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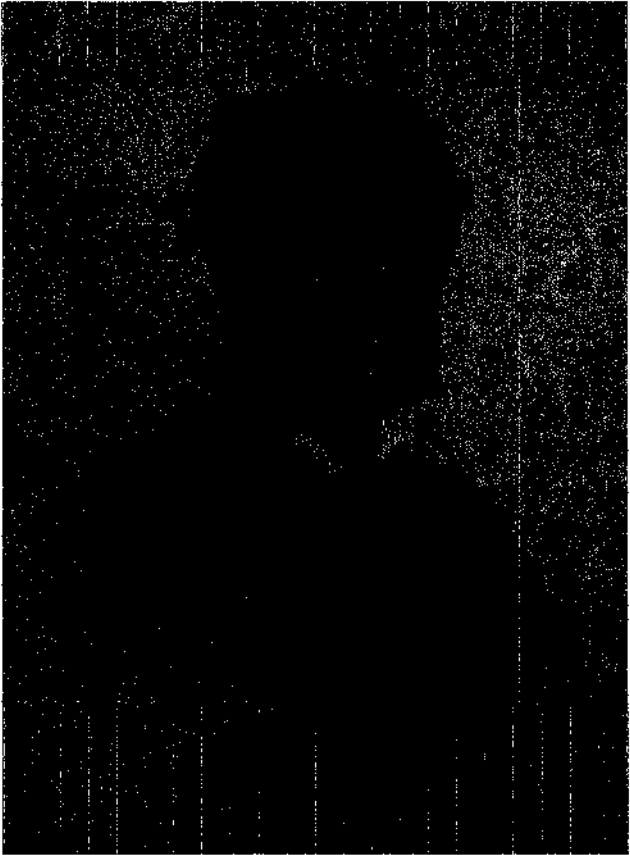
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MATTHEW ARNOLD:
AN INTRODUCTION AND A SELECTION



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MATTHEW ARNOLD, 1881
by F. Sandys

Matthew Arnold

AN INTRODUCTION AND A SELECTION BY

Clifford Djiment



PHOENIX HOUSE

LONDON • 1948

*This selection of the poems of
Matthew Arnold
is dedicated to my mother*

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INTRODUCTION

I THE POEMS

POETS CREATE, SCHOLARS ANNOTATE TURNING THE STIFF pages of some entombed author, it is hard to remember that the old words were once as contemporary as one's own heartbeats. Yet it is essential to be aware of the ecstasy and pain with which the words were set down, for poems live with the independent purpose of wild creatures and the poem that is taken from its natural state and turned into a labelled exhibit gives a very poor idea of its native ease and strength. It would, of course, be foolish to deny that exhibits have their uses. Knowing that the specimen cannot get away into the sky or the fern, we can study at leisure the rhythm of form and the articulation of bone and bone, but such study should never be an end in itself, its effect should always be to send us out into the sun and snow where the poems move.

In this selection of Arnold I have made no attempt to arrange the poems as data for the museum or examination room, but have instead tried to present them simply as the imaginative records of one man's experience. It is the poetry, not the definitive text, which matters in this book. Therefore, as an aid to appreciation, I have printed Arnold's story sources at the head of certain poems and, in the case of the 'Switzerland' group, included poems from 'Faded Leaves' and others that seemed to belong there by reason of emotional congruity, even though Arnold himself may at some time have excluded them from the canon.

I have borne in mind that Arnold was a thinker as well as a poet and it has been my aim to represent him by work in which both capacities are balanced, wherever philosophy

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has triumphed over poetry I have rejected it. An exception is the poem, *Empedocles on Etna*. This is not without faults as a poetic achievement, yet, because it reveals so clearly Arnold's philosophical attitudes and perplexities, I think a knowledge of it is essential to a proper understanding of the man and his writing. Though a dramatic poem, I have placed it among the 'Poems of Unrest' as gaining in significance there. Because their omission will probably be noticed, I should like to explain that one or two famous Arnold poems have been excluded because in my opinion the light of our day reveals them as being worn beyond further use; a case in point is *Rugby Chapel*: I cannot help thinking that Arnold was more dutiful than honest when he wrote this boy-scout-church-parade of a poem.

The text here used (including some footnotes) is that of the Oxford Standard Authors Edition.

II. THE POET

But we, brought forth and rear'd in hours
Of change, alarm, surprise—
What shelter to grow ripe is ours?
What leisure to grow wise?

Too fast we live, too much are tried,
Too harass'd, to attain
Wordsworth's sweet calm, or Goethe's wide
And luminous view to gain.

Those lines of Arnold's—in spite of the fact that compared to our own day the change, alarm, and stirprise of his were mild indeed—evoke an instantly sympathetic response from the modern reader. Here, we feel, is a man familiar with our language of foreboding and crisis; perhaps, attending to his experience, we shall learn not to despair of our own. This is not a disappointed hope, for Arnold was a prophet as well as a poet, and in his poetry spoke for our times as well as for his own. His value for us to-day is that in an

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age of materialism he affirmed the primacy of the spirit.

To his contemporaries he was a literary saboteur. *The Strayed Reveller*, his first book, was published in 1849; his second, *Empedocles on Etna*, in 1852. In between these two dates—in 1851 to be exact—the Great Exhibition was held in Hyde Park. To it, to be thrilled and flattered, people flocked from all over the world. Britain's inventive skill and fine craftsmanship, her bright imperialism, her wealth in men and treasure, and—above all—her pride, were epitomized in this gymkhana of industrial splendour. The exhibition was a grandiose party to celebrate the commercial triumphs of the day, but—so confident were these Victorian business men—it was even more a Joshua-blast to the future to open its gates to man the conqueror.

In this cup-final atmosphere of optimism Arnold was one of a small band of sceptics, and the leading reviews of the day—*The Times*, *English Review*, *Blackwood's*, and *Frosts*—were not slow to attack him for his subversive opinions. Arnold continued to be a heretic all his life, but we are better able to appreciate him now, as we have the advantage of knowing that heaven does not lie about us in our empires and factories.

Where does it lie? That is what we—in common with men since the world began—are trying to find out to-day, a little more anxiously now, perhaps, since heaven's alternative, hell, is seen to be approaching so near. Arnold was an assiduous seeker of heaven, and much given to philosophical speculation. He thought about the mind or mindlessness of the universe, objective and subjective beauty, the inferiority or superiority of man to nature, and so on; but he was also troubled by more immediate subjects: the relation of the individual to the state; the need for order in a disintegrating society; whether social improvement comes from a change of heart or of economics; the ethics of might and right, the good and the clever; the place in our civilization of science, industry, religion. These are precisely the problems that occupy the minds of thinkers to-day. They are urgent problems. They were not, apparently, urgent problems to most of Arnold's

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contemporaries: they were too busy sowing the seeds of material prosperity to foresee—as Arnold did—the harvest of bankruptcy and war which is ours.

Out of his meditation on these matters Arnold made poetry, and among English reflective poets he ranks high. He has a great sense of beauty, a devotion to truth, a compassion for human suffering, sincerity always, and a moving delight in nature. What Bede wrote of the monk Caedmon is also apt for him: 'But he whatsoever he could hear and learn would afterward think upon the same again by himself, and chewing thereon like a clean beast at his cud, would turn it into very sweet metre.' Arnold was an admirer of the civilization of ancient Greece and his work has a truly Attic grace; and I like to think that his best poems have the cool clarity of the Alpine streams along which he loved to roam,

But I do not wish to claim him as a great poet or a great thinker. It is useless to look for consistent teaching in his work, for, though he thought deeply about many problems, he thought about them somewhat confusedly. He was himself aware of this, and wrote to his sister: 'Tret not yourself to make my poems square in all their parts, but like what you can my darling. The true reason why parts suit you while others do not is that my poems are fragments—i.e. that I am fragments, while you are a whole; the whole effect of my poems is vague and indeterminate—this is their weakness; a person therefore who endeavoured to make them accord would only lose his labour; and a person who has any inward completeness can at best like only parts of them.' We can see from this that Arnold understood himself well: although he knew the desirability of wholeness he was never able to attain it, the reason being, perhaps, that owing to lifelong warfare between intellect and spirit he lacked the necessary simplicity of heart.

Many weaknesses are noticeable in his poetry. His work is pitched in too low a key for him to be placed with the finest poets. It is too much lacking in verve and incandescence, and its narrow range becomes obvious when Arnold wants to lift his utterance to something grander and more

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passionate. At such times he resorts to tricks, of which he has three: repetition, italics, the interjection 'Ah'. His ear was faulty, too—one often feels that he was so intent on sense that he ignored sound altogether. And in some of his famous pieces he reminds one of a ham actor coming on to say his piece: the pace forward, the hand raised to draw our attention to the scene and put us in a suitably solemn mood, the pause—and then the big speech. But, in spite of everything, Arnold is still a considerable figure, a noble and serious man who tried to find the best that life can be and gave us the results in several superb poems.

The story of Matthew Arnold the poet is for the most part confined to his young days, poetry then flowing unimpeded; his later story is that of a thinker, poetry then becoming obstructed by concern with affairs of the day. The reason for this is that there was a strong political element in his upbringing, which thrown aside in youth reasserted itself afterwards. As a result, growing older, he became less of an errant poet and more the conscientious son of his conscientious father.

This father is famous—Arnold of Rugby, the founder of the modern public school. In the year 1822, however, when Matthew Arnold was born, his father had not yet moved to Rugby, but was coaching or 'cramming' young gentlemen for matriculation at Laleham, near Staines. About the Reverend Thomas Arnold—deacon, not priest—there have been and are a lot of mistaken notions and, in view of his influence on his son's character, it is just as well to dispel them. He was not a sanctimonious tyrant of the Charles Barrett school. He was not a blinkered Tory, nor an imperialist in the usual sense. He was, on the contrary, a simple and earnest man with a robust sympathy for his less fortunate fellows. He loathed hypocrisy, he loathed injustice, he loathed the privilege of the unworthy ruling class. He took his stand with men like F. D. Maurice and Charles Kingsley for a Christianity of the people, for a religion in which bread and bricks are more important than chasubles and censers. For this reason he opposed John Henry

Newman and the influential members of the Oxford Movement—who stood for a reaffirmation of Church authority—regarding them as reactionaries who were hoping to stem the current of progress with the Gothic wall of theocracy. There is no doubt that, for his day, Thomas Arnold was a progressive man and it is a mistake to think of him merely as a schoolmaster. He was by nature a politician, and he administered Rugby as he would have administered a state. He would, that is, have ruled as a Christian and a gentleman, legislating with honesty and justice in the belief that, as members of a community and a church, men had a high duty to fulfil one to another. As this man's child Matthew Arnold was thus introduced early into the world of the moralist and the reformer.

The poet in him sensed—rightly—that there was danger ahead. He rebelled.

The rebellion did not show itself at Winchester, where he spent a year, nor at his father's school, Rugby—though his coming into the open as a poet by carrying off the school poetry prize in 1840 may have been the first sign—but at Balliol, which he entered in 1841.

Here, as the son of Arnold of Rugby, he proved to be a surprise. He was a gay but aloof young man, irreverent in his attitude to authority and convention, affected, frivolous, and in dress rather a dandy. He was far from being a diligent student. 'Matthew is out fishing when he ought properly to be working', wrote his friend Arthur Hugh Clough, in whose memory Arnold was later to write *Thyrsis*. As a result of this behaviour Arnold took only a second class degree. It is significant that he was still giving attention to poetry, however, for in 1843 he won the Newdigate Prize with his poem *Cromwell*.

In 1847 he became private secretary to Lord Lansdowne. But politics did not sober him—he was still the sporter of flashy waistcoats, still kept people at a distance with a joke or an epigram.

Ours is an age of labels. Having some knowledge of psychology, sociology, and science, we attach a name or a complex to a person and file him complacently. I most

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certainly do not want to commit that impertinence to Arnold, but it seems to me that his behaviour at Oxford and immediately after was not only a reaction against the strict virtue of his upbringing but also an elaborate device to protect his precious individual character.

All his life Arnold was aware of the conflict between the inner and outer life of man. His poetry is the record of his struggle to reconcile the two. In these Oxford days it would seem that he tried to solve the problem simply by repulsing the outer life, by putting up a ring of supercilious irresponsibility that frightened the world away and left inviolate the developing poet within.

It is a course that many sensitive people adopt. Byron, with his Dionysiac mask, comes to mind as an extreme example of the type. Arnold's is a problem that every artist and independent thinker encounters, and each has to solve it as best he can. To-day, when more than ever the outer world presses in and threatens to overwhelm the vulnerable inner life, we should be able to read Arnold with sympathy, for in his early productive years he was terrified—I am sure the word is not too emphatic—terrified that he might get into the hands of the energetic planners of his time and be killed as a poet.

Not that he lacked interest in society—far from it: as I have mentioned the problems of politics, religion, and philosophy had for him an almost irresistible attraction. But he felt that too much concern with them was inimical to the creation of poetry. It has been said that the poet thinks his sensations and feels his thoughts—he perceives with his whole being. To Arnold it seemed that the planners and system-makers were out to disrupt this intuitive wholeness, were out to isolate the faculty of reason from the complete person that every poet must be, were out to persuade him—in Arnold's own words—'to love his self knowledge, and talk of his usefulness and imagine himself a Reformer'. To put it briefly, the poet, an integrated personality, synthesizes and is a believer; the man of affairs, a specialist, analyses and—since to analyse you must first question—he is a sceptic. Doubt in the approach to experi-

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cnce, and the disorder proceeding from it, were two things that Arnold hated all his life, and at Oxford, to defend himself against them in the form of altruistic friends, he adopted what the array calls 'offensive support'—certain of attack he got his blow in first, 'Yes, I said to myself/ he wrote of Clough and others, 'something tells me I can, if need be, dispense with them all, even with him: better that, than be sucked for an hour even into the Time Stream in which he and they plunge and bellow.' The poet, Arnold felt, possessed truth spontaneously, but Clough and the others were 'ever learning, never coming to the knowledge of the truth'. They rushed actively about without the patience first to find out where they were going. Arnold *had* to know where he was going and sought what he called an Idea of the world 'in order not to be prevailed over by the world's multitudinousness' as manifested in his friends.

This concern with unity and disunity runs through all Arnold's poetry and all his thought. He abominated multitudinousness, cerebral probing, disorder, 'the trying to go into and to the bottom of an object instead of grouping objects'—that is, instead of trying for the whole view—and he sought a harmony in which the desired complete life would be possible.

The search led him far from poetry, and the journey away began when, in 1851, he became one of His Majesty's Inspectors of schools: after the publication of *Poems* in 1853 his main activity as a poet was over. Thereafter until his death in 1888—although he continued to produce poems from time to time, including the splendid Clough elegy and *Obermann Once Afore*—his life was occupied increasingly with practical matters. Certainly, this interfered with his creative energy, but it sharpened his intellect, for it was during this time that he produced his literary criticism. It is not generally known that one of the practical matters upon which he was engaged at this period was the foundation of our modern system of free elementary education.

As we have seen, the sociological problems which now filled his time did not represent a new interest in his life. He

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had been aware of them as a poet, but he had not then tried to solve them. He had known then that it is not the poet's business to make systems, but so to enlarge the consciousness of mankind that the systems will be made by others. Coleridge has pointed out that poetic fertility is stultified by the wish to identify everything, and it does seem that a certain willingness not to know is essential to the creation of poetry. Or, as another poet has said, 'they see not clearliest who see all things clear'. The Arnold of the *Resignation* days would have agreed with this.

This raises the question of the artist's function in society, a matter very much in the air at the present time. In Russia, as we all know, art is considered utilitarian in its purpose, very similar in status to government films in this country. A change of policy is decided upon, people have to be brought into line with it, orders are sent out to the artists to do the job of persuasion. The method has a lot in its favour and it has no lack of advocates. But it is doubtful whether it can produce supreme art. Man is the battlefield of good and evil, and to restrict the artist's freedom has the same effect as censorship or partisanship on the journalist—it makes him a mere ventriloquist's doll pretending to the voice of truth. In matters of morality and ethics the artist should be a free-lance and not a judge: judgement implies arrogance (a quality with which no artist can be great) for surely it is arrogant for any being limited by space and time to assert that he commands the intricate patterns of life—nature, mind, flesh? Truly, we see here as in a glass darkly, and our politics, economics, and sciences are matches that give only a small amount of light. It is not with arrogance, but humility in loving and learning that the artist should approach life; not with the mind made up, but ready to be surprised by men and things. It is fatal to frog-march art and morality into the registrar's office and expect a happy conjugality.

Arnold the poet—if not Arnold the later moralist—knew this very well. It is an attitude of mind that has much in common with eastern religious thought, and Arnold was in fact a profound admirer of the collection of Hindu scriptures

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known as the Bhagavad Gita. All about him he beheld the chaos caused by men pursuing their selfish ends, and he found order—his Idea of the world—in the doctrines of this book. The Bhagavad Gita teaches that the ordinary self or ego, to which we of the western world attach so much value, is illusory and can only be made real by being absorbed in the higher self or Oneness of the universe. In the higher self or Oneness the individual ego is consummated, and the anarchy of separate identities gives place to the order of a General Law in which all are united.

Arnold described this Law as 'the universal order which seems to be intended and aimed at in the world, and which it is man's happiness to go along with or his misery to go counter to'. The teaching of the Bhagavad Gita provided a spiritual law, but Arnold realized that another and more concrete law is necessary for the ordinary affairs of men. This need he found satisfied by the civilization and art of classical Greece, and it was upon this law, rather than the Hindu one, that he founded his sociological theories in later life. Here the Arnold enigma thrusts itself sharply forward: why did he take up sociology at all? Why, when he knew that poetic creativeness goes hand in hand with a sense of wonder, why, when he wrote 'I often think that even a slight gift of poetical expression which in a common person might have developed itself easily and naturally is overlaid and crushed in a profound thinker' did he start on the road that would eventually lead to artistic sterility?

There are several possible answers. One is the metaphorical rising from the grave of his giant father. It is as though the father insisted on the son following the Arnold party line for, bravely though Matthew challenged them in his youth, his father's ideas became more and more evident in his own.

Another answer is that he was a disillusioned idealist, a man who, unhappy in a world of intellectual turmoil and moral cupidity, sought a reassuring Order and Goodness like a wandering man seeking a home. He knew—one suspects—that the idea of order he derived from classicism did not fit the heterogeneity he found modern life to be, and a refuge from sickness and fear was a necessity to him—an

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intellectual eiderdown. To those who begin life with a conviction of man's nobility the realization of man's baseness comes as a shock. Many are thus shocked to-day. In Arnold's time it is true that man's wickedness was not showing itself on a global scale; conceptions of right and wrong were not being shuffled to and fro with bland cynicism, practical politics—expediency, that is—was not being made the official new testament, the earth was as yet ungirdled by lies night and day. But that is no reason why we should smile at Arnold's distress, as some of his modern critics are inclined to do. Signs of evil have never been lacking in the world, and to a man as sensitive as Arnold even its most trivial manifestations are hurtful because they provide perennial evidence of the essential hardness of men's hearts. Behind the polite fiction of society the law of the jungle is still the rule, not because every man is irremediably evil, but because almost every man is thinking of himself. Such a state of affairs is inevitable in a conception of life that puts a premium on egotism, and Arnold, disapproving as he did of the adulation of the self encouraged by philosophers like Kant and Fichte and found in the poets of the Romantic Movement, would certainly deplore the temper of our own day. For surely it is the belief in self-expression at all costs—to be found in our art, our morals, and our international relations—that produces the chaos in which we now live?

As we have seen, against such romantic individualism Arnold's recommendation for the good life was Oneness, loss of the ego in a general order. And this is where the shadow of Thomas Arnold begins to cross the mind of his son. Thomas Arnold, although a liberal, was feudalistic in his outlook. He believed in raising the standard of living, but he did not believe in equality. He wanted to do his best for the governed, but he did not wish them to change places with the governors. In Matthew Arnold this liberalistic feudalism turned itself into an enlightened absolutism' Rulers were to be men of culture, and they were to communicate their culture to the people, in time producing a perfect society. That is the right thing¹, Arnold said, but as 'right as far as we are concerned, is not ready', force was

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to be used until the goal was reached. Thus, in theory, Arnold advocated what amounts to the modern authoritarian state, and in the study it may all have seemed very possible and desirable, but we have since learned that there is a tragic gap between the idea and the reality.

Arnold reached this false position by making the mistake of applying to material matters what is only valid spiritually. It is one thing to submit to the General Law of the Universe or God; quite another to submit to the Law of men. Arnold confused the two laws, and as he became a thinker and less of a poet equated the functions of poetry with those of religion. Actually, the two are quite distinct, for poetry is but a stage on the way to enlightenment, not the enlightenment itself. In enlightenment the self is annihilated, but before it can be overcome the self must be realized. Poetry is the completest realization of the self.

And so poetry deserted Matthew Arnold. It deserted him because he was not willing to recognize that poetry is the product of the experiencing ego and is precipitated by the process of Becoming, before the stage of Pure Being is reached. Poetry is not mysticism: it is an intensely human activity, and to create it the poet must know the pub as well as the temple. To have sympathy with men, however mad and mistaken they may be, the poet must partake of their imperfection, for only the imperfect can have sympathy: the perfect is absolute, the frozen pole on which all spins. Perhaps Arnold changed over so smoothly from the heart's reason to the mind's formula because he moved too much among the bookish and genteel and did not know enough of those places where men do actually sweat and suffer. The life of man will not be tidied up into an ornamental garden. Seeds blow in from outside, weeds persist, flowers appear in dark unheeded corners, climbing stems escape through the fences.

We must be glad that, before he took up hoe and shears, the strays and rambling roses of Arnold's experience blew into his poetry. In it he expressed the sad and happy contradiction of life before he felt the need to rationalize it, and so it is that the outward classical appearance of his

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poems conceals a romantic self within. Under the stiff cravat of the school inspector there beats a passionate gipsy heart. In a sense there never can be a purely classical art, for the voice of nature is the voice of the romantic, and, like Blake, Shelley, and Richard Jefferies, Arnold had a poet's natural vision of what men might become if they would only follow the greatness within them and forsake the selfishness of the trivial ambitions which cause meanness, distrust, hate, war, famine. Men only partly live; if they lived fully, not like mystics in the spirit only, not like materialists in the flesh only, but in both, as complete beings participating in a mutual surrender and receiving, then this life would be rich and eternal and man would indeed be the builder of heaven upon earth. That is the message of Arnold the poet, but it was his pain, as it is ours, to say: 'if only—if only men would love one another—if only . . .' There seems little hope that they will, and so, like him, we turn to the making of systems, and poetry, the divine wisdom, abandons us.

PART I
POEMS OF UNREST

OBERMANN*

IN front the awful Alpine track
Crawls up its rocky stair;
The autumn storm-winds drive the rack
Close o'er it, in the air.

Behind are the abandon'd baths
Mute in their meadows lone;
The leaves are on the valley paths;
The mists are on the Rhone—

The white mists rolling like a sea.
I hear the torrents roar.
—Yes, Obermann, all speaks of thee!
I feel thee near once more.

I turn thy leaves: I feel their breath
Once more upon me roll;
That air of languor, cold, and death
Which brooded o'er thy soul.

Fly hence, poor Wretch, whoe'er thou art,
Condemn'd to cast about,
All shipwreck in thy own weak heart,
For comfort from without;

*This is the title of a book by ficinne Pivert de Sénancour (1770-1846)
'a collection of letten from Switzerland treating almott entirely of nature
and of the human soul'.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

A fever in these pages burns
Beneath the calm they feign;
A wounded human spirit turns
Here, on its bed of pain.

Yes, though the virgin mountain air
Fresh through these pages blows,
Though to these leaves the glaciers spare
The soul of their white snows,

Though here a mountain murmur swell
Of many a dark-bough'd pine,
Though, as you read, you hear the bells
Of the high-pasturing kine—

Yet, through the hum of torrent lone,
And brooding mountain bee,
There sobs I know not what ground tone
Of human agony.

Is it for this, because the sound
Is fraught too deep with pain,
That, Obcnnann! the world around
So little loves thy strain?

Some secrets may the poet tell,
For the world loves new ways.
To tell too deep ones is not well;
It knows not what he says.

Yet of the spirits who have reign'd
In this our troubled day,
I know but two, who have attain'd,
Save thee, to'see their way.

By England's lakes, in grey old age,
His quiet home one keeps;
And one, the strong much-toiling Sage,
In German Weimar sleeps.

POEMS OF UNREST

But Wordsworth's eyes avert their ken
From half of human fate;
And Goethe's course few sons of men
May think to emulate.

For he pursued a lonely road,
His eyes on Nature's plan;
Neither made man too much a God,
Nor God too much a man.

Strong was he, with a spirit free
From mists, and sane, and clear;
Clearer, how much! than ours: yet we
Have a worse course to steer.

For though his manhood bore the blast
Of Europe's stormiest time,
Yet in a tranquil world was pass'd
His tenderer youthful prime.

But we, brought forth and rear'd in hours
Of change, alarm, surprise—
What shelter to grow ripe is ours?
What leisure to grow wise?

Like children bathing on the shore,
Buried a wave beneath,
The second wave succeeds, before
We have had time to breathe.

Too fast we live, too much are tried,
Too harass'd, to attain
Wordsworth's sweet calm or Goethe's wide
And luminous view to gain.

And then we turn, thou sadder Sage!
To thee: we feel thy spell
The hopeless tangle of our age—
Thou too hast scann'd it well'

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Immovable thou sittest; still
As death; compos'd to bear.
Thy head is clear, thy feeling chill—
And icy thy despair.

Yes, as the Son of Thetis' said,
One hears thee saying now—
Greater by far than thou are dead:
Strive not: die also thou.—

Ah! Two desires toss about
The poet's feverish blood.
One drives him to the world without,
And one to solitude.

*The glow, he cries, the thrill of life—
Where, where do these abound?—*
Not in the world, not in the strife
Of men, shall they be found.

He who hath watch'd, not shar'd, the strife,
Knows how the day hath gone;
He only lives with the world's life
Who hath renounc'd his own.

