faintly the calm of his lip, and broke
In a haze on his dreaming eye.

“In the name of the Prophet, figs !”

He listened with downcast face.
“This Moslem,” he said, “is brave to own
His creed in the market-place ;

While I, with supremest trust,
And a hope that can know no shame,
Not once in the midst of this multitude
Have thought of my Prophet's name.

“ ‘ *In the name of the Prophet, figs !* ’

No vagueness about the way
He honors the slow muezzin call,
When his hour has come to pray.
It matters not where he be,
His worship his faith reveals ;
Would I have the manhood, amid these crowds,
To kneel as the Arab kneels ?

“ ‘ *In the name of the Prophet, figs !* ’

It sinks to an echo sweet,
Yet floats to me back with a pungent sting
Of reproach in this foreign street.
It bids that, with faith as bold
As the Moslem's, I bravely do
All things whatever, or great or small,
In the name of my Prophet too ! ”

WORLD-SICKNESS.

A SONNET.

O F all the maladies that fret men's hearts
And paralyze men's souls, can any show
Such crowds of victims rushing to and fro
For help, as this dire ailment? All the arts
That wisest skill of pharmacy imparts,
Have failed of cure: the vaunted healing flow
Of Nature's springs — alas, how well we know
They cannot anodyne these inward smarts!

And yet, O fevered and world-jaded soul,
Consumed with deadly thirst thou canst not quell,
There is a living draught can make thee whole:
Take from the hand of Christ the crystal cup
Of His pure grace, — that Holy Grail filled up
With sacramental wine, — drink, and be well!

HERE, OR THERE.

I.

SOMETIMES when faith is stilling
All doubt, we then are willing
To trust our Father's guidance, without a wish or care ;
Content to bide through sorrow,
Content to die to-morrow,
Nor question which is better, to serve Him here, or there.

II.

When, missing life's best guerdons,
We chafe beneath its burdens,
And wonder why *our* shoulder should have such weight
to bear ;
Even then, if choice were given, —
“Earth, — if ye will, or Heaven,” —
Would we not often waver betwixt the here and there ?

III.

All one the service, whether
We link our hands together,
And help to hearten struggle, or seek to soften care ;

Or front, ourselves, the trial,
The failure, loss, denial, —
All one, to do or suffer, — all one, the here, or there.

IV.

What spirit, bending lowly
Before the High and Holy,
Charged with the humblest errand that soul to soul could
bear,
E'er yearned for something higher
To fill his large desire?
Nay, *to obey* is worship supremest, here, or there.

V.

At best, our least endeavor
Must faint and fail forever,
Without God's guiding finger to point the how or where;
Then let us choose His choosing,
All selfish choice refusing,
Nor question which is better, to serve Him here, or there.

KEEPING HIS WORD.

(*Told to a child.*)

I.

“ONLY a penny a box,” — he said :

But the gentleman turned away his head,
As if he shrank from the squalid sight
Of the boy who stood in the failing light.

“Oh, sir,” he stammered, “you cannot know,”
(And he brushed from his matches the flakes of snow,
That the sudden tear might have chance to fall,)

“Or, I think — I think you would take them all.

“Hungry and cold, at our garret pane,
Ruby will watch till I come again,
Bringing the loaf. The sun has set,
And he has n’t a crumb of breakfast yet.

“One penny, and then I can buy the bread.”
The gentleman stopped. “And you?” he said.
“I—I can put up with hunger and cold,
But Ruby is only six years old.

“I promised our mother before she went, —
She knew I would do it, and died content, —
I promised her, sir, through best, through worst,
I always would think of Ruby first.”

The gentleman paused at the open door ;
Such tales he had often heard before ;
But he fumbled his purse in the twilight drear —
“I have nothing less than a shilling here.”

“Oh, sir, if you only will take the pack,
I’ll bring you the change in a moment back ;
Indeed you may trust me !” — “Trust you ? — no ;
But stop, — I’ll give you the shilling ; go !”

II.

