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THE PLEASURES  
OF POETRY

*THIRD SERIES*

*By Edith Sitwell*

THE PLEASURES OF POETRY

A CRITICAL ANTHOLOGY IN THREE VOLUMES

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AUGUSTAN AGE

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THE  
PLEASURES OF POETRY

A CRITICAL ANTHOLOGY

BY

EDITH SITWELL

*THIRD SERIES*  
THE VICTORIAN AGE

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To  
GEORGIA



## CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	3
<b>ØMAR KHAYYÁM :</b>	
Quatrains from the Rubáiyát . . . . .	53
<b>SWINBURNE :</b>	
Ilicet . . . . .	61
Excerpt from Anactoria . . . . .	67
Laus Veneris . . . . .	73
Before Parting . . . . .	91
Extract from The Masque of Queen Bersabe . . . . .	93
August . . . . .	102
Song from Locrine . . . . .	105
<b>DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI :</b>	
The Blessed Damozel . . . . .	109
Sister Helen . . . . .	115
A New Year's Burden . . . . .	126
Love-Lily . . . . .	127
The Woodspurge . . . . .	128
<b>WILLIAM MORRIS :</b>	
Golden Wings . . . . .	131
The Blue Closet . . . . .	141
The Tune of Seven Towers . . . . .	145
The Wind . . . . .	147
Summer Dawn . . . . .	152
In Prison . . . . .	153

	PAGE
<b>TENNYSON :</b>	
The Lotos-Eaters . . . . .	157
Songs from The Princess :	
1. As thro' the land at eve we went	164
2. The splendour falls on castle walls	165
3. Tears, idle tears . . . . .	166
4. O Swallow, Swallow, flying South	167
5. Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white . . . . .	169
O that 'twere possible (from Maud)	170
<b>EDGAR ALLAN POE :</b>	
To Helen . . . . .	173
Annabel Lee . . . . .	174
Romance . . . . .	176
<b>CHRISTINA ROSSETTI :</b>	
Goblin Market . . . . .	179
<b>ROBERT BROWNING :</b>	
In a Year . . . . .	201

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## INTRODUCTION

#### 4 THE PLEASURES OF POETRY

the little cemetery at Bonchurch, and to place offerings in the Greek manner upon that grave.

The ladies drove in an open cab, drawn by a horse tattered with age, to Bonchurch, and, when there, the younger lady entered into a furious and protracted battle with the verger (or whatever official was in charge of the cemetery), routed him, and, bending under a fuchsia bush which is almost a tree in size, poured the milk, and placed the bay-wreath, roses, and the honeycomb, upon the grave of the poet.

That is very many years ago, but the no-longer young lady remembers still the excitement of the adventure, the enchanted September day, and the appalling storm which broke over her head on her return to Bourne-mouth—with her grandmother acting as lightning and the visiting clergyman acting as thunder—for both Swinburne and running away were much disapproved of.

The no-longer young lady was then, and is still, much in love with the poems of Swinburne, with Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market" and with certain of the work of slightly older poets, Edgar Allan Poe, Tennyson and Edward Fitzgerald—or perhaps I

should say with Omar Khayyám as seen through the eyes of Edward Fitzgerald. She had, and has still, an affection (though a lesser one) for certain of the works of William Morris, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Robert Browning. But Browning, although he is included in this book because of the date of his birth, is not, in reality, a native of the world we are about to enter. He is there by reason of his birthday alone, and because his human warmth, his irradiation of our common clay, make it impossible that he should be excluded. Even so, he is represented here by one poem only. This world is a more sheltered world than that of Blake, Shelley and Wordsworth. Here are no God-haunted forests, no tempests wherein God's voice may be heard, no upheavals of the earth, no heavenly visitations. It is a world untroubled (if we except the case of Robert Browning and of Tennyson's lyrics) by any human emotion. The flush and passion of this universe of poetry is only like the lovely light and colour of the rose.

Yet that light and colour give me an undying and perpetual delight. And I gain an excitement from examining these poems,

## 6 THE PLEASURES OF POETRY

since nearly all of these have been underrated, or misread, or overrated, whilst many have become so well known that the ear of the reader is dulled to their music, and the eye no longer perceives their beauty.

Although this world is more sheltered than the world of Blake, of Shelley and of Wordsworth, yet Swinburne, at his best, is a great poet, and some (though not all) of Edward Fitzgerald's translation may, and must be, called great poetry. Nor can we withhold this word from certain of Tennyson's and of Poe's lyrics, unless we believe that greatness is a matter of size alone.

Swinburne's "Ilicet" must be called a great poem, nor must we blame him because he did not always reach to this level. If we blame him thus, we must, as well, blame Coleridge, who wrote three supreme poems, and three only (and who remains one of our finest poets); we must blame, also, Wordsworth, who sank, at moments, into abysses of dullness.

As in my second anthology, I do not propose to present these poets in chronological order, though, for obvious reasons, the book must begin with the quatrains taken from Omar Khayyám.

The beauties of the Rubáiyát are of a fine order (although the poem has many flaws); but, unhappily, these beauties have become so known that they are no longer understood—they have become dulled by time, and no longer reach the eyes and the ears of those for whom poetry is not a passion; whilst, at the same time, the facile philosophy of the poem, which was not, at the time when Khayyám lived, so known and so ordinary, has made it popular for the wrong reasons, among those persons who do not care for poetry

It has been difficult for me to choose whether I would make use of the first or the second edition of the Rubáiyát. In the end, I have chosen verses from the second edition. The first and second quatrains are finer than those of the first edition; but, on the other hand, I cannot imagine what induced Fitzgerald to include this verse, which I have excluded:

“The Palace that to Heav’n his pillars threw,  
And Kings the forehead on his threshold drew—  
I saw the solitary Ringdove there,  
And ‘Coo, coo, coo,’ she cried, and ‘Coo, coo, coo.’”

The lapse is terrible, and Fitzgerald’s critical

## 8 THE PLEASURES OF POETRY

faculty must have deserted him completely, as it deserted him, also, when he changed

“ Ah, Moon of my Delight, who know'st no wane,  
The Moon of Heav'n is rising once again ”

to the very inferior

“ But see! The rising Moon of Heav'n again  
Looks for us, Sweet-heart, through the quivering  
Plane.”

Let us examine the poem for a moment. There is not, in reality, much to be said about either structure or texture, since most of the beauties are those of association; but the languid loveliness of the particular verses which I quote is due, in part, to the fact that the third line of each quatrain is a blank, whilst the three others rhyme. There is, also, an interesting sharp scheme of “i's” in the first quatrain, which makes one think of the arising light. But as I have said, the beauties are mainly those of association (as in such a line, for instance, as

“ Iram indeed is gone with all his Rose,”

followed, to my regret, by the very inferior line

“ And Jamshýd's Sev'n-ring'd Cup where no one  
knows,”

a line which dwarfs the quatrain at once, and wakes us from out of our enchantment). We are, however, comforted immediately by this beauty :

“ But still a Ruby gushes from the Vine,  
And many a Garden by the Water blows ”—

the first line of which (it is the third of the quatrain) produces, to my feeling, the sharpness of the smell of budding grapes, by the means of its vowels. This line then deepens into the magical languor and darkness of the last line. These effects, again, are partly, though not entirely, a matter of association. I have been much blamed, by people who are incapable of understanding an interest in prosody, for denying the power of association. In this matter I am, it is scarcely necessary to say, entirely guiltless. I have, however, said that association is not everything in poetry, and that magic is the result of inspiration and of sound, as well as of association. For instance, when Matthew Arnold ends one of his better poems, “Nightingale,” with these lines :

“ Infinite passion  
Infinite pain,”

he, together with all other versifiers of the same class, is deluded into believing that the mere mention of such words as "Infinite," "passion," "pain" will produce a remarkable effect, because of their association. But in this case, the lines fall down, they seem unexperienced, merely cerebral, whilst, at the same time, a false reliance has been put upon other people's sentimentality, and not upon the magic of poetry. Also, we do not need to be told these obvious facts about the nightingale. Any fool can imagine (and does imagine) the same thing without help from the outside.

Swinburne is the next poet whose beauties we must examine. These beauties are so great, and have been so much despised by people who can only understand fashions in poetry, that it is difficult to know where to begin this examination, in order, if possible, to obtain for him a sensible and sensitive hearing, and a true valuation. I do not claim for Swinburne that he has a philosophy or a message; but although a philosophy and a message helped to make Wordsworth, for instance, the great poet that he is, it is yet possible for poetry to be pure poetry, written

for the sake of beauty, without any other ulterior motive. If this fact could be understood, there would be more hope for the poetry of our time. In spite, for instance, of such facile lines as

“ A thing of beauty is a joy for ever ”  
and

“ Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.”

the poems of Keats are pure poetry and nothing else. Milton's “ Sabrina Fair,” to take another instance, is pure poetry and nothing else; yet it is one of the miracles of our language. “ Kubla Khan,” again, is pure poetry and nothing else. It must not be said (as it will be said, undoubtedly, by people who spend their time in distorting meanings) that I am suggesting that nothing but pure poetry should be written. But I *do* say, and I *do* hold, that a lovely poem with no philosophy is preferable to a bad poem with philosophy. This is not, as a rule, understood.

Swinburne has been blamed by certain persons with no interest in, or knowledge of, prosody, for his barrel-organ rhythms. I,

myself, do not care for "Dolores," in spite of its prosodic perfection. But it is my opinion that the young people who are scornful about Swinburne (and Tennyson) should wait until they can, in their own performances, even approach on their hands and knees to such a flawless certainty of touch, to such an impeccable virtuosity as that possessed by these two poets, before they advance any but the most timid criticism of these.

Swinburne had, if we except Milton and Shelley, and, in certain instances, Blake (in "The Book of Thel" and "How sweet I roamed," for example), perhaps the most flawless and wonderful vowel-technique in our language. He had as well, if we except Milton, Pope and Blake, perhaps the most marvellous command over what are known as liquids in our language.

As I have said, I do not love, although I do admire, such works as "Dolores" or "Faustine," though the mastery of both these poems is very great. But how marvellous is "Ilicet"! how wonderful, in their varying ways, are all the poems of Swinburne which are included in this anthology.

The strange softness and languor, together with the extreme poignancy of "Ilicet"—these are nothing short of miraculous.

He obtains this effect, to some degree, by the fact that in these stanzas of six lines, lines A and B, D and E, have female endings, usually without poignant vowels (and when the vowel *is* poignant, it is invariably, with one exception, a high A, this giving the effect of something trying to raise itself from the dust) while lines C and F have common endings with, nearly always, poignant vowels. In the last verse of all, however, the last syllable of the female ending does not drop until after a long and fierce cry:—"retire," "desire," and then the drop is very faint, so that it seems that the dust is gathering together in one last effort to raise itself from the tomb. The common endings in this verse are very dark and deep: "call," "all."

The first sextet owes much of its beauty to the softness and darkness (deep as the colour and perfume of some sleepy dark rose) of the female endings "sorrow," "morrow," with their deep vowels and soft "s" and "m," sinking into languor

14 THE PLEASURES OF POETRY

after the sharper and accented "joy" and "night" :

"There is an end of joy and sorrow ;  
Peace all day long, all night, all morrow, "

The soft female endings are repeated, with the interval of one more poignant line, with a common ending, throughout the stanza. In line four,

"The end is come of pleasant places, "

the female ending is less languorous than in the first two lines, because of the alliterative "pl's" coming so close together. But the fifth line,

"The end of tender words and faces, "

sinks again into the same softness, with only the word "tender" to raise it from its deep languor. This stanza is largely built upon a scheme of "p's," which in this case, whilst being soft, gives a rich depth of colour.

In the second stanza, the scheme of "p's" is repeated, though they are placed one line higher up in each case—in lines A and E instead of in lines B and F. In this stanza there is an exceedingly beautiful line of alliterative "l's" :

"No lips to laugh, no lids for tears."

this alliteration giving, for all its softness and deep dark colour, for all its absence of sharp vowels, an almost unbearable poignance. This effect of poignance may come, in part, from the fact that the soft "l's" lengthen the line, though almost imperceptibly—in part from the assurance of "lips" and "lids"—the word "lids" being shallower than "lips." The extra and disturbed depth and length of the fifth stanza, that beginning with the lines:

“ Wind wherein seas and stars are shaken  
Shall shake them, and they shall not waken ;”

come from the alliterative "s's" and "sh's" (it is the latter that gives the feeling of disturbance). But in the midst of this disturbance, a feeling of equilibrium is given by the balanced "w's" in the first and second words of the first line, and the last word of the second line.

Much of the beauty of this great poem comes from Swinburne's power over alliteration, this giving the lines their supreme balance, giving them an added poignancy, as in

“ The grave's mouth laughs unto derision  
Desire and dread and dream and vision,  
Delight of heaven and sorrow of hell.”

The beauty comes in part from this, in part from his amazing power for lengthening a line slightly by using the same letters internally in two consecutive words and then outwardly in the word following, as in the line :

“The pale old lips of death are fed,”

or of lengthening it, more slightly, by using a letter internally in one word and then externally in the next, as in the line :

“The breathing flame’s mouth curls and kisses ”

Once he causes the line to dip, slightly and sadly, as one bending under the weight of dust, by the device of using, in the middle, and again at the end of the line, double-syllabled words in which the second syllable dies away :

“A little sorrow, a little pleasure,”—

the second syllable of “sorrow” is shorter than that of the second syllable of “pleasure,” and it is this subtle change, or difference, and the difference in vowel sounds (the vowel sounds in “sorrow” being rich, whilst the second vowel sound in “pleasure” is neutral) which produces this dipping movement.

His use of assonances and dissonances, interspersed with alliteration, is at once instinctive

and inspired. Take, for instance, this sextet, which is one of the most beautiful in the whole poem :

$\begin{array}{cccccc} 1 & 2 & 3 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\ \text{“ In deep wet ways by grey old gardens} \\ 2 & & 5 & & 1 & 5 \\ \text{Fed with sharp spring the sweet fruit hardens,} \\ & 3 & 4 & & 3 & 4 \\ \text{They know not what fruits wane or grow ;} \\ 2 & 6 & 6\frac{3}{4} & 6 & 4 & 2 \\ \text{Red summer burns to the utmost ember ;} \\ 3 & 4 & & & 2 & \\ \text{They know not, neither can remember,} \\ & 4 & 6\frac{1}{2} & & 3 & 4 \\ \text{The old years and flowers they used to know.”} \end{array}$

The alliteration and the half-tones ; these, with the change from the poignant “e’s” to the dulled “e’s,” the piteous attempt at lifting in the A and Ey sounds, the depth and mournfulness of the O sounds—the effect produced by these is beautiful, subtle and strange.

When I was a girl, it seemed to me that this verse was one of the most miraculous in our poetry ; and I remain of that opinion ; its spell, its enchantment, have never set me free.

The struggle in my mind about the inclusion of “Anactoria” has been very great.

The theme of the poem is, unfortunately, so detestable that one of the greatest of Swinburne's poems has been spoiled. It may be said, and it has been said, that all themes are suitable to literature; but I am not of that opinion. The excerpt I give can, however, be separated from anything that we find odious and objectionable in the theme, and we may enjoy it as a great poem, which, most undoubtedly, it is.

In these astonishingly lovely verses, again, the beauties come, very largely, from alliteration, from Swinburne's vowel-technique, including the use of the same vowel, alternately dulled, then sharp, then dark, as in the lines:

“ With lamentation from strange lands, from graves  
Where the snake pastures, from scarred mouths of  
slaves ”

an effect which gives a strange, waving, wandering movement, slowed, too, because of the many “s's.” This is followed by the strangely marked alliteration of

“ From prison, and from plunging prows of ships ”

Swinburne, in this poem, varies the actual movement of the line, time and again, by means of his power over alliteration, by his

perpetual shifting of the alliteration from one part of a line to another. For instance, the movement of

“ Where the snake pastures, from scarred mouths of slaves ”

is different from that of the next line

“ From prison, and from plunging prows of ships ”

and this change is due, not only to the change of accent, but also to the fact that the alliterations are put in different places in the line. (It is also, in this case, a fact that Swinburne foretells the alliteration of the second line, and repeats the alliteration of the first line at the end of the second.)

The movement of each of these lines, again, differs from that of *this* line :

“ Through flamelike foam of the sea’s closing lips,”

and the movement of the second line quoted differs slightly, though only slightly, from that of

“ And weeping of the weary Pleiads seven,”  
because, although “ weeping ” and “ weary ” are put in the same places in the line as “ prison ” and “ plunging,” there is no third alliteration in that line.

Again, the movement of

“ And weeping of the weary Pleiads seven,”  
with its melting sound, is not the same as  
that of the thicker

“ Feeds the mute melancholy lust of heaven ”  
where, again, the alliteration is shifted. And  
both these lines have different movement from  
that of

“ The wan washed sand and the waves’ vain desire,”  
wherein the alliteration of external and in-  
ternal letters (the varying “wa’s” and “an’s”)  
makes the line more heavy and weary than if  
the alliteration were external only ; whilst, at  
the same time, the change from dulled  
to bright “a’s” gives a wandering effect.  
“ Washed,” by the way, is slightly darker than  
“ wan ” because of the “ sh.”

But there is no miracle that is not per-  
formed by this great poet in the excerpt given  
from “ Anactoria ” in this anthology. Some-  
times he makes a change between the move-  
ment of one line and another by the use of  
the same letter placed, first externally, then  
internally, very close together, as in

“ And *mix* his *immortality* with death.”

His knowledge of the effect produced by elision is boundless, also, as we can see from the lines

“The immeasurable tremor of all the sea,”

and

“Like me shall be the shuddering calm of night,”

His virtuosity, too, in the varied use of the cæsure, his knowledge of the means by which this will change the movement of a line, can be compared with the virtuosity of Dryden and of Pope.

The completely aware use of the cæsure was largely a lost art in the age which I examined in the second volume of this anthology, the age of Shelley and of Wordsworth. With Swinburne it was, so far as he was concerned, restored to us; and with Swinburne, as with Dryden and Pope, the pauses seem of natural growth—they have varying heights, depths and lengths. The difference made by these natural pauses and changes of accent are of a very subtle kind. Take these beautiful lines :

“Why hath he *made* us ? // *What* had *all* we done  
That we should *live* / and *loathe* / the *sterile* sun,  
And with the *moon* / *wax* *paler* as she *wanes*,

And *pulse*  $\frac{1}{2}$  by *pulse* / feel time  $\frac{1}{2}$  grow through  
our veins ?