To thee we come, then. Clouds are roll'd
Where thou, O Seer, art set;
Thy realm of thought is drear and cold—
The world is colder yet!

And thou hast pleasures too to share
With those who come to thee:
Balms floating on thy mountain air,
And healing sights to see.

How often, where the slopes are green
On Jaman, hast thou sate
By some high chalet door, and seen
The summer day grow late,

*Achilles. See *Iliad* xxi 106 et seqq.

POEMS OF UNREST

And darkness steal o'er the wet grass
With the pale crocus starr'd,
And reach that glimmering sheet of glass
Beneath the piny sward,

Lake Lemman's waters, far below;
And watch'd the rosy light
Fade from the distant peaks of snow:
And on the ah of night

Heard accents of the eternal tongue
Through the pine branches play:
Listen'd, and felt thyself grow young;
Listen'd, and wept—Away!

Away the dreams that but deceive!
And thou, sad Guide, adieu!
I go; Fate drives me: but I leave
Half of my life with you.

We, in some unknown Power's employ,
Move on a rigorous line:
Can neither, when we will, enjoy;
Nor, when we will, resign.

I in the world must live:—but thou,
Thou melancholy Shade!
Wilt not, if thou canst see me now,
Condemn me, nor upbraid.

For thou art gone away from earth,
And place with those dost claim,
The Children of the Second Birth
Whom the world could not tame;

And with that small transfigured Band,
Whom many a different way
Conducted to their common land,
Thou learn'st to think as they.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Christian and pagan, king and slave,
Soldier and anchorite,
Distinctions we esteem so grave,
Are nothing in their sight.

They do not ask, who pin'd unseen,
Who was on action hurl'd,
Whose one bond is that all have been
Unspotted by the world.

There without anger thou wilt see
Him who obeys thy spell
No more, so he but rest, like thee,
UnsoiPd:—and so, Farewell!

Farewell!—Whether thou now liest near
That much-lov'd inland sea,
The ripples of whose blue waves cheer
Vevey and Meillerie,

And in that gracious region bland,
Where with clear-rustling wave
The scented pines of Switzerland
Stand dark round thy green grave,

Between the dusty vineyard walls
Issuing on that green place
The early peasant still recalls
The pensive stranger's face,

And stoops to dear thy moss-grown date
Ere he plods on again;—
Or whether, by maligner Fate,
Among the swarms of men,

Where between granite terraces
The blue Seine rolls her wave,
The Capital of Pleasure sees
Thy hardly-heard-of grave—

Farewell! Under the sky we part,
 In this stern Alpine dell.
 O unstrung will! O broken heart!
 A last, a last farewell!

1852

TO A GIPSY CHILD BY THE SEA-SHORE

WHO taught this pleading to unpractis'd eyes?
 Who hid such import in an infant's gloom?
 Who lent thee, child, this meditative guise?
 What clouds thy forehead, and fore-dates thy doom?

Lo! sails that gleam a moment and are gone;
 The swinging waters, and the cluster'd pier.
 Not idly Earth and Ocean labour on,
 Nor idly do these sea-birds hover near.

But thou, whom superfluity of joy
 Wafts not from thine own thoughts, nor longings vain,
 Nor weariness, the full-fed soul's annoy;
 Remaining in thy hunger and thy pain:

Thou, drugging pain by patience; half averse
 From thine own mother's breast, that knows not thee;
 With eyes that sought thine eyes thou didst converse,
 And that soul-searching vision fell on me.

Glooms that go deep as thine I have not known:
 Moods of fantastic sadness, nothing worth.
 Thy sorrow and thy calmness are thine own:
 Glooms that enhance and glorify this earth.

What mood wears like complexion to thy woe?—
 His, who in mountain glens, at noon of day,
 Sits rapt, and hears the battle break below?—
 Ah! thine was not the shelter, but the fray.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

What exile's, changing bitter thoughts with glad?
What seraph's, in some alien planet born?—
No exile's dream was ever half so sad,
Nor any angel's sorrow so forlorn.

Is the calm thine of stoic souls, who weigh
Life well, and find it wanting, nor deplore:
But in disdainful silence turn away,
Stand mute, self-centred, stern, and dream no more?

Or do I wait, to hear some grey-hair'd king
Unravel all his many-colour'd lore:
Whose mind hath known all arts of governing,
Mus'd much, lov'd life a little, loath'd it more?

Down the pale cheek long lines of shadow slope,
Which years, and curious thought, and suffering give—
Thou hast foreknown the vanity of hope,
Foreseen thy harvest—yet proceed'st to live.

O meek anticipant of that sure pain
Whose sureness grey-hair'd scholars hardly learn!
What wonder shall time breed, to swell thy strain?
What heavens, what earth, what suns shalt thou discern?

Ere the long night, whose stillness brooks no star,
Match that funereal aspect with her pall,
I think, thou wilt have fathom'd life too far,
Have known too much—or else forgotten all.

The Guide of our dark steps a triple veil
Betwixt our senses and our sorrow keeps:
Hath sown with ploudless passages the tale
Of grief, and eas'd us with a thousand sleeps.

Ah! not the nectarous poppy lovers use,
Not daily labour's dull, Lethaeon spring,
Oblivion in lost angels can infuse
Of the soil'd glory, and the trailing wing;

POEMS OF UNREST

And though thou glean, what strenuous gleaners may
In the throng'd fields where winning comes by strife;
And though the just sun gild, as all men pray,
Some reaches of thy storm-vext stream of life;

Though that blank sunshine blind thee: though the
cloud

That sever'd the world's march and thine, is gone:
Though ease dulls grace, and Wisdom be too proud
To halve a lodging that was all her own:

Once, ere the day decline, thou shalt discern,
Oh once, ere night, in thy success, thy chain.
Ere the long evening close, thou shalt return,
And wear this majesty of grief again.

1849

EMPEDOCLES ON ETNA

A DRAMATIC POEM

PERSONS

EMPEDOCLES.

PAUSANIAS, *a Physician.*

GALUCLES, *a young Harp-player.*

*The Scene of the Poem is on Mount Etna; at first in the forest region^
afterwards on the summit of the mountain.*

ACT I: SCENE I

A Pass in the forest region of Etna. Morning

CALLICLES

(Alone, resting on a rock by the path)

THE mules, I think, will not be here this hour.
They feel the cool wet turf under their feet
By the stream-side, after the dusty lanes
In which they have toil'd all night from Catana,
And scarcely will they budge a yard. O Pan!

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

How gracious is the mountain at this hour!
A thousand times have I been here alone
Or with the revellers from the mountain towns,
But never on so fair a morn;—the sun
Is shining on the brilliant mountain crests,
And on the highest pines: but further down
Here in the valley is in shade; the sward
Is dark, and on the stream the mist still hangs;
One sees one's foot-prints crush'd in the wet grass,
One's breath curls in the air; and on these pines
That climb from the stream's edge, the long grey tufts,
Which the goats love, are jewell'd thick with dew.
Here will I stay till the slow litter comes.
I have my harp too—that is well.—Apollo!
What mortal could be sick or sorry here?
I know not in what mind Empedocles,
Whose mules I follow'd, may be coming up,
But if, as most men say, he is half mad
With exile, and with brooding on his wrongs,
Pausanias, his sage friend, who mounts with him,
Could scarce have lighted on a lovelier cure.
The mules must be below, far down. I hear
Their tinkling bells, mixed with the song of birds,
Rise faintly to me—now it stops!—Who's here?
Pausanias! and on foot? alone?

PAUSANIAS

And thou, then?

I left thee supping with Pcisianax,
With thy head full of wine, and thy hair crown'd,
Touching thy harp as the whim came on thee,
And prais'd and spoil'd by master and by guests
Almost as much as the new dancing girl.
Why hast thou follow'd us?

CALLICLES

The night was hot,
And the feast past its prime; so we slipp'd out,
Some of us, to the portico to breathe;—

POEMS OF UNREST

Pcisianax, thou know'st, drinks late;—and then,
As I was lifting my soil'd garland off,
I saw the mules and Utter in the court,
And in the litter sate Empedocles;
Thou, too, wert with him. Straightway I sped home;
I saddled my white mule, and all night long
Through the cool lovely country follow'd you,
Pass'd you a little since as morning dawn'd,
And have this hour sate by the torrent here,
Till the slow mules should climb in sight again.
And now?

PAUSANIAS

And now, back to the town with speed!
Crouch *in* the wood first, till the mules have pass'd;
They do but halt, they will be here anon.
Thou must be viewless to Empedocles;
Save mine, he must not meet a human eye.
One of his moods is on him that thou know'st.
I think, thou would'st not vex him.

GALLICLES

No—and yet
I would fain stay and help thee tend him; once
He knew me well, and would oft notice me.
And still, I know not how, he draws me to him,
And I could watch him with his proud sad face,
His flowing locks and gold-encircled brow
And kingly gait, for ever; such a spell
In his severe looks, such a majesty
As drew of old the people after him,
In Agrigentum and Olympia,
When his star reign'd, before his banishment,
Is potent still on me in his decline.
But oh, Pausanias, he is changed of late!
There is a settled trouble in his air
Admits no momentary brightening now;
And when he comes among his friends at feasts,
Tis as an orphan among prosperous boys.
Thou know'st of old he loved this harp of mine,

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

When first he sojourn'd with Peisianax;
He is now always moody, and I fear him.
But I would serve him, soothe him, if I could,
Dared one but try.

PAUSANIAS

Thou wert a kind child ever.
He loves thee, but he must not see thee now.
Thou hast indeed a rare touch on thy harp,
He loves that in thee, too; there was a time
(But that is pass'd) he would have paid thy strain
With music to have drawn the stars from heaven.
He has his harp and laurel with him still,
But he has laid the use of music by,
And all which might relax his settled gloom.
Yet thou may'st try thy playing if thou wilt,
But thou must keep unseen; follow us on,
But at a distance; in these solitudes,
In this clear mountain air, a voice will rise,
Though from afar, distinctly; it may soothe him.
Play when we halt, and, when the evening comes
And I must leave him (for his pleasure is
To be left musing these soft nights alone
In the high unfrequented mountain spots),
Then watch him, for he ranges swift and far,
Sometimes to Etna's top, and to the cone;
But hide thee in the rocks a great way down,
And try thy noblest strains, my Gallicles,
With the sweet night to help thy harmony.
Thou wilt earn my thanks sure, and perhaps his.

GALLICLES

More than a day and night, Pausanias,
Of this fair summer weather, on these hills,
Would I bestow to help Empedocles.
That needs no thanks; one is far better here
Than in the broiling city in these heats.
But tell me, how hast thou persuaded him
In this his present fierce, man-hating mood,
To bring thee out with him alone on Etna?

POEMS OF UNREST

PAUSANIAS

Thou hast heard all men speaking of Pantheia,
The woman who at Agrigentum lay
Thirty long days in a cold trance of death,
And whom Empedocles call'd back to life.
Thou art too young to note it, but his power
Swells with the swelling evil of this time,
And holds men mute to see where it will rise.
He could stay swift diseases in old days,
Chain madmen by the music of his lyre,
Cleanse to sweet airs the breath of poisonous streams,
And in the mountain chinks inter the winds.
This he could do of old; but now, since all
Clouds and grows daily worse in Sicily,
Since broils tear us in twain, since this new swarm
Of sophists has got empire in our schools
Where he was paramount, since he is banish'd,
And lives a lonely man in triple gloom,
He grasps the very reins of life and death.
I ask'd him of Pantheia yesterday,
When we were gather'd with Peisianax,
And he made answer, I should come at night
On Etna here, and be alone with him,
And he would tell me, as his old, tried friend,
Who still was faithful, what might profit me;
That is, the secret of this miracle.

CALLICLES

Bah! Thou a doctor? Thou art superstitious.
Simple Pausanias, 'twas no miracle!
Pantheia, for I know her kinsmen well,
Was subject to these trances from a girl.
Empedocles would say so, did he deign;
But he still lets the people, whom he scorns,
Gape and cry wizard at him, if they list.
But thou, thou art no company for him;
Thou art as cross, as soured as himself.
Thou hast some wrong from thine own citizens,
And then thy friend is banish'd, and on that,

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Straightway thou fallest to arraign the times,
As if the sky was impious not to fall
The sophists are no enemies of his;
I hear, Gorgias, their chief, speaks nobly of him,
As of his gifted master and once friend.
He is too scornful, too high-wrought, too bitter.
'Tis not the times, 'tis not the sophists vex him;
There is some root of suffering in himself,
Some secret and unfollow'd vein of woe,
Which makes the time look black and sad to him.
Pester him not in this his sombre mood
With questioning about an idle tale,
But lead him through the lovely mountain paths,
And keep his mind from preying on itself,
And talk to him of things at hand and common,
Not miracles; thou art a learned man,
But credulous of fables as a girl.

PAUSANIAS

And thou, a boy whose tongue outruns his knowledge,
And on whose lightness blame is thrown away.
Enough of this! I see the litter wind
Up by the torrent-side, under the pines.
I must rejoin Empedocles. Do thou
Crouch in the brush-wood till the mules have pass'd;
Then play thy kind part well. Farewell till night!

SCENE II

Noon. *A Glen on the highest skirts of the woody region of Etna*
EMPEDOCLES. PAUSANIAS

PAUSANIAS

The noon is hot; when we have cross'd the stream
We shall have left the woody tract, and come
Upon the open shoulder of the hill.
See how the giant spires of yellow bloom
Of the sun-loving gentian, in the heat,

POEMS OF UNREST

Are shining on those naked slopes like flame!
Let us rest here; and now, Empedocles,
Pantheia's history. *[A harp-note is heard*

EMPEDOCLES

Hark! what sound was that
Rose from below? If it were possible,
And we were not so far from human haunt,
I should have said that some one touch'd a harp.
Hark! there again!

PAUSANIAS

Tis the boy Callicles,
The sweetest harp-player in Catana,
He is for ever coming on these hills,
In summer, to all country festivals,
With a gay revelling band; he breaks from them
Sometimes, and wanders far among the glens.
But heed him not, he will not mount to us;
I spoke with him this morning. Once more, therefore,
Instruct me of Pantheia's story, Master,
As I have pray'd thee.

EMPEDOCLES

That? and to what end?

PAUSANIAS

It is enough that all men speak' of it.
But I will also say, that when the Gods
Visit us as they do with sign and plague,
To know those spells of time that stay their hand
Were to live free from terror.

EMPEDOCLES

Spells? Mistrust them.
Mind is the spell which governs earth and heaven.
Man has a mind with which to plan his safety;
Know that, and help thyself.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

PAUSANIAS

But thy own words?

'The wit and counsel of man was never clear,
Troubles confuse the little wit he has.'
Mind is a light which the Gods mock us with,
To lead those false who trust it.

[The harp sounds again]

EMPEDOGLES

Hist! once more!

Listen, Pausanias!—Aye, 'tis Callicles!
I know those notes among a thousand. Hark!

CALLICLES

[Sings unscen'd from below]

The track winds down to the clear stream,
To cross the sparkling shallows; there
The cattle love to gather, on their way
To the high mountain pastures, and to stay,
Till the rough cow-herds drive them past,
Knee-deep in the cool ford; for 'tis the last
Of all the woody, high, well-water'd dells
On Etna; and the beam
Of noon is broken there by chestnut boughs
Down its steep verdant sides; the air
Is freshened by the leaping stream, which throws
Eternal showers of spray on the moss'd roots
Of trees, and veins of turf, and long dark shoots
Of ivy-plants, and fragrant hanging bells
Of hyacinths, and on late anemonies,
That muffle its wet banks; but glade,
And stream, and sward, and chestnut trees,
End here; Etna beyond, in the broad glare
Of the hot noon, without a shade,
Slope behind slope, up to the peak, lies bare;
The peak, round which the white clouds play.

In such a glen, on such a day,
On Pelion, on the grassy ground,
Chiron, the aged Centaur, lay,
The young Achilles standing by.

POEMS OF UNREST

The Centaur taught him to explore
The mountains; where the glens are dry,
And the tired Centaurs come to rest,
And where the soaking springs abound,
And the straight ashes grow for spears,
And where the hill-goats come to feed,
And the sea-eagles build their nest.
He show'd him Phthia far away,
And said: O boy, I taught this lore
To Peleus, in long distant years!
He told him of the Gods, the stars,
The tides;—and then of mortal wars,
And of the life which heroes lead
Before they reach the Elysian place
And rest in the immortal mead;
And all the wisdom of his race.

*[The music below ceases, and EMPEDOCLES speaks,
accompanying himself in a solemn manner on
his harp*

The out-spread world to span
A cord the Gods first slung,
And then the soul of man
There, like a mirror, hung.
And bade the winds through space impel the gusty toy.

Hither and thither spins
The wind-borne mirroring soul,
A thousand glimpses wins,
And never sees a whole;
Looks once, and drives elsewhere, and leaves its last
employ.

The Gods laugh in their sleeve
To watch man doubt and fear,
Who knows not what to believe
Since he sees nothing clear,
And dares stamp nothing false where he finds nothing
sure.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Is this, Pausanias, so?
And can our souls not strive,
But with the winds must go,
And hurry where they drive?
Is Fate indeed so strong, man's strength indeed so poor?

I will not judge! that man,
Howbeit, I judge as lost,
Whose mind allows a plan
Which would degrade it most;
And he treats doubt the best who tries to see least ill.

Be not, then, fear's blind slave!
Thou art my friend; to thee,
All knowledge that I have,
All skill I wield, are free;
Ask not the latest news of the last miracle,

Ask not what days and nights
In trance Pantheia lay,
But ask how thou such sights
May'st see without dismay;
Ask what most helps when known, thou son of Anchitus!

What? hate, and awe, and shame
Fill thee to see our world;
Thou feelest thy soul's frame
Shaken and rudely hurl'd.
What? life and time go hard with thee too, as with us;

Thy citizens, 'tis said,
Envy thee and oppress,
Thy goodness no men aid,
All strive to make it less;
Tyranny, pride, and lust fill Sicily's abodes;

POEMS OF UNREST

Heaven is with earth at strife,
Signs make thy soul afraid,
The dead return to life,
Rivers are dried, winds stay'd;
Scarce can one think in calm, so threatening are the
Gods;

And we feel, day and night,
The burden of ourselves—
Well, then, the wiser wight
In his own bosom delves,
And asks what ails him so, and gets what cure he can.

The sophist sneers: Fool, take
Thy pleasure, right or wrong!
The pious wail: Forsake
A world these sophists throng!
Be neither saint nor sophist-led, but be a man.

These hundred doctors try
To preach thee to their school.
We have the truth! they cry.
And yet their oracle,
Trumpet it as they will, is but the same as thine.

Once read thy own breast right,
And thou hast done with fears!
Man gets no other light,
Search he a thousand years.
Sink in thyself! there ask what ails thee, at that shrine!

What makes thee struggle and rave?
Why are men ill at ease?—
Tis that the lot they have
Fails their own will to please;
For man would make no murmuring, were his will
obey'd.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

And why is it, that still
Man with his lot thus fights?—
Tis that he makes this *will*
The measure of his *rights*,
And believes Nature outraged if his will 's gainsaid.

Couldst thou, Pausanias, learn
How deep a fault is this!
Couldst thou but once discern
Thou hast no *right* to bliss,
No title from the Gods to welfare and repose;

Then thou wouldst look less mazed
Whene'er from bliss debarr'd,
Nor think the Gods were crazed
When thy own lot went hard.
But we are all the same—the fools of our own woes!

For, from the first faint morn
Of life, the thirst for bliss
Deep in man's heart is born;
And, sceptic as he is,
He fails not to judge clear if this be quench'd or no.

Nor is that thirst to blame!
Man errs not that he deems
His welfare his true aim,
He errs because he dreams
The world does but exist that welfare to bestow.

We mortals are no kings
For each of whom to sway
A new-made world up-springs
Meant merely for his play;
No, we are strangers here; the world is from of old.

POEMS OF UNREST

In vain our pent wills fret,
And would the world subdue.
Limits we did not set
Condition all we do;
Born into life we are, and life must be our mould.

Born into life—man grows
Forth from his parents' stem,
And blends their bloods, as those
Of theirs are blent in them;
So each new man strikes root into a far fore-time.

Born into life—we bring
A bias with us here,
And, when here, each new thing
Affects us we come near;
To tunes we did not call our being must keep chime.

Born into life—in vain,
Opinions, those or these,
Unalter'd to retain
The obstinate mind decrees;
Experience, like a sea, soaks all-effacing in.

Born into life—who lists
May what is false hold dear,
And for himself make mists
Through which to see less clear;
The world is what it is, for all our dust and din.

Born into life—'tis we,
And not the world, are new.
Our cry for bliss, our plea,
Others have urged it too;
Our wants have all been felt, our errors made before,

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

No eye could be too sound
To observe a world so vast,
No patience too profound
To sort what's here amass'd;
How man may here best live no care too great to
explore.

But we—as some rude guest
Would change, where'er he roam,
The manners there profess'd
To those he brings from home—
We mark not the world's course, but would have *it*
take *ours*.

The world's course proves the terms
On which man wins content;
Reason the proof confirms;
We spurn it, and invent
A false course for the world, and for ourselves, false
powers.

Riches we wish to get,
Yet remain spendthrifts still;
We would have health, and yet
Still use our bodies ill;
Bafflers of our own prayers, from youth to life's last
scenes.

We would have inward peace,
Yet will not look within;
We would have misery cease,
Yet will not cease from sin;
We want all pleasant ends, but will use no harsh means;

We do not what we ought,
What we ought not, we do,
And lean upon the thought
That chance will bring us through;
But our own acts, for good or ill, are mightier powers.

POEMS OF UNREST

Yet, even when man forsakes
All sin,—is just, is pure,
Abandons all which makes
His welfare insecure—
Other existences there are, that clash with ours.

Like us, the lightning fires
Love to have scope and play;
The stream, like us, desires
An unimpeded way;
Like us, the Libyan wind delights to roam at large.

Streams will not curb their pride
The just man not to entomb,
Nor lightnings go aside
To leave his virtues room;
Nor is that wind less rough which blows a good man's
barge.

Nature, with equal mind,
Sees all her sons at play;
Sees man control the wind,
The wind sweep man away;
Allows the proudly-riding and the founder'd bark.

And, lastly, though of ours
No weakness spoil our lot,
Though the non-human powers
Of Nature harm us not,
The ill-deeds of other men make often *our* life dark.

What were the wise man's plan?—
Through this sharp, toil-set life,
To fight as best he can,
And win what's won by strife.
But we an easier way to cheat our pains have found,

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Scratched by a fall, with moans
As children of weak age
Lend life to the dumb stones
Whereon to vent their rage,
And bend their little fists, and rate the senseless ground;

So, loath to suffer mute,
We, peopling the void air,
Make Gods to whom to impute
The ills we ought to bear;
With God and Fate to rail at, suffering easily.

Yet grant—as sense long miss'd
Things that are now perceiv'd,
And much may still exist
Which is not yet believ'd—
Grant that the world were full of Gods we cannot see;

All things the world which fill
Of but one stuff are spun,
That we who rail are still,
With what we rail at, one;
One with the o'er-labour'd Power that through the
breadth and length

Of earth, and air, and sea,
In men, and plants, and stones,
Hath toil perpetually,
And struggles, pants, and moans;
Fain would do all things well, but sometimes fails in
strength.

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And patiently exact
This universal God
Alike to any act
Proceeds at any nod,
And quietly declaims the cursings of himself. ,

POEMS OF UNREST

This is not what man hates,
Yet he can curse but this.
Harsh Gods and hostile Fates
Are dreams! this only is;
Is everywhere; sustains the wise, the foolish elf.

Nor only, in the intent
To attach blame elsewhere,
Do we at will invent
Stern Powers who make their care
To embitter human life, malignant Deities;

But, next, we would reverse
The scheme ourselves have spun,
And what we made to curse
We now would lean upon,
And feign kind Gods who perfect what man vainly tries.

Look, the world tempts our eye,
And we would know it all!
We map the starry sky,
We mine this earthen ball,
We measure the sea-tides, we number the sea-sands;

We scrutinize the dates
Of long-past human things,
The bounds of effac'd states,
The lines of deceas'd kings;
We search out dead men's words, and works of dead
men's hands;

We shut our eyes, and muse
How our own minds are made,
What springs of thought they use,
How righten'd, how betray'd;
And spend our wit to name what most employ unnam'd;

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

But still, as we proceed,
The mass swells more and more
Of volumes yet to read,
Of secrets yet to explore.
Our hair grows grey, our eyes are dimm'd, our heat is
tamed.

We rest our faculties,
And thus address the Gods:
'True science if there is,
It stays in your abodes;
Man's measures cannot mete the immeasurable All;

' You only can take in
The world's immense design,
Our desperate search was sin,
Which henceforth we resign,
Sure only that your mind sees all things which befall!

Fools! that in man's brief term
He cannot all things view,
Affords no ground to affirm
That there are Gods who do!
Nor does being weary prove that he has where to rest!

Again: our youthful blood
Claims rapture as its right;
The world, a rolling flood
Of newness and delight,
Draws in the enamour'd gazer to its shining breast;

Pleasure to our hot grasp
Gives flowers after flowers,
With passionate warmth we clasp
Hand after hand in ours;
Nor do we soon perceive how fast our youth is spent,

POEMS OF UNREST

At once our eyes grow clear;
We see in blank dismay
Year posting after year,
Sense after sense decay;
Our shivering heart is mined by secret discontent;

Yet still, in spite of truth,
In spite of hopes entomb'd,
That longing of our youth
Burns ever unconsum'd,
Still hungrier for delight as delights grow more rare.

We pause; we hush our heart,
And then address the Gods:
'The world hath fail'd to impart
The joy our youth forbodes,
FaiPd to fill up the void which in our breasts we bear.

'Changeful till now, we still
Look'd on to something new;
Let us, with changeless will,
Henceforth look on to you,
To find with you the joy we in vain *here* require!

Fools! that so often here
Happiness mock'd our prayer,
I think, might make us fear
A like event elsewhere!
Make us, not fly to dreams, but moderate desire!