The gentleman lolled in his easy-chair,
And watched his cigar-wreath melt in air,
And smiled on his children, and rose to see
The baby asleep on its mother’s knee.

Just then came a message, — “Outside the door” —
But ere it was uttered, across the floor,
Half breathless, a child rushed, ragged, strange :
“*I am Ruby, — Mike’s brother, — I have brought the
change.*”

“Mike’s hurt, sir. The snow, it made him blind;
He did n’t take notice the train behind
Was near, till he slipped on the track, as by
It whizzed; I’m afraid — I’m afraid he’ll die.

“Yet nothing would do, sir, — nothing would do,
But out I must hurry and hunt for you.
He is sure of his hurt you won’t have heard,
And he wished you to know *he had kept his word.*”

— When the garret they reached, with pain they saw
Two arms stretched, crushed, on the heap of straw:
“*You did it? — dear Ruby — God bless you!*” said
The brave boy, smiling, and sank back — dead.

THE OTHER MAN.

THE storm had spent its rage ; the sea
Still moaned with sullen roar,
And flung its surges wrathfully
Against the shelving shore ;
And wide and far with plank and spar
The beach was splintered o'er.

A league from land a wreck was seen,
Above whose wave-washed hull,
Fast-wedged the jutting rocks between,
Circled a snow-white gull,
Whose shrieking cry rose clear and high
Above the tempest's lull.

“Hoy! — To the rescue! — Launch the boat!
I see a drifting speck ;
Some struggler may be still afloat, —
Some sailor on the deck :
Quick! ply the oar, — put from the shore,
And board the foundered wreck !”

Right through the churning plunge of spray,
Whirled like an ocean shell,
The hardy life-boat warped its way,
As billows rose and fell,
And boldly cast its grapnel fast
Above the reefy swell.

Around the bows the breakers sobbed
With low, defiant moan ;
When instant, every bosom throbbed,
Held by one sound alone :
Somewhere — somewhere — upon the air
There thrilled a human groan.

One moment — and they clomb the wreck,
And there a ghastly form
Lay huddled on the heaving deck,
With living breath still warm, —
Too dead to hear the shout of cheer
That mocked the dying storm.

And when they lowered him from the ship
With kindly care as can
Befit rough hands, across his lip
A whispered ripple ran :
They stooped, and heard the slow-drawn word
Breathed, — “ *Save — the — other — man !* ”

We — we who once on gulping waves
Of doubt were tempest-tossed, —
We who are safe through Him who saves
At such transcendent cost, —
Can we, while yet there's rescue, let
The other man be lost?

THE CHILD JESUS.

I.

ALL placid and lonely the village
Of Nazareth slept on the plain ;
No husbandman toiled at the tillage,
Nor reaped the ripe ears of the grain ;
No vine-dressers wrought at their labors,
Nor paused with their pruning-hooks by :
The slopes were as silent as Tabor's,
And Tabor was still as the sky.

II.

No voices of innocent riot
In market-place, hostel, or hut ;
The hum of the craftsman was quiet,
The door of the synagogue shut.
No *Alephs* and *Beths* were heard swelling
From the school of the scribe, by the wall ;
And Joseph-the-carpenter's dwelling
Was hushed as the publican's stall.

III.

'T was the week of the Passover : only
The aged, the sickly, the blind,
The tottering children, and lonely
Young mothers, had tarried behind.
To the sacredest Feast of the nation,
Through the paths that their fathers had trod,
All others, with paschal oblation,
Had gone to the city of God.

IV.

And Mary, — to every beholder,
Her face touched with wistfulest dole,
(Remembering what Simeon had told her
Of the sword that should pierce through her soul,)
With faith yet too steadfast to falter,
Though sorely with mysteries tried,
Midst the worshippers stood at the altar,
With Jesus, the child, by her side.

V.

The seven days' festival ended, —
Rites finished for people and priest,
The throngs from the Temple descended,
And homeward set face from the Feast.
And neighbor held converse with neighbor,
Unwonted and simple and free,

As northward they journeyed toward Tabor,
Or westward they turned to the sea.