*Thee too the years shall cover ; // thou shalt be*  
As the *rose born*  $\frac{1}{2}$  of *one same blood* with thee,"

But I could continue for ever. From these few examples the reader can form his own conclusions. How passionately I regret that the beginning of the poem has been so defaced by its theme. It is a source of personal grief to me to see such miraculous lines as these quoted below hurt by their surroundings :

"Nay, sweet, for is she God alone ? hath she  
Made earth and all the creatures of the sea,  
Taught the sun ways to travel, woven most fine  
The moonbeams, shed the starbeams forth as wine,  
Bound with her myrtles, beaten with her rods,  
The young men and the maidens and the gods ?  
Have we not lips to love with, eyes for tears,  
And summer and flower of women and of years ?  
Stars for the foot of morning, and for noon  
Sunlight, and exaltation of the moon ;  
Waters that answer waters, fields that wear  
Lilies, and languor of the Lesbian air ? "

Swinburne's feeling for texture, though it was, perhaps, less subtle than was that of Pope, was as deep, in the original meaning of the word. The difference between the two

poets as to texture is that whilst, in such a poem as "The Rape of the Lock," the incredibly subtle texture is thin, glittering, variable, and exquisite as that of the Sylph's wings, as they float above the barge, when :

"Some to the sun their insect wings unfold,  
Waft on the breeze, or sink in clouds of gold ;  
Transparent forms, too fine for mortal sight,  
Their fluid bodies half dissolved in light,  
Loose to the wind their airy garments flew,  
Their glitt'ring textures of the filmy dew,  
Dipped in the richest tincture of the skies,  
Where light disports in ever-mingling dyes ;  
While ev'ry beam new transient colours flings,  
Colours that change whene'er they wave their  
wings."

The texture of most of the poems of Swinburne ("Ilicet" and "Anactoria," for instance) has a sleepy deep richness, like that of some heavily perfumed dark rose. The lines are weighted as though with some rich honey. But this natural and inherent quality of the texture does not make the lines monotonous. No poet has ever existed who had more sensitive hands for poetry than those possessed by Swinburne. I said in my book on Alexander Pope, and it is equally true of Swinburne,

that: "A poem begins in the poet's head, and then grows in his blood, as a rose grows among its dark leaves. The poet feels the poem in the palms of his sensitive hands, understanding its exact weight (a most necessary part of the growth of a poem), letting the poem grow in his veins. He strokes it with his long fingers, as a sculptor divines the shape within the snow-cold, or sea-cold, marble that will soon discard, with his aid, all its outer sleep-wrappings, and stand revealed in its age-long beauty, one of a people of smiling statues, looking across an eternal and youthful sea.

"The poet knows, through his sensitive hands, the difference between the sea-cold marble of the Ode, with all its divine variations of ivy-dark veins (cold as the satyrine forests), veins with the shape of the Ægean waves within them, veins full of the light—the difference between this and the hot velvet petals of that rose the lyric—whose texture and whose music, with its air-subtle variation, makes the listener

"Die of a rose in aromatic pain."

He feels in the veins of his hand the shape and the texture of the poem before it has grown."



Then there is the subtlety with which he changes the heat and burden, caused by the heavy vowels, into softness, by the use of unsharp "e's" and "i's," as in the last line of this quatrain :

“ Outside it must be winter among men ;  
 For at the gold bars of the gates again  
 I heard all night and all the hours of it  
 The wind's wet wings and fingers drip with rain.”

I am convinced that if the beauties of this poem and the other poems by Swinburne included in this anthology are denied, it is because the reader has been blinded by a foolish and transitory fashion. At the moment it is fashionable to admire in poetry, knuckles, bits of bones, and of dead brains, and to detest that genius for the medium which has given mastery, splendour, light and life to the masterpieces of our language. But why should we trouble ourselves about such falsities ?

I have not included, in this anthology, the magnificent choruses from "Atalanta in Calydon," or such beauties as "Itylus," since these, for the most part, find a home (at times an uneasy and unsuitable one) in nearly every collection of verse, and their perfections

are so known that I do not need to dwell upon them. In their place I have included the lovely poem "August," which is less loved, though not by me.

In this poem the feeling of the roundness and the ripeness of the fruit on the lovely apple-tree, of the dew, of the green leaves, is conveyed, very largely, by means of the roundness and ripeness of the vowels used. Swinburne uses the word "gold" and "golden" and "red" in such a manner that many beauties are brought into our memory by the power of association. The word "gold" is a kind of keynote throughout the poem. In "August," as in every work of this great poet, there are the faintest stirrings and blood-beats, produced, sometimes, by the repeated use of the same vowel with different vibration-lengths, at other moments by the use of the same consonant ending two consecutive words. Take, for instance, this stanza :

"There were four apples on the tree,  
Red stained through gold, that all might see  
The sun went warm from core to rind ;  
The green leaves made the summer blind  
In that soft place they kept for me  
With golden apples shut behind."

Now in this verse, the first, and the last two, lines seem to me to be, very faintly, quicker, seem to be, very faintly, shorter (though, in actuality, they are not) than the other lines. This is due to the fact that the use of the "d's" in "red stained through gold" seems a prolonging or a deepening of the colour, whilst there are four consonants together, d, t, h, r, none of which can be *lifted*; they are on a level of sound, and this loss of movement makes the sound seem longer. Again, the use of the alliterative "e's" in "The green leaves" deepens the sound.

But the whole poem is of an incredible subtlety. The wandering from the dark to the dulled U sounds, and from these to the warmer, darker depths of the varying O sounds, these give a sense of the change to the roundness, warmth and ripeness of the fruit, after the sharpness of the leaves. These effects could only have been produced by one of the greatest of artists in his own medium. Here is another example :

" In the *mute* August afternoon,  
They trembled to *some* undertune  
Of *music* in the silver air ;  
Great *pleasure* was it to be there

Till green turned *duskier* and the *moon*  
Coloured the corn-sheaves like gold hair."

Notice, too, the slight slowing produced by the "r's" in "silver air."

Two stanzas after, the "moon," "noon," "tune" theme is repeated, with fresh subtleties of O sounds. In this lovely stanza,

" I lay there till the warm smell grew  
More sharp, when flecks of yellow dew  
Between the round ripe leaves had blurred  
The rind with stain and wet ; I heard  
A wind that blew and breathed and blew,  
Too weak to alter its one word."

The slight lengthening caused by the "m's" in "warm" and "smell," the pause after "sharp," the faint difference, so faint as to be almost imperceptible, between the sounds of "grew" and "dew," of "blurred" and "heard," the movement caused by the different "e's" in

" A wind that *blew* and *breathed* and *blew*  
Too *weak* to alter its one word."

All these subtleties give a feeling of dew falling on those round ripe leaves, sometimes chilled by a passing air, sometimes not. And this is

not *only* a matter of association, though association plays its part in the magic, as well as texture.

There is not much to be said, technically, about the lovely poem "The Masque of Queens," but there is one technical beauty to be pointed out in the exquisite "Before Parting." Some of the beauty of the sound arises from the fact that in verses one, three and five the fifth line is reduced from the ten syllables, which is the ordinary measure, to six syllables, returning, in the sixth line, to the ten-syllable norm. Whereas in verses two, four and six it is the sixth line which is reduced to six syllables. This alternate system is responsible for much beauty and melody.

It is sad to leave the beauties of Swinburne, great as they are. For the sake of space, I must exclude those great choruses which glorify "Atalanta in Calydon," and which are now so foolishly despised. I leave, therefore, the great poet of whom Professor Saintsbury has said: "Every weapon and sleight of the English poet—equivalence and substitution, alternation and repetition, rhymes and rhymeless suspension of sound, volley and check of verse,

stanza construction, line-and-pause-moulding, foot-conjunction and contrast — this poet knows and can use them all. The triple rhyme itself, that springe for the unwary, gives him no difficulty. He seems to revel in variety: the stanzas actually hide, though they never falsify, their heredity of norm.”

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, according to my instinct, seems an infinitely lesser poet than Swinburne, though he has various technical beauties. But, to my feeling, his poems are, as a rule, too extraneous, too consciously conscious, too inflated in feeling, though not in form, too fat in texture. These strictures, however, do not apply to “Sister Helen,” which is, in many ways, a magnificent ballad, or to “The Blessed Damozel,” with its flawless outline, its complete mastery over form. These poems will please us always. And such a song as “Love-Lily” is a small miracle, technically (but of this song I shall speak later). “Sister Helen,” as I have said, has a certain splendour, which is marred by the presence of many extraneous and inflating verses. It cannot compare with the ballad “Edward,” the greatest ballad in our language,



which gives the effect of something immortal seen from a great distance, and changed a little by that distance: "Heaven," "even," "seven," "choristers," "hers," "years," "on," "sun," "begun," "charm," "warm," "arm," "fierce," "pierce," "spheres" (this last dissonance widens the space, so does "Heaven," "even"). I may say at this point that I find the "charm," "warm," "arm" dissonance an unpleasant failure.

The dissonances occur at intervals, though not regularly, or inevitably, throughout the poem. The lovely sudden flutter caused by the names of the lady Mary's handmaidens (a flutter produced by the extra fraction of a syllable in "Margaret and Rosalys") this is like the flutter and the dew-dropping caused by the wings of a bird or of an angel brushing through the deep boughs of heaven.

"A New-Year's Burden" is a delightful little song, but it does not need any analysis. But with "Love-Lily" it is a different matter. The technical beauties of this poem are very great.

For the first two lines of the first stanza,

"Between / the hands, /// between / the brows,///  
Between / the lips /// of Love-Lily,"

the two very strong pauses, and the two far lesser ones (the lesser ones coming, in each case, after the word "between") give an intense strange flutter, like that of the dewy wings of a half-awakened bird. The word "spirit" continues this flutter; then in the third and fourth lines the pauses are infinitely less strong, so the poem is stiller, more peaceful. In the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth lines the poem is utterly at peace and in heaven. This scheme is used in the first and second stanzas: in the third, the poem is at peace.

Whilst it may be said that Rossetti's poems are not great poems, they must not be disregarded, for they have much technical value, and the perceptions of varying lights and shadows is exquisite. This is true, also, of William Morris, many of whose poems are exceedingly delightful and hold, in their fruit-round shapes, a living summer which will not fade. His poems delight me still, as if I were reading them for the first time. He does not need vivisection, or a too detailed examination. Let us enjoy these poems as we enjoy the pleasures of summer.

Edgar Allan Poe and Tennyson are, to my

belief, infinitely better poets than either Dante Gabriel Rossetti or William Morris. There has lately been an attempt on the part of the vulgar to discredit Poe. But how foolish is this attempt! It is unnecessary to say that nobody with any taste is pleased by "The Bells," the worst poem that Poe ever wrote, or by "The Raven." But how beautiful are the poems "To Helen," "Annabel Lee" and "Romance." "To Helen" is a singularly glamorous and marvellous poem, nor is its beauty to be explained, though we may assume that part of this water-smooth magic is due to the sound of the word "beauty," placed in exactly that part of the first line in which it is placed, the use of the word "perfumed," so smooth, so balanced, in connection with that everlasting sea, and the, gentle, unruffled alliterative "w's" of the line

"The weary, wayworn wanderer bore,"

together with the slight waving (as though some hardly perceptible air had wafted over that perfumed sea) caused by the dissonances of "wayworn wanderer bore," the sounds "worn" and "bore" giving a deeper hyacinthine colour to the water. But the

wonders of this poem (one of the loveliest short poems in the English language) are not to be explained, since they are the result of magic, not logic.

Lovely, again, as is "Annabel Lee," we can hardly discuss the technical aspects of this, since the beauty of the poem is the result of some enchantment in the dream-like atmosphere of the poem, more than of deliberate arrangements of sound.

With many of the most beautiful of Tennyson's poems, "The Lotos-Eaters," for example, the dream-slow movement of the lines, sometimes slowing down still more, sometimes widening out into fresh vistas, appears, at first, the result of instinct alone, but this is not so. "The Lotos-Eaters" is lovely, but imperfect. The scale of the poem is often changed—the weather, as you might say, changes from time to time. It seems to be a poem written between the dream and the business of everyday life. Verse one is a dream, and part of the body of poetry (the drone effect gained by repeating "land" and "land" instead of inserting a rhyme is also most interesting). Verse two is awake, and unhappy, possessed of nothing but obvious reality.

The Choric Song, however, from verse one to the end of verse seven is exceedingly beautiful, whilst verse eight has also many beauties, though it is spoilt, from time to time, by the practical, tourist-like experiences of

“ Roll’d to starboard, roll’d to larboard, when the  
surge was seething free,  
Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-  
fountains in the sea.”

There is something wrong, too, about the lines :

“ For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are  
hurl’d  
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are  
lightly curl’d  
Round their golden houses, girdled with the  
gleaming world : ”

Model villages, evidently. How *could* Tennyson’s instinct have failed him thus ? However, instinct and experience produced the flawless simplification of emotion that we find in the beautiful “ O that t’were possible ” and “ Tears, idle Tears,” and in the slightly less lovely “ As thro’ the land at eve we went.”

In the marvellous lyric “ Tears, idle Tears,” part of the unrhymed and deep music of this

flawless unrhymed poem, heavy and dark, as if weighted with dew, comes from the fact that in nearly all cases the lines end with a one-syllabled word ; or, where the line ends with a double-syllabled word, the syllables are equal, as in "despair," "regret." In the one case where we find a treble-syllabled word ending the line, "underworld," the first and third syllables are equal and balanced, so that the smooth quality of the poem is undisturbed.

Although this poem is unrhymed, the vowels of the end-words of the lines produce a most peculiar effect, with, to take an example, the assonance "fields" coming two lines after the poignant sound of "mean" ("mean" is slightly deeper than "fields," "fields" is a fraction longer than "mean"). There is, too, the lifting sound of "eyes," contrasted with the dark sound of "more," "no more," that dark drone sound and keynote of the poem, ending each flawless verse. Again, the dark and despairing dissonances ending the second and the last lines of the first stanza, "despair" and "more," with the deeper drop to be found in the third stanza (deeper because the dissonances are placed more closely together) in the words "square" and

“ more ” ; these, compared with the assonance, in the last stanza, an assonance deeply divided by the varying wave-lengths of the words “ death ” and “ regret,” all produce an effect nothing short of magical.

It is not for me to guess how any reader could have underrated this poem. Only an entire deafness and blindness to all the meanings and implications of poetry, to all its lights and shadows, to all its ineffable music, could explain such a phenomenon as the foolish manner in which this poem has been underrated.

It is a tragedy for the whole cause of poetry that such a fine, and, *at his best*, flawless poet as Tennyson, should have been, on the one hand, derided by some people because he was led by fright into mixing trite didactic statements with his poetry, and, on the other hand, should be admired by other people because of this fault. His proper place is among the writers of the most beautiful lyrics in our language.

I shall not write of the poems of Robert Browning, since everything which *could* be examined in his work *has* been examined ; and so I will end these notes with a few remarks

about what I believe to be the most perfect poem written by any woman in the English language — Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market."

Sometimes the movement of this poem is like that of a little bird running across the grass—at moments the verse grows slower, and then ripens in shape like the Goblin men's dewy fruit; or it floats like shadow, or it trembles like a bough that is heavy with dew before the dew falls to the ground, or it brightens till it is like the golden heads of Laura and Lizzie. Sometimes, again, it is like the

" — voice of doves  
Cooing all together :  
They sounded kind and full of loves  
In the pleasant weather."

It is one of the sweetest poems in our language, and one of the most perfect from the point of view of skill in quickening and slowing; indeed, it seems to me to have every single virtue of sight and sound which could be contained in such a quick measure, or mingling of measures. Based, in reality, upon the octosyllabic couplet, of which

“ Beside the brook, beside the glen  
She heard the tramp of goblin men ”

is an example, it develops a thousand variations, dactylic, anapæstic, iambic, trochaic. And the infinite variety of sound and feeling produced (a variety which is yet unified into a perfect whole) is due, as usual, not only to the different lengths of lines, the different measures, with their consequent quickening and slowing, but also to the texture.

Let us take the first few lines (I do not mean to separate them ; each runs into the other, each is dependent upon the preceding and the following lines) :

1. Morning and evening
2. Maids heard the goblins cry :
3. “ Come buy our orchard fruits,
4. Come buy, come buy :
5. Apples and quinces,
6. Lemons and oranges,
7. Plump unpecked cherries,
8. Melons and raspberries,
9. Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,
10. Swart-headed mulberries,
11. Wild free-born cranberries,
12. Crab-apples, dewberries,
13. Pine-apples, blackberries,
14. Apricots, strawberries ; —

15. All ripe together
16. In summer weather, —
17. Morns that pass by,
18. Fair eves that fly ;
19. Come buy, come buy :
20. Our grapes fresh from the vine,
21. Pomegranates full and fine,
22. Dates and sharp bullaces,
23. Rare pears and greengages,
24. Damsons and bilberries,
25. Taste them and try :
26. Currants and gooseberries,
27. Bright fire-like barberries,
28. Figs to fill your mouth,
29. Citrons from the South,
30. Sweet to tongue and sound to eye ;
31. Come buy, come buy.”

In the first two lines the first word of each begins with an alliterative “m,” thus giving a kind of droning sound, which makes us think of bees among heavy leaves. The sound in “Maids heard the goblins cry,” in “Come buy our orchard fruits,” “Come buy, come buy,” changes from light to shadow, and back to light again, owing to the vowels—changes with an extraordinary rapidity, so that we find ourselves walking from beneath the shadow of a heavily-laden tree into the country sunlight. In the line “Apples and

quinces," there is the contrast between the crisp sound of "apples" and the unilluminated sound of "quinces," whilst the sound, at the same time, is dulled, owing to its vowels. In "Lemons and oranges," the last word takes us into a deeper shade. "Plump unpecked cherries" is dulled again. No, "dulled" is the wrong word; the line suggests the intense fleshiness of the cherries. "Melons and raspberries" is shadowed still more darkly, "Bloom-down-cheeked peaches" moves very slightly slower, both because of the vowels, and because of the "m" and "n" and "ked" endings of the first three words. "Swart-headed mulberries" and "Wild free-born cranberries"—these two lines have the tune of a tiny dew-laden wind, because of the dark vowel-*assonance* of "swart" and "born," a vowel-*assonance* which is almost a *dissonance*, since "born" is darker, though only very slightly darker, than "swart." In the line "Crab-apples, dewberries," the word "crab-apples," again, has a dew-misted sound over its crispness; but "dewberries," because of its double-sounding first syllable, gives an impression of brightness. In "Pine-apples, blackberries," the word "Pine" is high and assertive, sinking

again into the misted "blackberries." In "Apricots, strawberries," the word "apricots" is a very full and ripe sound; "strawberries" is a darker, more secretive sound, as though, like the fruit itself, it were hidden under leaves. "All ripe together," "In summer weather" and the subsequent five lines have a strange, fairy-like, unreal sound, which is, perhaps, due to the shortening of the line by one syllable. This is truer still of the earlier "Come buy, come buy" repeated in this place. After this, the goblin-men remember their wares, and begin again: "Our grapes fresh from the vine," "Pomegranates full and fine," the last line of which dips into darkness and then lightens again, bringing a sense of sharp, cold dew with it. In "Dates and sharp bullaces," the word "Dates" has an insistent, high sound, whilst the line "Rare pears and green-gages" seems lengthened at the beginning of the line by the assonance of "rare" and "pears," each being a word with a fraction of an extra syllable, so that not only the assonances, placed together, but also the fractions of extra syllables lengthen the line. In "Damsons and bilberries" we find ourselves in the shadow once more, so far as the

word "damsons" may be concerned. But in "Taste them and try" we come, once more, into the strange summer light. In "Currants and gooseberries" the word "gooseberries" is, very slightly, longer than "currants"; it brings us, too, into a dark shadow, coming after "bilberries." In "Bright fire-like barberries" the line lengthens again, like "Rare pears and greengages"; the bird's wings are heavy with dew as it flies. The beginning of the line is sharp and bright with sunlight, because of the sharp "i's" in "bright" and "like" (brought close together); and it is lengthened, too, by the word "fire," which is a brighter echo of "rare" and "pears." Then the word "barberries" makes the line dip, like a bough heavy with these berries. Then we come to the shorter, quicker lines, running like a little bird over the grass in the shadow of the orchard trees, lines which are ripened and sweet, too, as small leaf-hidden fruits. "Figs to fill your mouth," "Citrons from the South," followed by the longer and even riper "Sweet to tongue and sound to eye"—then out we come into the strange sunlight again in "Come buy, come buy."