And yet, for those who know
Themselves, who wisely take
Their way through life, and bow
To what they cannot break,
Why should I say that life need yield but *moderate* bliss?

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Shall we, with temper spoil'd,
Health sapp'd by living ill,
And judgement all embroiTd
By sadness and self-will,
Shall *we* judge what for man is not true bliss or is?

Is it so small a thing
To have enjoy'd the sun,
To have lived light in the spring,
To have loved, to have thought, to have done;
To have advanced true friends, and beat down baffling
foes;

That we must feign a bliss
Of doubtful future date,
And, while we dream on this,
Lose all our present state,
And relegate to worlds yet distant our repose?

Not much, I know, you prize
What pleasures may be had,
Who look on life with eyes
Estrang'd, like mine, and sad;
And yet the village churl feels the truth more than you,

Who 's loath to leave this life
Which to him little yields;
His hard-task'd sunburnt wife,
His often-labour'd fields,
The boors with whom'he talk'd, the country spots he
knew.

But thou, because thou hear'st
Men scoff at Heaven and Fate,
Because the Gods thou fear'st
Fail to make blest thy state,
Tremblest, and wilt not dare to trust the joys there are.

POEMS OF UNREST

I say: Fear not! Life still
Leaves human effort scope.
But, since life teems with ill,
Nurse no extravagant hope;
Because thou must not dream, thou need'st not then
despair!

*[A long pause. At the end of it the notes of a harp
below are again heard, and CALLIGLES
sings:—*

Far, far from here,
The Adriatic breaks in a warm bay
Among the green Illyrian hills; and there
The sunshine in the happy glens is fair,
And by the sea, and in the brakes.
The grass is cool, the sea-side air
Buoyant and fresh, the mountain flowers
As virginal and sweet as ours.
And there, they say, two bright and ag&d snakes,
Who once were Cadmus and Harmonia,
Bask in the glens or on the warm sea-shore,
In breathless quiet, after all their ills.
Nor do they see their country, nor the place
Where the Sphinx lived among the frowning hills,
Nor the unhappy palace of their race,
Nor Thebes, nor the Ismenus, any more.

There those two live, far in the Illyrian brakes.
They had stay'd long enough to see,
In Thebes, the billow of calamity
Over their own dear children rolTd,
Curse upon curse, pang upon pang,
For years, they sitting helpless in their home,
A grey old man and woman; yet of old
The Gods had to their marriage come,
And at the banquet all the Muses sang.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Therefore they did not end their days
In sight of blood; but were rapt, far away,
To where the west wind plays,
And murmurs of the Adriatic come
To those untrodden mountain lawns; and there
Placed safely in changed forms, the Pair
Wholly forget their first sad life, and home,
And all that Theban woe, and stray
For ever through the glens, placid and dumb.

EMPEDOCLES

That was my harp-player again!—where is he?
Down by the stream?

PAUSANIAS

Yes, Master, in the wood.

EMPEDOCLES

He ever loved the Theban story well!
But the day wears. Go now, Pausanias,
For I must be alone. Leave me one mule;
Take down with thee the rest to Catana.
And for young Callicles, thank him from me;
Tell him I never failPd to love his lyre:
But he must follow me no more to-night.

PAUSANIAS

Thou wilt return to-morrow to the city?

EMPEDOCLES

Either to-morrow or some other day,
In the sure revolutions of the world,
Good friend, I shall revisit Catana.
I have seen many cities in my time
Till my eyes ache with the long spectacle,
And I shall doubtless see them all again;
Thou know'st me for a wanderer from of old.
Meanwhile, stay me not now. Farewell, Pausanias!

[He departs on his way up the mountain

POEMS OF UNREST

PAUSANIAS (*atone*)

I dare not urge him further; he must go.
But he is strangely wrought!—I will speed back
And bring Peisianax to him from the city;
His counsel could once soothe him. But, Apollo!
How his brow lighten'd as the music rose!
Callicles must wait here, and play to him;
I saw him through the chestnuts far below,
Just since, down at the stream.—Ho! Callicles!
[He descends, calling

ACT II

Evening. The Summit of Etna

EMPEDOGLES

Alone!—

On this charr'd, blacken'd, melancholy waste,
Crown'd by the awful peak, Etna's great mouth,
Round which the sullen vapour rolls—alone!
Pausanias is far hence, and that is well,
For I must henceforth speak no more with man.
He has his lesson too, and that debt's paid;
And the good, learned, friendly, quiet man,
May bravelier front his life, and in himself
Find henceforth energy and heart; but I,
The weary man, the banish'd citizen—
Whose banishment is not his greatest ill,
Whose weariness no energy can reach,
And for whose hurt courage is not the cure—
What should I do with life and living more?

No, thou art come too late, Empedocles!
And the world hath the day, and must break thee,
Not thou the world. With men thou canst not live,
Their thoughts, their ways, their wishes, are not thine;
And being lonely thou art miserable,
For something has impair'd thy spirit's strength,

And dried its self-sufficing fount of joy.
 Thou canst not live with men nor with thyself—
 Oh sage! oh sage!—Take then the one way left;
 And turn thee to the elements, thy friends,
 Thy well-tried friends, thy willing ministers,
 And say:—Ye servants, hear Empedocles,
 Who asks this final service at your hands!
 Before the sophist brood hath overlaid
 The last spark of man's consciousness with words—
 Ere quite the being of man, ere quite the world
 Be disarray'd of their divinity—
 Before the soul lose all her solemn joys,
 And awe be dead, and hope impossible,
 And the soul's deep eternal night come on,
 Receive me, hide me, quench me, take me home!

CALLIGLES *sings*:—

The lyre's voice is lovely everywhere!
 In the court of Gods, in the city of men,
 And in the lonely rock-strewn mountain glen,
 In the still mountain air.

Only to Typho it sounds hatefully!
 To Typho only, the rebel o'erthrown,
 Through whose heart Etna drives her roots of stone,
 To imbed them in the sea.

Wherefore dost thou groan so loud?
 Wherefore do thy nostrils flash,
 Through the dark night, suddenly,
 Typho, such red jets of flame?—
 Is thy tortur'd heart still proud?
 Is thy fire-scath'd arm still rash?
 Still alert thy stone-crush'd frame?
 Doth thy fierce soul still deplore
 The ancient rout by the Cilician hills,
 And that curst treachery on the Mount of Gore?
 Do thy bloodshot eyes still see

POEMS OF UNREST

The fight that crown'd thy ills,
Thy last defeat in this Sicilian sea?
Hast thou sworn, in thy sad lair,
Where erst the strong sea-currents suck'd thee down,
Never to cease to writhe, and try to sleep,
Letting the sea-stream wander through thy hair?
That thy groans, like thunder deep,
Begin to roll, and almost drown
The sweet notes, whose lulling spell
Gods and the race of mortals love so well,
When through thy caves thou hearest music swell?

But an awful pleasure bland
Spreading o'er the Thunderer's face,
When the sound climbs near his seat,
The Olympian council sees;
As he lets his lax right hand,
Which the lightnings doth embrace,
Sink upon his mighty knees.
And the eagle, at the beck
Of the appeasing gracious harmony,
Droops all his sheeny, brown, deep-feather'd neck,
Nestling nearer to Jove's feet;
While o'er his sovereign eye
The curtains of the blue films slowly meet,
And the white Olympus peaks
Rosily brighten, and the sooth'd Gods smile
At one another from their golden chairs,
And no one round the charmed circle speaks.
Only the loved Hebe bears
The cup about, whose draughts beguile
Pain and care, with a dark store
Of fresh-pulFd violets wreath'd and nodding o'er;
And her flush'd feet glow on the marble floor.

EMPEDOCLES

He fables, yet speaks truth.
The brave impetuous heart yields everywhere
To the subtle, contriving head;

Great qualities are trodden down,
And littleness united
Is become invincible.

These rumblings are not Typho's groans, I know!
These angry smoke-bursts
Are not the passionate breath
Of the mountain-crush'd, tortur'd, intractable Titan
king!
But over all the world
What suffering is there not seen
Of plainness oppress'd by cunning.
As the well-counsell'd Zeus oppress'd
The self-helping son of earth!
What anguish of greatness
Rail'd and hunted from the world,
Because its simplicity rebukes
This envious, miserable age!

I am weary of it!—
Lie there, ye ensigns
Of my unloved pre-eminence
In an age like this!
Among a people of children,
Who throng'd me in their cities,
Who worshipped me in their houses,
And ask'd, not wisdom,
But drugs to charm with,
But spells to mutter—
All the fooPs-armoury of magic!—Lie there,
My golden circlet!
My purple robe!

CALLICLES (*from below*)

As the sky-brightening south-wind clears the day,
And makes the mass'd clouds roll,
The music of the lyre blows away
The clouds that wrap the soul.

Oh, that Fate had let me see
 That triumph of the sweet persuasive lyre!
 That famous, final victory
 When jealous Pan with Marsyas did conspire!

When, from far Parnassus⁵ side,
 Young Apollo, all the pride
 Of the Phrygian flutes to tame,
 To the Phrygian highlands came!
 Where the long green reed-beds sway
 In the rippled waters grey
 Of that solitary lake
 Where Maeander's springs are born;
 Where the ridg'd pine-wooded roots
 Of Messogis westward break,
 Mounting westward, high and higher.
 There was held the famous strife;
 There the Phrygian brought his flutes,
 And Apollo brought his lyre;
 And, when now the westering sun
 Touch'd the hills, the strife was done,
 And the attentive Muses said:
 'Marsyas! thou art vanquished.'
 Then Apollo's minister
 Hang'd upon a branching fir
 Marsyas, that unhappy Faun,
 And began to whet his knife.
 But the Maenads, who were there,
 Left their friend, and with robes flowing
 In the wind, and loose dark hair
 O'er their polish'd bosoms blowing,
 Each her ribbon'd tambourine
 Flinging on the mountain sod,
 With a lovely frighten'd mien
 Came about the youthful God.
 But he turn'd his beauteous face
 Haughtily another way,
 From the grassy sun-warm'd place,
 Where in proud repose he lay,

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

With one arm over his head,
Watching how the whetting sped.

But aloof, on the lake strand,
Did the young Olympus stand,
Weeping at his master's end;
For the Faun had been his friend.
For he taught him how to sing.
And he taught him flute-playing.
Many a morning had they gone
To the glimmering mountain lakes,
And had torn up by the roots
The tall crested water-reeds
With long plumes, and soft brown seeds,
And had carved them into flutes,
Sitting on a tabled stone
Where the shoreward ripple breaks.
And he taught him how to please
The red-snooded Phrygian girls,
Whom the summer evening sees
Flashing in the dance's whirls
Underneath the starlit trees
In the mountain villages.
Therefore now Olympus stands,
At his master's piteous cries
Pressing fast with both his hands
His white garment to his eyes,
Not to see Apollo's scorn;
Ah, poor Faun, poor Faun! ah, poor Faun!

EMPEDOCLES

And lie thou there,
My laurel bough!
Scornful Apollo's ensign, lie thou there!
Though thou hast been my shade in the world's heat—
Though I have loved thee, lived in honouring thee—
Yet lie thou there,
My laurel bough!

I am weary of thee!
 I am weary of the solitude
 Where he who bears thee must abide!
 Of the rocks of Parnassus,
 Of the gorge of Delphi,
 Of the moonlit peaks, and the caves.
 Thou guardest them, Apollo!
 Over the grave of the slain Pytho,
 Though young, intolerably severe;
 Thou keepest aloof the profane,
 But the solitude oppresses thy votary!
 The jars of men reach him not in thy valley—
 But can life reach him?
 Thou fencest him from the multitude—
 Who will fence him from himself?
 He hears nothing but the cry of the torrents
 And the beating of his own heart.
 The air is thin, the veins swell—
 The temples tighten and throb there—
 Air! air!

Take thy bough; set me free from my solitude!
 I have been enough alone!

Where shall thy votary fly then? back to men?—
 But they will gladly welcome him once more,
 And help him to unbend his too tense thought,
 And rid him of the presence of himself,
 And keep their friendly chatter at his ear,
 And haunt him, till the absence from himself,
 That other torment, grow unbearable;
 And he will fly to solitude again,
 And he will find its air too keen for him,
 And so change back; and many thousand times
 Be miserably bandied to and fro
 Like a sea-wave, betwixt the world and thee,
 Thou young, implacable God! and only death
 Shall cut his oscillations short, and so
 Bring him to poise. There is no other way.

And yet what days were those, Parmenides!
 When we were young, when we could number friends
 In all the Italian cities like ourselves,
 When with elated hearts we join'd your train,
 Ye Sun-born Virgins! on the road of truth.
 Then we could still enjoy, then neither thought
 Nor outward things were clos'd and dead to us,
 But we receiv'd the shock of mighty thoughts
 On simple minds with a pure natural joy;
 And if the sacred load oppress'd our brain,
 We had the power to feel the pressure eased,
 The brow unbound, the thoughts flow free again,
 In the delightful commerce of the world.
 We had not lost our balance then, nor grown
 Thought's slaves, and dead to every natural joy!
 The smallest thing could give us pleasure then!
 The sports of the country people,
 A flute-note from the woods,
 Sunset over the sea;
 Seed-time and harvest,
 The reapers in the corn,
 The vine-dresser in his vineyard,
 The village-girl at her wheel!

Fullness of life and power of feeling, ye
 Are for the happy, for the souls at ease,
 Who dwell on a firm basis of content!—
 But he, who has outliv'd his prosperous days,
 But he, whose youth fell on a different world
 From that on which his exiled age is thrown,
 Whose mind was fed on other food, was train'd
 By other rules than are in vogue to-day,
 Whose habit of thought is fix'd, who will not change,
 But in a world he loves not must subsist
 In ceaseless opposition, be the guard
 Of his own breast, fetter'd to what he guards
 That the world win no mastery over him;
 Who has no friend, no fellow left, not one;
 Who has no minute's breathing space allow'd

POEMS OF UNREST

To nurse his dwindling faculty of joy—
Joy and the outward world must die to him,
As they are dead to me!

[A long pause, during which EMPEDOCLES remains motionless, plunged in thought. The night deepens. He moves forward and gazes round him, and proceeds:—

And you, ye stars,
Who slowly begin to marshal,
As of old, in the fields of heaven,
Your distant, melancholy lines!
Have you, too, survived yourselves?
Are you, too, what I fear to become?
You, too, once lived!
You too moved joyfully
Among august companions
In an older world, peopled by Gods,
In a mightier order,
The radiant, rejoicing, intelligent Sons of Heaven!
But now, you kindle
Your lonely, cold-shining lights,
Unwilling lingerers
In the heavenly wilderness,
For a younger, ignoble world;
And renew, by necessity,
Night after night your courses,
In echoing unhear'd silence,
Above a race you know not.
Uncaring and undelighted,
Without friend and without home;
Weary like us, though not
Weary with our weariness.

No, no, ye stars! there is no death with you,
No languor, no decay! Languor and death,
They are with me, not you! ye are alive!
Ye and the pure dark ether where ye ride

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Brilliant above me! And thou, fiery world,
That sapp'st the vitals of this terrible mount
Upon whose charr'd and quaking crust I stand,
Thou, too, brimmest with life!—the sea of cloud
That heaves its white and billowy vapours up
To moat this isle of ashes from the world,
Lives!—and that other fainter sea, far down,
O'er whose lit floor a road of moonbeams leads
To Etna's Liparean sister-fires
And the long dusky line of Italy—
That mild and luminous floor of waters lives,
With held-in joy swelling its heart!—I only,
Whose spring of hope is dried, whose spirit has fail'd—
I, who have not, like these, in solitude
Maintain'd courage and force, and in myself
Nursed an immortal vigour—I alone
Am dead to life and joy; therefore I read
In all things my own deadness.

[A long silence. He continues:—

Oh that I could glow like this mountain!
Oh that my heart bounded with the swell of the sea!
Oh that my soul were full of light as the stars!
Oh that it brooded over the world like the air!

But no, this heart will glow no more! thou art
A living man no more, Empedocles!
Nothing but a devouring flame of thought—
But a naked, eternally restless mind!

[After a pause:—

To the elements it came from
Everything will return.
Our bodies to earth,
Our blood to water,
Heat to fire,
Breath to air.
They were well born, they will be well entomb'd!
But mind? . . .

POEMS OF UNREST

And we might gladly share the fruitful stir
Down in our mother earth's miraculous womb!
Well might it be
With what roll'd of us in the stormy main!
We might have joy, blent with the all-bathing air,
Or with the nimble radiant life of fire!

But mind—but thought—
If these have been the master part of us—
Where will *they* find their parent element?
What will receive *them*, who will call *them* home?
But we shall still be in them, and they in us,
And we shall be the strangers of the world,
And they will be our lords, as they are now;
And keep us prisoners of our consciousness,
And never let us clasp and feel the All
But through their forms, and modes, and stifling veils.
And we shall be unsatisfied as now,
And we shall feel the agony of thirst,
The ineffable longing for the life of life
Baffled for ever: and still thought and mind
Will hurry us with them on their homeless march,
Over the unallied unopening earth,
Over the unrecognizing sea; while air
Will blow us fiercely back to sea and earth,
And fire repel us from its living waves.
And then we shall unwillingly return
Back to this meadow of calamity,
This uncongenial place, this human life;
And in our individual human state
Go through the sad probation all again,
To see if we will poise our life at last,
To see if we will now at last be true
To our own only true, deep-buried selves,
Being one with which we are one with the whole world;
Or whether we will once more fall away
Into some bondage of the flesh or mind,
Some slough of sense, or some fantastic maze
Forg'd by the imperious lonely thinking-power.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

And each succeeding age in which we are born
Will have more peril for us than the last;
Will goad our senses with a sharper spur,
Will fret our minds to an intenser play,
Will make ourselves harder to be discern'd.
And we shall struggle awhile, gasp and rebel;
And we shall fly for refuge to past times,
Their soul of unworn youth, their breath of greatness;
And the reality will pluck us back,
Knead us in its hot hand, and change our nature.
And we shall feel our powers of effort flag,
And rally them for one last fight, and fail;
And we shall sink in the impossible strife,
And be astray for ever.

Slave of sense

I have in no wise been; but slave of thought?—
And who can say:—I have been always free,
Lived ever in the light of my own soul?—
I cannot! I have lived in wrath and gloom,
Fierce, disputatious, ever at war with man,
Far from my own soul, far from warmth and light.
But I have not grown easy in these bonds—
But I have not denied what bonds these were!
Yea, I take myself to witness,
That I have loved no darkness,
Sophisticated no truth,
Nursed no delusion,
Allow'd no fear!

And therefore, O ye elements, I know—
Ye know it too—it hath been granted me
Not to die wholly, not to be all enslav'd.
I feel it in this hour! The numbing cloud
Mounts off my soul; I feel it, I breathe free!

Is it but for a moment?
Ah! boil up, ye vapours!
Leap and roar, thou sea of fire!
My soul glows to meet you.

POEMS OF UNREST

Ere it flag, ere the mists
Of despondency and gloom
Rush over it again,
Receive me! Save me!

[He plunges into the crater]

CALLICLES *(from below)*

Through the black, rushing smoke-bursts,
Thick breaks the red flame;
All Etna heaves fiercely
Her forest-cloth'd frame.

Not here, O Apollo!
Are haunts meet for thee.
But, where Helicon breaks down
In cliff to the sea,

Where the moon-silver'd inlets
Send far their light voice
Up the still vale of Thisbe,
O speed, and rejoice!

On the sward, at the cliff-top
Lie strewn the white flocks;
On the cliff-side the pigeons
Roost deep in the rocks.

In the moonlight the shepherds,
Soft lull'd by the rills,
Lie wrapt in their blankets,
Asleep on the hills.

—What forms are these coming
So white through the gloom?
What garments out-glistening
The gold-flower' d broom?

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

What sweet-breathing presence
Out-perfumes the thyme?
What voices enrapture
The night's balmy prime?—

Tis Apollo comes leading
His choir, the Nine.
—The leader is fairest,
But all are divine.

They are lost in the hollows!
They stream up again!
What seeks on this mountain
The glorified train?—

They bathe on this mountain,
In the spring by their road;
Then on to Olympus,
Their endless abode!

—Whose praise do they mention?
Of what is it told?—
What will be for ever;
What was from of old.

First hymn they the Father
Of all things; and then
The rest of immortals,
The action of men.

The day in his hotness,
The strife with the palm;
The night in her silence,
The stars in their calm.

1852

POEMS OF UNREST

BACCHANALIA; OR, THE NEW AGE

I

The evening comes, the field is still.
The tinkle of the thirsty rill,
Unheard all day, ascends again;
Deserted is the new-reap'd grain,
Silent the sheaves! the ringing wain,
The reaper's cry, the dogs' alarms,
All houses within the sleeping farms!
The business of the day is done,
The last belated gleaner gone.
And from the thyme upon the height,
And from the elder-blossom white
And pale dog-roses in the hedge,
And from the mint-plant in the sedge,
In puffs of balm the night-air blows
The perfume which the day forgoes.
And on the pure horizon far,
See, pulsing with the first-born star,
The liquid sky above the hill!
The evening comes, the field is still.

Loitering and leaping,
With saunter, with bounds—
Flickering and circling
In files and in rounds—
Gaily their pine-staff green
Tossing in air,
Loose o'er their shoulders white
Showering their hair—
See! the wild Maenads
Break from the wood,
Youth and lacchus
Maddening their blood!

See! through the quiet corn
Rioting they pass—
Fling the piled sheaves about
Trample the grass!
Tear from the rifled hedge
Garlands, their prize;
Fill with their sports the field,
Fill with their cries!

Shepherd, what ails thee, then?
Shepherd, why mute?
Forth with thy joyous song!
Forth with thy flute!
Tempt not the revel blithe?
Lure not their cries?
Glow not their shoulders smooth?
Melt not their eyes?
Is not, on cheeks like those,
Lovely the flush?—

Ah, so the quiet was!
So was the hush!

II

The epoch ends, the world is still.
The age has talk'd and work'd its fill—
The famous orators have done,
The famous poets sung and gone,
The famous men of war have fought,
The famous speculators thought,
The famous players, sculptors, wrought,
The famous painters filPd their wall,
The famous critics judged it all.
The combatants are parted now,
Uphung the spear, unbent the bow,
The puissant crown'd, the weak laid low!
And in the after-silence sweet,
Now strife is hush'd, our ears doth meet,
Ascending pure, the bell-like fame

POEMS OF UNREST

Of this or that down-trodden name,
Delicate spirits, push'd away
In the hot press of the noon-day.
And o'er the plain, where the dead age
Did its now silent warfare wage—
O'er that wide plain, now wrapt in gloom,
Where many a splendour finds its tomb,
Many spent fames and fallen might—
The one or two immortal lights
Rise slowly up into the sky
To shine there everlastingly,
Like stars over the bounding hill.
The epoch ends, the world is still.

Thundering and bursting
In torrents, in waves—
Carolling and shouting
Over tombs, amid graves—
See! on the cumber'd plain
Clearing a stage,
Scattering the past about,
Comes the new age!
Bards make new poems,
Thinkers new schools,
Statesmen new systems,
Critics new rules!
All things begin again;
Life is their prize;
Earth with their deeds they fill,
Fill with their cries!

Poet, what ails thee then?
Say, why so mute?
Forth with thy praising voice!
Forth with thy flute!
Loiterer! why sittest thou
Sunk in thy dream?
Tempt not the bright new age?
Shines not its stream?

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Look, ah, what genius,
Art, science, wit!
Soldiers like Caesar,
Statesmen like Pitt!
Sculptors like Phidias,
Raphaels in shoals,
Poets like Shakespeare—
Beautiful souls!
See, on their glowing cheeks
Heavenly the flush!

Ah, so the silence was!
So was the hush!

The world but feels the present's spell,
The poet feels the past as well;
Whatever men have done, might do,
Whatever thought, might think it too.

1867

DOVER BEACH

THE sea is calm to-night,
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the Straits;—on the French coast, the light
Gleams, and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the ebb meets the moon-blanch'd sand,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves suck back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

POEMS OF UNREST

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Aegaeon, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The sea of faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furPd;
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating to the breath
Of the night-wind down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seem'
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

1867

PHILOMELA'

HARK! ah, the Nightingale!
The tawny-throated!
Hark! from that moonlit cedar what a burst!
What a triumph! hark—what pain!

'Philomela and Procne were daughters of Pandion, legendary King of Atdca. Procne's husband, Tcreus, King of Thrace, seduced Philomela. In revenge, Philomela and Procne killed Tereus's son, Itys. They fled, but were changed by the gods into birds, Procne becoming a swallow, Philomela a nightingale. The dumb sister referred to is Procne, whose tongue had been cut out by Tcreus.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

O Wanderer from a Grecian shore,
Still, after many years, in distant lands,
Still nourishing in thy bewilder'd brain
That wild, unquench'd, deep-sunken, old-world pain—
 Say, will it never heal?
And can this fragrant lawn
With its cool trees, and night,
And the sweet, tranquil Thames,
And moonshine, and the dew,
To thy rack'd heart and brain
 Afford no balm?

Dost thou to-night behold
Here, through the moonlight on this English grass,
The unfriendly palace in the Thracian wild?
Dost thou again peruse
With hot cheeks and sear'd eyes
The too clear web, and thy dumb Sister's shame?
Dost thou once more assay
Thy flight, and feel come over thee,
Poor Fugitive, the feathery change
Once more, and once more seem to make resound
With love and hate, triumph and agony,
Lone Daulis, and the high Cephissian vale?
Listen, Eugenia—
How thick the bursts come crowding through the
 leaves!
 Again—thou hearest!
Eternal Passion!
Eternal Pain!

1853

HUMAN LIFE

WHAT mortal, when he saw,
 Life's voyage done, his heavenly Friend,
 Could ever yet dare tell him fearlessly:
 'I have kept uninfring'd my nature's law;
 The inly-written chart thou gavest me
 To guide me, I have steer'd by to the end?