VI.

But not till the night-dews were falling,
Did Mary, oft questioning, find,
As children to children were calling,
That Jesus had lingered behind.
He vex her? — the mother that bore Him? —
Or veiled it some portent or sign?
For oft had she trembled before Him, —
Her human too near His divine.

VII.

She sought midst her kinsfolk, whose pity
Grew tender to look on her grief;
Then back through the streets of the city
She hastened, yet found not relief.
Thus searching, a marvellous story
Her ear and her senses beguiled, —
“The Rabbis, gray-bearded and hoary,
In the Temple are taught by a child.”

VIII.

O marvel of womanly weakness!
She finds Him, — fears, sorrows subside,
And Mary, the angel of meekness,
In petulance pauses to chide: —

“Son, wherefore thus tarry to gather
About Thee the curious throng,
Unheeding, the while, that Thy father
And I have been seeking Thee long?”

IX.

A look so reproachfully tender,
It awed while it melted her eye,
He cast, as He hastened to render
Subjection, and filial reply :—
“Nay, wherefore perplexed and pursuing?
Dost *thou* too, my mother, forget,
And wist not the Son must be doing
The work that His Father hath set?”

THE BABY'S MESSAGE.

I.

“O H, it is beautiful! — Lifted so high, —
Up where the stars are, — into the sky, —
Out of the fierce, dark grasp of pain,
Into the rapturous light again!

II.

“Whence do ye bear me, shining ones,
Over the dazzling paths of suns?
Wherefore am I thus caught away
Out of my mother's arms to-day?

III.

“Never before have I left her breast,
Never been elsewhere rocked to rest;
Yet, I am wrapped in a maze of bliss —
Tell me what the mystery is!”

IV.

“Baby-spirit, whose wondering eyes
Kindle, ecstatic with surprise,
This is the ending of earthly breath, —
This is what mortals mean by death.

V.

“Far in the silences of the blue,
See where the splendor pulses through;
Thither, released from a world of sin,
Thither we come to guide thee in:

VI.

“In through each seven-fold, circling band, —
In where the white child-angels stand, —
Up to the throne, that thou mayest see
Him who was once a babe like thee.”

VII.

“Oh, ye seraphs of love and light!
Stay for a little your lofty flight:
Stay, and adown the star-sown track,
Haste to my weeper, — haste ye back!

VIII.

“Tell her how filled and thrilled I am, —
Tell her how wrapped in boundless calm:
Tell her I soar, I sing, I shine, —
Tell her the heaven of heavens is mine!”

IX.

“Tenderest comforter, — faith's own word,
Sweeter than ours, her heart hath heard:
Softly her solaced tears now fall;
Christ's one whisper hath told her all!”

FAR OR NEAR.

WHEN Monica lay on her dying bed,
Beyond the walls of Rome,
And saw the blue Campagna-widths that spread
Between her and her home ;

And missed the yearning eye and reverent hand
Of friends that would have striven,
Who, with love's privilege, should nearest stand
To one so close to heaven ;

She heard Augustine sigh, 'twixt tear and tear ;
"Ah, blinded that we are !
Had I but known — I had not borne her here,
To find a grave so far —

"So far from home !" — she turned her luminous eyes
On her belovèd one,
With something of rebuke and strange surprise :
"So far from home — my son ?

"Why, here I 'll lie and sleep in very bliss ;
Because this Ostian¹ sod
Is just as close as home to Heaven : there is
No Far, nor Near, with God !"

¹ At Ostia, Monica, the mother of Saint Augustine, was buried.

A CHILD'S SERVICE.

WHAT if the little Jewish lad,
That summer day, had failed to go
Down to the lake, because he had
So small a store of loaves to show ?

“The press is great,” — he might have said ;
“For food the thronging people call ;
And what were my few loaves of bread, —
My five small loaves among them all ?”