These are only a few of the speculations roused in my mind by this enchanting poem ; but I dare not carry these examinations further, or the book would be too long.

And, in any case, I am certain to be reprov'd by one person, if not by another, both for the crime of enjoying myself, and because, in the course of this criminal career of mine, I have refused to include any poems which I do not enjoy, or any poets who, according to my feeling, should be rejected.

I cannot, and will not, include such versifiers as Mr. T. E. Brown, with his "wot," "plot," "god" "grot" complex, his gift for discovering groups of sounds which produce poems of a consistency as horrid and as muddy as that of a chocolate blanc-mange filled with whipped cream. Nor will I weary my readers with the whimpering Eileen Aroons and Dark Rosaleen's of this time, nor burden them with the poems of a certain lady whose name might be merely a *nom-de-plume* shrouding the identity of Emily, the heroine of my friend Mr. John Collier's "His Monkey Wife."

It would, also, be a mere act of treachery on my part to include the verses of the woman of genius who wrote "Wuthering Heights";

these verses are as inferior and as mawkish as the novel is instinct with fire and passion. There is neither passion nor genius in the poems. Compare, for an instant, the last verse of Byron's magnificent "And thou art dead" (magnificent, although it contains lapses) with two verses from Emily Brontë's poem on the same theme. Byron's last verse runs thus :

" Yet how much less it were to gain,  
Though thou hast left me free,  
The loveliest things that still remain,  
Than thus remember thee !  
The all of thine that cannot die  
Through dark and dread Eternity  
Returns again to me,  
And more thy buried love endears  
Than aught except its living years."

Emily Brontë's poem runs thus :

" Then did I check the tears of useless passion,  
Wean'd my young soul from yearning after thine ;  
Sternly denied its burning wish to hasten  
Down to that tomb already more than mine.  
  
And, even yet, I dare not let it languish,  
Dare not indulge in memory's rapturous pain ;  
Once drinking deep of that divinest anguish,  
How could I seek the empty world again ? "

Yes, and how could the young woman of fire and genius who wrote "Wuthering Heights" have gushed out this weak and young-ladyish stuff? It is impossible to say.

Matthew Arnold is, it is unnecessary to say, superior to the versifiers I have just named; but all we need say of him is that he will remain the only educated versifier whose verses are admired by those people who dislike poetry.

After the period of which I write there was a pause, filled with the faint and dying twittering of certain imitators of the eight poets included in this book. Then there was a rebirth of poetry, with such great poets as Mr. Hardy and Mr. Yeats to renew our pleasures.

How, indeed, can my "Pleasures of Poetry" be complete without including these? The moment will come when I shall hope to produce a book, not belonging to this series, devoted to the work of these two great poets and certain other poets of our time. For poetry must embrace all those who are born of her nature, which includes all beauties—the ripe summer weather, and the cold sharp flakes of snow, falling softly, as the first shade

of age falls on some golden cheek. The beauties of poetry are unconfined ; they grow like a tree, to give our summer a pleasant shade, they ripen like fruit, and spring like a fountain to cool our thirst. All the wings of the world are hers, for she flies like an eagle, near to the summer sun, and seeks the darkness like a nightingale, and floats in beauty like the swan. The pleasures of poetry are unconfined as the heavenly airs among which she moves, clothed in the splendours and glammers of ancient worlds and of unvisited horizons.



OMAR KHAYYAM



*Quatrains from the Rubáiyát of Omar  
Khayyám*

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I

**W**AKE! For the Sun behind yon Eastern  
height  
Has chased the Session of the Stars from Night ;  
And, to the field of Heav'n ascending, strikes  
The Sultán's Turret with a Shaft of Light.

II

Before the phantom of False morning died,  
Methought a Voice within the Tavern cried,  
“ When all the Temple is prepared within,  
Why lags the drowsy Worshipper outside ? ”

III

And, as the Cock crew, those who stood before  
The Tavern shouted—“ Open then the door !  
You know how little while we have to stay,  
And, once departed, may return no more.”

IV

Now the New Year reviving old Desires,  
The thoughtful Soul to Solitude retires,  
Where the *White Hand* of Moses on the Bough  
Puts out, and Jesus from the Ground suspires.

## V

Iram indeed is gone with all his Rose,  
 And Jamshýd's Sev'n-ring'd Cup where no one knows :  
     But still a Ruby gushes from the Vine,  
 And many a Garden by the Water blows.

## VI

And David's lips are lockt ; but in divine  
 High-piping Péhleví, with " Wine ! Wine ! Wine !  
     Red Wine ! "—the Nightingale cries to the Rose  
 That sallow cheek of hers to incarnadine.

## VII

Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring  
 Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling :  
     The Bird of Time has but a little way  
 To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing.

## VIII

Whether at Naishápúr or Babylon,  
 Whether the Cup with sweet or bitter run,  
     The Wine of Life keeps oozing drop by drop,  
 The Leaves of Life keep falling one by one.

## IX

Morning a thousand Roses brings, you say ;  
 Yes, but where leaves the Rose of yesterday ?  
     And this first Summer month that brings the Rose  
 Shall take Jamshýd and Kaikobád away.

## x

Well, let it take them ! What have we to do  
With Kaikobád the Great, or Kaikhosrú ?

Let Rustum cry " To Battle ! " as he likes,  
Or Hátim Tai " To Supper ! "—heed not you.

## xi

With me along the strip of Herbage strown  
That just divides the desert from the sown,  
Where name of Slave and Sultán is forgot—  
And Peace to Máhmúd on his golden Throne !

## xii

Here with a little Bread beneath the Bough,  
A Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse—and Thou  
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—  
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow !

## xiii

Some for the Glories of This World ; and some  
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come ;  
Ah, take the Cash, and let the Promise go,  
Nor heed the music of a distant Drum !

## xiv

Were it not Folly, Spider-like to spin  
The Thread of present Life away to win—  
What ? for ourselves, who know not if we shall  
Breathe out the very Breath we now breathe in !

## xv

Look to the blowing Rose about us—"Lo,  
Laughing," she says, "into the world I blow :

At once the silken tassel of my Purse  
Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden throw."

## xvi

For those who husbanded the Golden Grain,  
And those who flung it to the winds like Rain,

Alike to no such aureate Earth are turn'd  
As, buried once, Men want dug up again.

## xvii

The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon  
Turns Ashes—or it prospers ; and anon,

Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,  
Lighting a little hour or two—was gone.

## xviii

Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai  
Whose Portals are alternate Night and Day,

How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp  
Abode his destin'd Hour, and went his way.

## xix

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep  
The Courts where Jamshýd gloried and drank deep ;

And Bahrám, that great Hunter—the Wild Ass  
Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his Sleep.

## XXI

Ah, my Belovéd, fill the Cup that clears  
To-day of past Regret and future Fears :  
*To-morrow!*—Why, To-morrow I may be  
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n thousand Years.

## XXII

For some we loved, the loveliest and the best  
That from his Vintage rolling Time has prest,  
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,  
And one by one crept silently to rest.

## XXIII

And we, that now make merry in the Room  
They left, and Summer dresses in new bloom,  
Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of Earth  
Descend, ourselves to make a Couch—for whom ?

## XXIV

I sometimes think that never blows so red  
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled ;  
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears  
Dropt in her Lap from some once lovely Head.

## XXV

And this delightful Herb whose living Green  
Fledges the River's Lip on which we lean—  
Ah, lean upon it lightly ! for who knows  
From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen !

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,  
Before we too into the Dust descend ;  
Dust into Dust, and under Dust, to lie,  
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and—sans End !

SWINBURNE



*Ilicet*

**T**HERE is an end of joy and sorrow ;  
Peace all day long, all night, all morrow,  
But never a time to laugh or weep.  
The end is come of pleasant places,  
The end of tender words and faces,  
The end of all, the popped sleep.

No place for sound within their hearing,  
No room to hope, no time for fearing,  
No lips to laugh, no lids for tears.  
The old years have run out all their measure ;  
No chance of pain, no chance of pleasure,  
No fragment of the broken years,

Outside of all the worlds and ages,  
There where the fool is as the sage is,  
There where the slayer is clean of blood,  
No end, no passage, no beginning,  
There where the sinner leaves off sinning,  
There where the good man is not good.

There is not one thing with another,  
But Evil saith to Good : My brother,  
My brother, I am one with thee :  
They shall not strive nor cry for ever :  
No man shall choose between them : never  
Shall this thing end and that thing be.

Wind wherein seas and stars are shaken  
 Shall shake them, and they shall not waken ;  
     None that has lain down shall arise ;  
 The stones are sealed across their places ;  
 One shadow is shed on all their faces,  
     One blindness cast on all their eyes.

Sleep, is it sleep perchance that covers  
 Each face, as each face were his lover's ?  
     Farewell ; as men that sleep fare well.  
 The grave's mouth laughs unto derision  
 Desire and dread and dream and vision,  
     Delight of heaven and sorrow of hell.

No soul shall tell nor lip shall number  
 The names and tribes of you that slumber ;  
     No memory, no memorial.  
 "Thou knowest"—who shall say thou knowest ?  
 There is none highest, and none lowest :  
     An end, an end, an end of all.

Good night, good sleep, good rest from sorrow  
 To these that shall not have good morrow ;  
     The gods be gentle to all these.  
 Nay, if death be not, how shall they be ?  
 Nay, is there help in heaven ? it may be  
     All things and lords of things shall cease.

The stooped urn, filling, dips and flashes ;  
 The bronzed brims are deep in ashes ;  
     The pale old lips of death are fed.

Shall this dust gather flesh hereafter ?  
Shall one shed tears or fall to laughter,  
At sight of all these poor old dead ?

Nay, as thou wilt ; these know not of it ;  
Thine eyes' strong weeping shall not profit,  
Thy laughter shall not give thee ease ;  
Cry aloud, spare not, cease not crying,  
Sigh, till thou cleave thy sides with sighing,  
Thou shalt not raise up one of these.

Burnt spices flash, and burnt wine hisses,  
The breathing flame's mouth curls and kisses  
The small dried rows of frankincense ;  
All round the sad red blossoms smoulder,  
Flowers coloured like the fire, but colder,  
In sign of sweet things taken hence ;

Yea, for their sake and in death's favour  
Things of sweet shape and of sweet savour  
We yield them, spice and flower and wine  
Yea, costlier things than wine or spices,  
Whereof none knoweth how great the price is,  
And fruit that comes not of the vine.

From boy's pierced throat and girl's pierced bosom  
Drips, reddening round the blood-red blossom,  
The slow delicious bright soft blood,  
Bathing the spices and the pyre,  
Bathing the flowers and fallen fire,  
Bathing the blossom by the bud.

Roses whose lips the flame has deadened  
Drink till the lapping leaves are reddened  
And warm wet inner petals weep ;  
The flower whereof sick sleep gets leisure,  
Barren of balm and purple pleasure,  
Fumes with no native steam of sleep.

Why will ye weep ? what do ye weeping ?  
For waking folk and people sleeping,  
And sands that fill and sands that fall,  
The days rose-red, the popped hours,  
Blood, wine, and spice and fire and flowers,  
There is one end of one and all.

Shall such an one lend love or borrow ?  
Shall these be sorry for thy sorrow ?  
Shall these give thanks for words or breath ?  
Their hate is as their loving-kindness ;  
The frontlet of their brows is blindness,  
The armlet of their arms is death.

Lo, for no noise or light of thunder  
Shall these grave-clothes be rent in sunder,  
He that hath taken, shall he give ?  
He hath rent them : shall he bind together ?  
He hath bound them : shall he break the tether ?  
He hath slain them : shall he bid them live ?

A little sorrow, a little pleasure,  
Fate metes us from the dusty measure  
That holds the date of all of us ;

We are born with travail and strong crying,  
And from the birth-day to the dying  
The likeness of our life is thus.

One girds himself to serve another,  
Whose father was the dust, whose mother  
The little dead red worm therein ;  
They find no fruit of things they cherish ;  
The goodness of a man shall perish,  
It shall be one thing with his sin.

In deep wet ways by grey old gardens  
Fed with sharp spring the sweet fruit hardens ;  
They know not what fruits wane or grow ;  
Red summer burns to the utmost ember ;  
They know not, neither can remember,  
The old years and flowers they used to know.

Ah, for their sakes, so trapped and taken,  
For theirs, forgotten and forsaken,  
Watch, sleep not, gird thyself with prayer.  
Nay, where the heart of wrath is broken,  
Where long love ends as a thing spoken,  
How shall thy crying enter there ?

Though the iron sides of the old world falter,  
The likeness of them shall not alter  
For all the rumour of periods,  
The stars and seasons that come after,  
The tears of latter men, the laughter  
Of the old unalterable gods.

Far up above the years and nations,  
The high gods, clothed and crowned with patience,  
    Endure through days of deathlike date ;  
They bear the witness of things hidden ;  
Before their eyes all life stands chidden,  
    As they before the eyes of Fate.

Not for their love shall Fate retire,  
Nor they relent for our desire,  
    Nor the graves open for their call.  
The end is more than joy and anguish,  
Than lives that laugh and lives that languish,  
    The popped sleep, the end of all.

*Excerpt from Anactoria*

FOR who shall change with prayers or thank-  
givings

The mystery of the cruelty of things ?

Or say what God above all gods and years

With offering and blood-sacrifice of tears,

With lamentation from strange lands, from graves

Where the snake pastures, from scarred mouths of  
slaves

From prison, and from plunging prows of ships

Through flamelike foam of the sea's closing lips—

With thwartings of strange signs, and wind-blown  
hair

Of comets, desolating the dim air,

When darkness is made fast with seals and bars,

And fierce reluctance of disastrous stars,

Eclipse, and sound of shaken hills, and wings

Darkening, and blind inexpiable things—

With sorrow of labouring moons, and altering light

And travail of the planets of the night,

And weeping of the weary Pleiads seven,

Feeds the mute melancholy lust of heaven ?

Is not his incense bitterness, his meat

Murder ? his hidden face and iron feet

Hath not man known, and felt them on their way

Threaten and trample all things and every day ?

Hath he not sent us hunger ? who hath cursed

Spirit and flesh with longing ? filled with thirst  
Their lips who cried unto him ? who bade exceed  
The fervid will, fall short the feeble deed,  
Bade sink the spirit and the flesh aspire,  
Pain animate the dust of dead desire,  
And life yield up her flower to violent fate ?  
Him would I reach, him smite, him desecrate,  
Pierce the cold lips of God with human breath,  
And mix his immortality with death.  
Why hath he made us ? what had all we done  
That we should live and loathe the sterile sun,  
And with the moon wax paler as she wanes,  
And pulse by pulse feel time grow through our veins ?  
Thee too the years shall cover ; thou shalt be  
As the rose born of one same blood with thee,  
As a song sung, as a word said, and fall  
Flower-wise, and be not any more at all,  
Nor any memory of thee anywhere ;  
For never Muse has bound above thine hair  
The high Pierian flower whose graft outgrows  
All summer kinship of the mortal rose  
And colour of deciduous days, nor shed  
Reflex and flush of heaven about thine head,  
Nor reddened brows made pale by floral grief  
With splendid shadow from that lordlier leaf.  
Yea, thou shalt be forgotten like spilt wine,  
Except these kisses of my lips on thine  
Brand them with immortality ; but me—  
Men shall not see bright fire nor hear the sea,  
Nor mix their hearts with music, nor behold

Cast forth of heaven, with feet of awful gold  
And plumeless wings that make the bright air blind,  
Lightning, with thunder for a hound behind  
Hunting through fields unfurrowed and unsown,  
But in the light and laughter, in the moan  
And music, and in grasp of lip and hand  
And shudder of water that makes felt on land  
The immeasurable tremor of all the sea,  
Memories shall mix and metaphors of me.  
Like me shall be the shuddering calm of night,  
When all the winds of the world for pure delight  
Close lips that quiver and fold up wings that ache ;  
When nightingales are louder for love's sake,  
And leaves tremble like lute-strings or like fire ;  
Like me the one star swooning with desire  
Even at the cold lips of the sleepless moon,  
As I at thine ; like me the waste white noon,  
Burnt through with barren sunlight ; and like me  
The land-stream and the tide-stream in the sea.  
I am sick with time as these with ebb and flow,  
And by the yearning in my veins I know  
The yearning sound of waters ; and mine eyes  
Burn as that beamless fire which fills the skies  
With troubled stars and travailing things of flame ;  
And in my heart the grief consuming them  
Labours, and in my veins the thirst of these,  
And all the summer travail of the trees  
And all the winter sickness ; and the earth,  
Filled full with deadly works of death and birth,  
Sore spent with hungry lusts of birth and death,

Has pain like mine in her divided breath ;  
Her spring of leaves is barren, and her fruit  
Ashes ; her boughs are burdened, and her root  
Fibrous and gnarled with poison ; underneath  
Serpents have gnawn it through with tortuous teeth  
Made sharp upon the bones of all the dead,  
And wild birds rend her branches overhead.  
These, woven as raiment for his word and thought,  
These hath God made, and me as these, and wrought  
Song, and hath lit it at my lips ; and me  
Earth shall not gather though she feed on thee.  
As a shed tear shalt thou be shed ; but I—  
Lo, earth may labour, men live long and die,  
Years change and stars, and the high God devise  
New things, and old things wane before his eyes  
Who wields and wrecks them, being more strong than  
they—

But, having made me, me he shall not slay.  
Nor slay nor satiate, like those herds of his  
Who laugh and live a little, and their kiss  
Contents them, and their loves are swift and sweet,  
And sure death grasps and gains them with slow feet,  
Love they or hate, they, strive or bow their knees—  
And all these end ; he hath his will of these.  
Yea, but albeit he slay me, hating me—  
Albeit he hide me in the deep dear sea  
And cover me with cool wan foam, and ease  
This soul of mine as any soul of these,  
And give me water and great sweet waves, and make  
The very sea's name lordlier for my sake,

The whole sea sweeter—albeit I die indeed  
 And hide myself and sleep and no man heed,  
 Of me the high God hath not all his will.  
 Blossom of branches, and on each high hill  
 Clear air and wind, and under in clamorous vales  
 Fierce noises of the fiery nightingales,  
 Buds burning in the sudden spring like fire,  
 The wan washed sand and the waves' vain desire,  
 Sails seen like blown white flowers at sea, and words  
 That bring tears swiftest, and long notes of birds  
 Violently singing till the whole world sings—  
 I Sappho shall be one with all these things,  
 With all high things for ever ; and my face  
 Seen once, my songs once heard in a strange place,  
 Cleave to men's lives, and waste the days thereof  
 With gladness and much sadness and long love.  
 Yea, they shall say, earth's womb has borne in vain  
 New things, and never this best thing again ;  
 Borne days and men, borne fruits and wars and wine,  
 Seasons and songs, but no song more like mine.  
 And they shall know me as ye who have known me  
     here,  
 Last year when I loved Atthis, and this year  
 When I love thee ; and they shall praise me, and say  
 “ She hath all time as all we have our day,  
 Shall she not live and have her will ”—even I ?  
 Yea, though thou diest, I say I shall not die.  
 For these shall give me of their souls, shall give  
 Life, and the days and loves wherewith I live,  
 Shall quicken me with loving, fill with breath,

Save me and serve me, strive for me with death.  
Alas, that neither moon nor snow nor dew  
Nor all cold things can purge me wholly through,  
Assuage me nor allay me nor appease,  
Till supreme sleep shall bring me bloodless ease,  
Till time wax faint in all his periods ;  
Till fate undo the bondage of the gods,  
And lay, to slake and satiate me all through,  
Lotus and Lethe on my lips like dew,  
And shed around and over and under me  
Thick darkness and the insuperable sea.