Ah! let us make no claim
 On life's incognizable sea
 To too exact a steering of our way!
 Let us not fret and fear to miss our aim
 If some fair coast has lured us to make stay,
 Or some friend hail'd us to keep company!

Aye, we would each fain drive
 At random, and not steer by rule!
 Weakness! and worse, weakness bestow'd in vain!
 Winds from our side the unsuiting consort rive,
 We rush by coasts where we had lief remain;
 Man cannot, though he would, live chance's fool.

No! as the foaming swathe
 Of torn-up water, on the main,
 Falls heavily away with long-drawn roar
 On either side the black deep-furrow'd path
 Cut by an onward-labouring vessel's prore,
 And never touches the ship-side again;

Even so we leave behind,
 As, charter'd by some unknown Powers,
 We stem across the sea of life by night,
 The joys which were not for our use design'd,
 The friends to whom we had no natural right,
 The homes that were not destined to be ours.

STANZAS FROM THE GRANDE CHARTREUSE

THROUGH Alpine meadows soft-suffused
With rain, where thick the crocus blows,
Past the dark forges long disused,
The mule-track from Saint Laurent goes.
The bridge is cross'd, and slow we ride,
Through forest, up the mountain-side.

The autumnal evening darkens round,
The wind is up, and drives the rain;
While hark! far down, with strangled sound
Doth the Dead Guiers' stream complain,
Where that wet smoke among the woods
Over his boiling cauldron broods.

Swift rush the spectral vapours white
Past limestone scars with ragged pines,
Showing—then blotting from our sight.
Halt! through the cloud-drift something shines!
High in the valley, wet and drear,
The huts of Courrierie appear.

Strike leftward, cries our guide; and higher
Mounts up the stony forest-way.
At last the encircling trees retire;
Look! through the showery twilight grey
What pointed roofs are these advance?
A palace of the Kings of France?

Approach, for what we seek is here.
Alight and sparely sup and wait
For rest in this outbuilding near;
Then cross the sward and reach that gate;
Knock; pass the wicket! Thou art come
To the Carthusians' world-famed home.

POEMS OF UNREST

The silent courts, where night and day
Into their stone-carved basins cold
The splashing icy fountains play,
The humid corridors behold,
Where ghostlike in the deepening night
Cowl'd forms brush by in gleaming white.

The chapel, where no organ's peal
Invests the stern and naked prayer.
With penitential cries they kneel
And wrestle; rising then, with bare
And white uplifted faces stand,
Passing the Host from hand to hand.

Each takes; and then his visage wan
Is buried in his cowl once more.
The cells—the suffering Son of Man
Upon the wall! the knee-worn floor!
And, where they sleep, that wooden bed,
Which shall their coffin be, when dead.

The library, where tract and tome
Not to feed priestly pride are there,
To hymn the conquering march of Rome,
Nor yet to amuse, as ours are;
They paint of souls the inner strife,
Their drops of blood, their death in life.

The garden, overgrown—yet mild
Those fragrant herbs are flowering there!
Strong children of the Alpine wild
Whose culture is the brethren's care;
Of human tasks their only one,
And cheerful works beneath the sun.

Those halls too, destined to contain
Each its own pilgrim host of old,
From England, Germany, or Spain—

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

All are before me! I behold
The House, the Brotherhood austere!
And what am I, that I am here?

For rigorous teachers seized my youth,
And purged its faith, and trimm'd its fire,
Show'd me the high white star of Truth,
There bade me gaze, and there aspire;
Even now their whispers pierce the gloom:
What dost thou in this living tomb?

Forgive me, masters of the mind!
At whose behest I long ago
So much unlearnt, so much resign'd!
I come not here to be your foe.
I seek these anchorites, not in ruth,
To curse and to deny your truth;

Not as their friend for child I speak!
But as on some far northern strand,
Thinking of his own Gods, a Greek
In pity and mournful awe might stand
Before some fallen Runic stone—
For both were faiths, and both are gone.

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born,
With nowhere yet to rest my head,
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.
Their faith, my tears, the world deride;
I come to shed them at their side.

Oh, hide me in your gloom profound,
Ye solemn seats of holy pain!
Take me, cowl'd forms, and fence me round,
Till I possess my soul again!
Till free my thoughts before me roll,
Not chafed by hourly false control.

POEMS OF UNREST

For the world cries your faith is now
But a dead time's exploded dream;
My melancholy, sciolists say,
Is a pass'd mode, an outworn theme—
As if the world had ever had
A faith, or sciolists been sad.

Ah, if it *be* pass'd, take away,
At least, the restlessness—the pain!
Be man henceforth no more a prey
To these out-dated stings again!
The nobleness of grief is gone—
Ah, leave us not the fret alone!

But, if you cannot give us ease,
Last of the race of them who grieve
Here leave us to die out with these
Last of the people who believe!
Silent, while years engrave the brow;
Silent—the best are silent now.

Achilles ponders in his tent,
The kings of modern thought are dumb;
Silent they are, though not content,
And wait to see the future come.
They have the grief men had of yore,
But they contend and cry no more.

Our fathers water'd with their tears
This sea of time whereon we sail;
Their voices were in all men's ears
Who pass'd within their puissant hail.
Still the same Ocean round us raves,
But we stand mute and watch the waves.

For what avail'd it, all the noise
And outcry of the former men?
Say, have their sons obtained more joys?

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Say, is life lighter now than then?
The sufferers died, they left their pain;
The pangs which tortured them remain.

What helps it now, that Byron bore,
With haughty scorn which mock'd the smart,
Through Europe to the Aetolian shore
The pageant of his bleeding heart?
That thousands counted every groan,
And Europe made his woe her own?

What boots it, Shelley! that the breeze
Carried thy lovely wail away,
Musical through Italian trees
That fringe thy soft blue Spezzian bay?
Inheritors of thy distress
Have restless hearts one throb the less?

Or are we easier, to have read,
O Obermann! the sad, stern page,
Which tells us how thou hidd'st thy head
From the fierce tempest of thine age
In the lone brakes of Fontainebleau,
Or chalets near the Alpine snow?

Ye slumber in your silent grave!
The world, which for an idle day
Grace to your mood of sadness gave,
Long since hath flung her weeds away.
The eternal trifler breaks your spell;
But we—we learnt your lore too well!

There may, perhaps, yet dawn an age,
More fortunate, alas! than we,
Which without hardness will be sage,
And gay without frivolity.
Sons of the world, oh, haste those years;
But, till they rise, allow our tears!

POEMS OF UNREST

Allow them! We admire with awe
The exulting thunder of your race,
You give the universe your law,
You triumph over time and space.
Your pride of lie, your tireless powers,
We mark them, but they are not ours.

We are like children rear'd in shade
Beneath some old-world abbey wall
Forgotten in a forest-glade
And secret from the eyes of all;
Deep, deep the greenwood round them waves,
Their abbey and its close of graves.

But where the road runs near the stream,
Oft through the trees they catch a glance
Of passing troops in the sun's beam—
Pennon, and plume, and flashing lance!
Forth to the world those soldiers fare,
To life, to cities, and to war.

And through the woods, another way,
Faint bugle-notes from far are borne,
Where hunters gather, staghounds bay,
Round some old forest-lodge at morn;
Gay dames are there in sylvan green,
Laughter and cries—those notes between!

The banners flashing through the trees
Make their blood dance and chain their eyes;
That bugle-music on the breeze
Arrests them with a charm'd surprise.
Banner by turns and bugle woo:
Ye shy recluses, follow too!

O children, what do ye reply?—
'Action and pleasure, will ye roam
Through these secluded dells to cry

And call us? but too late ye come!
Too late for us your call ye blow
Whose bent was taken long ago.

'Long since we pace this shadow'd nave;
We watch those yellow tapers shine,
Emblems of hope over the grave,
In the high altar's depth divine;
The organ carries to our ear
Its accents of another sphere.

'Fenced early in this cloistral round
Of reverie, of shade, of prayer,
How should we grow in other ground?
How should we flower in foreign air?
Pass, banners, pass, and bugles, cease!
And leave our desert to its peace!⁵

1855

DESIRE

THOU, who dost dwell alone—
Thou, who dost know thine own—
Thou, to whom all are known
From the cradle to the grave—
 Save, oh, save.
From the world's temptations,
 From tribulations;
From that fierce anguish
Wherein we languish;
From that torpor deep
Wherein we lie asleep,
Heavy as death, cold as the grave;
 Save, oh, save.

POEMS OF UNREST

When the Soul, growing clearer,
Sees God no nearer:
When the Soul, mounting higher,
To God comes no nigher:
But the arch-fiend Pride
Mounts at her side,
Foiling her high emprise,
Sealing her eagle eyes,
And, when she fain would soar,
Makes idols to adore;
Changing the pure emotion
Of her high devotion,
To a skin-deep sense
Of her own eloquence:
Strong to deceive, strong to enslave—
Save, oh, save.

From the ingrain'd fashion
Of this earthly nature
That mars thy creature.
From grief, that is but passion;
From mirth, that is but feigning;
From tears, that bring no healing;
From wild and weak complaining;
Thine old strength revealing,
Save, oh, save.
From doubt, where all is double:
Where wise men are not strong:
Where comfort turns to trouble:
Where just men suffer wrong:
Where sorrow treads on joy:
Where sweet things soonest cloy:
Where faiths are built on dust:
Where Love is half mistrust,
Hungry, and barren, and sharp as the sea;
Oh, set us free.

O let the false dream fly
Where our sick souls do lie

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Tossing continually.
O where thy voice doth come
Let all doubts be dumb:
Let all words be mild:
All strifes be reconcil'd:
All pains beguil'd.
Light bring no blindness;
Love no unkindness;
Knowledge no ruin;
Fear no undoing.
From the cradle to the grave,
Save, oh, save.

1849

ROME-SICKNESS

To daily tasks we set our hand
And oft the spirit, pent at home,
Breaks out and longs for Switzerland,
Longs oftener yet and pines for Rome.

I pass'd to-day o'er Walton Heath—
The coining spring-time's earliest stir
Quickened and moved, a happy breath,
In moss, and gorse, and shining fir.

Fortunate firs! who never think
How firs less curst by Fortune's frown
O'er Glion fringe the mountain's brink,
Or dot the slopes to Vevey down.

I cross'd St. George's Hill to-day—
There in the leaf-strewn copse I found
The tender foxglove-plants display
Their first green muffle on the ground.

POEMS OF UNREST

They envy not, this tranquil brood,
The cyclamens whose blossoms fill
With fragrance all Frascati's wood
Along the gracious Alban Hill!

Man only, with eternal bent
To come and go, to shift and range,
At life and living not content,
Chafes in his place, and pines for change.

Yet happy,—since his feverish blood
Leaves him no rest, and change he will,—
When restlessness is restless good,
Still mending, lessening, human ill!

Unwearied, as from land to land
The incessant wanderer takes his way,
To hold the light and reach the hand
To all who sink, to all who stray!

1875

SELF-DECEPTION

SAY, what blinds us, that we claim the glory
Of possessing powers not our share?—
Since man woke on earth, he knows his story,
But, before we woke on earth, we were.

Long, long since, undower'd yet, our spirit
Roam'd, ere birth, the treasures of God:
Saw the gifts, the powers it might inherit;
Ask'd an outfit for its earthly road.

Then, as now, this tremulous, eager Being
Strain'd, and long'd, and grasp'd each gift it saw.
Then, as now, a Power beyond our seeing
Stav'd us back, and gave our choice the law.

Ah, whose hand that day through heaven guided
Man's blank spirit, since it was not we?
Ah, who sway'd our choice, and who decided
What our gifts, and what our wants should be?

For, alas! he left us each retaining
Shreds of gifts which he refus'd in full.
Still these waste us with their hopeless straining—
Still the attempt to use them proves them null.

And on earth we wander, groping, reeling;
Powers stir in us, stir and disappear.
Ah, and he, who placed our master-feeling,
Fail'd to place our master-feeling clear.

We but dream we have our wish'd-for powers.
Ends we seek we never shall attain.
Ah, *some* power exists there, which is ours?
Some end is there, we indeed may gain?

1852

IN UTRUMQUE PARATUS

IF, in the silent mind of One all-pure,
At first imagin'd lay
The sacred world; and by procession sure
From those still deeps, in form and colour drest,
Seasons alternating, and night and day,
The long-mus'd thought to north south east and west
Took then its all-seen way:

O waking on a world which thus-wise springs!
Whether it needs thee count
Betwixt thy waking and the birth of things
Ages or hours: O waking on Life's stream!
By lonely pureness to the all-pure Fount
(Only by this thou canst) the colour'd dream
Of Life remount.

POEMS OF UNREST

Thin, thin the pleasant human noises grow;
And faint the city gleams;
Rare the lone pastoral huts: marvel not thou!
The solemn peaks but to the stars are known,
But to the stars, and the cold lunar beams:
Alone the sun arises, and alone
Spring the great streams.

But, if the wild unfather'd mass no birth
In divine seats hath known:
In the blank, echoing solitude, if Earth,
Rocking her obscure body to and fro,
Ceases not from all time to heave and groan,
Unfruitful oft, and, at her happiest throe,
Forms, what she forms, alone:

O seeming sole to awake, thy sun-bath'd head
Piercing the solemn cloud
Round thy still dreaming brother-world outspread!
O man, whom Earth, thy long-vext mother, bare
Not without joy; so radiant, so endow'd—
(Such, happy issue crown'd her painful care)
Be not too proud!

O when most self-exalted most alone,
Chief dreamer, own thy dream!
Thy brother-world stirs at thy feet unknown;
Who hath a monarch's hath no brother's part;
Yet doth thine inmost soul with yearning teem,
O what a spasm shakes the dreamer's heart—
'I too but seem!'

1849

TO AN INDEPENDENT PREACHER

WHO PREACHED THAT WE SHOULD BE
'IN HARMONY WITH NATURE'

'IN harmony with Nature?' Restless fool,
Who with such heat dost preach what were to thee,
When true, the last impossibility;
To be like Nature strong, like Nature cool:—
Know, man hath all which Nature hath, but more,
And in that *more* lie all his hopes of good.
Nature is cruel; man is sick of blood:
Nature is stubborn; man would fain adore:
Nature is fickle; man hath need of rest:
Nature forgives no debt, and fears no grave,
Man would be mild, and with safe conscience blest.
Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends;
Nature and man can never be fast friends.
Fool, if thou canst not pass her, rest her slave!

1849

THE YOUTH OF NATURE

RAIS'D are' the dripping oars—
Silent the boat: the lake,
Lovely and soft as a dream,
Swims in the sheen of the moon.
The mountains stand at its head
Clear in the pure June night,
But the valleys are flooded with haze.
Rydal and Fairfield are there;
In the shadow Wordsworth lies dead.
So it is, so it will be for aye.
Nature is fresh as of old,
Is lovely: a mortal is dead.

The spots which recall him survive,
 For he lent a new life to these hills.
 The Pillar still broods o'er the fields
 Which border Ennerdale Lake,
 And Egremont sleeps by the sea.
 The gleam of The Evening Star*
 Twinkles on Grasmere no more,
 But ruin'd and solemn and grey
 The sheepfold of Michael survives,
 And far to the south, the heath
 Still blows in the Quantock coombs,
 By the favourite waters of Ruth.
 These survive: yet not without pain,
 Pain and dejection to-night,
 Can I feel that their Poet is gone.

He grew old in an age he condemn'd.
 He look'd on the rushing decay
 Of the times which had shelter'd his youth.
 Felt the dissolving throes
 Of a social order he lov'd.
 Outliv'd his brethren, his peers.
 And, like the Theban seer,
 Died in his enemies' day.

Cold bubbled the spring of Tilphusa,
 Copais lay bright in the moon;
 Helicon glass'd in the lake
 It's firs, and afar, rose the peaks
 Of Parnassus, snowily clear:
 Thebes was behind him in flames,
 And the clang of arms in his ear,
 When his awe-struck captors led
 The Theban seer to the spring.

*The references in this and the succeeding six lines are to *Michael* and *Ruth*, two poems, by Wordsworth. *The Evening Star* was the name given to Michael's house because of the light of his lamp.

Tiresias drank and died.
Nor did reviving Thebes
See such a prophet again.

Well may we mourn when the head
Of a sacred poet lies low
In an age which can rear them no more.
The complaining millions of men
Darken in labour and pain;
But he was a priest to us all
Of the wonder and bloom of the world,
Which we saw with his eyes, and were glad.
He is dead, and the fruit-bearing day
Of his race is past on the earth;
And darkness returns to our eyes.

For oh, is it you, is it you
Moonlight, and shadow, and lake,
And mountains, that fill us with joy,
Or the Poet who sings you so well?
Is it you, O Beauty, O Grace,
O Charm, O Romance, that we feel,
Or the voice which reveals what you are?
Are ye, like daylight and sun,
Shar'd and rejoic'd in by all?
Or are ye immers'd in the mass
Of matter, and hard to extract,
Or sunk at the core of the world
Too deep for the most to discern?
Like stars in the deep of the sky,
Which arise on the glass of the sage,
But are lost when their watcher is gone.
'They are here'—I heard, as men heard
In Mysian Ida the voice
Of the Mighty Mother,' or Crete,
The murmur of Nature reply—
'Loveliness, Magic, and Grace,

'Rhea, the mother of the gods'

POEMS OF UNREST

They are here—they are set in the world—
They abide—and the finest of souls
Has not been thrill'd by them all,
Nor the dullest been dead to them quite.
The poet who sings them may die,
But they are immortal, and live,
For they are the life of the world.

Will ye not learn it, and know,
When ye mourn that a poet is dead,
That the singer was less than his themes,
Life, and Emotion, and I?

'More than the singer are these.
Weak is the tremor of pain
That thrills in his mournfullest chord
To that which once ran through his soul.
Cold the elation of joy
In his gladdest, airiest song,
To that which of old in his youth
Fill'd him and made him divine.
Hardly his voice at its best
Gives us a sense of the awe,
The vastness, the grandeur, the gloom
Of the unlit gulph of himself.

'Ye know not yourselves—and your bards,
The clearest, the best, who have read
Most in themselves, have beheld
Less than they left unreveal'd.
Ye express not yourselves—can ye make
With marble, with colour, with word,
What charm'd you in others re-live?
Can thy pencil, O Artist, restore
The figure, the bloom of thy love,
As she was in her morning of spring?
Canst thou paint the ineffable smile
Of her eyes as they rested on thine?
Can the image of life have the glow,
The motion of life itself?

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

'Yourselves and your fellows ye know not—
and me
The Mateless, the One, will ye know?
Will ye scan me, and read me, and tell
Of the thoughts that ferment in my breast,
My longing, my sadness, my joy?
Will ye claim for your great ones the gift
To have render'd the gleam of my skies,
To have echoed the moan of my seas,
Utter'd the voice of my hills?
When your great ones depart, will ye say—
*All things have suffered a loss—
Nature is hid in their grave?*

'Race after race, man after man,
Have dream'd that my secret was theirs,
Have thought that I liv'd but for them,
That they were my glory and joy.—
They are dust, they are chang'd, they are gone.—
I remain.'

1852

THE YOUTH OF MAN

WE, O Nature, depart:
Thou survivest us: this,
This, I know, is the law.
Yes, but more than this,
Thou who seest us die,
Seest us change while we live;
Seest our dreams one by one,
Seest our errors depart:
Watchest us, Nature, throughout,
Mild and inscrutably calm.

Well for us that we change!
Well for us that the Power
Which in our morning prime

POEMS OF UNREST

Saw the mistakes of our youth,
Sweet, and forgiving, and good,
Sees the contrition of age!

Behold, O Nature, this pair!
See them to-night where they stand,
Not with the halo of youth
Crowning their brows with its light,
Not with the sunshine of hope,
Not with the rapture of spring,
Which they had of old, when they stood
Years ago at my side
In this self-same garden, and said;—
'We are young, and the world is ours,
For man is the king of the world.
Fools that these mystics are
Who prate of Nature! but she
Has neither beauty, nor warmth,
Nor life, nor emotion, nor power.
But Man has a thousand gifts,
And the generous dreamer invests
The senseless world with them all.

Nature is nothing! her charm
Lives in our eyes which can paint,
Lives in our hearts which can feel!

Thou, O Nature, wert mute,
Mute as of old: days flew,
Days and years; and Time
With the ceaseless stroke of his wings
Brush'd off the bloom from their soul.
Clouded and dim grew their eye;
Languid their heart; for Youth
Quicken'd its pulses no more.
Slowly within the walls
Of an ever-narrowing world
They droop'd, they grew blind, they grew old.
Thee and their Youth in thee,
Nature, they saw no more.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Murmur of living!
Stir of existence!
Soul of the world!
Make, oh make yourselves felt
To the dying spirit of Youth.
Come, like the breath of the spring.
Leave not a human soul
To grow old in darkness and pain.
Only the living can feel you:
But leave us not while we live.

Here they stand to-night—
Here, where this grey balustrade
Crowns the still valley: behind
Is the castled house with its woods
Which shelter'd their childhood, the sun
On its ivied windows: a scent
From the grey-wall'd gardens, a breath
Of the fragrant stock and the pink,
Perfumes the evening air.
Their children play on the lawns.
They stand and listen: they hear
The children's shouts, and, at times,
Faintly, the bark of a dog
From a distant farm in the hills:—
Nothing besides: in front
The wide, wide valley outspreads
To the dim horizon, repos'd
In the twilight, and bath'd in dew,
Corn-field and hamlet and copse
Darkening fast; but a light,
Far off, a glory of day,
Still plays on the city spires:
And there in the dusk by the walls,
With the grey mist marking its course
Through the silent flowery land,
On, to the plains, to the sea,
Floats the Imperial Stream.

POEMS OF UNREST

Well I know what they feel.
They gaze, and the evening wind
Plays on their faces: they gaze;
Airs from the Eden of Youth
Awake and stir in their soul:
The Past returns; they feel
What they are, alas! what they were.
They, not Nature, are chang'd.
Well I know what they feel.

Hush! for tears
Begin to steal to their eyes.
Hush! for fruit
Grows from such sorrow as theirs.

And they remember
With piercing untold anguish
The proud boasting of their youth.
And they feel how Nature was fair.
And the mists of delusion,
And the scales of habit,
Fall away from their eyes.
And they see, for a moment,
Stretching out, like the Desert
In its weary, unprofitable length,
Their faded, ignoble lives.

While the locks are yet brown on thy head,
While the soul still looks through thine eyes,
While the heart still pours
The mantling blood to thy cheek,
Sink, O Youth, in thy soul!
Yearn to the greatness of Nature!
Rally the good in the depths of thyself!

1852

TO A REPUBLICAN FRIEND, 1848*

GOD knows it, I am with you. If to prize
Those virtues, priz'd and praotis'd by too few,
But priz'd, but lov'd, but eminent in you,
Man's fundamental life: if to despise
The barren optimistic sophistries
Of comfortable moles, whom what they do
Teaches the limit of the just and true—
And for such doing have no need of eyes:
If sadness at the long heart-wasting show
Wherein earth's great ones are disquieted:
If thoughts, not idle, while before me flow
The armies of the homeless and unfed:—
 If these are yours, if this is what you are,
 Then I am yours, and what you feel, I share.

Yet, when I muse on what life is, I seem
Rather to patience prompted, than that proud
Prospect of hope which France proclaims so loud,
France, fam'd in all great arts, in none supreme.
Seeing this Vale, this Earth, whereon we dream,
Is on all sides o'ershadow'd by the high
Uno'erleap'd Mountains of Necessity,
Sparing us narrower margin than we deem.
Nor will that day dawn at a human nod,
When, bursting through the network superpos'd
By selfish occupation—plot and plan,
Lust, avarice, envy—liberated man,
 All difference with his fellow man compos'd.
 Shall be left standing face to face with God.

1849

*Arthur Hugh Clough.

POEMS OF UNREST

THE FUTURE

A WANDERER is man from his birth.
He was born in a ship
On the breast of the River of Time.
Brimming with wonder and joy
He spreads out his arms to the light,
Rivets his gaze on the banks of the stream.

As what he sees is, so have his thoughts been.
Whether he wakes
Where the snowy mountainous pass
Echoing the screams of the eagles
Hems in its gorges the bed
Of the new-born clear-flowing stream:
Whether he first sees light
Where the river in gleaming rings
Sluggishly winds through the plain:
Whether in sound of the swallowing sea:—
As is the world on the banks
So is the mind of the man.

Vainly does each as he glides
Fable and dream
Of the lands which the River of Time
Had left ere he woke on its breast,
Or shall reach when his eyes have been clos'd.
Only the tract where he sails
He wots of: only the thoughts,
Rais'd by the objects he passes, are his.

Who can see the green Earth any more
As she was by the sources of Time?
Who imagines her fields as they lay
In the sunshine, unworn by the plough?

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Who thinks as they thought,
The tribes who then roam'd on her breast,
Her vigorous primitive sons?

What girl
Now reads in hei¹ bosom as clear
As Rebekah read, when she sate
At eve by the palm-shaded well?
Who guards in her breast
As deep, as pellucid a spring
Of feeling, as tranquil, as sure?

What Bard,
At the height of his vision, can deem
Of God, of the world, of the soul,
With a plainness as near,
As flashing as Moses felt,
When he lay in the night by his flock
On the starlit Arabian waste?
Can rise and obey
The beck of the Spirit like him?

This tract which the River of Time
Now flows through with us, is the Plain.
Gone is the calm of its earlier shore.
Border'd by cities and hoarse
With a thousand cries is its stream.
And we on its breast, our minds
Are confus'd as the cries which we hear,
Changing and shot as the sights which we sec.

And we say that repose has fled
For ever the course of the River of Time.
That cities will crowd to its edge
In a blacker incessanter line;
That the din will be more on its banks,
Denser the trade on its stream,
Flatter the plain where it flows,
Fiercer the sun overhead.

POEMS OF UNREST

That never will those on its breast
See an ennobling sight,
Drink of the feeling of quiet again.

But what was before us we know not,
And we know not what shall succeed.