And back the mother's word would come,
Her coaxing hand upon his hair ;
“Yet go, for here be food for some
Among the hungry children there.”

If from his home the lad that day
His five small loaves had failed to take,
Would Christ have wrought — can any say ? —
That miracle beside the lake ?

THE GRIT OF THE MILLSTONE.

YEA, we give thanks for daily bread,
With words that breathe a filial air,
And marvel much that others dare
Eat of their Father's bounty spread,
Nor bless Him for His tireless care.

The wheaten loaf, with new-fallen snow
Matched in its whiteness, calm we break,
And with an inward zest partake,
(We call it gratitude,) and know
'Tis only ours for Christ's dear sake.

Yet let a hidden dust of grit
But set our teeth on edge, and how
Each turns to each, with captious brow,
As (of all thankfulness acquit)
It were our right to murmur now.

Oh, graceless prodigals that we be !
Self-beggared so, and turned adrift
To starve, or back to come, and lift
Appeals for hireling fare, shall we
Fret if a sand-grain mar the gift, —

When we should take the menial's place,
And meekly say, whate'er befall :
" Give as Thou wilt, or large, or small,
Since 't is of Thy so marvellous grace
That Thou shouldst grant Thy gifts at all ! "

So hap what haps, with chastened mind
Let us receive the mercies spread
Around us, all unmerited,
Nor, as we use them, seek to find
The grit within our daily bread.

TOO TIRED TO PRAY.

I.

TOO tired — too worn to pray,
I can but fold my hands,
Entreating in a voiceless way,
Of Him who understands
How flesh and heart succumb —
How will sinks, weary — weak,
“Dear Lord, my languid lips are dumb,
See what I cannot speak.”

II.

Just as the wearied child,
Through sobbing pain oppressed,
Drops, hushing all its wailings wild,
Upon its mother's breast —
So, on Thy bosom, I
Would cast my speechless prayer,
Nor doubt that Thou wilt let me lie
In trustful weakness there.

III.

And though, no conscious thought
Before me rises clear,
The prayer, of wordless language wrought,
Thou yet wilt deign to hear.
For when, at best, I plead —
Whatso my spirit saith —
I only am the bruised reed,
And Thou, the breathing breath.

IMMEDIATELY.

THE certainest, surest thing I know,
 Whatever, what else may yet befall
Of blessings or bane, of weal or woe,
 Is the truth that is fatefulest far of all,
That the Master will knock at my door some night,
 And there, in the silence hushed and dim,
Will wait for my coming with lamp alight,
 To open immediately to Him.

I wonder if I at His tap shall spring
 In eagerness up, and cross the floor
With rapturous step, and freely fling,
 In the murk of the midnight, wide the door?
Or will there be work to be put away?
 Or the taper, that burns too low, to trim?
Or something that craves too much delay
 To open immediately to Him?

Or shall I with whitened fear grow dumb
 The moment I hear the sudden knock,
And, startled to think He hath surely come,
 Shall falter and fail to find the lock,

And keep Him so waiting, as I stand,
 Irresolute, while my senses swim,
Instead of the bound with outstretched hand,
 To open immediately to Him !

If this is the only thing foretold
 Of all my future — then, I pray,
That, quietly watchful, I may hold
 The key of a golden faith each day
Fast shut in my grasp, that when I hear
 His step, be it dawn or midnight dim,
Straightway I may rise without a fear,
 And open immediately to Him !

WHO KNOWETH?

A SONNET.

HOW low the life that flutters faint within
The environed soul that cannot soar and shine
In the rare atmosphere of light divine,
By reason of the coils that flesh doth spin
In silken weftage round it! — subtly thin
In its accretions, — yet so strong, so fine,
It proves a chrysalis'-web, that can entwine,
And wrap it close, in darkness, doubt, and sin!
But the day comes, when some mysterious power
Dissolves imprisoning circumstance, and lo!
The soul springs upward, an embodied breath,
Exultant; and in that supremest hour,
When earth's last filament is snapped, we know
That what we heretofore called Life, was Death!