## *Laus Veneris*

**A** SLEEP or waking is it ? for her neck,  
Kissed over close, wears yet a purple speck  
Wherein the pained blood falters and goes out ;  
Soft, and stung softly—fairer for a fleck.

But though my lips shut sucking on the place,  
There is no vein at work upon her face ;  
Her eyelids are so peaceable, no doubt  
Deep sleep has warmed her blood through all its ways.

Lo, this is she that was the world's delight ;  
The old grey years were parcels of her might ;  
The strewings of the ways wherein she trod  
Were the twain seasons of the day and night.

Lo, she was thus when her clear limbs enticed  
All lips that now grow sad with kissing Christ,  
Stained with blood fallen from the feet of God,  
The feet and hands whereat our souls were priced.

Alas, Lord, surely thou art great and fair.  
But lo her wonderfully woven hair !  
And thou didst heal us with thy piteous kiss ;  
But see now, Lord ; her mouth is lovelier.

She is right fair ; what hath she done to thee ?  
Nay, fair Lord Christ, lift up thine eyes and see ;  
    Had now thy mother such a lip—like this ?  
Thou knowest how sweet a thing it is to me.

Inside the Horsel here the air is hot ;  
Right little peace one hath for it, God wot ;  
    The scented dusty daylight burns the air,  
And my heart chokes me till I hear it not.

Behold, my Venus, my soul's body, lies  
With my love laid upon her garment-wise,  
    Feeling my love in all her limbs and hair  
And shed between her eyelids through her eyes.

She holds my heart in her sweet open hands  
Hanging asleep ; hard by her head there stands,  
    Crowned with gilt thorns and clothed with flesh like  
    fire,  
Love, wan as foam blown up the salt burnt sands—

Hot as the brackish waifs of yellow spume  
That shift and steam—loose clots of arid fume  
    From the sea's panting mouth of dry desire ;  
There stands he, like one labouring at a loom.

The warp holds fast across ; and every thread  
That makes the woof up has dry specks of red ;  
    Always the shuttle cleaves clean through, and he  
Weaves with the hair of many a ruined head.

Love is not glad nor sorry, as I deem ;  
Labouring he dreams, and labours in the dream,  
    Till when the spool is finished, lo I see  
His web, reeled off, curls and goes out like steam.

Night falls like fire ; the heavy lights run low,  
And as they drop, my blood and body so  
    Shake as the flame shakes, full of days and hours  
That sleep not neither weep they as they go.

Ah yet would God this flesh of mine might be  
Where air might wash and long leaves cover me,  
    Where tides of grass break into foam of flowers,  
Or where the wind's feet shine along the sea.

Ah yet would God that stems and roots were bred  
Out of my weary body and my head,  
    That sleep were sealed upon me with a seal,  
And I were as the least of all his dead.

Would God my blood were dew to feed the grass,  
Mine ears made deaf and mine eyes blind as glass,  
    My body broken as a turning wheel,  
And my mouth stricken ere it saith Alas !

Ah God, that love were as a flower or flame,  
That life were as the naming of a name,  
    That death were not more pitiful than desire,  
That these things were not one thing and the same.

Behold now, surely somewhere there is death :  
For each man hath some space of years, he saith,  
    A little space of time ere time expire,  
A little day, a little way of breath.

And lo, between the sundawn and the sun,  
His day's work and his night's work are undone ;  
    And lo, between the nightfall and the light,  
He is not, and none knoweth of such an one.

Ah God, that I were as all souls that be,  
As any herb or leaf of any tree,  
    As men that toil through hours of labouring night,  
As bones of men under the deep sharp sea.

Outside it must be winter among men ;  
For at the gold bars of the gates again  
    I heard all night and all the hours of it  
The wind's wet wings and fingers drip with rain.

Knights gather, riding sharp for cold ; I know  
The ways and woods are strangled with the snow ;  
    And with short song the maidens spin and sit  
Until Christ's birthnight, lily-like, arow.

The scent and shadow shed about me make  
The very soul in all my senses ache ;  
    The hot hard night is fed upon my breath,  
And sleep beholds me from afar awake.

Alas, but surely where the hills grow deep,  
Or where the wild ways of the sea are steep,  
Or in strange places somewhere there is death,  
And on death's face the scattered hair of sleep.

There lover-like with lips and limbs that meet  
They lie, they pluck sweet fruit of life and eat ;  
But me the hot and hungry days devour,  
And in my mouth no fruit of theirs is sweet.

No fruit of theirs, but fruit of my desire,  
For her love's sake whose lips through mine respire ;  
Her eyelids on her eyes like flower on flower,  
Mine eyelids on mine eyes like fire on fire.

So lie we, not as sleep that lies by death,  
With heavy kisses and with happy breath ;  
Not as man lies by woman, when the bride  
Laughs low for love's sake and the words he saith.

For she lies, laughing low with love ; she lies  
And turns his kisses on her lips to sighs,  
To sighing sound of lips unsatisfied,  
And the sweet tears are tender with her eyes.

Ah, not as they, but as the souls that were  
Slain in the old time, having found her fair ;  
Who, sleeping with her lips upon their eyes,  
Heard sudden serpents hiss across her hair.

Their blood runs round the roots of time like rain :  
She casts them forth and gathers them again ;  
    With nerve and bone she weaves and multiplies  
Exceeding pleasure out of extreme pain.

Her little chambers drip with flower-like red,  
Her girdles, and the chaplets of her head,  
    Her armlets and her anklets ; with her feet  
She tramples all that winepress of the dead.

Her gateways smoke with fume of flowers and fires  
With loves burnt out and unassuaged desires ;  
    Between her lips the steam of them is sweet,  
The languor in her ears of many lyres.

Her beds are full of perfume and sad sound,  
Her doors are made with music, and barred round  
    With sighing and with laughter and with tears,  
With tears whereby strong souls of men are bound.

There is the knight Adonis that was slain ;  
With flesh and blood she chains him for a chain ;  
    The body and the spirit in her ears  
Cry, for her lips divide him vein by vein.

Yea, all she slayeth ; yea, every man save me ;  
Me, love, thy lover that must cleave to thee  
    Till the ending of the days and ways of earth,  
The shaking of the sources of the sea.

Me, most forsaken of all souls that fell ;

Me, satiated with things insatiable ;

Me, for whose sake the extreme hell makes mirth,  
Yea, laughter kindles at the heart of hell.

Alas thy beauty ! for thy mouth's sweet sake

My soul is bitter to me, my limbs quake

As water, as the flesh of men that weep,  
As their heart's vein whose heart goes nigh to break.

Ah God, that sleep with flower-sweet finger-tips

Would crush the fruit of death upon my lips ;

Ah God, that death would tread the grapes of sleep  
And wring their juice upon me as it drips.

There is no change of cheer for many days,

But change of chimes high up in the air, that sways

Rung by the running fingers of the wind ;  
And singing sorrows heard on hidden ways.

Day smiteth day in twain, night sundereth night,

And on mine eyes the dark sits as the light ;

Yea, Lord, thou knowest I know not, having sinned,  
If heaven be clean or unclean in thy sight.

Yea, as if earth were sprinkled over me,

Such chafed harsh earth as chokes a sandy sea,

Each pore doth yearn, and the dried blood thereof  
Gaspeth by sick fits, my heart swims heavily,

There is a feverish famine in my veins ;  
Below her bosom, where a crushed grape stains  
The white and blue, there my lips caught and clove  
An hour since, and what mark of me remains ?

I dare not always touch her, lest the kiss  
Leave my lips charred. Yea, Lord, a little bliss,  
Brief bitter bliss, one hath for a great sin ;  
Nathless thou knowest how sweet a thing it is.

Sin, is it sin whereby men's souls are thrust  
Into the pit ? yet had I a good trust  
To save my soul before it slipped therein,  
Trode under by the fire-shod feet of lust.

For if mine eyes fail and my soul takes breath,  
I look between the iron sides of death  
Into sad hell where all sweet love hath end,  
All but the pain that never finisheth.

There are the naked faces of great kings,  
The singing folk with all their lute-playings ;  
There when one cometh he shall have to friend  
The grave that covets and the worm that clings.

There sit the knights that were so great of hand,  
The ladies that were queens of fair green land,  
Grown grey and black now, brought unto the dust,  
Soiled, without raiment, clad about with sand.

There is one end for all of them ; they sit  
Naked and sad, they drink the dregs of it,  
Trodden as grapes in the wine-press of lust,  
Trampled and trodden by the fiery feet.

I see the marvellous mouth whereby there fell  
Cities and people whom the gods loved well,  
Yet for her sake on them the fire gat hold,  
And for their sakes on her the fire of hell.

And softer than the Egyptian lote-leaf is,  
The queen whose face was worth the world to kiss  
Wearing at breast a suckling snake of gold ;  
And large pale lips of strong Semiramis,

Curled like a tiger's that curl back to feed ;  
Red only where the last kiss made them bleed ;  
Her hair most thick with many a carven gem,  
Deep in the mane, great-chested, like a steed.

Yea, with red sin the faces of them shine ;  
But in all these there was no sin like mine ;  
No, not in all the strange great sins of them  
That made the wine-press froth and foam with wine.

For I was of Christ's choosing, I God's knight,  
No blinkard heathen stumbling for scant light ;  
I can well see, for all the dusty days  
Gone past, the clean great time of goodly fight.

I smell the breathing battle sharp with blows,  
With shriek of shafts and snapping short of bows ;  
    The fair pure sword smites out in subtle ways,  
Sounds and long lights are shed between the rows

Of beautiful mailed men ; the edged light slips,  
Most like a snake that takes short breath and dips  
    Sharp from the beautifully bending head,  
With all its gracious body lithe as lips

That curl in touching you ; right in this wise  
My sword doth, seeming fire in mine own eyes,  
    Leaving all colours in them brown and red  
And flecked with death ; then the keen breaths like  
    sighs,

The caught-up choked dry laughters following them,  
When all the fighting face is grown a flame  
    For pleasure, and the pulse that stuns the ears,  
And the heart's gladness of the goodly game.

Let me think yet a little ; I do know  
These things were sweet, but sweet such years ago  
    Their savour is all turned now into tears ;  
Yea, ten years since, where the blue ripples blow,

The blue curled eddies of the blowing Rhine,  
I felt the sharp wind shaking grass and vine  
    Touch my blood too, and sting me with delight  
Through all this waste and weary body of mine

That never feels clear air ; right gladly then  
I rode alone, a great way off my men,  
    And heard the chiming bridle smite and smite,  
And gave each rhyme thereof some rhyme again,

Till my song shifted to that iron one ;  
Seeing there rode up between me and the sun  
    Some certain of my foe's men, for his three  
White wolves across their painted coats did run.

The first red-bearded, with square cheeks—alack,  
I made my knave's blood turn his beard to black ;  
    The slaying of him was a joy to see :  
Perchance too, when at night he came not back,

Some woman fell a-weeping, whom this thief  
Would beat when he had drunken ; yet small grief  
    Hath any for the ridding of such knaves ;  
Yea, if one wept, I doubt her teen was brief.

This bitter love is sorrow in all lands,  
Draining of eyelids, wringing of drenched hands,  
    Sighing of hearts and filling up of graves ;  
A sign across the head of the world he stands,

An one that hath a plague-mark on his brows ;  
Dust and spilt blood do track him to his house  
    Down under earth ; sweet smells of lip and cheek,  
Like a sweet snake's breath made more poisonous

With chewing of some perfumed deadly grass,  
Are shed all round his passage if he pass,  
    And their quenched savour leaves the whole soul  
    weak,  
Sick with keen guessing whence the perfume was.

As one who hidden in deep sedge and reeds  
Smells the rare scent made where a panther feeds,  
    And tracking ever slotwise the warm smell  
Is snapped upon by the sweet mouth and bleeds,

His head far down the hot sweet throat of her—  
So one tracks love, whose breath is deadlier,  
    And lo, one springe and you are fast in hell,  
Fast as the gin's grip of a wayfarer.

I think now, as the heavy hours deace  
One after one, and bitter thoughts increase  
    One upon one, of all sweet finished things ;  
The breaking of the battle ; the long peace

Wherein we sat clothed softly, each man's hair  
Crowned with green leaves beneath white hoods of  
    vair ;

    The sounds of sharp spears at great tourneyings,  
And noise of singing in the late sweet air.

I sang of love too, knowing nought thereof ;  
"Sweeter," I said, "the little laugh of love  
    Than tears out of the eyes of Magdalen,  
Or any fallen feather of the Dove.

“ The broken little laugh that spoils a kiss,  
The ache of purple pulses, and the bliss  
Of blinded eyelids that expand again—  
Love draws them open with those lips of his,

“ Lips that cling hard till the kissed face has grown  
Of one same fire and colour with their own ;  
Then ere one sleep, appeased with sacrifice,  
Where his lips wounded, there his lips atone.”

I sang these things long since and knew them not,  
“ Lo, here is love, or there is love, God wot,  
This man and that finds favour in his eyes,”  
I said, “ but I, what guerdon have I got ?

“ The dust of praise that is blown everywhere  
In all men’s faces with the common air ;  
The bay-leaf that wants chafing to be sweet  
Before they wind it in a singer’s hair.”

So that one dawn I rode forth sorrowing ;  
I had no hope but of some evil thing,  
And so rode slowly past the windy wheat  
And past the vineyard and the water-spring,

Up to the Horsel. A great elder-tree  
Held back its heaps of flowers to let me see  
The ripe tall grass, and one that walked therein,  
Naked, with hair shed over to the knee.

She walked between the blossom and the grass ;  
I knew the beauty of her, what she was,  
    The beauty of her body and her sin,  
And in my flesh the sin of hers, alas !

Alas ! for sorrow is all the end of this.  
O sad kissed mouth, how sorrowful it is !  
    O breast whereat some suckling sorrow clings,  
Red with the bitter blossom of a kiss !

Ah, with blind lips I felt for you, and found  
About my neck your hands and hair enwound,  
    The hands that stifle and the hair that stings,  
I felt them fasten sharply without sound.

Yea, for my sin I had great store of bliss :  
Rise up, make answer for me, let thy kiss  
    Seal my lips hard from speaking of my sin,  
Lest one go mad to hear how sweet it is.

Yet I waxed faint with fume of barren bowers,  
And murmuring of the heavy-headed hours ;  
    And let the dove's beak fret and peck within  
My lips in vain, and Love shed fruitless flowers.

So that God looked upon me when your hands  
Were hot about me ; yea, God brake my bands  
    To save my soul alive, and I came forth  
Like a man blind and naked in strange lands

That hears men laugh and weep, and knows not  
whence

Nor wherefore, but is broken in his sense ;

Howbeit I met folk riding from the north  
Towards Rome, to purge them of their souls' offence,

And rode with them, and spake to none ; the day  
Stunned me like lights upon some wizard way,

And ate like fire mine eyes and mine eyesight ;  
So rode I, hearing all these chant and pray,

And marvelled ; till before us rose and fell

White cursed hills, like outer skirts of hell

Seen where men's eyes look through the day to  
night,

Like a jagged shell's lips, harsh, untunable,

Blown in between by devils' wrangling breath ;

Nathless we won well past that hell and death,

Down to the sweet land where all airs are good,  
Even unto Rome where God's grace tarrieth.

Then came each man and worshipped at his knees

Who in the Lord God's likeness bears the keys

To bind or loose, and called on Christ's shed blood,  
And so the sweet-souled father gave him ease.

But when I came I fell down at his feet,

Saying, " Father, though the Lord's blood be right  
sweet,

The spot it takes not off the panther's skin,  
Nor shall an Ethiop's stain be bleached with it.

“Lo, I have sinned and have spat out at God,  
Wherefore his hand is heavier and his rod  
More sharp because of mine exceeding sin,  
And all his raiment redder than bright blood

“Before mine eyes ; yea, for my sake I wot  
The heat of hell is waxen seven times hot  
Through my great sin.” Then spake he some  
sweet word,  
Giving me cheer ; which thing availed me not ;

Yea, scarce I wist if such indeed were said ;  
For when I ceased—lo, as one newly dead  
Who hears a great cry out of hell, I heard  
The crying of his voice across my head.

“Until this dry shred staff, that hath no whit  
Of leaf nor bark, bear blossom and smell sweet,  
Seek thou not any mercy in God’s sight,  
For so long shalt thou be cast out from it.”

Yea, what if dried-up stems wax red and green,  
Shall that thing be which is not nor has been ?  
Yea, what if sapless bark wax green and white,  
Shall any good fruit grow upon my sin ?

Nay, though sweet fruit were plucked of a dry tree,  
And though men drew sweet waters of the sea,  
There should not grow sweet leaves on this dead  
stem,  
This waste wan body and shaken soul of me.