Haply, the River of Time,
As it grows, as the towns on its marge
Fling their wavering lights
On a wider statelier stream—
May acquire, if not the calm
Of its early mountainous shore,
Yet a solemn peace of its own.

And the width of the waters, the hush
Of the grey expanse where he floats,
Freshening its current and spotted with foam
As it draws to the Ocean, may strike
Peace to the soul of the man on its breast:
As the pale Waste widens around him—
As the banks fade dimmer away—
As the stars come out, and the night-wind
Brings up the stream
Murmurs and scents of the infinite Sea.

1852

PART II

LOVE POEMS

A MODERN SAPPHO

THEY are gone: all is still: Foolish heart, dost thou quiver?
Nothing moves on the lawn but the quick lilac shade.
Far up gleams the house, and beneath flows the river.
Here lean, my head, on this cool balustrade.

Ere he come: ere the boat, by the shining-branch'd border
Of dark elms come round, dropping down the proud stream;
Let me pause, let me strive, in myself find some order,
Ere their boat-music sound, ere their broider'd flags gleam.

Is it hope makes me linger? the dim thought, that sorrow
Means parting? that only in absence lies pain?
It was well with me once if I saw him: to-morrow
May bring one of the old happy moments again.

Last night we stood earnestly talking together—
She enter'd—that moment his eyes turn'd from me.
Fasten'd on her dark hair and her wreath of white heather—
As yesterday was, so to-morrow will be.

Their love, let me know, must grow strong and yet stronger,
Their passion burn more, ere it ceases to burn:
They must love—while they must: But the hearts that love
longer
Are rare: ah! most loves but flow once, and return.

I shall suffer; but they will outlive their affection:
I shall weep; but their love will be cooling: and he,
As he drifts to fatigue, discontent, and dejection,
Will be brought, thou poor heart! how much nearer to thee!

LOVE POEMS

For cold is his eye to mere beauty, who, breaking
The strong band which beauty around him hath furPd,
Disenchanted by habit, and newly awaking,
Looks languidly round on a gloom-buried world.

Through that gloom he will see but a shadow appearing,
Perceive but a voice as I come to his side:
But deeper their voice grows, and nobler their bearing,
Whose youth in the fires of anguish hath died.

Then—to wait. But what notes down the wind, hark! are
driving?
'Tis he! 'tis the boat, shooting round by the trees!
Let my turn, if it will come, be swift in arriving!
Ah! hope cannot long lighten torments like these.

Hast thou yet dealt him, O Life, thy full measure?
World, have thy children yet bow'd at his knee?
Hast thou with myrtle-leaf crown'd him, O Pleasure?
Crown, crown him quickly, and leave him for me.

1849

The Switzerland Poems

DESTINY

WHY each is striving, from of old,
To love more deeply than he can?
Still would be true, yet still grows cold?
—Ask of the Powers that sport with man!

They yok'd in him, for endless strife,
A heart of ice, a soul of fire;
And hurl'd him on the Field of Life,
An aimless unallay'd Desire.

1852

THE LAKE

AGAIN I see my bliss at hand;
The town, the lake are here.
My Marguerite smiles upon the strand
Unalter'd with the year.

I know that graceful figure fair,
That cheek of languid hue;
I know that soft enkerchiefd hair,
And those sweet eyes of blue.

Again I spring to make my choice;
Again in tones of ire
I hear a God's tremendous voice—
'Be counsell'd, and retire!'

Ye guiding Powers, who join and part,
What would ye have with me?
Ah, warn some more ambitious heart,
And let the peaceful be!

1652

TO MY FRIENDS

WHO RIDICULED A TENDER LEAVE-TAKING

LAUGH, my Friends, and without blame
Lightly quit what lightly came:
Rich to-morrow as to-day
Spend as madly as you may.
I, with little land to stir,
Am the exacter labourer.
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

LOVE POEMS

But my Youth reminds me—'Thou
Hast liv'd light as these live now:
As these are, thou too wert such:
Much hast had, hast squander'd much.'
Fortune's now less frequent heir,
Ah! I husband what's grown rare.
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

Young, I said: 'A face is gone
If too hotly mus'd upon:
And our best impressions are
Those that do themselves repair.'
Many a face I then let by,
Ah! is faded utterly.
Ere the parting hour go by
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

Marguerite says: 'As last year went,
So the coming year'll be spent:
Some day next year, I shall be,
Entering heedless, kiss'd by thee.'
Ah! I hope—yet, once away,
What may chain us, who can say?
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

Paint that lilac kerchief, bound
Her soft face, her hair around:
Tied under the archest chin
Mockery ever ambush'd in.
Let the fluttering fringes streak
All her pale, sweet-rounded cheek.
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

Paint that figure's pliant grace
As she towards me lean'd her face,

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Half refus'd and half resign'd,
Murmuring, 'Art thou still unkind?'
Many a broken promise then
Was new made—to break again.
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

Paint those eyes, so blue, so kind,
Eager tell-tales of her mind:
Paint, with their impetuous stress
Of inquiring tenderness,
Those frank eyes, where deep doth lie
An angelic gravity.
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

What, my Friends, these feeble lines
Show, you say, my love declines?
To paint ill as I have done,
Proves forgetfulness begun?
Time's gay minions, pleas'd you see,
Time, your master, governs me.
Pleas'd, you mock the fruitless cry
'Quick, thy tablets, Memory!'

Ah! too true. Time's current strong
Leaves us true to nothing long.
Yet, if little stays with man,
Ah! retain we all we can!
If the clear impression dies,
Ah! the dim remembrance prize!
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

1849

LOVE POEMS

PARTING

YE storm-winds of Autumn
Who rush by, who shake
The window, and ruffle
The gleam-lighted lake;
Who cross to the hill-side
Thin-sprinkled with farms,
Where the high woods strip sadly
Their yellowing arms:—
Ye are bound for the mountains—
Ah, with you let me go
Where your cold distant barrier,
The vast range of snow,
Through the loose clouds lifts dimly
Its white peaks in air—
How deep is their stillness!
Ah! would I were there!

But on the stairs what voice is this I hear,
Buoyant as morning, and as morning clear?
Say, has some wet bird-haunted English lawn
Lent it the music of its trees at dawn?
Or was it from some sun-fleck'd mountain-brook
That the sweet voice its upland clearness took?
Ah! it comes nearer—
Sweet notes, this way!

Hark! fast by the window
The rushing winds go,
To the ice-cumber'd gorges,
The vast seas of snow.
There the torrents drive upward
Their rock-strangled hum,
There the avalanche thunders
The hoarse torrent dumb.
—I come, O ye mountains!
Ye torrents, I come!

But who is this, by the half-open'd door,
Whose figure casts a shadow on the floor?
The sweet blue eyes—the soft, ash-colour'd hair—
The cheeks that still their gentle paleness wear—
The lovely lips, with their arch smile, that tells
The unconquer'd joy in which her spirit dwells—
 Ah! they bend nearer—
 Sweet lips, this way!

Hark! the wind rushes past us—
Ah! with that let me go
To the clear waning hill-side
Unspotted by snow,
There to watch, o'er the sunk vale,
The frore mountain wall,
Where the nich'd snow-bed sprays down
Its powdery fall.
There its dusky blue clusters
The aconite spreads;
There the pines slope, the cloud-strips
Hung soft in their heads.
No life but, at moments,
The mountain-bee's hum.
—I come, O ye mountains!
Ye pine-woods, I come!

Forgive me! forgive me!
Ah, Marguerite, fain
Would these arms reach to clasp thee:—
 But see! 'tis in vain.

In the void air towards thee
 My strain'd arms are cast.
But a sea rolls between us—
 Our different past.

To the lips, ah! of others,
 Those lips have been prest,
And others, ere I was,
 Were clasp'd to that breast;

LOVE POEMS

Far, far from each other
Our spirits have grown.
And what heart knows another?
Ah! who knows his own?

Blow, ye winds! lift me with you!
I come to the wild.
Fold closely, O Nature!
Thine arms round thy child.

To thee only God granted
A heart ever new:
To all always open;
To all always true.

Ah, calm me! restore me!
And dry up my tears
On thy high mountain platforms,
Where Morn first appears,

Where the white mists, for ever,
Are spread and upfurl'd;
In the stir of the forces
Whence issued the world.

1852

A FAREWELL

My horse's feet beside the lake,
Where sweet the unbroken moonbeams lay,
Sent echoes through the night to wake
Each glistening strand, each heath-fring'd bay.

The poplar avenue was pass'd,
And the roofd bridge that spans the stream.
Up the steep street I hurried fast,
Led by thy taper's starlike beam.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

I came; I saw thee rise:—the blood
Came flushing to thy languid cheek.
Lock'd in each other's arms we stood,
In tears, with hearts too full to speak.

Days flew: ah, soon I could discern
A trouble in thine alter'd air.
Thy hand lay languidly in mine—
Thy cheek was grave, thy speech grew rare.

I blame thee not:—this heart, I know,
To be long lov'd was never fram'd;
For something in its depths doth glow
Too strange, too restless, too untam'd.

And women—things that live and move
Min'd by the fever of the soul—
They seek to find in those they love
Stern strength, and promise of control.

They ask not kindness, gentle ways;
These they themselves have tried and known:
They ask a soul that never sways
With the blind gusts which shake their own.

I too have felt the load I bore
In a too strong emotion's sway;
I too have wish'd, no woman more,
This starting, feverish heart, away:

I too have long'd for trenchant force
And will like a dividing spear;
Have prais'd the keen, unscrupulous course,
Which knows no doubt, which feels no fear.

But in the world I learnt, what there
Thou too wilt surely one day prove,
That will, that energy, though rare,
Are yet far, far less rare than love.

LOVE POEMS

Go then! till Time and Fate impress
This truth on thee, be mine no more!
They will: for thou, I feel, no less
Than I, wert destin'd to this lore.

We school our manners, act our parts:
But He, who sees us through and through,
Knows that the bent of both our hearts
Was to be gentle, tranquil, true.

And though we wear out life, alas,
Distracted as a homeless wind,
In beating where we must not pass,
In seeking what we shall not find;

Yet we shall one day gain, life past,
Clear prospect o'er our being's whole;
Shall see ourselves, and learn at last
Our true affinities of soul.

We shall not then deny a course
To every thought the mass ignore;
We shall not then call hardness force,
Nor lightness wisdom any more.

Then, in the eternal Father's smile,
Our sooth'd, encourag'd souls will dare
To *seem* as free from pride and guile,
As good, as generous, as they *are*.

Then we shall know our friends: though much
Will have been lost—the help in strife;
The thousand sweet still joys of such
As hand in hand face earthly life;—

Though these be lost, there will be yet
A sympathy august and pure;
Ennobled by a vast regret,
And by contrition seaPd thrice sure.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

And we, whose ways were unlike here,
May then more neighbouring courses ply;
May to each other be brought near,
And greet across infinity.

How sweet, unreach'd by earthly jars,
My sister! to behold with thee
The hush among the shining stars,
The calm upon the moonlit sea.

How sweet to feel, on the boon air,
All our unquiet pulses cease;
To feel that nothing can impair
The gentleness, the thirst for peace—

The gentleness too rudely hurl'd
On this wild earth of hate and fear:
The thirst for peace a raving world
Would never let us satiate here.

1852

TO MARGUERITE

WE were apart: yet, day by day,
I bade my heart more constant be;
I bade it keep the world away,
And grow a home for only thee:
Nor fear'd but thy love likewise grew,
Like mine, each day more tried, more true.

The fault was grave: I might have known,
What far too soon, alas, I learn'd—
The heart can bind itself alone,
And faith is often unreturn'd.—
Self-sway'd our feelings ebb and swell:
Thou lov'st no more: Farewell! Farewell!

LOVE POEMS

Farewell! and thou, thou lonely heart,
Which never yet without remorse
Even for a moment did'st depart
From thy remote and speiidd course
To haunt the place where passions reign,
Back to thy solitude again!

Back, with the conscious thrill of shame
Which Luna felt, that summer night,
Flash through her pure immortal frame,
When she forsook the starry height
To hang over Endymion's sleep
Upon the pine-grown Latmian steep;—

Yet she, chaste Queen, had never prov'd
How vain a thing is mortal love,
Wandering in Heaven, far remov'd.
But thou hast long had place to prove
This truth—to prove, and make thine own:
Thou hast been, shall be, art) alone.

Or, if not quite alone, yet they
Which touch thee are unmating things—
Ocean, and Clouds, and Night, and Day;
Lorn Autumns and triumphant Springs;
And life, and others' joy and pain,
And love, if love, of happier men.

Of happier men—for they, at least,
Have *drearfd* two human hearts might blend
In one, and were through faith releas'd
From isolation without end
Prolong'd, nor knew, although not less
Alone than thou, their loneliness.

*57

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

TO MARGUERITE, IN RETURNING A VOLUME
OF THE LETTERS OF ORTIS

YES: in the sea of life enis'd,
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal millions live *alone*.

The islands feel the enclasping flow,
And then their endless bounds they know.

But when the moon their hollows lights
And they are swept by balms of spring,
And in their glens, on starry nights,
The nightingales divinely sing;
And lovely notes, from shore to shore,
Across the sounds and channels pour;

Oh then a longing like despair
Is to their farthest caverns sent;
For surely once, they feel, we were
Parts of a single continent.
Now round us spreads the watery plain—
Oh might our marges meet again!

Who order'd, that their longing's fire
Should be, as soon as kindled, cool'd?
Who renders vain their deep desire?—
A God, a God their severance rul'd;
And bade betwixt their shores to be
The unplumbed salt estranging sea.

1852

LOVE POEMS

ABSENCE

IN this fair stranger's eyes of grey
Thine eyes, my love, I see.
I shudder: for the passing day
Had borne me far from thee.

This is the curse of life: that not
A nobler calmer train
Of wiser thoughts and feelings blot
Our passions from our brain;

But each day brings its petty dust
Our soon-chok'd souls to fill,
And we forget because we must,
And not because we will.

I struggle towards the light; and ye,
Once-long'd-for storms of love!
If with the light ye cannot be,
I bear that ye remove.

I struggle towards the light; but oh,
While yet the night is chill,
Upon Time's barren, stormy flow,
Stay with me, Marguerite, still!

1852

INDIFFERENCE

I MUST not say that thou wert true,
Yet let me say that thou wert fair.
And they that lovely face who view,
They will not ask if truth be there.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Truth—what is truth? Two bleeding hearts
Wounded by men, by Fortune tried,
Outwearied with their lonely parts,
Vow to beat henceforth side by side.

The world to them was stern and drear;
Their lot was but to weep and moan.
Ah, let them keep their faith sincere,
For neither could subsist alone!

But souls whom some benignant breath
Has charm'd at birth from gloom and care,
These ask no love—these plight no faith,
For they are happy as they are.

The world to them may homage make,
And garlands for their forehead weave.
And what the world can give, they take:
But they bring more than they receive.

They smile upon the world: their ears
To one demand alone are coy.
They will not give us love and tears—
They bring us light, and warmth, and joy.

It was not love that heav'd thy breast,
Fair child! it was the bliss within.
Adieu! and say that one, at least,
Was just to what he did not win.

1852

A DREAM

WAS it a dream? We sail'd, I thought we sail'd,
Martin and I, down a green Alpine stream,
Under overhanging pines; the morning sun,
On the wet umbrage of their glossy tops,
On the red pinings of their forest floor,
Drew a warm scent abroad; behind the pines

LOVE POEMS

The mountain skirts, with all their sylvan change
Of bright-leaf'cl chestnuts, and moss'd walnut-trees,
And the frail scarlet-berried ash, began.
Swiss chalets glitter'd on the dewy slopes,
And from some swarded shelf high up, there came
Notes of wild pastoral music: over all
Rang'd, diamond-bright, the eternal wall of snow.
Upon the mossy rocks at the stream's edge,
Back'd by the pines, a plank-built cottage stood,
Bright in the sun; the climbing gourd-plant's leaves
Muffled its walls, and on the stone-strewn roof
Lay the warm golden gourds; golden, within,
Under the eaves, peer'd rows of Indian corn.
We sat beneath the cottage with the stream.
On the brown rude-carv'd balcony two Forms
Came forth—Olivia's, Marguerite! and thine.
Clad were they both in white, flowers in their breast;
Straw hats bedeck'd their heads, with ribbons blue
Which wav'd, and on their shoulders fluttering play'd.
They saw us, they conferr'd; their bosoms heav'd,
And more than mortal impulse fill'd their eyes.
Their lips mov'd; their white arms, wav'd eagerly,
Flash'd once, like falling streams:—we rose, we gaz'd:
One moment, on the rapid's top, our boat
Hung pois'd—and then the darting River of Life,
Loud thundering, bore us by: swift, swift it foam'd;
Black under cliffs it rac'd, round headlands shone.
Soon the plank'd cottage 'mid the sun-warmed pines
Faded, the moss, the rocks; us burning Plains
Bristled with cities, us the Sea receiv'd.

1853

THE TERRACE AT BERNE

TEN years!—and to my waking eye
Once more the roofs of Berne appear;
The rocky banks, the terrace high,
The stream—and do I linger here?

The clouds are on the Oberland,
The Jungfrau snows look faint and far;
But bright are those green fields at hand,
And through those fields comes down the Aar,

And from the blue twin lakes it comes,
Flows by the town, the church-yard fair,
And 'neath the garden-walk it hums,
The house—and is my Marguerite there?

Ah, shall I see thee, while a flush
Of startled pleasure floods thy brow,
Quick through the oleanders brush,
And clap thy hands, and cry: *'Tis thou!*

Or hast thou long since wander'd back,
Daughter of France! to France, thy home;
And flitted down the flowery track
Where feet like thine too lightly come?

Doth riotous laughter now replace
Thy smile, and rouge, with stony glare,
Thy cheek's soft hue, and fluttering lace
The kerchief that enwound thy hair?

Or is it over?—art thou dead?—
Dead?—and no warning shiver ran
Across my heart, to say thy thread
Of life was cut, and closed thy span!

Could from earth's ways that figure slight
Be lost, and I not feel 'twas so?
Of that fresh voice the gay delight
Fail from earth's air, and I not know?

Or shall I find thee still, but changed,
But not the Marguerite of thy prime?
With all thy being re-arranged,
Pass'd through the crucible of time;

LOVE POEMS

With spirit vanish'd, beauty waned,
And hardly yet a glance, a tone,
A gesture—anything—retain'd
Of all that was my Marguerite's own?

I will not know—for wherefore try
To things by mortal course that live
A shadowy durability
For which they were not meant, to give?

Like driftwood spars which meet and pass
Upon the boundless ocean-plain,
So on the sea of life, alas!
Man nears man, meets, and leaves again.

I knew it when my life was young,
I feel it still, now youth is o'er!
The mists are on the mountains hung,
And Marguerite I shall see no more.

1867

EXCUSE

I TOO have suffer'd: yet I know
She is not cold, though she seems so:
She is not cold, she is not light;
But our ignoble souls lack might.

She smiles and smiles, and will not sigh,
While we for hopeless passion die;
Yet she could love, those eyes declare,
Were but men nobler than they are,

Eagerly once her gracious ken
Was turn'd upon the sons of men.
But light the serious visage grew—
She look'd, and smiled, and saw them through.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Our petty souls, our strutting wits,
Our labour'd puny passion-fits—
Ah, may she scorn them still, till we
Scorn them as bitterly as she!

Yet oh, that Fate would let her see
One of some worthier race than we;
One for whose sake she once might prove
How deeply she who scorns can love.

His eyes be like the starry lights—
His voice like sounds of summer nights—
In all his lovely mien let pierce
The magic of the universe.

And she to him will reach her hand,
And gazing in his eyes will stand,
And know her friend, and weep for glee,
And cry—*Long) long I've look'dfor thee.*—

Then will she weep—with smiles, till then,
Coldly she mocks the sons of men.
Till then her lovely eyes maintain
Their gay, unwavering, deep disdain.

1852

THE BURIED LIFE

LIGHT flows our war of mocking words, and yet,
Behold, with tears my eyes are wet.
I feel a nameless sadness o'er me roll.

Yes, yes, we know that we can jest,
We know, we know that we can smile;
But there's a something in this breast
To which thy light words bring no rest,

LOVE POEMS

And thy gay smiles no anodyne.

Give me thy hand, and hush awhile,
And turn those limpid eyes on mine,
And let me read there, love, thy inmost soul.

Alas, is even Love too weak
To unlock the heart, and let it speak?
Are even lovers powerless to reveal
To one another what indeed they feel?
I knew the mass of men conceal'd
Their thoughts, for fear that if reveal'd
They would by other men be met
With blank indifference, or with blame reprov'd:
I knew they liv'd and mov'd
Trick'd in disguises, alien to the rest
Of men, and alien to themselves—and yet
The same heart beats in every human breast.

But we, my love—does a like spell benumb
Our hearts—our voices?—must we too be dumb?

Ah, well for us, if even we,
Even for a moment, can get free
Our heart, and have our lips unchain'd:
For that which seals them hath been deep ordain'd.

Fate, which foresaw
How frivolous a baby man would be,
By what distractions he would be possess'd,
How he would pour himself in every strife,
And well-nigh change his own identity;
That it might keep from his capricious play
His genuine self, and force him to obey,
Even in his own despite, his being's law,
Bade through the deep recesses of our breast
The unregarded River of our Life
Pursue with indiscernible flow its way;
And that we should not see
The buried stream, and seem to be

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Eddying about in blind uncertainty,
Though driving on with it eternally.

But often, in the world's most crowded streets,
But often, in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life,
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
In tracking out our true, original course;
A longing to inquire
Into the mystery of this heart that beats
So wild, so deep in us, to know
Whence our thoughts come and where they go.
And many a man in his own breast then delves,
But deep enough, alas, none ever mines:
And we have been on many thousand lines,
And we have shown on each talent and power,
But hardly have we, for one little hour,
Been on our own line, have we been ourselves;
Hardly had skill to utter one of all
The nameless feelings that course through our breast,
But they course on for ever unexpress'd.
And long we try in vain to speak and act
Our hidden self, and what we say and do
Is eloquent, is well—but 'tis not true:
And then we will no more be rack'd
With inward striving, and demand
Of all the thousand nothings of the hour
Their stupefying power;
Ah yes, and they benumb us at our call:
Yet still, from time to time, vague and forlorn,
From the soul's subterranean depth upborne
As from an infinitely distant land,
Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey
A melancholy into all our day.

Only—but this is rare—
When a beloved hand is laid in ours,
When, jaded with the rush and glare

LOVE POEMS

Of the interminable hours,
Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,
When our world-deafen'd ear
Is by the tones of a lov'd voice caress'd
A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again:
The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,
And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we know.
A man becomes aware of his life's flow,
And hears its winding murmur, and he sees
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.

And there arrives a lull in the hot race
Wherein he doth for ever chase
That flying and elusive shadow, Rest.
An air of coolness plays upon his face,
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast.

And then he thinks he knows
The Hills where his life rose,
And the Sea where it goes.

1852

THE RIVER

STILL glides the stream, slow drops the boat
Under the rustling poplars' shade;
Silent the swans beside us float:
None speaks, none heeds—ah, turn thy head.

Let those arch eyes now softly shine,
That mocking mouth grow sweetly bland:
Ah, let them rest, those eyes, on mine;
On mine let rest that lovely hand.

My pent-up tears oppress my brain,
My heart is swoln with love unsaid:
Ah, let me weep, and tell my pain,
And on thy shoulder rest my head.

Before I die, before the soul,
Which now is mine, must re-attain
Immunity from my control,
And wander round the world again:

Before this teas'd o'erlabour'd heart
For ever leaves it vain employ,
Dead to its deep habitual smart,
And dead to hopes of future joy.

1852

TOO LATE

EACH on his own strict line we move,
And some find death ere they find love.
So far apart their lives are thrown
From the twin soul that halves their own.

And sometimes, by still harder fate,
The lovers meet, but meet too late.
—Thy heart is mine!—*True, true! ah true!*
—Then, love, thy hand!—*Ah no! adieu!*

1852

CALAIS SANDS

A THOUSAND knights have rein'd their steeds
To watch this line of sand-hills run,
Along the never silent Strait,
To Calais glittering in the sun:

To look toward Ardres' Golden Field
Across this wide aerial plain,
Which glows as if the Middle Age
Were gorgeous upon earth again:

LOVE POEMS

Oh, that to share this famous scene
I saw, upon the open sand,
Thy lovely presence at my side,
Thy shawl, thy look, thy smile, thy hand!

How exquisite thy voice would come,
My darling, on this lonely air!
How sweetly would the fresh sea-breeze
Shake loose some lock of soft brown hair!

But now my glance but once hath roved
O'er Calais and its famous plain;
To England's cliffs my gaze is turn'd,
O'er the blue Strait mine eyes I strain.

Thou comest! Yes, the vessel's cloud
Hangs dark upon the rolling sea!—
Oh that yon seabird's wings were mine
To win one instant's glimpse of thee!

I must not spring to grasp thy hand,
To woo thy smile, to seek thine eye;
But I may stand far off, and gaze,
And watch thee pass unconscious by,

And spell thy looks, and guess thy thoughts,
Mixt with the idlers on the pier.—
Ah, might I always rest unseen,
So I might have thee always near!

To-morrow hurry through the fields
Of Flanders to the storied Rhine!
To-night those soft-fringed eyes shall close
Beneath one roof, my queen! with mine.

1867

ON THE RHINE

VAIN is the effort to forget.
Some day I shall be cold, I know,
As is the eternal moon-lit snow
Of the high Alps, to which I go:
But ah, not yet! not yet!

Vain is the agony of grief.
'Tis true, indeed, an iron knot
Ties straitly up from mine thy lot,
And were it snapt—thou lov'st me not!
But is despair relief?

Awhile let me with thought have done;
And as this brimm'd unwrinkled Rhine
And that far purple mountain line
Lie sweetly in the look divine
Of the slow-sinking sun;

So let me lie, and calm as they
Let beam upon my inward view
Those eyes of deep, soft, lucent hue—
Eyes too expressive to be blue,
Too lovely to be grey.