Yea, though God search it warily enough,  
There is not one sound thing in all thereof ;  
    Though he search all my veins through, searching  
    them  
He shall find nothing whole therein but love.

For I came home right heavy, with small cheer,  
And lo my love, mine own soul's heart, more dear  
    Than mine own soul, more beautiful than God,  
Who hath my being between the hands of her—

Fair still, but fair for no man saving me,  
As when she came out of the naked sea  
    Making the foam as fire whereon she trod,  
And as the inner flower of fire was she.

Yea, she laid hold upon me, and her mouth  
Clove unto mine as soul to body doth,  
    And, laughing, made her lips luxurious ;  
Her hair had smells of all the sunburnt south,

Strange spice and flower, strange savour of crushed  
fruit,  
And perfume the swart kings tread underfoot  
    For pleasure when their minds wax amorous,  
Charred frankincense and grated sandal-root.

And I forgot fear and all weary things,  
All ended prayers and perished thanksgivings,  
    Feeling her face with all her eager hair  
Cleave to me, clinging as a fire that clings

To the body and to the raiment, burning them ;  
As after death I know that such-like flame  
    Shall cleave to me for ever ; yea, what care,  
Albeit I burn then, having felt the same ?

Ah love, there is no better life than this ;  
To have known love, how bitter a thing it is,  
    And afterwards be cast out of God's sight ;  
Yea, these that know not, shall they have such bliss

High up in barren heaven before his face  
As we twain in the heavy-hearted place,  
    Remembering love and all the dead delight,  
And all that time was sweet with for a space ?

For till the thunder in the trumpet be,  
Soul may divide from body, but not we  
    One from another ; I hold thee with my hand,  
I let mine eyes have all their will of thee,

I seal myself upon thee with my might,  
Abiding alway out of all men's sight  
    Until God loosen over sea and land  
The thunder of the trumpets of the night.

## *Before Parting*

A MONTH or twain to live on honeycomb  
Is pleasant ; but one tires of scented time,  
Cold sweet recurrence of accepted rhyme,  
And that strong purple under juice and foam  
Where the wine's heart has burst ;  
Nor feel the latter kisses like the first.

Once yet, this poor one time ; I will not pray  
Even to change the bitterness of it,  
The bitter taste ensuing on the sweet,  
To make your tears fall where your soft hair lay  
All blurred and heavy in some perfumed wise  
Over my face and eyes.

And yet who knows what end the scythed wheat  
Makes of its foolish poppies' mouths of red ?  
These were not sown, these are not harvested,  
They grow a month and are cast under feet  
And none has care thereof,  
As none has care of a divided love.

I know each shadow of your lips by rote,  
Each change of love in eyelids and eyebrows ;  
The fashion of fair temples tremulous  
With tender blood, and colour of your throat ;  
I know not how love is gone out of this,  
Seeing that all was his.

Love's likeness there endures upon all these :  
But out of these one shall not gather love.  
Day hath not strength nor the night shade enough  
To make love whole and fill his lips with ease,  
As some bee-builded cell  
Feels at filled lips the heavy honey swell.

I know not how this last month leaves your hair  
Less full of purple colour and hid spice,  
And that luxurious trouble of closed eyes  
Is mixed with meaner shadow and waste care ;  
And love, kissed out by pleasure, seems not yet  
Worth patience to regret.

*Extract from The Masque of Queen Bersabe*

HERODIAS.

I am the queen Herodias.  
This headband of my temples was  
    King Herod's gold band woven me.  
This broken dry staff in my hand  
Was the queen's staff of a great land  
    Betwixen Perse and Samarie.  
For that one dancing of my feet,  
The fire is come in my green wheat,  
    From one sea to the other sea.

AHOLIBAH.

I am the queen Aholibah.  
My lips kissed dumb the word of *Ab*  
    Sighed on strange lips grown sick thereby  
God wrought to me my royal bed ;  
The inner work thereof was red,  
    The outer work was ivory.  
My mouth's heat was the heat of flame  
For lust towards the kings that came  
    With horsemen riding royally.

CLEOPATRA.

I am the queen of Ethiope.  
Love bade my kissing eyelids ope  
    That men beholding might praise love.

## SWINBURNE

My hair was wonderful and curled ;  
My lips held fast the mouth o' the world  
    To spoil the strength and speech thereof.  
The latter triumph in my breath  
Bowed down the beaten brows of death,  
    Ashamed they had not wrath enough.

## ABIHAIL.

I am the queen of Tyrians.  
My hair was glorious for twelve spans,  
    That dried to loose dust afterward.  
My stature was a strong man's length :  
My neck was like a place of strength  
    Built with white walls, even and hard.  
Like the first noise of rain leaves catch  
One from another, snatch by snatch,  
    Is my praise, hissed against and marred.

## AZUBAH.

I am the queen of Amorites.  
My face was like a place of lights  
    With multitudes at festival.  
The glory of my gracious brows  
Was like God's house made glorious  
    With colours upon either wall.  
Between my brows and hair there was  
A white space like a space of glass  
    With golden candles over all.

AHOLAH.

I am the queen of Amalek.  
 There was no tender touch or fleck  
     To spoil my body or bared feet.  
 My words were soft like dulcimers,  
 And the first sweet of grape-flowers  
     Made each side of my bosom sweet.  
 My raiment was as tender fruit  
 Whose rind smells sweet of spice-tree root,  
     Bruised balm-blossom and budded wheat.

AHINOAM.

I am the queen Ahinoam.  
 Like the throat of a soft slain lamb  
     Was my throat, softer veined than his :  
 My lips were as two grapes the sun  
 Lays his whole weight of heat upon  
     Like a mouth heavy with a kiss :  
 My hair's pure purple a wrought fleece,  
 My temples therein as a piece  
     Of a pomegranate's cleaving is.

ATARAH.

I am the queen Sidonian.  
 My face made faint the face of man,  
     And strength was bound between my brows.  
 Spikenard was hidden in my ships,  
 Honey and wheat and myrrh in strips,  
     White wools that shine as colour does.

## SWINBURNE

Soft linen dyed upon the fold,  
Split spice and cores of scented gold,  
Cedar and broken calamus.

## SEMIRAMIS.

I am the queen Semiramis.  
The whole world and the sea that is  
In fashion like a chrysopras,  
The noise of all men labouring,  
The priest's mouth tired through thanksgiving,  
The sound of love in the blood's pause,  
The strength of love in the blood's beat,  
All these were cast beneath my feet  
And all found lesser than I was.

## HESIONE.

I am the queen Hesioné.  
The seasons that increased in me  
Made my face fairer than all men's.  
I had the summer in my hair ;  
And all the pale gold autumn air  
Was as the habit of my sense.  
My body was as fire that shone ;  
God's beauty that makes all things one  
Was one among my handmaidens.

## CHRYSOTHEMIS.

I am the queen of Samothrace.  
God, making roses, made my face  
As a rose filled up full with red.

My prows made sharp the straitened seas  
 From Pontus to that Chersonese  
     Whereon the ebbd Asian stream is shed.  
 My hair was as sweet scent that drips ;  
 Love's breath begun about my lips  
     Kindled the lips of people dead.

THOMYRIS.

I am the queen of Scythians.  
 My strength was like no strength of man's,  
     My face like day, my breast like spring.  
 My fame was felt in the extreme land  
 That hath sunshine on the one hand  
     And on the other star-shining.  
 Yea, and the wind there fails of breath ;  
 Yea, and there life is waste like death ;  
     Yea, and there death is a glad thing.

HARIAS.

I am the queen of Anakim.  
 In the spent years whose speech is dim,  
     Whose raiment is the dust and death,  
 My stately body without stain  
 Shone as the shining race of rain  
     Whose hair a great wind scattereth,  
 Now hath God turned my lips to sighs,  
 Plucked off mine eyelids from mine eyes,  
     And sealed with seals my way of breath.

## MYRRHA.

I am the queen Arabian.  
The tears wherewith mine eyelids ran  
    Smelt like my perfumed eyelids' smell.  
A harsh thirst made my soft mouth hard,  
That ached with kisses afterward ;  
    My brain rang like a beaten bell.  
As tears on eyes, as fire on wood,  
Sin fed upon my breath and blood,  
    Sin made my breasts subside and swell.

## PASIPHAE.

I am the queen Pasiphae.  
Not all the pure clean-coloured sea  
    Could cleanse or cool my yearning veins ;  
Nor any root nor herb that grew,  
Flag-leaves that let green water through,  
    Nor washing of the dews and rains.  
From shame's pressed core I wrung the sweet  
Fruit's savour that was death to eat,  
    Whereof no seed but death remains.

## SAPPHO.

I am the queen of Lesbians.  
My love, that had no part in man's,  
    Was sweeter than all shape of sweet.  
The intolerable infinite desire  
Made my face pale like faded fire  
    When the ashen pyre falls through with heat.

My blood was hot wan wine of love,  
 And my song's sound the sound thereof,  
 The sound of the delight of it.

MESSALINA.

I am the queen of Italy.  
 These were the signs God set on me ;  
     A barren beauty subtle and sleek,  
 Curled carven hair, and cheeks worn wan  
 With fierce false lips of many a man,  
     Large temples where the blood ran weak,  
 A mouth athirst and amorous  
 And hungering as the grave's mouth does  
     That, being an-hungred, cannot speak.

AMESTRIS.

I am the queen of Persians.  
 My breasts were lordlier than bright swans,  
     My body as amber fair and thin.  
 Strange flesh was given my lips for bread,  
 With poisonous hours my days were fed,  
     And my feet shod with adder-skin.  
 In Shushan toward Ecbatane  
 I wrought my joys with tears and pain,  
     My loves with blood and bitter sin.

EPHRATH.

I am the queen of Rephaim.  
 God, that some while refraineth him,  
     Made in the end a spoil of me.

## SWINBURNE

My rumour was upon the world  
As strong sound of swoln water hurled  
    Through porches of the straining sea.  
My hair was like the flag-flower,  
And my breasts carven goodlier  
    Than beryl with chalcedony.

## PASITHEA.

I am the queen of Cypriotes.  
Mine oarsmen, labouring with brown throats  
    Sang of me many a tender thing.  
My maidens, girdled loose and braced  
With gold from bosom to white waist,  
    Praised me between their wool-combing.  
All that praise Venus all night long  
With lips like speech and lids like song  
    Praised me till song lost heart to sing.

## ALACIEL.

I am the queen Alaciel.  
My mouth was like that moist gold cell  
    Whereout the thickest honey drips.  
Mine eyes were as a grey-green sea ;  
The amorous blood that smote on me  
    Smote to my feet and finger-tips.  
My throat was whiter than the dove,  
Mine eyelids as the seals of love,  
    And as the doors of love my lips.

ERIGONE.

I am the queen Erigone.  
The wild wine shed as blood on me  
    Made my face brighter than a bride's.  
My large lips had the old thirst of earth,  
Mine arms the might of the old sea's girth  
    Bound round the whole world's iron sides.  
Within mine eyes and in mine ears  
Were music and the wine of tears,  
    And light, and thunder of the tides.

## *August*

**T**HERE were four apples on the bough,  
Half gold half red, that one might know  
The blood was ripe inside the core ;  
The colour of the leaves was more  
Like stems of yellow corn that grow  
Through all the gold June meadow's floor.

The warm smell of the fruit was good  
To feed on, and the split green wood,  
With all its bearded lips and stains  
Of mosses in the cloven veins,  
Most pleasant, if one lay or stood  
In sunshine or in happy rains.

There were four apples on the tree,  
Red stained through gold, that all might see  
The sun went warm from core to rind ;  
The green leaves made the summer blind  
In that soft place they kept for me  
With golden apples shut behind.

The leaves caught gold across the sun,  
And where the bluest air begun  
Thirsted for song to help the heat ;  
As I to feel my lady's feet  
Draw close before the day were done ;  
Both lips grew dry with dreams of it.

In the mute August afternoon  
They trembled to some undertune  
Of music in the silver air ;  
Great pleasure was it to be there  
Till green turned duskier and the moon  
Coloured the corn-sheaves like gold hair.

That August time it was delight  
To watch the red moons wane to white  
'Twiht grey seamed stems of apple-trees ;  
A sense of heavy harmonies  
Grew on the growth of patient night,  
More sweet than shapen music is.

But some three hours before the moon  
The air, still eager from the noon,  
Flagged after heat, not wholly dead ;  
Against the stem I leant my head ;  
The colour soothed me like a tune,  
Green leaves all round the gold and red.

I lay there till the warm smell grew  
More sharp, when flecks of yellow dew  
Between the round ripe leaves had blurred  
The rind with stain and wet ; I heard  
A wind that blew and breathed and blew,  
Too weak to alter its one word.

The wet leaves next the gentle fruit  
Felt smoother, and the brown tree-root

Felt the mould warmer : I too felt  
(As water feels the slow gold melt  
Right through it when the day burns mute)  
The peace of time wherein love dwelt.

There were four apples on the tree,  
Gold stained on red that all might see  
The sweet blood filled them to the core :  
The colour of her hair is more  
Like stems of fair faint gold, that be  
Mown from the harvest's middle floor.

*Song from Lochrine*

ESTRILD (*sings*) :—

HAD I wist, quoth spring to the swallow,  
That earth could forget me, kissed  
By summer, and lured to follow  
Down ways that I know not, I,  
My heart should have waxed not high :  
Mid March would have seen me die,  
Had I wist.

Had I wist, O spring, said the swallow,  
That hope was a sunlit mist  
And the faint light heart of it hollow,  
Thy woods had not heard me sing,  
Thy winds had not known my wing ;  
It had faltered ere thine did, spring,  
Had I wist.



DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI



## *The Blessed Damozel*

THE blessed damozel leaned out  
From the gold bar of Heaven ;  
Her eyes were deeper than the depth  
Of waters stilled at even ;  
She had three lilies in her hand,  
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,  
No wrought flowers did adorn,  
But a white rose of Mary's gift,  
For service meetly worn ;  
Her hair that lay along her back  
Was yellow like ripe corn.

Herseemed she scarce had been a day  
One of God's choristers ;  
The wonder was not yet quite gone  
From that still look of hers ;  
Albeit, to them she left, her day  
Had counted as ten years.

(To one, it is ten years of years.  
. . . Yet now, and in this place,  
Surely she leaned o'er me—her hair  
Fell all about my face. . . .  
Nothing : the autumn-fall of leaves.  
The whole year sets apace.)

It was the rampart of God's house  
That she was standing on ;  
By God built over the sheer depth  
The which is Space begun ;  
So high, that looking downward thence  
She scarce could see the sun.

It lies in Heaven, across the flood  
Of ether, as a bridge.  
Beneath, the tides of day and night  
With flame and darkness ridge  
The void, as low as where this earth  
Spins like a fretful midge.

Around her, lovers, newly met  
'Mid deathless love's acclaims,  
Spoke evermore among themselves  
Their heart-remembered names ;  
And the souls mounting up to God  
Went by her like thin flames.

And still she bowed herself and stooped  
Out of the circling charm ;  
Until her bosom must have made  
The bar she leaned on warm,  
And the lilies lay as if asleep  
Along her bended arm.

From the fixed place of Heaven she saw  
Time like a pulse shake fierce

Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove  
    Within the gulf to pierce  
Its path ; and now she spoke as when  
    The stars sang in their spheres.

The sun was gone now ; the curled moon  
    Was like a little feather  
Fluttering far down the gulf ; and now  
    She spoke through the still weather.  
Her voice was like the voice the stars  
    Had when they sang together.

(Ah sweet ! Even now, in that bird's song,  
    Strove not her accents there,  
Fain to be hearkened ? When those bells  
    Possessed the mid-day air,  
Strove not her steps to reach my side  
    Down all the echoing stair ?)

“ I wish that he were come to me,  
    For he will come,” she said.

“ Have I not prayed in Heaven ?—on earth,  
    Lord, Lord, has he not pray'd ?  
Are not two prayers a perfect strength ?  
    And shall I feel afraid ?

“ When round his head the aureole clings,  
    And he is clothed in white,  
I'll take his hand and go with him  
    To the deep wells of light ;  
As unto a stream we will step down,  
    And bathe there in God's sight.

“ We two will stand beside that shrine,  
Occult, withheld, untrod,  
Whose lamps are stirred continually  
With prayers sent up to God ;  
And see our old prayers, granted, melt  
Each like a little cloud.

“ We two will lie i' the shadow of  
That living mystic tree  
Within whose secret growth the Dove  
Is sometimes felt to be,  
While every leaf that His plumes touch  
Saith His Name audibly.

“ And I myself will teach to him,  
I myself, lying so,  
The songs I sing here ; which his voice  
Shall pause in, hushed and slow,  
And find some knowledge at each pause,  
Or some new thing to know.”

(Alas ! we two, we two, thou say'st !  
Yea, one wast thou with me  
That once of old. But shall God lift  
To endless unity  
The soul whose likeness with thy soul  
Was but its love for thee ?)

“ We two,” she said, “ will seek the groves  
Where the lady Mary is,

With her five handmaidens, whose names  
Are five sweet symphonies,  
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,  
Margaret and Rosalys.

“ Circlewise sit they, with bound locks  
And foreheads garlanded ;  
Into the fine cloth white like flame  
Weaving the golden thread,  
To fashion the birth-robcs for them  
Who are just born, being dead.

“ He shall fear, haply, and be dumb :  
Then will I lay my cheek  
To his, and tell about our love,  
Not once abashed or weak :  
And the dear Mother will approve  
My pride, and let me speak.

“ Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,  
To Him round whom all souls  
Kneel, the clear-ranged unnumbered heads  
Bowed with their aureoles :  
And angels meeting us shall sing  
To their citherns and citoles.

“ There will I ask of Christ the Lord  
Thus much for him and me :—  
Only to live as once on earth  
With Love,—only to be,  
As then awhile, for ever now  
Together, I and he.”

She gazed and listened and then said,  
Less sad of speech than mild,—  
“ All this is when he comes.” She ceased.  
The light thrilled towards her, fill'd  
With angels in strong level flight.  
Her eyes prayed, and she smil'd.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their path  
Was vague in distant spheres :  
And then she cast her arms along  
The golden barriers,  
And laid her face between her hands,  
And wept. (I heard her tears.)

## *Sister Helen*

“ **W**HY did you melt your waxen man,  
Sister Helen ?

To-day is the third since you began.”

“ The time was long, yet the time ran,  
Little brother.”

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
Three days to-day, between Hell and Heaven !*)

“ But if you have done your work aright,  
Sister Helen,  
You’ll let me play, for you said I might.”

“ Be very still in your play to-night,  
Little brother.”

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
Third night, to-night, between Hell and Heaven !*)

“ You said it must melt ere vesper-bell,  
Sister Helen ;

If now it be molten, all is well.”

“ Even so,—nay, peace ! you cannot tell,  
Little brother.”

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
O what is this, between Hell and Heaven ?*)

“ Oh the waxen knave was plump to-day,  
Sister Helen ;

How like dead folk he has dropped away ! ”

“ Nay now, of the dead what can you say,  
Little brother ? ”

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
What of the dead, between Hell and Heaven ?*)

“ See, see, the sunken pile of wood,  
Sister Helen,  
Shines through the thinned wax red as blood ! ”

“ Nay now, when looked you yet on blood,  
Little brother ? ”

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
How pale she is, between Hell and Heaven !*)

“ Now close your eyes, for they’re sick and sore,  
Sister Helen,  
And I’ll play without the gallery door.”

“ Aye, let me rest,—I’ll lie on the floor,  
Little brother.”

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
What rest to-night, between Hell and Heaven ?*)

“ Here high up in the balcony,  
Sister Helen,  
The moon flies face to face with me.”

“ Aye, look and say whatever you see,  
Little brother.”

(*O Mother, Mary Mother  
What sight to-night, between Hell and Heaven ?*)

“ Outside it’s merry in the wind’s wake,

Sister Helen ;

In the shaken trees the chill stars shake.”

“ Hush, heard you a horse-tread as you spake,

Little brother ? ”

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*

*What sounds to-night, between Hell and Heaven ?*)

“ I hear a horse-tread, and I see,

Sister Helen,

Three horsemen that ride terribly.”

“ Little brother, whence come the three,

Little brother ? ”

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*

*Whence should they come, between Hell and Heaven ?*)

“ They come by the hill-verge from Boyne Bar,

Sister Helen,

And one draws nigh, but two are afar.”

“ Look, look, do you know them who they are,

Little brother ? ”

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*

*Who should they be, between Hell and Heaven ?*)

“ Oh, it’s Keith of Eastholm rides so fast,

Sister Helen,

For I know the white mane on the blast.”

“ The hour has come, has come at last,

Little brother ! ”

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*

*Her hour at last, between Hell and Heaven !*)



- “ But he has not ceased to cry to-day,  
Sister Helen,  
That you should take your curse away.”
- “ My prayer was heard,—he need but pray,  
Little brother ! ”  
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
Shall God not hear, between Hell and Heaven ?*)
- “ But he says, till you take back your ban,  
Sister Helen,  
His soul would pass, yet never can.”
- “ Nay then, shall I slay a living man,  
Little brother ? ”  
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
A living soul, between Hell and Heaven !*)
- “ But he calls for ever on your name,  
Sister Helen,  
And says that he melts before a flame.”
- “ My heart for his pleasure fared the same,  
Little brother.”  
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
Fire at the heart, between Hell and Heaven !*)
- “ Here’s Keith of Westholm riding fast,  
Sister Helen,  
For I know the white plume on the blast.”
- “ The hour, the sweet hour I forecast,  
Little brother ! ”  
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
Is the hour sweet, between Hell and Heaven ?*)







“ Pale, pale her cheeks, that in pride did glow,  
Sister Helen,

’Neath the bridal-wreath three days ago.”

“ One morn for pride and three days for woe,  
Little brother ! ”

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
Three days, three nights, between Hell and Heaven !*)

“ Her clasped hands stretch from her bending head,  
Sister Helen ;

With the loud wind’s wail her sobs are wed.”

“ What wedding-strains hath her bridal-bed,  
Little brother ? ”

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
What strain but death’s, between Hell and Heaven !*)

“ She may not speak, she sinks in a swoon,  
Sister Helen,—

She lifts her lips and gasps on the moon.”

“ Oh ! might I but hear her soul’s blithe tune,  
Little brother ! ”

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
Her woe’s dumb cry, between Hell and Heaven !*)

“ They’ve caught her to Westholm’s saddle-bow,  
Sister Helen,

And her moonlit hair gleams white in its flow.”

“ Let it turn whiter than winter snow,  
Little brother ! ”

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
Woe-withered gold, between Hell and Heaven !*)

“ O Sister Helen, you heard the bell,

Sister Helen,

More loud than the vesper-chime it fell.”

“ No vesper-chime, but a dying knell,

Little brother ! ”

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
His dying knell, between Hell and Heaven !*)

“ Alas ! but I fear the heavy sound,

Sister Helen ;

Is it in the sky or in the ground ? ”

“ Say, have they turned their horses round,

Little brother ? ”

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
What would she more, between Hell and Heaven ?*)

“ They have raised the old man from his knee,

Sister Helen,

And they ride in silence hastily.”

“ More fast the naked soul doth flee,

Little brother ! ”

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
The naked soul, between Hell and Heaven !*)

“ Flank to flank are the three steeds gone,

Sister Helen,

But the lady’s dark steed goes alone.”

“ And lonely her bridegroom’s soul hath flown,

Little brother.”

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
The lonely ghost, between Hell and Heaven !*)

“ Oh the wind is sad in the iron chill,  
Sister Helen,  
And weary sad they look by the hill.”

“ But he and I are sadder still,  
Little brother ! ”  
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
Most sad of all, between Hell and Heaven !*)

“ See, see, the wax has dropped from its place,  
Sister Helen,  
And the flames are winning up apace ! ”

“ Yet here they burn but for a space,  
Little brother ! ”  
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
Here for a space, between Hell and Heaven !*)

“ Ah ! what white thing at the door has cross'd,  
Sister Helen ?

Ah ! what is this that sighs in the frost ? ”

“ A soul that's lost as mine is lost,  
Little brother ! ”  
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
Lost, lost, all lost, between Hell and Heaven !*)

## *A New Year's Burden*

**A** LONG the grass sweet airs are blown  
Our way this day in Spring.  
Of all the songs that we have known  
Now which one shall we sing ?  
Not that, my love, ah no !—  
Not this, my love ? why, so !—  
Yet both were ours, but hours will come and go.

The grove is all a pale frail mist,  
The new year sucks the sun.  
Of all the kisses that we kissed  
Now which shall be the one ?  
Not that, my love, ah no !—  
Not this, my love ?—heigh-ho  
For all the sweets that all the winds can blow !

The branches cross above our eyes,  
The skies are in a net :  
And what's the thing beneath the skies  
We two would most forget ?  
Not birth, my love, no, no,—  
Not death, my love, no, no,—  
The love once ours, but ours long hours ago.

## *Love-Lily*

**B**ETWEEN the hands, between the brows,  
Between the lips of Love-Lily,  
A spirit is born whose birth endows  
My blood with fire to burn through me ;  
Who breathes upon my gazing eyes,  
Who laughs and murmurs in mine ear,  
At whose least touch my colour flies,  
And whom my life grows faint to hear.

Within the voice, within the heart,  
Within the mind of Love-Lily,  
A spirit is born who lifts apart  
His tremulous wings and looks at me ;  
Who on my mouth his finger lays,  
And shows, while whispering lutes confer,  
That Eden of Love's watered ways  
Whose winds and spirits worship her.

Brows, hands, and lips, heart, mind, and voice,  
Kisses and words of Love-Lily,—  
Oh ! bid me with your joy rejoice  
Till riotous longing rest in me !  
Ah ! let not hope be still distraught,  
But find in her its gracious goal,  
Whose speech Truth knows not from her thought  
Nor Love her body from her soul.

## *The Woodspurge*

THE wind flapped loose, the wind was still,  
Shaken out dead from tree and hill :  
I had walked on at the wind's will,—  
I sat now, for the wind was still.

Between my knees my forehead was,—  
My lips, drawn in, said not Alas !  
My hair was over in the grass,  
My naked ears heard the day pass.

My eyes, wide open, had the run  
Of some ten weeds to fix upon ;  
Among those few, out of the sun,  
The woodspurge flowered, three cups in one.

From perfect grief there need not be  
Wisdom or even memory :  
One thing then learnt remains to me,—  
The woodspurge has a cup of three.





## *Golden Wings*

**M**IDWAYS of a wallèd garden,  
In the happy poplar land,  
Did an ancient castle stand,  
With an old knight for a warden.

Many scarlet bricks there were  
In its walls, and old grey stone ;  
Over which red apples shone  
At the right time of the year.

On the bricks the green moss grew,  
Yellow lichen on the stone,  
Over which red apples shone ;  
Little war that castle knew.

Deep green water fill'd the moat,  
Each side had a red-brick lip,  
Green and mossy with the drip  
Of dew and rain ; there was a boat

Of carven wood, with hangings green  
About the stern ; it was great bliss  
For lovers to sit there and kiss  
In the hot summer noons, not seen.

Across the moat the fresh west wind  
In very little ripples went ;  
The way the heavy aspens bent  
Towards it, was a thing to mind.

The painted drawbridge over it  
Went up and down with gilded chains,  
'Twas pleasant in the summer rains  
Within the bridge-house there to sit.

There were five swans that ne'er did eat  
The water-weeds, for ladies came  
Each day, and young knights did the same,  
And gave them cakes and bread for meat.

They had a house of painted wood,  
A red roof gold-spiked over it,  
Wherein upon their eggs to sit  
Week after week ; no drop of blood,

Drawn from men's bodies by sword-blows,  
Came ever there, or any tear ;  
Most certainly from year to year  
'Twas pleasant as a Provence rose.

The banners seem'd quite full of ease,  
That over the turret-roofs hung down ;  
The battlements could get no frown  
From the flower-moulded cornices.

Who walked in that garden there ?  
Miles and Giles and Isabeau,  
Tall Jehane du Castel beau,  
Alice of the golden hair,

Big Sir Gervaise, the good knight,  
Fair Ellayne le Violet,  
Mary, Constance fille de fay,  
Many dames with footfall light.

Whosoever wander'd there,  
Whether it be dame or knight,  
Half of scarlet, half of white  
Their raiment was ; of roses fair

Each wore a garland on the head,  
At Ladies' Gard the way was so :  
Fair Jehane du Castel beau  
Wore her wreath till it was dead.

Little joy she had of it,  
Of the raiment white and red,  
Or the garland on her head,  
She had none with whom to sit

In the carven boat at noon ;  
None the more did Jehane weep,  
She would only stand and keep  
Saying : He will be here soon !

Many times in the long day  
Miles and Giles and Gervaise passed,  
Holding each some white hand fast,  
Every time they heard her say :

Summer cometh to an end,  
Undern cometh after noon ;  
Golden wings will be here soon,  
What if I some token send ?

Wherefore that night within the hall,  
With open mouth and open eyes,  
Like some one listening with surprise,  
She sat before the sight of all.

Stoop'd down a little she sat there,  
With neck stretch'd out and chin thrown up,  
One hand around a golden cup ;  
And strangely with her fingers fair

She beat some tune upon the gold ;  
The minstrels in the gallery  
Sung : Arthur, who will never die,  
In Avallon he groweth old.

And when the song was ended, she  
Rose and caught up her gown and ran ;  
None stopp'd her eager face and wan  
Of all that pleasant company.

Right so within her own chamber  
Upon her bed she sat ; and drew  
Her breath in quick gasps ; till she knew  
That no man follow'd after her.

She took the garland from her head,  
Loosed all her hair, and let it lie  
Upon the coverlet ; thereby  
She laid the gown of white and red ;

And she took off her scarlet shoon,  
And bared her feet ; still more and more  
Her sweet face redden'd ; evermore  
She murmur'd : He will be here soon ;

Truly he cannot fail to know  
My tender body waits him here ;  
And if he knows, I have no fear  
For poor Jehane du Castel beau.

She took a sword within her hand,  
Whose hilts were silver, and she sung  
Somehow like this, wild words that rung  
A long way over the moonlit land :

Gold wings across the sea !  
Grey light from tree to tree,  
Gold hair beside my knee,  
I pray thee come to me,  
Gold wings !

The water slips,  
The red-bill'd moorhen dips.  
Sweet kisses on red lips ;  
Alas ! the red rust grips,  
And the blood-red dagger rips,  
Yet, O knight, come to me !

Are not my blue eyes sweet ?  
The west wind from the wheat  
Blows cold across my feet ;  
Is it not time to meet  
Gold wings across the sea ?

White swans on the green moat,  
Small feathers left afloat  
By the blue-painted boat ;  
Swift running of the stoat,  
Sweet gurgling note by note  
Of sweet music.

O gold wings,  
Listen how gold hair sings,  
And the Ladies Castle rings,  
Gold wings across the sea.

I sit on a purple bed,  
Outside, the wall is red,  
Thereby the apple hangs,  
And the wasp, caught by the fangs,

Dies in the autumn night,  
And the bat flits till light,  
And the love-crazèd knight

Kisses the long wet grass :  
The weary days pass,  
Gold wings across the sea.

Gold wings across the sea !  
Moonlight from tree to tree,  
Sweet hair laid on my knee,  
O, sweet knight, come to me.

Gold wings, the short night slips,  
The white swan's long neck drips,  
I pray thee kiss my lips,  
Gold wings across the sea !

No answer through the moonlit night ;  
No answer in the cold grey dawn ;  
No answer when the shaven lawn  
Grew green, and all the roses bright.

Her tired feet look'd cold and thin,  
Her lips were twitch'd, and wretched tears,  
Some, as she lay, roll'd past her ears,  
Some fell from off her quivering chin.

Her long throat, stretched to its full length,  
Rose up and fell right brokenly ;  
As though the unhappy heart was nigh  
Striving to break with all its strength.

And when she slipp'd from off the bed,  
Her cramp'd feet would not hold her ; she  
Sank down and crept on hand and knee,  
On the window-sill she laid her head.

There, with crooked arm upon the sill,  
She look'd out, muttering dismally :  
There is no sail upon the sea,  
No pennon on the empty hill.

I cannot stay here all alone,  
Or meet their happy faces here,  
And wretchedly I have no fear ;  
A little while, and I am gone.

Therewith she rose upon her feet,  
And totter'd ; cold and misery  
Still made the deep sobs come, till she  
At last stretch'd out her fingers sweet,

And caught the great sword in her hand ;  
And, stealing down the silent stair,  
Barefooted in the morning air.  
And only in her smock, did stand

Upright upon the green lawn grass ;  
And hope grew in her as she said :  
I have thrown off the white and red,  
And pray God it may come to pass

I meet him ; if ten years go by  
    Before I meet him ; if, indeed,  
    Meanwhile both soul and body bleed,  
Yet there is end of misery,

And I have hope. He could not come,  
    But I can go to him and show  
    These new things I have got to know,  
And make him speak, who has been dumb.

O Jehane ! the red morning sun  
    Changed her white feet to glowing gold,  
    Upon her smock, on crease and fold,  
Changed that to gold which had been dun.

O Miles, and Giles, and Isabeau,  
    Fair Ellayne le Violet,  
    Mary, Constance fille de fay !  
Where is Jehane du Castel beau ?

O big Gervaise ride apace !  
    Down to the hard yellow sand,  
    Where the water meets the land.  
This is Jehane by her face.

Why has she a broken sword ?  
    Mary ! she is slain outright ;  
    Verily a piteous sight ;  
Take her up without a word !

Giles and Miles and Gervaise there,  
Ladies' Gard must meet the war ;  
Whatsoever knights these are,  
Man the walls withouten fear !

Axes to the apple-trees,  
Axes to the aspens tall !  
Barriers without the wall  
May be lightly made of these.

O poor shivering Isabeau ;  
Poor Ellayne le Violet,  
Bent with fear ! we miss to-day  
Brave Jehane du Castel beau.

O poor Mary, weeping so !  
Wretched Constance fille de fay !  
Verily we miss to-day  
Fair Jehane du Castel beau.

The apples now grow green and sour  
Upon the mouldering castle-wall,  
Before they ripen there they fall :  
There are no banners on the tower,

The draggled swans most eagerly eat  
The green weeds trailing in the moat ;  
Inside the rotting leaky boat  
You see a slain man's stiffen'd feet.

## *The Blue Closet*

### THE DAMOZELS.

LADY Alice, lady Louise,  
Between the wash of the tumbling seas  
We are ready to sing, if so ye please ;  
So lay your long hands on the keys ;  
Sing, *Laudate pueri.*

*And ever the great bell overhead  
Boom'd in the wind a knell for the dead,  
Though no one toll'd it, a knell for the dead.*

### LADY LOUISE.

Sister, let the measure swell  
Not too loud ; for you sing not well  
If you drown the faint boom of the bell ;  
He is weary, so am I.

*And ever the chevron overhead  
Flapp'd on the banner of the dead ;  
(Was he asleep, or was he dead ?)*

### LADY ALICE.

Alice the Queen, and Louise the Queen,  
Two damozels wearing purple and green,  
Four lone ladies dwelling here  
From day to day and year to year ;

And there is none to let us go ;  
To break the locks of the doors below,  
Or shovel away the heaped-up snow ;  
And when we die no man will know  
That we are dead ; but they give us leave,  
Once every year on Christmas-eve,  
To sing in the Closet Blue one song ;  
And we should be so long, so long,  
If we dared, in singing ; for dream on dream,  
They float on in a happy stream ;  
Float from the gold strings, float from the keys,  
Float from the open'd lips of Louise ;  
But, alas ! the sea-salt oozes through  
The chinks of the tiles of the Closet Blue ;  
*And ever the great bell overhead  
Booms in the wind a knell for the dead,  
The wind plays on it a knell for the dead.*

[*They sing all together.*]

How long ago was it, how long ago,  
He came to this tower with hands full of snow ?

Kneel down, O love Louise, kneel down ! he said,  
And sprinkled the dusty snow over my head.

He watch'd the snow melting, it ran through my hair,  
Ran over my shoulders, white shoulders and bare.

I cannot weep for thee, poor love Louise,  
For my tears are all hidden deep under the seas ;

In a gold and blue casket she keeps all my tears,  
But my eyes are no longer blue, as in old years ;

Yea, they grow grey with time, grow small and dry,  
I am so feeble now, would I might die.

*And in truth the great bell overhead  
Left off his pealing for the dead,  
Perchance, because the wind was dead.*

Will he come back again, or is he dead ?  
O ! is he sleeping, my scarf round his head ?

Or did they strangle him as he lay there,  
With the long scarlet scarf I used to wear ?

Only I pray thee, Lord, let him come here !  
Both his soul and his body to me are most dear.

Dear Lord, that loves me, I wait to receive  
Either body or spirit this wild Christmas-eve.

*Through the floor shot up a lily red,  
With a patch of earth from the land of the dead,  
For he was strong in the land of the dead.*

What matter that his cheeks were pale,  
His kind kiss'd lips all grey ?  
O, love Louise, have you waited long ?  
O, my lord Arthur, yea.

What if his hair that brush'd her cheek  
Was stiff with frozen rime ?  
His eyes were grown quite blue again,  
As in the happy time.

O, love Louise, this is the key  
Of the happy golden land !  
O, sisters, cross the bridge with me,  
My eyes are full of sand.  
What matter that I cannot see,  
If ye take me by the hand ?