Ah Quiet, all things feel thy balm!
Those blue hills too, this river's flow,
Were restless once, but long ago.
Tam'd is their turbulent youthful glow:
Their joy is in their calm.

1852

PART III
NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM
AN EPISODE

The story of *Sohrab and Rustum* is told in Sir John Malcolm's History of Persia, as follows:—

The young Sohrab was the fruit of one of Rustum's early amours. He had left his mother, and sought fame under the banners of Afrasiab, whose armies he commanded, and soon obtained a renown beyond that of all contemporary heroes but his father. He had carried death and dismay into the ranks of the Persians, and had terrified the boldest warriors of that country, before Rustum encountered him, which at last that hero resolved to do, under a feigned name. They met three times. The first time they parted by mutual consent, though Sohrab had the advantage. The second, the youth obtained a victory, but granted life to his unknown father. The third was fatal to Sohrab, who, when writhing in the pangs of death, warned his conqueror to shun the vengeance that is inspired by parental woes, and bade him dread the rage of the mighty Rustum, who must soon learn that he had slain his son Sohrab. These words, we are told, were as death to the aged hero; and when he recovered from a trance, he called in despair for proofs of what Sohrab had said. The afflicted and dying youth tore open his mail, and showed his father a seal which his mother had placed on his arm when she discovered to him the secret of his birth, and bade him seek his father. The sight of his own signet rendered Rustum quite frantic: he cursed himself, attempted to put an end to his existence, and was only prevented by the efforts of his expiring son. After Sohrab's death, he burnt his tents, and all his goods, and carried the corpse to Seistan, where it was interred. The army of Turan was, agreeably to the last request of Sohrab, permitted to cross the Oxus unmolested. It was commanded by Haman: and Zoarrah attended, on the part of Rustum, to see that this engagement was respected by the Persians. To reconcile us to the improbability of this tale we are informed that Rustum could have no idea his son was in existence. The mother of Sohrab had written to him her child was a daughter, fearing to lose her darling infant if she revealed the truth; and Rustum, as before stated, fought under a feigned name, an usage not uncommon in the chivalrous combats of those days.'

AND the first grey of morning fill'd the east,
And the fog rose out of the Oxus stream.
But all the Tartar camp along the stream
Was hush'd, and still, the men were plunged in sleep:

Sohrab alone, he slept not: all night long
 He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed;
 But when the grey dawn stole into his tent,
 He rose, and clad himself, and girt his sword,
 And took his hoiseman's cloak, and left his tent,
 And went abroad into the cold wet fog,
 Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's tent.

Through the black Tartar tents he pass'd, which stood
 Clustering like bee-hives on the low flat strand
 Of Oxus, where the summer floods o'erflow
 When the sun melts the snows in high Pamere'
 Through the black tents he pass'd, o'er that Jow strand,
 And to a hillock came, a little back
 From the stream's brink, the spot where first a boat,
 Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the land.
 The men of former times had crown'd the top
 With a clay fort: but that was fall'n; and now
 The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent.
 A dome of laths, and o'ei it felts were spread.
 And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood
 Upon the thick-pil'd carpets in the tent,
 And found the old man sleeping on his bed
 Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his aims.
 And Peian-Wisa heard him, though the step
 Was dull'd; for he slept light, an old man's sleep;
 And he rose quickly on one arm, and said:—

'Who art thou? for it is not yet clear dawn.
 Speak! is there news, or any night alaim?'

But Sohrab came to the bedside, and said:—
 'Thou know'st me, Pcran-Wisa: it is I.
 The sun is not yet risen, and the foe
 Sleep; but I sleep not; all night long I he
 Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.
 For so did King Afrasiab bid me seek
 Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,
 In Samarcand, before the army march'd;
 And I will tell thee what my heart desires.
 Thou know'st if, since from Ader-baijan first
 I came among the Tartars, and bore arms,

I have still serv'd Afrasiab well, and shown,
 At my boy's years, the courage of a man.
 This too thou know'st, that, while I still bear on
 The conquering Tartar ensigns through the world,
 And beat the Persians back on every field,
 I seek one man, one man, and one alone—
 Rustum, my father; who, I hop'd, should greet,
 Should one day greet, upon some well-fought field,
 His not unworthy, not inglorious son.
 So I long hop'd, but him I never find.
 Come then, hear now, and grant me what I ask.
 Let the two armies rest to-day: but I
 Will challenge forth the biavest Persian lords
 To meet me, man to man: if I prevail,
 Rustum will surely hear it; if I fall—
 Old man, the dead need no one, claim no km.
 Dim is the rumour of a common fight,
 Where host meets host, and many names are sunk:
 But of a single combat Fame speaks clear.'

He spoke: and Peran-Wisa took the hand
 Of the young man in his, and sigh'd, and said:—

'O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine!
 Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,
 And share the battle's common chance with us
 Who love thee, but must press for ever first,
 In single fight incurring single risk,
 To find a father thou hast never seen?
 That were far best, my son, to stay with us
 Unmurmuring; in our tents, while it is war,
 And when 'tis truce, then in Afrasiab's towns.
 But, if this one desire indeed rules all,
 To seek out Rustum—seek him not through fight:
 Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,
 Oh Sohrab, carry an unwounded son!
 But far hence seek him, for he is not here.
 For now it is not as when I was young,
 When Rustum was in front of every fray:
 But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,
 In Seistan, with Zal, his father old.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Whether that his own mighty strength at last
Feels the abhorr'd approaches of old age;
Or in some quarrel with the Persian King.
There go:—Thou wilt not? Yet my heart forebodes
Danger or death awaits thee on this field.
Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost
To us: fain therefore send thee hence, in peace
To seek thy father, not seek single fights
In vain:—but who can keep the lion's cub
From ravening? and who govern Rustum's son?
Go: I will grant thee what thy heart desires/

So said he, and dropp'd Sohrab's hand, and left
His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay,
And o'er his chilly limbs his woollen coat
He pass'd, and tied his sandals on his feet,
And threw a white cloak round him, and he took
In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword;
And on his head he plac'd his sheep-skin cap,
Black, glossy, curl'd, the fleece of Kara-Kul;
And rais'd the curtain of his tent, and call'd
His herald to his side, and went abroad.

The sun, by this, had risen, and clear'd the fog
From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands:
And from their tents the Tartar horsemen fil'd
Into the open plain; so Haman bade;
Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa rul'd
The host, and still was in his lusty prime.
From their black tents, long files of horse, they stream'd:
As when, some grey November morn, the files,
In marching order spread, of long-neck'd cranes
Stream over Casbin, and the southern slopes
Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,
Or some froze Caspian reed-bed, southward bound
For the warm Persian sea-board: so they stream'd.
The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard,
First, with black sheep-skin caps and with long spears;
Large men, large steeds; who from Bokhara come
And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares.
Next the more temperate Toorkmuns of the south,

The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,
 And those from Attruck and the Caspian sands;
 Light men, and on light steeds, who only drink
 The acrid milk of camels, and their wells.
 And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came
 From far, and a more doubtful service own'd;
 The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks
 Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards
 And close-set skull-caps; and those wilder hordes
 Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern waste,
 Kalmuks and unkemp'd Kuzzaks, tribes who stray
 Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,
 Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere.
 These all nTd out from camp into the plain.
 And on the other side the Persians form'd:
 First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seem'd,
 The Ilyats of Khorassan: and behind,
 The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,
 Marshall'd battalions bright in burnish'd steel.
 But Peran-Wisa with his herald came
 Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,
 And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks.
 And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw
 That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,
 He took his spear, and to the front he came,
 And check'd his ranks, and fix'd them where they stood.
 And the old Tartar came upon the sand
 Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said:—

'Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear!
 Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.
 But choose a champion from the Persian lorçis
 To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man.'

As, in the country, on a morn in June,
 When the dew glistens on the pearled ears,
 A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy—
 So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,
 A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran
 Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they lov'd.

But as a troop of pedlars, from Cabool,

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Gross underneath the Indian Caucasus,
That vast sky-neighbouring mountain of milk snow;
Winding so high, that, as they mount, they pass
Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,
Chok'd by the air, and scarce can they themselves
Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd mulberries—
In single file they move, and stop their breath,
For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging snows—
So the pale Persians held their breath with fear.

And to Ferood his brother Chiefs came up
To counsel: Gudurz and Zoarrah came,
And Feraburz, who ruPd the Persian host
Second, and was the uncle of the King:
These came and counseled; and then Gudurz said:—

Terood, shame bids us take their challenge up,
Yet champion have we none to match this youth.
He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.
But Rustum came last night; aloof he sits

And sullen, and has pitch'd his tents apart:
Him will I seek, and carry to his ear
The Tartar challenge, and this young man's name.
Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.
Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up.'

So spake he; and Ferood stood forth and said:—
'Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said.
Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man.'

He spoke; and Peran-Wisa turn'd, and strode
Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.
But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,
And cross'd the camp which lay behind, and reach'd,
Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.
Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,
Just pitch'd: the high pavilion in the midst
Was Rustum's, and his men lay camp'd around.
And Gudurz enter'd Rustum's tent, and found
Rustum: his morning meal was done, but still
The table stood beside him, charg'd with food;
A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,
And dark green melons; and there Rustum sate

Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist,
 And play'd with it; but Gudurz came and stood
 Before him; and he look'd, and saw him stand;
 And with a cry sprang up, and dropp'd the bird,
 And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said:—

'Welcome! these eyes could see no better sight.
 What news? but sit down first, and eat and drink.'

But Gudurz stood in the tent door, and said:—
 'Not now: a time will come to eat and drink,
 But not to-day: to-day has other needs.
 The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze:
 For from the Tartars is a challenge brought
 To pick a champion from the Persian lords
 To fight their champion—and thou know'st his name—
 Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid.
 O Rustum, like thy might is this young man's!
 He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.
 And he is young, and Iran's Chiefs are old,
 Or else too weak; and all eyes turn to thee.
 Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose.'

He spoke: but Rustum answer'd with a smile.—
 'Go to! if Iran's Chiefs are old, then I
 Am older: if the young are weak, the King
 Errs strangely: for the King, for Kai-Khosroo,
 Himself is young, and honours younger men,
 And lets the aged moulder to their graves.
 Rustum he loves no more, but loves the young—
 The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts, not I.
 For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's fame?
 For would that I myself had such a son,
 And not that one slight helpless girl I have,
 A son so fam'd, so brave, to send to war,
 And I to tarry with the snow-hair'd Zal,
 My father, whom the robber Afghans vex,
 And clip his borders short, and drive his herds,
 And he has none to guard his weak old age.
 There would I go, and hang my armour up,
 And with my great name fence that weak old man,
 And spend the goodly treasures I have got,

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,
And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings,
And with these slaughterous hands draw sword no more/

He spoke, and smiPd; and Gudurz made reply:—
'What then, O Rustum, will men say to this,
When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks
Thee most of all, and thou, whom most he seeks,
Hidest thy face? Take heed, lest men should say,
Like some old miser, Rustum hoards hisfame.
And shuns to peril it with younger men.'⁹

And, greatly mov'd, then Rustum made reply:—
'O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words?
Thou knowest better words than this to say.
What is one more, one less, obscure or fam'd,
Valiant or craven, young or old, to me?
Are not they mortal, am not I myself?
But who for men of naught would do great deeds?
Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame.
But I will fight unknown, and in plain arms;
Let not men say of Rustum, he was match'd
In single fight with any mortal man.'

He spoke, and frown'd; and Gudurz turned, and ran
Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy,
Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.
But Rustum strode to his tent door, and call'd
His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,
And clad himself in steel: the arms he chose
Were plain, and on his shield was no device,
Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,
And from the fluted spine atop a plume
Of horsehair wav'd, a scarlet horsehair plume.
So arm'd he issued forth; and Ruksh, his horse,
Follow'd him, like a faithful hound, at heel,
Ruksh, whose renown was nois'd through all the earth,
The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once
Did in Bokhara by the river find
A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home,
And rear'd him; a bright bay, with lofty crest;
Dight with a saddle-cloth of broider'd green

Crusted with gold, and on the ground were work'd
 All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know:
 So follow'd, Rustum left his tents, and cross'd
 The camp, and to the Persian host appear'd.
 And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts
 HaiPd; but the Tartars knew not who he was.
 And dear as the wet diver to the eyes
 Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,
 By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,
 Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,
 Having made up his tale of precious pearls,
 Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands—
 So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came.

And Rustum to the Persian front advanc'd,
 And Sohrab arm'd in Raman's tent, and came.
 And as afield the reapers cut a swathe
 Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,
 And on each side are squares of standing corn,
 And in the midst a stubble, short and bare;
 So on each side were squares of men, with spears
 Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand.
 And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast
 His eyes towards the Tartar tents, and saw
 Sohrab come forth, and ey'd him as he came.

As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,
 Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge
 Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes her fire—
 At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn,
 When the frost flowers the whiten'd window panes—
 And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts
 Of that poor drudge may be; so Rustum ey'd
 The unknown adventurous Youth, who from afar
 Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth
 All the most valiant chiefs: long he perus'd
 His spirited air, and wonder'd who he was.
 For very young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd;
 Like some young cypress, tall, and dark, and straight,
 Which in a queen's secluded garden throws
 Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,

By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound—
 So slender Sohrab seem'd, so softly rear'd.
 And a deep pity enter'd Rustum's soul
 As he beheld him coming; and he stood,
 And beckon'd to him with his hand, and said:—
 'O thou young man, the air of Heaven is soft,
 And warm, and pleasant; but the grave is cold.
 Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.
 Behold me: I am vast, and clad in iron,
 And tried; and I have stood on many a field
 Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe:
 Never was that field lost, or that foe sav'd.
 Oh Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death?
 Be govern'd: quit the Tartar host, and come
 To Iran, and be as my son to me,
 And fight beneath my banner till I die.
 There are no youths in Iran brave as thou.'

So he spake, mildly: Sohrab heard his voice.
 The mighty voice of Rustum; and he saw
 His giant figure planted on the sand,
 Sole, like some single tower, which a chief
 Has builded on the waste in former years
 Against the robbers; and he saw that head,
 Streak'd with its first grey hairs: hope fill'd his soul;
 And he ran forwards and embrac'd his knees,
 And clasp'd his hand within his own and said:—

'Oh, by thy father's head! by Thine own soul!
 Art thou not Rustum? Speak! art thou not he?'

But Rustum ey'd askance the kneeling youth,
 And turn'd away, and spoke to his own soul:—

'Ah me, I muse what this young fox may mean.
 False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys.
 For if I now confess this thing he asks,
 And hide it not, but **say**—*Rustum is here*—
 He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,
 But he will find some pretext not to fight,
 And praise my fame, and proffer courteous gifts,
 A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.
 And on a feast-tide, in Afrasiab's hall,

In Samarcand, he will arise and cry—
 "I challeng'd once, when the two armies camp'd
 Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords
 To cope with me in single fight; but they
 Shrank; only Rustum dar'd: then he and I
 Ghang'd gifts, and went on equal terms away."
 So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud.
 Then were the chiefs of Iran sham'd through me.'

And then he turn'd, and sternly spake aloud:—
 'Rise! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus
 Of Rustum? I am here, whom thou hast call'd
 By challenge forth: make good thy vaunt, or yield.
 Is it with Rustum only thou wouldst fight?
 Rash boy, men look on Rustum's face and flee.
 For well I know, that did great Rustum stand
 Before thy face this day, and were reveal'd,
 There would be then no talk of fighting more.
 But being what I am, I tell thee this;
 Do thou record it in thine inmost soul:
 Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt, and yield;
 Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till winds
 Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer floods,
 Oxus in summer wash them all away.'

He spoke: and Sohrab answer'd, on his feet:—
 'Art thou so fierce? Thou wilt not fright me so.
 I am no girl, to be made pale by words.
 Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum stand
 Here on this field, there were no fighting then.
 But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here.
 Begin: thou art more vast, more dread than I,
 And thou art prov'd, I know, and I am young—
 But yet Success sways with the breath of Heaven.
 And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure
 Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know.
 For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,
 Pois'd on the top of a huge wave of Fate,
 Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.
 And whether it will heave us up to land,
 Or whether it will roll us out to sea,

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,
We know not, and no search will make us know:
Only the event will teach us in its hour.'

He spoke; and Rustum answer'd not, but hurl'd
His spear: down from the shoulder, down it came,
As on some partridge in the corn a hawk
That long has tower'd in the airy clouds
Drops like a plummet: Sohrab saw it come,
And sprang aside, quick as a flash: the spear
Hiss'd, and went quivering down into the sand,
Which it sent flying wide:—then Sohrab threw
In turn, and full struck Rustum's shield: sharp rang,
The iron plates rang sharp, but turn'd the spear.
And Rustum seiz'd his club, which none but he
Could wield: an unlopp'd trunk it was, and huge,
Still rough; like those which men in treeless plains
To build them boats fish from the flooded rivers,
Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up
By their dark springs, the wind in winter-time
Has made in Himalayan forests wrack,
And strewn the channels with torn boughs; so huge
The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck
One stroke; but again Sohrab sprang aside
Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club came
Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum's hand.
And Rustum follow'd his own blow, and fell
To his knees, and with his fingers clutch'd the sand:
And now might Sohrab have unsheath'd his sword,
And pierc'd the mighty Rustum while he lay
Dizzy, and on his knees, and chok'd with sand:
But he look'd on, and smil'd, nor bar'd his sword,
But courteously drew back, and spoke, and said:—

'Thou strik'st too hard: that club of thine will float
Upon the summer floods, and not my bones.
But rise, and be not wroth; not wroth am I:
No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul.
Thou say'st, thou art not Rustum: be it so.
Who art thou then, that canst so touch my soul?
Boy as I am, I have seen battles too;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Have waded foremost in their bloody waves,
 And heard their hollow roar of dying men;
 But never was my heart thus touch'd before.
 Are they from Heaven, these softenings of the heart?
 O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven!
 Come, plant we here in earth our angry spears,
 And make a truce, and sit upon this sand,
 And pledge each other in red wine, like friends,
 And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's deeds.
 There are enough foes in the Persian host
 Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no pang;
 Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou
 Mayst fight; fight them, when they confront thy spear.
 But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and me!

He ceas'd: but while he spake, Rustum had risen,
 And stood erect, trembling with rage: his club
 He left to lie, but had regain'd his spear,
 Whose fiery point now in his mail'd right-hand
 Blaz'd bright and baleful, like that autumn Star,
 The baleful sign of fevers: dust had soil'd
 His stately crest, and dimm'd his glittering arms.
 His breast heav'd; his lips foam'd; and twice his voice
 Was chok'd with rage: at last these words broke way:—

'Girl! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands!
 CuiTd minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words!
 Fight; let me hear thy hateful voice no more!
 Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now
 With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to dance;
 But on the Oxus sands, and in the dance
 Of battle, and with me, who make no play
 Of war: I fight it out, and hand to hand.
 Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine!
 Remember all thy valour: try thy feints
 And cunning: all the pity I had is gone:
 Because thou hast sham'd me before both the hosts
 With thy light skipping tricks, and thy girl's wiles.'

He spoke; and Sohrab kindled at his taunts,
 And he too drew his sword: at once they rush'd
 Together, as two eagles on one prey

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Come rushing down together from the clouds,
One from the east, one from the west: their shields
Dash'd with a clang together, and a din
Rose, such as that the sinewy woodcutters
Make often in the forest's heart at morn,
Of hewing axes, crashing trees: such blows
Rustum and Sohrab on each other hail'd.
And you would say that sun and stars took part
In that unnatural conflict; for a cloud
Grew suddenly in Heaven, and dark'd the sun
Over the fighters' heads; and a wind rose
Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain.
And in a sandy whirlwind wrapp'd the pair.
In gloom they twain were wrapp'd, and they alone;
For both the on-looking hosts on either hand
Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was pure,
And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.
But in the gloom they fought, with bloodshot eyes
And labouring breath; first Rustum struck the shield
Which Sohrab held stiff out; the steel-spik'd spear
Rent the tough plates, but fail'd to reach the skin,
And Rustum pluck'd it back with angry groan,
Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's helm,
Nor clove its steel quite through; but all the crest
He shore away, and that proud horsehair plume
Never till now defiled, sunk to the dust;
And Rustum bow'd his head; but then the gloom
Grew blacker: thunder rumbled in the air,
And lightnings rent the cloud; and Ruksh, the horse,
Who stood at hand, utter'd a dreadful cry:
No horse's cry was that, most like the roar
Of some pain'd desert lion, who all day
Has trail'd the hunter's javelin in his side,
And comes at night to die upon the sand:—
The two hosts heard that cry, and quak'd for fear,
And Oxus curdled as it cross'd his stream.
But Sohrab heard, and quail'd not, but rush'd on,
And struck again; and again Rustum bow'd
His head; but this time all the blade, like glass,

Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm.
 And in his hand the hilt remain'd alone.
 Then Rustum rais'd his head: his dreadful eyes
 Glar'd, and he shook on high his menacing spear,
 And shouted, *Rustum!* Sohrab heard that shout,
 And shrank amaz'd: back he recoil'd one step,
 And scann'd with blinking eyes the advancing Form:
 And then he stood bewil'd; and he dropp'd
 His covering shield, and the spear pierc'd his side.
 He reePd, and staggering back, sunk to the ground.
 And then the gloom dispers'd, and the wind fell.
 And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all
 The cloud; and the two armies saw the pair;
 Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,
 And Sohrab, wounded on the bloody sand.

Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum began:—
 'Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to kill
 A Persian lord this day, and strip his corpse,
 And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent.
 Or else that the great Rustum would come down
 Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would move
 His heart to take a gift, and let thee go.
 And then that all the Tartar host would praise
 Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy fame,
 To glad thy father in his weak old age.
 Fool! thou art slain, and by an unknown man!
 Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be,
 Than to thy friends, and to thy father old.'

And, with a fearless mien, Sohrab replied:—
 'Unknown thou art; yet thy fierce vaunt is vain.
 Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man!
 No! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart.
 For were I match'd with ten such men as thou,
 And I were he who till to-day I was,
 They should be lying here, I standing there.
 But that beloved name unnerv'd my arm—
 That name, and something, I confess, in thee,
 Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield
 Fall; and thy spear transfix'd an unarm'd foe.

And now thou boastest, and insult'st my fate.
 But hear thou this, fierce Man, tremble to hear!
 The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death!
 My father, whom I seek through all the world,
 He shall avenge my death, and punish thee!

As when some hunter in the spring hath found
 A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,
 Upon the craggy isle of a hill lake,
 And pierc'd her with an arrow as she rose,
 And follow'd her to find her where she fell
 Far off;—anon her mate comes winging back
 From hunting, and a great way off descries
 His huddling young left sole; at that, he checks
 His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps
 Circles above his eyry, with loud screams
 Chiding his mate back to her nest; but she
 Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,
 In some far stony gorge out of his ken,
 A heap of fluttering feathers: never more
 Shall the lake glass her, flying over it;
 Never the black and dripping precipices
 Echo her stormy scream as she sails by:—
 As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss—
 So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood
 Over his dying son, and knew him not.

But with a cold, incredulous voice, he said:—
 'What prate is this of fathers and revenge?
 The mighty Rustum never had a son.'

And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied:—
 'Ah yes, he had! and that lost son am I
 Surely the news will one day reach his ear,
 Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,
 Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here;
 And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap
 To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee.
 Fierce Man, bethink thee, for an only son!
 What will that grief, what will that vengeance be!
 Oh, could I live, till I that grief had seen!
 Yet him I pity not so much, but her,

My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells
 With that old King, her father, who grows grey
 With age, and rules over the valiant Koords.
 Her most I pity, who no more will see
 Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,
 With spoils and honour, when the war is done.
 But a dark rumour will be bruited up,
 From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear;
 And then will that defenceless woman learn
 That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more;
 But that in battle with a nameless foe,
 By the far-distant Oxus, he is slain.'

He spoke; and as he ceas'd he wept aloud,
 Thinking of her he left, and his own death.
 He spoke; but Rustum listen'd, plung'd in thought.
 Nor did he yet believe it was his son
 Who spoke, although he call'd back names he knew;
 For he had had sure tidings that the babe,
 Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,
 Had been a puny girl, no boy at all:
 So that sad mother sent him word, for fear
 Rustum should take the boy, to train in arms;
 And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,
 By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son;
 Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.
 So deem'd he; yet he listen'd, plung'd in thought;
 And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide
 Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore
 At the full moon: tears gather'd in his eyes;
 For he remember'd his own early youth,
 And all its bounding rapture; as, at dawn,
 The Shepherd from his mountain lodge descries
 A far bright City, smitten by the sun,
 Through many rolling clouds;—so Rustum saw
 His youth; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom;
 And that old King, her father, who lov'd well
 His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child
 With joy; and all the pleasant life they led,
 They three, in that long-distant summer-time—

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt
And hound, and morn on those delightful hills
In Ader-baijan. And he saw that Youth,
Of age and looks to be his own dear son,
Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,
Like some rich hyacinth, which by the scythe
Of an unskilful gardener has been cut,
Mowing the garden grass-plots near its bed,
And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,
On the mown, dying grass;—so Sohrab lay,
Lovely in death, upon the common sand.
And Rustum gaz'd on him with grief, and said:—

'O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son
Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have lov'd!
Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men
Have told thee false;—thou art not Rustum's son.
For Rustum had no son: one child he had—
But one—a girl: who with her mother now
Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us—
Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war.³

But Sohrab answer'd him in wrath; for now
The anguish of the deep-fixed spear grew fierce,
And he desired to draw forth the steel,
And let the blood flow free, and so to die;
But first he would convince his stubborn foe—
And, rising sternly on one arm, he said:—

'Man, who art thou who dost deny my words?
Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,
And Falsehood, while I hVd, was far from mine.
I tell thee, prick'd upon this arm I bear
That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,
That she might prick it on the babe she bore.^J

He spoke: and all the blood left Rustum's cheeks;
And his knees totter'd, and he smote his hand
Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,
That the hard iron corslet clank'd aloud:
And to his heart he press'd the other hand,
And in a hollow voice he spake, and said:—

'Sohrab, that were a proof which could not lie.

If thou shew this, then art thou Rustum's son.'

Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loos'd
His belt, and near the shoulder bar'd his arm,
And shew'd a sign in faint vermilion points
Prick'd: as a cunning workman, in Pekin,
Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase,
An emperor's gift—at early morn he paints,
And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp
Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands:—
So delicately prick'd the sign appeared
On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's seal.
It was that Griffin, which of old rear'd Zal,
Rustum's great father, whom they left to die,
A helpless babe, among the mountain rocks.
Him that kind Creature found, and rear'd, and lov'd—
Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.

And Sohrab bar'd that figure on his arm,
And himself scann'd it long with mournful eyes,
And then he touch'd it with his hand and said:—

'How say'st thou? Is that sign the proper sign
Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's?'

He spoke: but Rustum gaz'd, and gaz'd, and stood
Speechless; and then he utter'd one sharp cry—
O Boy—thy Father!—and his voice chok'd there.

And then a dark cloud pass'd before his eyes,
And his head swam, and he sunk down to earth.
But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and cast
His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his lips,
And with fond faltering fingers strok'd his cheeks,
Trying to call him back to life: and life
Came back to Rustum, and he op'd his eyes,
And they stood wide with horror; and he seiz'd
In both his hands the dust which lay around,
And threw it on his head, and smirch'd his hair,
His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms:
And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast,
And his sobs chok'd him; and he clutch'd his sword,
To draw it, and for ever let life out.

But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hands,

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

And with a soothing voice he spoke, and said:—

'Father, forbear: for I but meet to-day
The doom that at my birth was written down
In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's unconscious hand.
Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,
When first I saw thee; and thy heart spoke too,
I know it: but Fate trod those promptings down
Under its iron heel; Fate, Fate engag'd
The strife, and hurl'd me on my father's spear.
But let us speak no more of this: I find
My father; let me feel that I have found.
Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take
My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,
And wash them with thy tears, and say, *My Son!*
Quick! quick! for number'd are my sands of life,
And swift; for like the lightning to this field
I came, and like the wind I go away—
Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind.
But it was writ in Heaven that this should be.'

So said he: and his voice releas'd the heart
Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth; he cast
His arms round his son's neck, and wept aloud,
And kiss'd him. And awe fell on both the hosts
When they saw Rustum's grief: and Ruksh, the horse,
With his head bowing to the ground, and mane
Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute woe
First to the one then to the other mov'd
His head, as if inquiring what their grief
Might mean; and from his dark, compassionate eyes,
The big warm tears roll'd down, and cak'd the sand.
But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said:—

'Ruksh, now thou grievest; but, O Ruksh, thy feet
Should then have rotted on thy nimble joints,
When first they bore thy Master to this field.'

But Sohrab look'd upon the horse and said:—
'Is this then Ruksh? How often, in past days,
My mother told me of thee, thou brave Steed!
My terrible father's terrible horse; and said,
That I should one day find thy lord and thee.

Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane.
 O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I;
 For thou hast gone where I shall never go,
 And snuff'd the breezes of my father's home.
 And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,
 And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake
 Of Zirrah; and the aged Zal himself
 Has often strok'd thy neck, and given thee food.
 Corn in a golden platter soak'd with wine,
 And said—"O Ruksh! bear Rustum well!"—but I
 Have never known my grandsire's furrow'd face,
 Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,
 Nor slak'd my thirst at the clear Helmund stream:
 But lodg'd among my father's foes, and seen
 Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand,
 Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,
 And the black Toorkmun tents; and only drunk
 The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,
 Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,
 The northern Sir; and this great Oxus stream—
 The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die.'

And, with a heavy groan, Rustum replied:—
 ('O that its waves were flowing over me!
 Oh that I saw its grains of yellow silt
 Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head!')

And, with a grave mild voice, Sohrab replied:—
 'Desire not that, my father; thou must live.
 For some are born to do great deeds, and live,
 As some are born to be obscur'd, and die.
 Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,
 And reap a second glory in thine age.
 Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.
 But come: thou seest this great host of men
 Which follow me; I pray thee, slay not these:
 Let me entreat for them: what have they done?
 They follow'd me, my hope, my fame, my star.
 Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
 But me thou must bear hence, not send with them,
 But carry me with thee to Seistan,

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

And place me on a bed, and mourn for me,
Thou, and the snow-hair'd Zal, and all thy friends.
And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above my bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all:
That so the passing horseman on the waste
May see my tomb a great way off, and say—
Sohrab, the mighty Rusturfs son, lies there,
Whom his greatfather did in ignorance kill—
And I be not forgotten in my grave.'

And with a mournful voice, Rustum replied:—
Tear not; as thou hast said, Sohrab my son,
So shall it be: for I will burn my tents,
And quit the host, and bear thee hence with me,
And carry thee away to Seistan,
And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee,
With the snow-headed Zal, and all my friends
And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above thy bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all:
And men shall not forget thee in thy grave.
And I will spare thy host: yea, let them go:
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
What should I do with slaying any more?
For would that all whom I have ever slain
Might be once more alive; my bitterest foes,
And they who were call'd champions in their time,
And through whose death I won that fame I have;
And I were nothing but a common man,
A poor, mean soldier, and without renown,
So thou mightest live too, my Son, my Son!
Or rather would that I, even I myself,
Might now be lying on this bloody sand,
Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,
Not thou of mine; and I might die, not thou;
And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan;
And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine;
And say—*O son, I weep thee not too sore,*
For willingly, I know, thou mefst thine end.—

But now in blood and battles was my youth,
 And full of blood and battles is my age;
 And I shall never end this life of blood.'

Then at the point of death, Sohrab replied:—
 'A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful Man!
 But thou shalt yet have peace; only not now:
 Not yet: but thou shalt have it on that day,
 When thou shalt sail in a high-masted Ship,
 Thou and the other peers of Kai-Khosroo,
 Returning home over the salt blue sea,
 From laying thy dear Master in his grave.'

And Rustum gaz'd on Sohrab's face, and said:—
 'Soon be that day, my Son, and deep that sea!
 Till then, if Fate so wills, let me endure.'

He spoke; and Sohrab smiPd on him, and took
 The spear, and drew it from his side, and eas'd
 His wound's imperious anguish: but the blood
 Came welling from the open gash, and life ,
 Flow'd with the stream: all down his cold white side
 The crimson torrent ran, dim now, and soil'd,
 Like the soil'd tissue of white violets
 Left, freshly gather'd, on their native bank,
 By romping children, whom their nurses call
 From the hot fields at noon: his head droop'd low,
 His limbs grew slack; motionless, white, he lay-
 White, with eyes closed; only when heavy gasps,
 Deep, heavy gasps, quivering through all his frame,
 Convuls'd him back to life, he open'd them,
 And fix'd them feebly on his father's face:
 Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from his limbs
 Unwillingly the spirit fled away,
 Regretting the warm mansion which it left,
 And youth and bloom, and this delightful world,

So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead.
 And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak
 Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son,
 As those black granite pillais, once high-rear'd
 By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear
 His house, now, mid their broken flights of steps,

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side—
So in the sand lay Rustrum by his son.

And night came down over the solemn waste,
And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,
And darken'd all; and a cold fog, with night,
Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,
As of a great assembly loos'd, and fires
Began to twinkle through the fog: for now
Both armies mov'd to camp, and took their meal:
The Persians took it on the open sands
Southward; the Tartars by the river marge:
And Rustum and his son were left alone.

But the majestic River floated on,
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
Into the frosty starlight, and there mov'd,
Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasmian waste,
Under the solitary moon: he flow'd
Right for the Polar Star, past Orgunje,
Brimming, and bright, and large: then sands begin
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,
And split his currents; that for many a league
The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles—
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had
In his high mountain cradle in Pamere,
A foiPd circuitous wanderer:—till at last
The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide
His luminous home of waters opens, bright
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bath'd stars
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

1853

MYGERINUS

'After Ghephren, Mycermus, son of Cheops, reigned over Egypt. He abhorred his father's courses, and judged his subjects more justly than any of their kings had done.—To him there came an oracle from the city of Buto, to the effect, that he was to live but six years longer, and to die in the seventh year from that time,' HERODOTUS, ii. 133.

'NOT by the justice that my father spurn'd,
 Not for the thousands whom my father slew,
 Altars unfed and temples overturn'd,
 Gold hearts and thankless tongues, where thanks were due;
 Fell this late voice from lips that cannot lie,
 Stern sentence of the Powers of Destiny.

I will unfold my sentence and my crime.
 My crime, that, rapt in reverential awe,
 I sate obedient, in the fiery prime
 Of youth, self-govern'd, at the feet of Law;
 Ennobling this dull pomp, the life of kings,
 By contemplation of diviner things.

My father lov'd injustice, and liv'd long;
 Crown'd with grey hairs he died, and full of sway.
 I lov'd the good he scorn'd, and hated wrong:
 The Gods declare my recompense to-day.
 I look'd for life more lasting, rule more high;
 And when six years are measur'd, lo, I die!

Yet surely, O my people, did I deem
 Man's justice from the all-just Gods was given:
 A light that from some upper fount did beam,
 Some better archetype, whose seat was heaven;
 A light that, shining from the blest abodes,
 Did shadow somewhat of the life of Gods.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Mere phantoms of man's self-tormenting heart,
Which on the sweets that woo it dares not feed:
Vain dreams, that quench our pleasures, then depart,
When the dup'd soul, self-master'd, claims its meed:
When, on the strenuous just man, Heaven bestows,
Crown of his struggling life, an unjust close.

Seems it so light a thing then, austere Powers,
To spurn man's common lure, life's pleasant things?
Seems there no joy in dances crown'd with flowers,
Love, free to range, and regal banquetings?
Bend ye on these, indeed, an unmov'd eye,
Not Gods but ghosts, in frozen apathy?

Or is it that some Power, too wise, too strong,
Even for yourselves to conquer or beguile,
Whirls earth, and heaven, and men, and gods along,
Like the broad rushing of the insurged Nile?
And the great powers we serve, themselves may be
Slaves of a tyrannous Necessity?

Or in mid-heaven, perhaps, your golden cars,
Where earthly voice climbs never, wing their flight,
And in wild hunt, through mazy tracts of stars,
Sweep in the sounding stillness of the night?
Or in deaf ease, on thrones of dazzling sheen,
Drinking deep draughts of joy, ye dwell serene?

Oh, wherefore cheat our youth, if thus it be,
Of one short joy, one lust, one pleasant dream?
Stringing vain words of powers we cannot see,
Blind divinations of a will supreme;
Lost labour: when the circumambient gloom
But hides, if Gods, Gods careless of our doom?

The rest I give to joy. Even while I speak
My sand runs short; and as yon star-shot ray,
Hemm'd by two banks of cloud, peers pale and weak,
Now, as the barrier closes, dies away;

Even so do past and future intertwine,
Blotting this six years' space, which yet is mine.

Six years—six little years—six drops of time—
Yet suns shall rise, and many moons shall wane,
And old men die, and young men pass their prime,
And languid Pleasure fade and flower again;
And the dull Gods behold, ere these are flown,
Revels more deep, joy keener than their own.

Into the silence of the groves and woods
I will go forth; but something would I say—
Something—yet what I know not: for the Gods
The doom they pass revoke not, nor delay;
And prayers, and gifts, and tears, are fruitless all,
And the night waxes, and the shadows fall.

Ye men of Egypt, ye have heard your king.
I go, and I return not. But the will
Of the great Gods is plain; and ye must bring
Ill deeds, ill passions, zealous to fulfil
Their pleasure, to their feet; and reap their praise,
The praise of Gods, rich boon! and length of days.'

—So spake he, half in anger, half in scorn;
And one loud cry of grief and of amaze
Broke from his sorrowing people: so he spake;
And turning, left them there; and with brief pause,
Girt with a throng of revellers, bent his way
To the cool region of the groves he lov'd.
There by the river banks he wander'd on,
From palm-grove on to palm-grove, happy trees,
Their smooth tops shining sunwards, and beneath
Burying their unsunn'd stems in grass and flowers:
Where in one dream the feverish time of Youth
Might fade in slumber, and the feet of Joy
Might wander all day long and never tire:
Here came the king, holding high feast, at morn,
Rose-crown'd; and ever, when the sun went down,

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

A hundred lamps beam'd in the tranquil gloom,
From tree to tree, all through the twinkling grove,
Revealing all the tumult of the feast,
Flush'd guests, and golden goblets, foam'd with wine;
While the deep-burnish'd foliage overhead
Splinter'd the silver arrows of the moon.

It may be that sometimes his wondering soul
From the loud joyful laughter of his lips
Might shrink half startled, like a guilty man
Who wrestles with his dream; as some pale Shape,
Gliding half hidden through the dusky stems,
Would thrust a hand before the lifted bowl,
Whispering, 'A little space, and thou art mine.'
It may be on that joyless feast his eye
Dwelt with mere outward seeming; he, within,
Took measure of his soul, and knew its strength,
And by that silent knowledge, day by day,
Was calm'd, ennobled, comforted, sustained.
It may be; but not less his brow was smooth,
And his clear laugh fled ringing through the gloom,
And his mirth quail'd not at the mild reproof
Sigh'd out by Winter's sad tranquillity;
Nor, palp'd with its own fullness, ebb'd and died
In the rich languor of long summer days;
Nor wither'd, when the palm-tree plumes that roof'd
With their mild dark his grassy banquet-hall,
Bent to the cold winds of the showerless Spring;
No, nor grew dark when Autumn brought the clouds.

So six long years he revell'd, night and day;
And when the mirth wax'd loudest, with dull sound
Sometimes from the grove's centre echoes came,
To tell his wondering people of their king;
In the still night, across the steaming flats,
Mix'd with the murmur of the moving Nile.

1849

THE STRAYED REVELLER

THE YOUTH

FASTER, faster,
O Circe, Goddess,
Let the wild, thronging train,
The bright procession
Of eddying forms,
Sweep through my soul!

Thou standest, smiling
Down on me; thy right arm,
Lean'd up against the column there,
Props thy soft cheek;
Thy left holds, hanging loosely,
The deep cup, ivy-cinctur'd,
I held but now.

Is it then evening
So soon? I see, the night dews,
Cluster'd in thick beads, dim
The agate brooch-stones
On thy white shoulder.
The cool night-wind, too,
Blows through the portico,
Stirs thy hair, Goddess,
Waves thy white robe.

CIRCE

Whence art thou, sleeper?

THE YOUTH

When the white dawn first
Through the rough fir-planks
Of my hut, by the chestnuts,
Up at the valley-head,

Came breaking, Goddess,
I sprang up, I threw round me
My dappled fawn-skin:
Passing out, from the wet turf,
Where they lay, by the hut door,
I snatch'd up my vine-crown, my fir-staff,
All drench'd in dew:
Came swift down to join
The rout early gather'd
In the town, round the temple,
Iacchus' white fane
On yonder hill.

Quick I pass'd, following
The wood-cutters' cart-track
Down the dark valley;—I saw
On my left, through the beeches,
Thy palace, Goddess,
Smokeless, empty:
Trembling, I enter'd; beheld
The court all silent,
The lions sleeping;
On the altar, this bowl.
I drank, Goddess—
And sunk down here, sleeping,
On the steps of thy portico.

CIRCE

Foolish boy! Why tremblest thou?
Thou lovest it, then, my wine?
Wouldst more of it? See, how glows,
Through the delicate flush'd marble,
The red creaming liquor,
Strown with dark seeds!
Drink, then! I chide thee not,
Deny thee not my bowl.
Come, stretch forth thy hand, then—so,—
Drink, drink again!

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

THE YOUTH

Thanks, gracious One!
Ah, the sweet fumes again!
More soft, ah me!
More subtle-winding
Than Pan's flute-music.
Faint—faint! Ah me!
Again the sweet sleep.

CIRCE

Hist! Thou—within there!
Come forth, Ulysses!
Art tired with hunting?
While we range the woodland,
See what the day brings.

ULYSSES

Ever new magic!
Hast thou then lur'd hither,
Wonderful Goddess, by thy art,
The young, languid-ey'd Ampelus,
Iacchus' darling—
Or some youth belov'd of Pan,
Of Pan and the Nymphs?
That he sits, bending downward
His white, delicate neck
To the ivy-wreath'd marge
Of thy cup:—the bright, glancing vine-leaves
That crown his hair,
Falling forwards, mingling
With the dark ivy-plants,
His fawn-skin, half untied,
Smear'd with red wine-stains? Who is he,
That he sits, overweigh'd
By fumes of wine and sleep,
So late, in thy portico?
What youth, Goddess,—what guest
Of Gods or mortals?

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

GIRCE

Hist! he wakes!

I lur'd him not hither, Ulysses.

Nay, ask him!

THE YOUTH

Who speaks? Ah! Who comes forth

To thy side, Goddess, from within?

How shall I name him?

This spare, dark-featur'd,

Quick-ey'd stranger?

Ah! and I see too

His sailor's bonnet,

His short coat, travel-tarnish'd,

With one arm bare.—

Art thou not he, whom fame

This long time rumours

The favour'd guest of Circe, brought by the waves?

Art thou he, stranger?

The wise Ulysses,

Laertes' son?

ULYSSES

I am Ulysses.

And thou, too, sleeper?

Thy voice is sweet.

It may be thou hast follow'd

Through the islands some divine bard,

By age taught many things,

Age and the Muses;

And heard him delighting

The chiefs and people

In the banquet, and learn'd his songs,

Of Gods and Heroes,

Of war and arts,

And peopled cities

Inland, or built

By the grey sea.—If so, then hail!

I honour and welcome thee.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

THE YOUTH

The Gods are happy.
They turn on all sides
Their shining eyes:
And see, below them,
The Earth, and men.

They see Tiresias
Sitting, staff in hand,
On the warm, grassy
Asopus' bank:
His robe drawn over
His old, sightless head:
Revolving inly
The doom of Thebes.

They see the Centaurs
In the upper glens
Of Pelion, in the streams,
Where red-berried ashes fringe
The clear-brown shallow pools;
With streaming flanks, and heads
Rear'd proudly, snuffing
The mountain wind.

They see the Indian
Drifting, knife in hand,
His frail boat moor'd to
A floating isle thick matted
With large-leav'd, low-creeping melon-plants,
And the dark cucumber.
He reaps, and stows them,
Drifting—drifting:—round him,
Round his green harvest-plot,
Flow the cool lake-waves:
The mountains ring them.

They see the Scythian
On the wide Stepp, unharnessing

His wheel'd house at noon.
He tethers his beast down, and makes his meal,
Mares' milk, and bread
Bak'd on the embers:—all around
The boundless waving grass-plains stretch, thick-starr'd
With saffron and the yellow hollyhock
And flag-leav'd iris flowers.
Sitting in his cart
He makes his meal: before him, for long miles,
Alive with bright green lizards,
And the springing bustard fowl,
The track, a straight black line,
Furrows the rich soil: here and there
Clusters of lonely mounds
Topp'd with rough-hewn,
Grey, rain-blear'd statues, overpeer
The sunny Waste.

They see the Ferry
On the broad, clay-laden
Lone Chorasmian stream: thereon
With snort and strain,
Two horses, strongly swimming, tow
The ferry-boat, with woven ropes
To either bow
Firm-harness'd by the mane:—a Chief,
With shout and shaken spear
Stands at the prow, and guides them: but astern,
The cowering Merchants, in long robes,

Sit pale beside their wealth
Of silk-bales and of balsam-drops,
Of gold and ivory,
Of turquoise-earth and amethyst,
Jasper and chalcedony,
And milk-barr'd onyx stones.
The loaded boat swings groaning
In the yellow eddies.
The Gods behold them.

They see the Heroes
 Sitting in the dark ship
 On the foamless, long-heaving,
 Violet sea:
 At sunset nearing
 The Happy Islands.

These things, Ulysses,
 The wise Bards also
 Behold and sing.
 But oh, what labour!
 O Prince, what pain!

They too can see
 Tiresias:—but the Gods,
 Who give them vision,
 Added this law:
 That they should bear too
 His groping blindness,
 His dark foreboding,
 His scorn'd white hairs;
 Bear Hera's anger
 Through a life lengthened
 To seven ages.

They see the Centaurs
 On Pelion:—then they feel,
 They too, the maddening wine
 Swell their large veins to bursting: in wild pain
 They feel the biting spears
 Of the grim Lapithae, and Theseus, drive,
 Drive crashing through their bones: they feel
 High on a jutting rock in the red stream
 Alcmena's dreadful son'
 Ply his bow:—such a price
 The Gods exact for song;
 To become what we sing.

* Hercules.

They see the Indian
On his mountain lake:—but squalls
Make their skiff reel, and worms
In the unkind spring have gnaw'd
Their melon-harvest to the heart: They see
The Scythian:—but long frosts
Parch them in winter-time on the bare Stepp,
Till they too fade like grass: they crawl
Like shadows forth in spring.

They see the Merchants
On the Oxus' stream:—but care
Must visit first them too, and make them pale.
Whether, through whirling sand,
A cloud of desert robber-horse has burst
Upon their caravan: or greedy kings,
In the wall'd cities the way passes through,
Crush'd them with tolls: or fever-air,
On some great river's marge,
Mown them down, far from home.

They see the Heroes
Near harbour:—but they share
Their lives, and former violent toil, in Thebes,
Seven-gated Thebes, or Troy:
Or where the echoing oars
Of Argo, first,
Startled the unknown Sea.

The old Silenus
Came, lolling in the sunshine,
From the dewy forest coverts,
This way, at noon.
Sitting by me, while his Fauns
Down at the water side
Sprinkled and smooth'd
His drooping garland,
He told me these things.

But I, Ulysses,
 Sitting on the warm steps,
 Looking over the valley,
 AH day long, have seen,
 Without pain, without labour,
 Sometimes a wild-hair'd Maenad;
 Sometimes a Faun with torches;
 And sometimes, for a moment,
 Passing through the dark stems
 Flowing-rob'd—the belov'd,
 The desir'd, the divine,
 Belov'd Iacchus.

Ah cool night-wind, tremulous stars!
 Ah glimmering water—
 Fitful earth-murmur—
 Dreaming woods!
 Ah golden-hair'd, strangely-smiling Goddess,
 And thou, prov'd, much enduring,
 Wave-toss'd Wanderer!
 Who can stand still?
 Ye fade, ye swim, ye waver before me.
 The cup again!

Faster, faster,
 O Circe, Goddess,
 Let the wild thronging train,
 The bright procession
 Of eddyng forms,
 Sweep through my soul!

THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

COME, dear children, let us away;
Down and away below.
Now my brothers call from the bay;
Now the great winds shorewards blow;
Now the salt tides seawards flow;
Now the wild white horses play,
Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.
Children dear, let us away.
This way, this way.

Call her once before you go.
Call once yet.
In a voice that she will know:
'Margaret! Margaret!'
Children's voices should be dear
(Call once more) to a mother's ear:
Children's voices, wild with pain.
Surely she will come again.
Call her once and come away.
This way, this way.
'Mother dear, we cannot stay.'
The wild white horses foam and fret.
Margaret! Margaret!

Come, dear children, come away down.
Call no more.
One last look at the white-wall'd town,
And the little grey church on the windy shore.
Then come down.
She will not come though you call all day.
Come away, come away.

Children dear, was it yesterday
We heard the sweet bells over the bay?
In the caverns where we lay,

Through the surf and through the swell,
 The far-off sound of a silver bell?
 Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,
 Where the winds are all asleep;
 Where the spent lights quiver and gleam;
 Where the salt weed sways in the stream;
 Where the sea-beasts rang'd all round
 Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground;
 Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,
 Dry their mail and bask in the brine;
 Where great whales come sailing by,
 Sail and sail, with unshut eye,
 Round the world for ever and aye?
 When did music come this way?
 Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, was it yesterday
 (Call yet once) that she went away?
 Once she sate with you and me,
 On a red gold throne in the heart of the sea,
 And the youngest sate on her knee.
 She comb'd its bright hair, and she tended it well,
 When down swung the sound of the far-off bell.
 She sigh'd, she look'd up through the clear green sea.
 She said; 'I must go, for my kinsfolk pray
 In the little grey church on the shore to-day.
 'Twill be Easter-time in the world—ah me!
 And I lose my poor soul, Merman, here with thee.'
 I said; 'Go up, dear heart, through the waves;
 Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind sea-caves.'
 She smil'd, she went up through the surf in the bay.
 Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, were we long alone?
 'The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.
 Long prayers,' I said, 'in the world they say.
 Come,' I said, and we rose through the surf in the bay.
 We went up the beach, by the sandy down
 Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-wall'd town.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Through the narrow pav'd streets, where all was still,
To the little grey church on the windy hill.
From the church came a murmur of folk at their prayers,
But we stood without in the cold blowing airs.
We climb'd on the graves, on the stones, worn with rains,
And we gaz'd up the aisle through the small leaded panes.
She sate by the pillar; we saw her clear:
'Margaret, hist! come quick, we are here.
Dear heart,' I said, 'we are long alone.
The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.'
But, ah, she gave me never a look,
For her eyes were seal'd to the holy book.
Loud prays the priest; shut stands the door.
Come away, children, call no more.
Come away, come down, call no more.

Down, down, down.
Down to the depths of the sea.
She sits at her wheel hi the humming town,
Singing most joyfully.
Hark, what she sings; 'O joy, O joy,
For the humming street, and the child with its toy.
For the priest, and the bell, and the holy well.
For the wheel where I spun,
And the blessed light of the sun.'
And so she sings her fill,
Singing most joyfully,
Till the shuttle falls from her hand,
And the whizzing wheel stands still.
She steals to the window, and looks at the sand;
And over the sand at the sea;
And her eyes are set in a stare;
And anon there breaks a sigh,
And anon there drops a tear,
From a sorrow-clouded eye,
And a heart sorrow-laden,
A long, long sigh,
For the cold strange eyes of a little Mermaiden,
And the gleam of her golden hair.

Come away, away children.
 Come children, come down.
 The hoarse wind blows colder;
 Lights shine in the town.
 She will start from her slumber
 When gusts shake the door:
 She will hear the winds howling,
 Will hear the waves roar.
 We shall see, while above us
 The waves roar and whirl,
 A ceiling of amber,
 A pavement of pearl.
 Singing, 'Here came a mortal,
 But faithless was she.
 And alone dwell for ever
 The kings of the sea.'