*And ever the great bell overhead,  
And the tumbling seas mourn'd for the dead ;  
For their song ceased, and they were dead.*

## *The Tune of Seven Towers*

NO one goes there now :  
For what is left to fetch away  
From the desolate battlements all arow,  
And the lead roof heavy and grey ?  
*Therefore, said fair Yoland of the flowers,*  
*This is the tune of Seven Towers.*

No one walks there now ;  
Except in the white moonlight  
The white ghosts walk in a row ;  
If one could see it, an awful sight,  
*Listen ! said fair Yoland of the flowers,*  
*This is the tune of Seven Towers.*

But none can see them now,  
Though they sit by the side of the moat,  
Feet half in the water, there in a row,  
Long hair in the wind afloat.  
*Therefore, said fair Yoland of the flowers,*  
*This is the tune of Seven Towers.*

If any will go to it now,  
He must go to it all alone,  
Its gates will not open to any row  
Of glittering spears : will you go alone ?  
*Listen ! said fair Yoland of the flowers,*  
*This is the tune of Seven Towers.*

By my love go there now,  
To fetch me my coif away,  
My coif and my kirtle, with pearls arow,  
Oliver, go to-day !  
*Therefore, said fair Yoland of the flowers,  
This is the tune of Seven Towers.*

I am unhappy now,  
I cannot tell you why ;  
If you go, the priest and I in a row  
Will pray that you may not die.  
*Listen ! said fair Yoland of the flowers,  
This is the tune of Seven Towers.*

If you will go for me now,  
I will kiss your mouth at last ;  
[*She sayeth inwardly.*]  
(*The graves stand grey in a row.*)  
Oliver, hold me fast !  
*Therefore, said fair Yoland of the flowers,  
This is the tune of Seven Towers.*

## *The Wind*

AH! no, no, it is nothing, surely nothing at all,  
Only the wild-going wind round by the garden-  
wall,  
For the dawn just now is breaking, the wind beginning  
to fall.

*Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?  
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,  
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.*

So I will sit, and think and think of the days gone by,  
Never moving my chair for fear the dogs should cry,  
Making no noise at all while the flambeau burns awry.  
For my chair is heavy and carved, and with sweeping  
green behind  
It is hung, and the dragons thereon grin out in the  
gusts of the wind;  
On its folds an orange lies, with a deep gash cut in  
the rind.

*Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?  
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,  
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.*

If I move my chair it will scream, and the orange will  
roll out afar,  
And the faint yellow juice ooze out like blood from a  
wizard's jar ;  
And the dogs will howl for those who went last month  
to the war.

*Wind, wind ! thou art sad, art thou kind ?  
Wind, wind, unhappy ! thou art blind,  
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.*

So I will sit and think of love that is over and past,  
O, so long ago ! Yes, I will be quiet at last :  
Whether I like it or not, a grim half-slumber is cast  
Over my worn old brains, that touches the roots of  
my heart,  
And above my half-shut eyes, the blue roof 'gins to  
part,  
And show the blue spring sky, till I am ready to  
start  
From out of the green-hung chair ; but something  
keeps me still,  
And I fall in a dream that I walk'd with her on the  
side of a hill,  
Dotted, for was it not spring ? with tufts of the  
daffodil.

*Wind, wind ! thou art sad, art thou kind ?  
Wind, wind, unhappy ! thou art blind,  
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.*

And Margaret as she walk'd held a painted book in  
her hand ;  
Her finger kept the place ; I caught her, we both did  
stand  
Face to face, on the top of the highest hill in the land.

*Wind, wind ! thou art sad, art thou kind ?  
Wind, wind, unhappy ! thou art blind,  
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.*

I held to her long bare arms, but she shudder'd away  
from me,  
While the flush went out of her face as her head fell  
back on a tree,  
And a spasm caught her mouth, fearful for me to see ;  
And still I held to her arms till her shoulder touch'd  
my mail,  
Weeping she totter'd forward, so glad that I should  
prevail,  
And her hair went over my robe, like a gold flag  
over a sail.

*Wind, wind ! thou art sad, art thou kind ?  
Wind, wind, unhappy ! thou art blind,  
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.*

I kiss'd her hard by the ear, and she kiss'd me on the  
brow,  
And then lay down on the grass, where the mark on  
the moss is now,  
And spread her arms out wide while I went down  
below.

*Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?  
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,  
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.*

And then I walk'd for a space to and fro on the side  
of the hill,  
Till I gather'd and held in my arms great sheaves of  
the daffodil,  
And when I came again my Margaret lay there still.

I piled them high and high above her heaving breast,  
How they were caught and held in her loose un-  
girded vest!  
But one beneath her arm died, happy so to be prest!

*Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?  
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,  
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.*

Again I turn'd my back and went away for an hour;  
She said no word when I came again, so, flower by  
flower,  
I counted the daffodils over, and cast them languidly  
lower.

*Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?  
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,  
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.*

My dry hands shook and shook as the green gown  
show'd again,  
Clear'd from the yellow flowers, and I grew hollow  
with pain,  
And on to us both there fell from the sun-shower  
drops of rain.

*Wind, wind ! thou art sad, art thou kind ?  
Wind, wind, unhappy ! thou art blind,  
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.*

Alas ! alas ! there was blood on the very quiet breast,  
Blood lay in the many folds of the loose ungirded  
vest,  
Blood lay upon her arm where the flower had been  
prest.

I shriek'd and leapt from my chair, and the orange  
roll'd out afar,  
The faint yellow juice oozed out like blood from a  
wizard's jar ;  
And then in march'd the ghosts of those that had gone  
to the war.

I knew them by the arms that I was used to paint  
Upon their long thin shields ; but the colours were  
all grown faint,  
And faint upon their banner was Olaf, king and saint.

*Wind, wind ! thou art sad, art thou kind ?  
Wind, wind, unhappy ! thou art blind,  
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.*

## *Summer Dawn*

PRAY but one prayer for me 'twixt thy closed  
lips ;

Think but one thought of me up in the stars.

The summer night waneth, the morning light slips,

Faint and grey 'twixt the leaves of the aspen,  
betwixt the cloud-bars,

That are patiently waiting there for the dawn :

Patient and colourless, though Heaven's gold  
Waits to float through them along with the sun.

Far out in the meadows, above the young corn,

The heavy elms wait, and restless and cold  
The uneasy wind rises ; the roses are dun ;

They pray the long gloom through for daylight new  
born,

Round the lone house in the midst of the corn.

Speak but one word to me over the corn,

Over the tender, bow'd locks of the corn.

*In Prison*

**W**EARILY, drearily,  
Half the day long,  
Flap the great banners  
High over the stone ;  
Strangely and eerily  
Sounds the wind's song,  
Bending the banner-poles.

While, all alone,  
Watching the loophole's spark,  
Lie I, with life all dark,  
Feet tether'd, hands fetter'd  
Fast to the stone,  
The grim walls, square letter'd  
With prison'd men's groan.

Still strain the banner-poles  
Through the wind's song,  
Westward the banner rolls  
Over my wrong.



# TENNYSON



## *The Lotos-Eaters*

“**C**OURAGE !” he said, and pointed towards the  
land,

“This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon.”

In the afternoon they came unto a land,

In which it seemed always afternoon.

All round the coast the languid air did swoon,

Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.

Full-faced above the valley stood the moon ;

And like a downward smoke, the slender stream

Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

·  
A land of streams ! some, like a downward smcke,

Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go ;

And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,

Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.

They saw the gleaming river seaward flow

From the inner land : far off, three mountain-tops,

Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,

Stood sunset-flush'd : and, dew'd with showery drops,

Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

The charmed sunset linger'd low adown

In the red West : thro' mountain clefts the dale

Was seen far inland, and the yellow down

Border'd with palm, and many a winding vale

And meadow, set with slender galingale ;

A land where all things always seem'd the same !

And round about the keel with faces pale,  
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,  
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,  
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave  
To each, but whoso did receive of them,  
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave  
Far far away did seem to mourn and rave  
On alien shores ; and if his fellow spake,  
His voice was thin, as voices from the grave ;  
And deep-asleep he seem'd, yet all awake,  
And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,  
Between the sun and moon upon the shore ;  
And sweet it was to dream of Father-land,  
Of child, and wife, and slave ; but evermore  
Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,  
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.  
Then some one said, " We will return no more ; "  
And all at once they sang, " Our island home  
Is far beyond the wave ; we will no longer roam."

## CHORIC SONG

## I

There is sweet music here that softer falls  
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,  
Or night-dews on still waters between walls  
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass ;  
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,  
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes ;

Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful  
skies,  
Here are cool mosses deep,  
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,  
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,  
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

## 2

Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness,  
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,  
While all things else have rest from weariness ?  
All things have rest : why should we toil alone,  
We only toil, who are the first of things,  
And make perpetual moan,  
Still from one sorrow to another thrown :  
Nor ever fold our wings,  
And cease from wanderings,  
Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm ;  
Nor harken what the inner spirit sings,  
" There is no joy but calm ! "  
Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of  
things ?

## 3

Lo ! in the middle of the wood,  
The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud  
With winds upon the branch, and there  
Grows green and broad, and takes no care,  
Sun-steep'd at noon, and in the moon  
Nightly dew-fed : and turning yellow  
Falls, and floats adown the air.

Lo ! sweeten'd with the summer light,  
 The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,  
 Drops in a silent autumn night.  
 All its allotted length of days,  
 The flower ripens in its place,  
 Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,  
 Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

## 4

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,  
 Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.  
 Death is the end of life ; ah, why  
 Should life all labour be ?  
 Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,  
 And in a little while our lips are dumb.  
 Let us alone. What is it that will last ?  
 All things are taken from us, and become  
 Portions and parcels of the dreadful Past.  
 Let us alone. What pleasure can we have  
 To war with evil ? Is there any peace  
 In ever climbing up the climbing wave ?  
 All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave  
 In silence ; ripen, fall and cease :  
 Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful  
 ease.

## 5

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,  
 With half-shut eyes ever to seem  
 Falling asleep in a half-dream !  
 To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,  
 Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height ;

To hear each other's whisper'd speech ;  
Eating the Lotos day by day,  
To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,  
And tender curving lines of creamy spray ;  
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly  
To the influence of mild-minded melancholy ;  
To muse and brood and live again in memory,  
With those old faces of our infancy  
Heap'd over with a mound of grass,  
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass !

## 6

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,  
And dear the last embraces of our wives  
And their warm tears : but all hath suffer'd change ;  
For surely now our household hearths are cold :  
Our sons inherit us : our looks are strange :  
And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.  
Or else the island princes over-bold  
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings  
Before them of the ten-years' war in Troy,  
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.  
Is there confusion in the little isle ?  
Let what is broken so remain.  
The Gods are hard to reconcile :  
'Tis hard to settle order once again.  
There *is* confusion worse than death,  
Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,  
Long labour unto aged breath,  
Sore task to hearts worn out with many wars  
And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

## 7

But, propt on beds of amaranth and moly,  
How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly)  
With half-dropt eyelids still,  
Beneath a heaven dark and holy,  
To watch the long bright river drawing slowly  
His waters from the purple hill—  
To hear the dewy echoes calling  
From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined vine—  
To watch the emerald-colour'd water falling  
Thro' many a wov'n acanthus-wreath divine!  
Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,  
Only to hear were sweet, stretch'd out beneath the  
    pine.

## 8

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak :  
The Lotos blows by every winding creek :  
All day the wind breathes low with mellower tone :  
Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone  
Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos-  
    dust is blown.  
We have had enough of action, and of motion we,  
Roll'd to starboard, roll'd to larboard, when the surge  
    was seething free,  
Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-  
    fountains in the sea.  
Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,  
In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined  
On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind.

For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are  
hurl'd

Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are  
lightly curl'd

Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming  
world :

Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,  
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring  
deeps and fiery sands,

Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships,  
and praying hands.

But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful  
song

Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of  
wrong,

Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong ;  
Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the  
soil,

Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,  
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil ;  
Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whisper'd—  
down in hell

Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys dwell,  
Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.

Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the  
shore

Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave  
and oar ;

Oh rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.

*Songs from The Princess*

*As thro' the land at eve we went*

AS thro' the land at eve we went,  
And pluck'd the ripen'd ears,  
We fell out, my wife and I,  
O we fell out I know not why,  
And kiss'd again with tears.

For when we came where lies the child  
We lost in other years,  
There above the little grave,  
O there above the little grave,  
We kiss'd again with tears.

*The splendour falls on castle walls*

**T**HE splendour falls on castle walls  
And snowy summits old in story :  
The long light shakes across the lakes  
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.  
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,  
Blow, bugle ; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O hark, O hear ! how thin and clear,  
And thinner, clearer, farther going !  
O sweet and far from cliff and scar  
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing !  
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying :  
Blow, bugle ; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,  
They faint on hill or field or river :  
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,  
And grow for ever and for ever.  
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,  
And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

*Tears, idle tears*

**T**EARS, idle tears, I know not what they mean,  
Tears from the depth of some divine despair  
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,  
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,  
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,  
That brings our friends up from the underworld,  
Sad as the last which reddens over one  
That sinks with all we love below the verge ;  
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns  
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds  
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes  
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square ;  
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remember'd kisses after death,  
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd  
On lips that are for others ; deep as love,  
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret ;  
O Death in Life, the days that are no more.

*O Swallow, Swallow, flying, flying South*

**O** SWALLOW, Swallow, flying, flying South,  
Fly to her, and fall upon her gilded eaves,  
And tell her, tell her what I tell to thee.

O tell her, Swallow, thou that knowest each,  
That bright and fierce and fickle is the South,  
And dark and true and tender is the North.

O Swallow, Swallow, if I could follow, and light  
Upon her lattice, I would pipe and trill,  
And cheep and twitter twenty million loves.

O were I thou that she might take me in,  
And lay me on her bosom, and her heart  
Would rock the snowy cradle till I died.

Why lingereth she to clothe her heart with love,  
Delaying as the tender ash delays  
To clothe herself, when all the woods are green ?

O tell her, Swallow, that thy brood is flown :  
Say to her, I do but wanton in the South,  
But in the North long since my nest is made.

O tell her, brief is life but love is long,  
And brief the sun of summer in the North,  
And brief the moon of beauty in the South.

O Swallow, flying from the golden woods,  
Fly to her, and pipe and woo her, and make her mine,  
And tell her, tell her, that I follow thee.

*Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white*

**N**OW sleeps the crimson petal, now the white ;  
Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk ;  
Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry font :  
The fire-fly wakens : waken thou with me.

Now droops the milkwhite peacock like a ghost,  
And like a ghost she glimmers on to me.

Now lies the Earth all Danaë to the stars,  
And all thy heart lies open unto me.

Now slides the silent meteor on, and leaves  
A shining furrow, as thy thoughts in me.

Now folds the lily all her sweetness up,  
And slips into the bosom of the lake :  
So fold thyself, my dearest, thou, and slip  
Into my bosom and be lost in me.

*O that 'twere possible (from Maud)*

I

**O** THAT 'twere possible  
After long grief and pain  
To find the arms of my true love  
Round me once again !

3

A shadow flits before me,  
Not thou, but like to thee ;  
Ah Christ, that it were possible  
For one short hour to see  
The souls we loved, that they might tell us  
What and where they be.

EDGAR ALLAN POE



*To Helen*

**H**ELEN, thy beauty is to me  
Like those Nicean barks of yore,  
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,  
The weary, wayworn wanderer bore  
To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,  
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,  
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home  
To the glory that was Greece,  
To the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo ! in yon brilliant window niche,  
How statue-like I see thee stand,  
The agate lamp within thy hand !  
Ah, Psyche, from the regions which  
Are Holy Land !

## *Annabel Lee*

**I**T was many and many a year ago,  
In a kingdom by the sea,  
That a maiden there lived whom you may know  
By the name of ANNABEL LEE ;  
And this maiden she lived with no other thought  
Than to love and be loved by me.

*I* was a child and *she* was a child,  
In this kingdom by the sea :  
But we loved with a love that was more than love--  
I and my ANNABEL LEE ;  
With a love that the winged seraphs of heaven  
Coveted her and me.

And this was the reason that, long ago,  
In this kingdom by the sea,  
A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling  
My beautiful ANNABEL LEE ;  
So that her highborn kinsmen came  
And bore her away from me,  
To shut her up in a sepulchre  
In this kingdom by the sea.

The angels, not half so happy in heaven,  
Went envying her and me—

Yes !—that was the reason (as all men know  
    In this kingdom by the sea)  
That the wind came out of the cloud by night,  
    Chilling and killing my ANNABEL LEE.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love  
    Of those who were older than we—  
    Of many far wiser than we—  
And neither the angels in heaven above,  
    Nor the demons down under the sea,  
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul  
    Of the beautiful ANNABEL LEE :

For the moon never beams without bringing me  
    . dreams  
    Of the beautiful ANNABEL LEE ;  
And the stars never rise but I see the bright eyes  
    Of the beautiful ANNABEL LEE ;  
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side  
Of my darling, my darling, my life and my bride,  
    In her sepulchre there by the sea—  
    In her tomb by the side of the sea.

## *Romance*

**R**OMANCE, who loves to nod and sing,  
With drowsy head and folded wing,  
Among the green leaves as they shake  
Far down within some shadowy lake,  
To me a painted paroquet  
Hath been—a most familiar bird—  
Taught me my alphabet to say—  
To lisp my very earliest word  
While in the wild wood I did lie,  
A child—with a most knowing eye.

Of late, eternal Condor years  
So shake the very Heaven on high  
With tumult as they thunder by,  
I have no time for idle cares  
Through gazing on the unquiet sky.  
And when an hour with calmer wings  
Its down upon my spirit flings—  
That little time with lyre and rhyme  
To while away—forbidden things !  
My heart would feel to be a crime  
Unless it trembled with the strings.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI



## *Goblin Market*

MORNING and evening  
Maids heard the goblins cry :  
“ Come buy our orchard fruits,  
Come buy, come buy :  
Apples and quinces,  
Lemons and oranges,  
Plump unpecked cherries,  
Melons and raspberries,  
Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,  
Swart-headed mulberries,  
Wild free-born cranberries,  
Crab-apples, dewberries,  
Pine-apples, blackberries,  
Apricots, strawberries ;—  
All ripe together  
In summer weather,—  
Morns that pass by,  
Fair eves that fly ;  
Come buy, come buy :  
Our grapes fresh from the vine,  
Pomegranates full and fine,  
Dates and sharp bullaces,  
Rare pears and greengages,  
Damsons and bilberries,  
Taste them and try :

Currants and gooseberries,  
Bright fire-like barberries,  
Figs to fill your mouth,  
Citrons from the South,  
Sweet to tongue and sound to eye ;  
Come buy, come buy."

Evening by evening  
Among the brookside rushes,  
Laura bowed her head to hear,  
Lizzie veiled her blushes :  
Crouching close together  
In the cooling weather,  
With clasping arms and cautioning lips,  
With tingling cheeks and finger tips.  
" Lie close," Laura said,  
Pricking up her golden head :  
" We must not look at goblin men,  
We must not buy their fruits :  
Who knows upon what soil they fed  
Their hungry, thirsty roots ? "  
" Come buy," call the goblins  
Hobbling down the glen.  
" Oh," cried Lizzie, " Laura, Laura,  
You should not peep at goblin men."  
Lizzie covered up her eyes,  
Covered close lest they should look ;  
Laura reared her glossy head,  
And whispered like the restless brook :  
" Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie,

Down the glen tramp little men.  
One hauls a basket,  
One bears a plate,  
One lugs a golden dish  
Of many pounds' weight.  
How fair the vine must grow  
Whose grapes are so luscious ;  
How warm the wind must blow  
Through those fruit bushes."  
" No," said Lizzie : " No, no, no ;  
Their offers should not charm us,  
Their evil gifts would harm us."  
She thrust a dimpled finger  
In each ear, shut eyes and ran :  
Curious Laura chose to linger  
Wondering at each merchant man.  
One had a cat's face,  
One whisked a tail,  
One tramped at a rat's pace,  
One crawled like a snail,  
One like a wombat prowled obtuse and furry,  
One like a ratel tumbled hurry skurry.  
She heard a voice like voice of doves  
Cooing all together :  
They sounded kind and full of loves  
In the pleasant weather.

Laura stretched her gleaming neck  
Like a rush-imbedded swan,  
Like a lily from the beck,

Like a moonlit poplar branch,  
Like a vessel at the launch  
When its last restraint is gone.

Backwards up the mossy glen  
Turned and trooped the goblin men,  
With their shrill repeated cry,  
“Come buy, come buy.”  
When they reached where Laura was,  
They stood stock-still upon the moss,  
Leering at each other,  
Brother with queer brother ;  
Signalling each other,  
Brother with sly brother.  
One set his basket down,  
One reared his plate ;  
One began to weave a crown  
Of tendrils, leaves, and rough nuts brown  
(Men sell not such in any town) ;  
One heaved the golden weight  
Of dish and fruit to offer her :  
“Come buy, come buy,” was still their cry.  
Laura stared but did not stir,  
Longed, but had no money :  
The whisk-tailed merchant bade her taste  
In tones as smooth as honey,  
The cat-faced purr’d,  
The rat-paced spoke a word  
Of welcome, and the snail-paced even was heard ;

One parrot-voiced and jolly  
Cried " Pretty Goblin " still for " Pretty Polly " ;  
One whistled like a bird.

But sweet-tooth Laura spoke in haste :  
" Good Folk, I have no coin ;  
To take were to purloin :  
I have no copper in my purse,  
I have no silver either,  
And all my gold is on the furze  
That shakes in windy weather  
Above the rusty heather."  
" You have much gold upon your head,"  
They answered all together :  
" Buy from us with a golden curl."  
She clipped a precious golden lock,  
She dropped a tear more rare than pearl,  
Then sucked their fruit globes fair or red :  
Sweeter than honey from the rock,  
Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,  
Clearer than water flowed that juice ;  
She never tasted such before,  
How should it cloy with length of use ?  
She sucked and sucked and sucked the more  
Fruits which that unknown orchard bore ;  
She sucked until her lips were sore ;  
Then flung the emptied rinds away  
But gathered up one kernel-stone,  
And knew not was it night or day  
As she turned home alone.

Lizzie met her at the gate  
Full of wise upbraidings :  
“ Dear, you should not stay so late,  
Twilight is not good for maidens ;  
Should not loiter in the glen  
In the haunts of goblin men.  
Do you not remember Jeanie,  
How she met them in the moonlight,  
Took their gifts both choice and many,  
Ate their fruits and wore their flowers  
Plucked from bowers  
Where summer ripens at all hours ?  
But ever in the moonlight  
She pined and pined away ;  
Sought them by night and day,  
Found them no more, but dwindled and grew gray ;  
Then fell with the first snow,  
While to this day no grass will grow  
Where she lies low :  
I planted daisies there a year ago  
That never blow.  
You should not loiter so.”  
“ Nay, hush,” said Laura :  
“ Nay, hush, my sister :  
I ate and ate my fill,  
Yet my mouth waters still :  
To-morrow night I will  
Buy more ;” and kissed her :  
“ Have done with sorrow ;  
I'll bring you plums to-morrow

Fresh on their mother twigs,  
Cherries worth getting ;  
You cannot think what figs  
My teeth have met in,  
What melons icy-cold  
Piled on a dish of gold  
Too huge for me to hold,  
What peaches with a velvet nap,  
Pellucid grapes without one seed :  
Odorous indeed must be the mead  
Whereon they grow, and pure the wave they drink  
With lilies at the brink,  
And sugar-sweet their sap.”

Golden head by golden head,  
Like two pigeons in one nest  
Folded in each other's wings,  
They lay down in their curtained bed :  
Like two blossoms on one stem,  
Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow,  
Like two wands of ivory  
Tipped with gold for awful kings.  
Moon and stars gazed in at them,  
Wind sang to them lullaby,  
Lumbering owls forbore to fly,  
Not a bat flapped to and fro  
Round their nest :  
Cheek to cheek and breast to breast  
Locked together in one nest.

Early in the morning  
When the first cock crowed his warning,  
Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,  
Laura rose with Lizzie :  
Fetched in honey, milked the cows,  
Aired and set to rights the house,  
Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,  
Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,  
Next churned butter, whipped up cream,  
Fed their poultry, sat and sewed ;  
Talked as modest maidens should :  
Lizzie with an open heart,  
Laura in an absent dream,  
One content, one sick in part ;  
One warbling for the mere bright day's delight,  
One longing for the night.

At length slow evening came :  
They went with pitchers to the reedy brook ;  
Lizzie most placid in her look,  
Laura most like a leaping flame.  
They drew the gurgling water from its deep.  
Lizzie plucked purple and rich golden flags,  
Then turning homeward said : " The sunset flushes  
Those furthest loftiest crags ;  
Come, Laura, not another maiden lags.  
No wilful squirrel wags,  
The beasts and birds are fast asleep."  
But Laura loitered still among the rushes,  
And said the bank was steep.

And said the hour was early still,  
The dew not fall'n, the wind not chill ;  
Listening ever, but not catching  
The customary cry,  
" Come buy, come buy,"  
With its iterated jingle  
Of sugar-baited words :  
Not for all her watching  
Once discerning even one goblin  
Racing, whisking, tumbling, hobbling ;  
Let alone the herds  
That used to tramp along the glen,  
In groups or single,  
Of brisk fruit-merchant men.

Till Lizzie urged, " O Laura, come ;  
I hear the fruit-call, but I dare not look :  
You should not loiter longer at this brook :  
Come with me home.  
The stars rise, the moon bends her arc,  
Each glow-worm winks her spark,  
Let us get home before the night grows dark :  
For clouds may gather  
Though this is summer weather,  
Put out the lights and drench us through ;  
Then if we lost our way what should we do ? "

Laura turned cold as stone  
To find her sister heard that cry alone,  
That goblin cry,  
" Come buy our fruits, come buy."

Must she then buy no more such dainty fruits ?  
Must she no more such succous pasture find,  
Gone deaf and blind ?  
Her tree of life drooped from the root :  
She said not one word in her heart's sore ache :  
But peering thro' the dimness, nought discerning,  
Trudged home, her pitcher dripping all the way ;  
So crept to bed, and lay  
Silent till Lizzie slept ;  
Then sat up in a passionate yearning,  
And gnashed her teeth for baulked desire, and wept  
As if her heart would break.

Day after day, night after night,  
Laura kept watch in vain  
In sullen silence of exceeding pain.  
She never caught again the goblin cry,  
“ Come buy, come buy ” ;—  
She never spied the goblin men  
Hawking their fruits along the glen :  
But when the noon waxed bright  
Her hair grew thin and gray ;  
She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth turn  
To swift decay and burn  
Her fire away.

One day remembering her kernel-stone  
She set it by a wall that faced the south ;  
Dewed it with tears, hoped for a root,  
Watched for a waxing shoot,  
But there came none.

It never saw the sun,  
It never felt the trickling moisture run :  
While with sunk eyes and faded mouth  
She dreamed of melons, as a traveller sees  
False waves in desert drouth  
With shade of leaf-crowned trees,  
And burns the thirstier in the sandful breeze.

She no more swept the house,  
Tended the fowls or cows,  
Fetched honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,  
Brought water from the brook :  
But sat down listless in the chimney-nook  
And would not eat.

Tender Lizzie could not bear  
To watch her sister's cankerous care,  
Yet not to share.  
She night and morning  
Caught the goblins' cry :  
" Come buy our orchard fruits,  
Come buy, come buy : "—  
Beside the brook, along the glen,  
She heard the tramp of goblin men,  
The voice and stir  
Poor Laura could not hear ;  
Longed to buy fruit to comfort her,  
But feared to pay too dear.  
She thought of Jeanie in her grave,  
Who should have been a bride ;

But who for joys brides hope to have  
Fell sick and died  
In her gay prime,  
In earliest Winter time,  
With the first glazing rime,  
With the first snow-fall of crisp Winter time.

Till Laura dwindling  
Seemed knocking at Death's door :  
Then Lizzie weighed no more  
Better and worse ;  
But put a silver penny in her purse,  
Kissed Laura, crossed the heath with clumps of furze  
At twilight, halted by the brook :  
And for the first time in her life  
Began to listen and look.

Laughed every goblin  
When they spied her peeping :  
Came towards her hobbling,  
Flying, running, leaping,  
Puffing and blowing,  
Chuckling, clapping, crowing,  
Clucking and gobbling,  
Mopping and mowing,  
Full of airs and graces,  
Pulling wry faces,  
Demure grimaces,  
Cat-like and rat-like,  
Ratel- and wombat-like,  
Snail-paced in a hurry,

Parrot-voiced and whistler,  
Helter skelter, hurry skurry,  
Chattering like magpies,  
Fluttering like pigeons,  
Gliding like fishes,—  
Hugged her and kissed her :  
Squeezed and caressed her :  
Stretched up their dishes,  
Panniers and plates :  
“ Look at our apples  
Russet and dun,  
Bob at our cherries,  
Bite at our peaches,  
Citrons and dates,  
Grapes for the asking,  
Pears red with basking  
Out in the sun,  
Plums on their twigs ;  
Pluck them and suck them,  
Pomegranates, figs.”—

“ Good folk,” said Lizzie,  
Mindful of Jeanie :  
“ Give me much and many : ”  
Held out her apron,  
Tossed them her penny.  
“ Nay, take a seat with us,  
Honour and eat with us,”  
They answered grinning :  
“ Our feast is but beginning.

Night yet is early,  
Warm and dew-pearly,  
Wakeful and starry :  
Such fruits as these  
No man can carry ;  
Half their bloom would fly,  
Half their dew would dry,  
Half their flavour would pass by.  
Sit down and feast with us,  
Be welcome guest with us,  
Cheer you and rest with us.”—  
“ Thank you,” said Lizzie : “ But one waits  
At home alone for me :  
So without further parleying,  
If you will not sell me any  
Of your fruits though much and many  
Give me back my silver penny  
I tossed you for a fee.”—  
They began to scratch their pates,  
No longer wagging, purring,  
But visibly demurring,  
Grunting and snarling.  
One called her proud,  
Cross-grained, uncivil ;  
Their tones waxed loud,  
Their looks were evil.  
Lashing their tails  
They trod and hustled her,  
Elbowed and jostled her,  
Clawed with their nails,

Barking, mewing, hissing, mocking,  
Tore her gown and soiled her stocking,  
Twitched her hair out by the roots,  
Stamped upon her tender feet,  
Held her hands and squeezed their fruits  
Against her mouth to make her eat.

White and golden Lizzie stood,  
Like a lily in a flood,—  
Like a rock of blue-veined stone  
Lashed by tides obstreperously,—  
Like a beacon left alone  
In a hoary roaring sea,  
Sending up a golden fire,—  
Like a fruit-crowned orange-tree  
White with blossoms honey-sweet  
Sore beset by wasp and bee,—  
Like a royal virgin town  
Topped with gilded dome and spire  
Close beleaguered by a fleet  
Mad to tug her standard down.

One may lead a horse to water,  
Twenty cannot make him drink.  
Though the goblins cuffed and caught her,  
Coaxed and fought her,  
Bullied and besought her,  
Scratched her, pinched her black as ink,  
Kicked and knocked her,  
Mauled and mocked her,

Lizzie uttered not a word ;  
Would not open lip from lip  
Lest they should cram a mouthful in :  
But laughed in heart to feel the drip  
Of juice that syruiped all her face,  
And lodged in dimples of her chin,  
And streaked her neck which quaked like curd.  
At last the evil people,  
Worn out by her resistance,  
Flung back her penny, kicked their fruit  
Along whichever road they took,  
Not leaving root or stone or shoot ;  
Some writhed into the ground,  
Some dived into the brook  
With ring and ripple,  
Some scudded on the gale without a sound,  
Some vanished in the distance.

In a smart, ache, tingle,  
Lizzie went her way ;  
Knew not was it night or day ;  
Sprang up the bank, tore thro' the furze,  
Threaded copse and dingle,  
And heard her penny jingle  
Bouncing in her purse,—  
Its bounce was music to her ear.  
She ran and ran  
As if she feared some goblin man  
Dogged her with gibe or curse  
Or something worse :

But not one goblin skurried after,  
Nor was she pricked by fear ;  
The kind heart made her windy-paced  
That urged her home quite out of breath with haste  
And inward laughter.

She cried, " Laura," up the garden,  
" Did you miss me ?  
Come and kiss me.  
Never mind my bruises,  
Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices  
Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,  
Goblin pulp and goblin dew.  
Eat me, drink me, love me ;  
Laura, make much of me :  
For your sake I have braved the glen  
And had to do with goblin merchant men."

Laura started from her chair,  
Flung her arms up in the air,  
Clutched her hair :  
" Lizzie, Lizzie, have you tasted  
For my sake the fruit forbidden ?  
Must your light like mine be hidden,  
Your young life like mine be wasted,  
Undone in mine undoing,  
And ruined in my ruin,  
Thirsty, cankered, goblin-ridden ?"—  
She clung about her sister,  
Kissed and kissed and kissed her :

Tears once again  
Refreshed her shrunken eyes,  
Dropping like rain  
After long sultry drouth ;  
Shaking with aguish fear, and pain,  
She kissed and kissed her with a hungry mouth.

Her lips began to scorch,  
That juice was wormwood to her tongue,  
She loathed the feast :  
Writhing as one possessed she leaped and sung,  
Rent all her robe, and wrung  
Her hands in lamentable haste,  
And beat her breast.  
Her locks streamed like the torch  
Borne by a racer at full speed,  
Or like the mane of horses in their flight,  
Or like an eagle when she stems the light  
Straight toward the sun,  
Or like a caged thing freed,  
Or like a flying flag when armies run.

Swift fire spread through her veins, knocked at her  
heart,  
Met the fire smouldering there  
And overbore its lesser flame ;  
She gorged on bitterness without a name :  
Ah ! fool, to choose such part  
Of soul-consuming care !  
Sense failed in the mortal strife :

Like the watch-tower of a town  
Which an earthquake shatters down,  
Like a lightning-stricken mast,  
Like a wind-uprooted tree  
Spun about,  
Like a foam-topped waterspout  
Cast down headlong in the sea,  
She fell at last ;  
Pleasure past and anguish past,  
Is it death or is it life ?

Life out of death.  
That night long Lizzie watched by her,  
Counted her pulse's flagging stir,  
Felt for her breath,  
Held water to her lips, and cooled her face  
With tears and fanning leaves :  
But when the first birds chirped about their eaves,  
And early reapers plodded to the place  
Of golden sheaves,  
And dew-wet grass  
Bowed in the morning winds so brisk to pass,  
And new buds with new day  
Opened of cup-like lilies on the stream,  
Laura awoke as from a dream,  
Laughed in the innocent old way,  
Hugged Lizzie but not twice or thrice ;  
Her gleaming locks showed not one thread of gray,  
Her breath was sweet as May,  
And light danced in her eyes.

Days, weeks, months, years,  
Afterwards, when both were wives  
With children of their own ;  
Their mother-hearts beset with fears,  
Their lives bound up in tender lives ;  
Laura would call the little ones  
And tell them of her early prime,  
Those pleasant days long gone  
Of not-returning time :  
Would talk about the haunted glen,  
The wicked, quaint fruit-merchant men.  
Their fruits like honey to the throat  
But poison in the blood ;  
(Men sell not such in any town :)  
Would tell them how her sister stood  
In deadly peril to do her good,  
And win the fiery antidote :  
Then joining hands to little hands  
Would bid them cling together,  
“ For there is no friend like a sister  
In calm or stormy weather ;  
To cheer one on the tedious way,  
To fetch one if one goes astray,  
To lift one if one totters down,  
To strengthen whilst one stands.”

# ROBERT BROWNING



## *In a Year*

### I

**N**EVER any more  
While I live,  
Need I hope to see his face  
As before.  
Once his love grown chill,  
Mine may strive—  
Bitterly we re-embrace,  
Single still.

### II

Was it something said,  
Something done,  
Vexed him ? was it touch of hand,  
Turn of head ?  
Strange ! that very way  
Love begun.  
I as little understand  
Love's decay.

### III

When I sewed or drew,  
I recall  
How he looked as if I sang,  
—Sweetly too.

If I spoke a word,  
 First of all  
 Up his cheek the colour sprang,  
 Then he heard.

## IV

Sitting by my side,  
 At my feet,  
 So he breathed the air I breathed,  
 Satisfied !  
 I, too, at love's brim  
 Touched the sweet :  
 I would die if death bequeathed  
 Sweet to him.

## V

“ Speak, I love thee best ! ”  
 He exclaimed,  
 “ Let my love thy own foretell,—”  
 I confessed :  
 “ Clasp my heart on thine  
 Now unblamed,  
 Since upon thy soul as well  
 Hangeth mine ! ”

## VI

Was it wrong to own,  
 Being truth ?  
 Why should all the giving prove  
 His alone ?

I had wealth and ease,  
Beauty, youth—  
Since my lover gave me love,  
I gave these.

## VII

That was all I meant,  
—To be just,  
And the passion I had raised  
To content.  
Since he chose to change  
Gold for dust,  
If I gave him what he praised  
Was it strange ?

## VIII

Would he loved me yet,  
On and on,  
While I found some way undreamed  
—Paid my debt !  
Gave more life and more,  
Till, all gone,  
He should smile “ She never seemed  
Mine before.

## IX

“ What—she felt the while,  
Must I think ?  
Love’s so different with us men,”  
He should smile.

“ Dying for my sake—  
White and pink !  
Can't we touch these bubbles then  
But they break ? ”

x

Dear, the pang is brief.  
Do thy part,  
Have thy pleasure. How perplex  
Grows belief !  
Well, this cold clay clod  
Was man's heart.  
Crumble it—and what comes next ?  
Is it God ?