But, children, at midnight,
 When soft the winds blow;
 When clear falls the moonlight;
 When spring-tides are low:
 When sweet airs come seaward
 From heaths starr'd with broom;
 And high rocks throw mildly
 Of the blanch'd sands a gloom:
 Up the still, glistening beaches,
 Up the creeks we will hie;
 Over banks of bright seaweed
 The ebb-tide leaves dry.
 We will gaze, from the sand-hills,
 At the white, sleeping town;
 At the church on the hill-side—
 And then come back down.
 Singing, 'There dwells a lov'd one,
 But cruel is she.
 She left lonely for ever
 The kings of the sea.'

1849

THE NECKAN

IN summer, on the headlands,
The Baltic Sea along,
Sits Neckan with his harp of gold,
And sings his plaintive song.

Green rolls beneath the headlands,
Green rolls the Baltic Sea.
And there, below the Neckan's feet,
His wife and children be.

He sings not of the ocean,
Its shells and roses pale.
Of earth, of earth the Neckan sings;
He hath no other tale.

He sits upon the headlands,
And sings a mournful stave
Of all he saw and felt on earth,
Far from the green sea wave.

Sings how, a knight, he wander'd
By castle, field, and town.—
But earthly knights have harder hearts
Than the Sea Children own.

Sings of his earthly bridal—
Priest, knights, and ladies gay.
'And who art thou,' the priest began,
'Sir Knight, who wedd'st to-day?'—

'I am no knight,' he answer'd;
'From the sea waves I come.'—
The knights drew sword, the ladies scream'd,
The surplic'd priest stood dumb.

He sings how from the chapel
 He vanished with his bride,
 And bore her down to the sea halls,
 Beneath the cold sea tide.

He sings how she sits weeping
 'Mid shells that round her lie.
 'False Neckan shares my bed,' she weeps;
 'No Christian mate have I.'—

He sings how through the billows
 He rose to earth again,
 And sought a priest to sign the cross,
 That Neckan Heaven might gam.

He sings how, on an evening,
 Beneath the birch trees cool,
 He sate and play'd his harp of gold,
 Beside the river pool.

Beside the pool sate Neckan—
 Tears filPd his cold blue eye.
 On his white mule, across the bridge,
 A cassock'd priest rode by.

'Why sitt'st thou there, O Neckan,
 And play'st thy harp of gold?
 Sooner shall this my staff bear leaves,
 Than thou shalt Heaven behold.'—

The cassock'd priest rode onwards,
 And vanish'd with his mule.
 And Neckan in the twilight grey
 Wept by the river pool.

In summer, on the headlands,
 The Baltic Sea along,
 Sits Neckan with his harp of gold,
 And sings this plaintive song.

SAINT BRANDAN

SAINT BRANDAN sails the northern main;
The brotherhoods of saints are glad.
He greets them once, he sails again.
So late!—such storms!—The Saint is mad!

He heard across the howling seas
Chime convent bells on wintry nights,
He saw on spray-swept Hebrides
Twinkle the monastery lights;

But north, still north, Saint Brandan steer'd;
And now no bells, no convents more!
The hurtling Polar lights are near'd,
The sea without a human shore.

At last—(it was the Christmas night,
Stars shone after a day of storm)—
He sees float past an iceberg white,
And on it—Christ!—*a living form!*

That furtive mien, that scowling eye,
Of hair that red and tufted fell—
It is—Oh, where shall Brandan fly?—
The traitor Judas, out of hell!

Palsied with terror, Brandan sate;
The moon was bright, the iceberg near.
He hears a voice sigh humbly: 'Wait!
By high permission I am here.

'One moment wait, thou holy man!
On earth my crime, my death, they knew;
My name is under all men's ban;
Ah, tell them of my respite too!

Tell them, one blessed Christmas night—
 (It was the first after I came,
 Breathing self-murder, frenzy, spite,
 To rue my guilt in endless flame)—

'I felt, as I hi torment lay
 'Mid the souls plagued by heavenly power,
 An angel touch mine arm, and say:
Go hence, and cool thyself an hour!

' "Ah, whence this mercy, Lord?" I said.
*The Leper recollect, said he,
 Who ask'd the passers-by for aid,
 In Joppa, and thy charity.*

'Then I remember'd how I went,
 In Joppa, through the public street,
 One morn, when the sirocco spent
 Its storms of dust, with burning heat;

'And in the street a Leper sate,
 Shivering with fever, naked, old;
 Sand raked his sores from heel to pate,
 The hot wind fever'd him five-fold.

'He gazed upon me as I pass'd,
 And murmur'd: *Help me, or I die!*—
 To the poor wretch my cloak I cast,
 Saw him look eased, and hurried by.

'Oh, Brandan, think what grace divine,
 What blessing must true goodness shower,
 If semblance of it faint, like mine,
 Hath such inestimable power!

'Well-fed, well-clothed, well-friended, I
 Did that chance act of good, that one!
 Then went my way to kill and lie—
 Forgot my good as soon as done.

'That germ of kindness, in the womb
Of mercy caught, did not expire;
Outlives my guilt, outlives my doom,
And friends me in the pit of fire.

'Once every year, when carols wake,
On earth, the Christmas night's repose,
Arising from the sinners' lake,
I journey to these healing snows.

'I stanch with ice my burning breast,
With silence balm my whirling brain.
O Brandan! to this hour of rest,
That Joppa leper's ease was pain!'——

Tears started to Saint Brandan's eyes;
He bow'd his head; he breathed a prayer.
When he look'd up—tenantless lies
The iceberg in the frosty air!

1860

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

In the court of his uncle King Marc, the king of Cornwall, who at this time resided at the castle of Tyntagel, Tristram became expert in all knightly exercises —The king of Ireland, at Tristram's solicitations, promised to bestow his daughter Iseult in marriage on King Marc. The mother of Iseult gave to her daughter's confidante a philtre, or love-potion, to be administered on the night of her nuptials. Of this beverage Tristram and Iseult, on their voyage to Cornwall, unfortunately partook. Its influence, during the remainder of their lives, regulated the affections and destiny of the lovers.—

'After the arrival of Tristram and Iseult in Cornwall, and the nuptials of the latter with King Marc, a great part of the romance is occupied with their contrivances to procure secret interviews.—Tristram, being forced to leave Cornwall on account of the displeasure of his uncle, repaired to Brittany, where lived Iseult with the White Hands.—He married her—more out of gratitude than love.—Afterwards he proceeded

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

to the dominions of Arthur, which became the theatre of unnumbered exploits.

Tristram, subsequent to these events, returned to Brittany, and to his long-neglected wife. There, being wounded and sick, he was soon reduced to the lowest ebb. In this situation, he dispatched a confidant to the queen of Cornwall, to try if he could induce her to accompany him to Brittany, &c.—DUNLOP'S *History of Futton*.

I

TRISTRAM

TRISTRAM

Is she not come? The messenger was sure.
Prop me upon the pillows once again—
Raise me, my Page: this cannot long endure.
Christ! what a night! how the sleet whips the pane!
What lights will those out to the northward be?

THE PAGE

The lanterns of the fishing-boats at sea.

TRISTRAM

Soft—who is that stands by the dying fire?

THE PAGE

Iseult.

TRISTRAM

Ah! not the Iseult I desire.

• • • • •

What Knight is this so weak and pale,
Though the locks are yet brown on his noble head,
Propt on pillows in his bed,
Gazing seawards for the light
Of some ship that fights the gale
On this wild December night?

Over the sick man's feet is spread
A dark green forest dress.
A gold harp leans against the bed,
Ruddy in the fire's light.

I know him by his harp of gold,
Famous in Arthur's court of old:
I know him by his forest dress.

The peerless hunter, harper, knight—
Tristram of Lyonesse.

What Lady is this, whose silk attire
Gleams so rich in the light of the fire?
The ringlets on her shoulders lying
In their flitting lustre vying
With the clasp of burnish'd gold
Which her heavy robe doth hold.
Her looks are mild, her fingers slight
As the driven snow are white;
And her cheeks are sunk and pale.

Is it that the bleak sea-gale
Beating from the Atlantic sea
On this coast of Brittany,
Nips too keenly the sweet Flower?—

Is it that a deep fatigue
Hath come on her, a chilly fear,
Passing all her youthful hour
Spinning with her maidens here,
Listlessly through the window bars
Gazing seawards many a league
From her lonely shore-built tower,
While the knights are at the wars?

Or, perhaps, has her young heart
Felt already some deeper smart,
Of those that in secret the heart-strings rive,
Leaving her sunk and pale, though fair?—

Who is this snowdrop by the sea?
I know her by her mildness rare,
Her snow-white hands, her golden hair;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

I know her by her rich silk dress,
And her fragile loveliness.
The sweetest Christian soul alive,
Iseult of Brittany.

Iseult of Brittany?—but where
Is that other Iseult fair,
That proud, first Iseult, Cornwall's queen?
She, whom Tristram's ship of yore
From Ireland to Cornwall bore,
To Tyntagel, to the side
Of King Marc, to be his bride?
She who, as they voyag'd, quaff'd
With Tristram that spic'd magic draught,
Which since then for ever rolls
Through their blood, and binds their souls,
Working love, but working teen?—
There were two Iseults, who did sway
Each her hour of Tristram's day;
But one possess'd his waning time,
The other his resplendent prime.

Behold her here, the patient Flower,
Who possess'd his darker hour.
Iseult of the Snow-White Hand
Watches pale by Tristram's bed.—
She is here who had his gloom,
Where art thou who hadst his bloom?
One such kiss as those of yore
Might thy dying knight restore—
Does the love-draught work no more?
Art thou cold, or false, or dead,
Iseult of Ireland?

Loud howls the wind, sharp patters the rain,
And the knight sinks back on his pillows again:
He is weak with fever and pain,
And his spirit is not clear.
Hark! he mutters in his sleep,

As he wanders far from here,
Changes place and time of year,
And his closed eye doth sweep
O'er some fair unwint'ry sea.
Not this fierce Atlantic deep,
As he mutters brokenly—

TRISTRAM

The calm sea shines, loose hang the vessel's sails—
Before us are the sweet green fields of Wales,
And overhead the cloudless sky of May.—
*'Ah, would I were in those green fields at play,
Not pent on ship-board this delicious day.
Tristram^ I pray thee, of thy courtesy.
Reach me my golden cup that stands by thee.
And pledge me in it first for courtesy.—'*
Ha! dost thou start? are thy lips blanch'd like mine?
Child, 'tis no water this, 'tis poison'd wine!
Iseult! . . .

.

Ah, sweet angels, let him dream!
Keep his eyelids! let him seem
Not this fever-wasted wight
Thinn'd and pal'd before his time,
But the brilliant youthful knight
In the glory of his prime,
Sitting in the gilded barge,
At thy side, thou lovely charge!
Bending gaily o'er thy hand,
Iseult of Ireland!
And she too, that princess fair,
If her bloom be now less rare,
Let her have her youth again—
Let her be as she was then!
Let her have her proud dark eyes,
And her petulant quick replies,
Let her sweep her dazzling hand
With its gesture of command,

And shake back her raven hair
 With the old imperious air.
 As of old, so let her be,
 That first Iseult, princess bright,
 Chatting with her youthful knight
 As he steers her o'er the sea,
 Quitting at her father's will
 The green isle where she was bred,
 And her bower in Ireland,
 For the surge-beat Cornish strand,
 Where the prince whom she must wed
 Dwells on proud Tyntagel's hill,
 Fast beside the sounding sea.
 And that golden cup her mother
 Gave her, that her future lord
 Gave her, that King Marc and she,
 Might drink it on their marriage day,
 And for ever love each other,
 Let her, as she sits on board,
 Ah, sweet saints, unwittingly,
 See it shine, and take it up,
 And to Tristram laughing say—
 'Sir Tristram, of thy courtesy,
 Pledge me in my golden cup!
 Let them drink it—let their hands
 Tremble, and their cheeks be flame,
 As they feel the fatal bands
 Of a love they dare not name,
 With a wild delicious pain,
 Twine about their hearts again.
 Let the early summer be
 Once more round them, and the sea
 Blue, and o'er its mirror kind
 Let the breath of the May wind,
 Wandering though their drooping sails,
 Die on the green fields of Wales.
 Let a dream like this restore
 What his eye must see no more.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

TRISTRAM

Chill blows the wind, the pleasaunce walks are drear.
Madcap, what jest was this, to meet me here?
Were feet like those made for so wild a way?
The southern winter-parlour, by my fay,
Had been the likeliest trysting-place to-day.—
' *Tristram I—nay, nay—thou must not take my hand—
Tristram—sweet love—we are betray'd—out-planned.
Fly—save thyself—save me. I dare not stay.*'—
One last kiss first!—' *'Tis vain—to horse—away I'*

.

Ah, sweet saints, his dream doth move
Faster surely than it should,
From the fever in his blood.
All the spring-time of his love
Is already gone and past,
And instead thereof is seen
Its winter, which endureth still—
Tyntagel on its surge-beat hill,
The pleasaunce walks, the weeping queen,
The flying leaves, the straining blast,
And that long, wild kiss—their last.
And this rough December night
And his burning fever pain
Mingle with his hurrying dream
Till they rule it, till he seem
The press^d fugitive again,
The love-desperate banish'd knight
With a fire in his brain
Flying o'er the stormy main.

Whither does he wander now?
Haply in his dreams the wind
Wafts him here, and lets him find
The lovely Orphan Child again
In her castle by the coast,
The youngest, fairest chatelaine,
That this realm of France can boast,

Our Snowdrop by the Atlantic sea,
 Iseult of Brittany.
 And—for through the haggard air,
 The stain'd arms, the matted hair
 Of that stranger-knight ill-starr'd,
 There gleam'd something that recalPd
 The Tristram who in better days
 Was Launcelot's guest at Joyous Card—
 Welcom'd here, and here instalFd,
 Tended of his fever here,
 Haply he seems again to move
 His young guardian's heart with love;
 In his exil'd loneliness,
 In his stately deep distress,
 Without a word, without a tear.—
 Ah, 'tis well he should retrace
 His tranquil life in this lone place;
 His gentle bearing at the side
 Of his timid youthful bride;
 His long rambles by the shore
 On winter evenings, when the roar
 Of the near waves came, sadly grand,
 Through the dark, up the drown'd sand:
 Or his endless reveries
 In the woods, where the gleams play
 On the grass under the trees,
 Passing the long summer's day
 Idle as a mossy stone
 In the forest depths alone;
 The chase neglected, and his hound
 Crouch'd beside him on the ground.—
 Ah, what trouble's on his brow?
 Hither let him wander now,
 Hither, to the quiet hours
 Pass'd among these heaths of ours
 By the grey Atlantic sea.
 Hours, if not of ecstasy,
 From violent anguish surely free.

TRISTRAM

All red with blood the whirling river flows,
 The wide plain rings, the daz'd air throbs with blows.
 Upon us are the chivalry of Rome—
 Their spears are down, their steeds are bath'd in foam.
 'Up, Tristram, up,' men cry, 'thou moonstruck knight!
 What foul fiend rides thee? On into the fight!'—
 Above the din her voice is in my ears—
 I see her form glide through the crossing spears.—
 Iseult! . . .

.

Ah, he wanders forth again;
 We cannot keep him; now as then
 There's a secret in his breast
 That will never let him rest.
 These musing fits in the green wood
 They cloud the brain, they dull the blood.
 His sword is sharp—his horse is good—
 Beyond the mountains will he see
 The famous towns of Italy,
 And label with the blessed sign
 The heathen Saxons on the Rhine.
 At Arthur's side he fights once more
 With" the Roman'Emperor.
 There 's many a gay knight where he goes
 Will help him to forget his care.
 The march—the leaguer—Heaven's blithe air—
 The neighing steeds—the ringing blows;
 Sick pining comes not where these are.
 Ah, what boots it, that the jest
 Lightens every other brow,
 What, that every other breast
 Dances as the trumpets blow,
 If one's own heart beats not light
 On the waves of the toss'd fight,
 If oneself cannot get free
 From the clog of misery?

Thy lovely youthful Wife grows pale
 Watching by the salt sea tide
 With her children at her side
 For the gleam of thy white sail.
 Home, Tristram, to thy halls again!
 To our lonely sea complain,
 To our forests tell thy pain.

TRISTRAM

All round the forest sweeps off, black in shade,
 But it is moonlight in the open glade:
 And in the bottom of the glade shine clear
 The forest chapel and the fountain near.

I think, I have a fever in my blood:
 Come, let me leave the shadow of this wood,
 Ride down, and bathe my hot brow in the flood.

Mild shines the cold spring in the moon's clear light.
 God! 'tis *her* face plays in the waters bright.—
 'Fair love,' she says, 'canst thou forget so soon,
 At this soft hour, under this sweet moon?'—
 Iseult! . . .

.

Ah poor soul, if this be so,
 Only death can balm thy woe.
 The solitudes of the green wood
 Had no medicine for thy mood.
 The rushing battle clear'd thy blood
 As little as did solitude.
 Ah, his eyelids slowly break
 Their hot seals, and let him wake.
 What new change shall we now see?
 A happier? Worse it cannot be.

TRISTRAM

Is my Page here? Come, turn me to the fire.
 Upon the window panes the moon shines bright;
 The wind is down: but she'll not come to-night.

Ah no—she is asleep in Cornwall now,
 Far hence—her dreams are fair—smooth is her brow.
 Of me she recks not, nor my vain desire.

I have had dreams, I have had dreams, my Page,
 Would take a score years from a strong man's age;
 And with a blood like mine, will leave, I fear,
 Scant leisure for a second messenger.

My Princess, art thou there? Sweet, 'tis too late.
 To bed, and sleep: my fever is gone by:
 To-night my Page shall keep me company.
 Where do the children sleep? kiss them for me.
 Poor child, thou art almost as pale as I:
 This comes of nursing long and watching late.
 To bed—good night!

.

She left the gleam-lit fire-place,
 She came to the bed-side.
 She took his hands in hers: her tears
 Down on her slender fingers rain'd.
 She rais'd her eyes upon his face—
 Not with a look of wounded pride,
 A look as if the heart complain'd:—
 Her look was like a sad embrace;
 The gaze of one who can divine
 A grief, and sympathize.
 Sweet Flower, thy children's eyes
 Are not more innocent than thine.
 But they sleep in shelter'd rest,
 Like helpless birds in the warm nest,
 On the Castle's southern side;
 Where feebly comes the mournful roar
 Of buffeting wind and surging tide
 Through many a room and corridor.
 Full on their window the Moon's ray
 Makes their chamber as bright as day;
 It shines upon the blank white walls,
 And on the snowy pillow falls,
 And on two angel-heads doth play

Turn'd to each other:—the eyes clos'd—

The lashes on the cheeks repos'd.

Round each sweet brow the cap close-set

Hardly lets peep the golden hair;

Through the soft-open'd lips the air

Scarcely moves the coverlet.

One little wandering arm is thrown

At random on the counterpane,

And often the fingers close in haste

As if their baby owner chas'd

The butterflies again.

This stir they have and this alone;

But else they are so still.

Ah, tired madcaps, you lie still.

But were you at the window now

To look forth on the fairy sight

Of your illumin'd haunts by night;

To see the park-glades where you play

Far lovelier than they are by day;

To see the sparkle on the eaves,

And upon every giant bough

Of those old oaks, whose wet red leaves

Are jewell'd with bright drops of rain—

How would your voices run again!

And far beyond the sparkling trees

Of the castle park one sees

The bare heaths spreading, clear as day,

Moor behind moor, far, far away,

Into the heart of Brittany.

And here and there, lock'd by the land,

Long inlets of smooth glittering sea,

And many a stretch of watery sand

All shining in the white moon-beams.

But you see fairer in your dreams.

What voices are these on the clear night air?

What lights in the court? what steps on the stair?

II

ISEULT OF IRELAND

TRISTRAM

RAISE the light, my Page, that I may see her.—
Thou art come at last then, haughty Queen!
Long I've waited, long I've fought my fever:
Late thou comest, cruel thou hast been.

ISEULT

Blame me not, poor sufferer, that I tarried:
I was bound, I could not break the band.
Chide not with the past, but feel the present:
I am here—we meet—I hold thy hand.

TRISTRAM

Thou art come, **indeed**—thou hast rejoin'd me;
Thou hast dar'd it: but too late to save.
Fear not now that men should tax thy honour.
I am dying: **build**—(thou may'st)—my grave!

ISEULT

Tristram, for the love of Heaven, speak kindly!
What, I hear these bitter words from thee?
Sick with grief I am, and faint with travel—
Take my hand—dear Tristram, look on me!

TRISTRAM

I forgot, thou comest from thy voyage.
Yes, the spray is on thy cloak and hair.
But thy dark eyes are not dimm'd, proud Iseult!
And thy beauty never was more fair.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

ISEULT

Ah, harsh flatterer! let alone my beauty.
I, like thee, have left my youth afar.
Take my hand, and touch these wasted fingers—
See my cheek and lips, how white they are.

TRISTRAM

Thou art paler:—but thy sweet charm, Iseult!
Would not fade with the dull years away.
Ah, how fair thou standest in the moonlight!
I forgive thee, Iseult!—thou wilt stay?

ISEULT

Fear me not, I will be always with thee;
I will watch thee, tend thee, soothe thy pain;
Sing thee tales of true long-parted lovers
Join'd at evening of their days again.

TRISTRAM

No, thou shalt not speak; I should be finding
Something alter'd in thy courtly tone.
Sit—sit by me: I will think, we've liv'd so
In the greenwood, all our lives, alone.

ISEULT

Altered, Tristram? Not in courts, believe me,
Love like mine is alter'd in the breast.
Courtly life is light and cannot reach it.
Ah, it lives, because so deep suppress'd,

Royal state with Marc, my deep-wrong'd husband—
That was bliss to make my sorrows flee!
Silken courtiers whispering honied nothings—
Those were friends to make me false to thee!

What, thou think'st, men speak in courtly chambers
Words by which the wretched are consol'd?
What, thou think'st, this aching brow was cooler,
Circled, Tristram, by a band of gold?

Ah, on which, if both our lots were balanc'd,
Was indeed the heaviest burden thrown,
Thee, a weeping exile in thy forest—
Me, a smiling queen upon my throne?

Vain and strange debate, where both have suffer'd;
Both have pass'd a youth constraint and sad;
Both have brought their anxious day to evening,
And have now short space for being glad.

Join'd we are henceforth: nor will thy people,
Nor thy younger Iseult take it ill,
That a former rival shares her office,
When she sees her humbled, pale, and still.

I, a faded watcher by thy pillow,
I, a statue on thy chapel floor,
Pour'd in grief before the Virgin Mother,
Rouse no anger, make no rivals more.

She will cry—'Is this the foe I dreaded?
This his idol? this that royal bride?
Ah, an hour of health would purge his eyesight:
Stay, pale queen! for ever by my side.'

Hush, no words! that smile, I see, forgives me.
I am now thy nurse, I bid thee sleep.
Close thine eyes—this flooding moonlight blinds them—
Nay, all's well again: thou must not weep.

TRISTRAM

I am happy: yet I feel, there's something
Swells my heart, and takes my breath away:
Through a mist I see thee: near!—come nearer!
Bend—bend down—I yet have much to say.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

ISEULT

Heaven! his head sinks back upon the pillow!—
Tristram! Tristram! let thy heart not fail.
Call on God and on the holy angels!
What, love, courage!—Christ! he is so pale.

TRISTRAM

Hush, 'tis vain, I feel my end approaching.
This is what my mother said should be,
When the fierce pains took her in the forest,
The deep draughts of death, in bearing me.

'Son,' she said, 'thy name shall be of sorrow!
Tristram art thou call'd for my death's sake!'
So she said, and died in the drear forest.
Grief since then his home with me doth make.

I am dying.—Start not, nor look wildly!
Me, thy living friend, thou canst not save.
But, since living we were ununited,
Go not far, O Iseult! from my grave.

Rise, go hence, and seek the princess Iseult:
Speak her fair, she is of royal blood.
Say, I charg'd her, that ye live together:—
She will grant it—she is kind and good.

Now to sail the seas of Death I leave thee;
One last kiss upon the living shore!

ISEULT

Tristram!—Tristram!—stay—receive me with thee!
Iseult leaves thee, Tristram, never more.

.

You see them clear: the moon shines bright.
Slow—slow and softly, where she stood,
She sinks upon the ground: her hood

Had fallen back: her arms outspread
Still hold her lover's hands: her head
Is bow'd, half-buried, on the bed.
O'er the blanch'd sheet her raven hair
Lies in disorder'd streams; and there,
Strung like white stars, the pearls still are,
And the golden bracelets heavy and rare
Flash on her white arms still.
The very same which yesternight
Flash'd in the silver sconces' light,
When the feast was gay and the laughter loud
In TyntagePs palace proud.
But then they deck'd a restless ghost.
With hot-flush'd cheeks and brilliant eyes,
And quivering lips on which the tide
Of courtly speech abruptly died,
And a glance that over the crowded floor,
The dancers, and the festive host,
Flew ever to the door.

That the knights eyed her in surprise,
And the dames whisper'd scoffingly—
'Her moods, good lack, they pass like showers
But yesternight and she would be
As pale and still as wither'd flowers,
And now to-night she laughs and speaks
And has a colour in her cheeks.

Christ keep us from such fantasy!'—

The air of the December night
Steals coldly around the chamber bright,
Where those lifeless lovers be.
Swinging with it, in the light
Flaps the ghostlike tapestry.
And on the arras wrought you see
A stately Huntsman, clad in green,
And round him a fresh forest scene.
On that clear forest knoll he stays
With his pack round him, and delays.
He stares and stares, with troubled face,
At this huge gleam-lit fireplace,

At the bright iron-figur'd door,
And those blown rushes on the floor.

He gazes down into the room
With heated cheeks and flurried air,
And to himself he seems to say—
*' What place is this and who are they?
Who is that kneeling Ladyfair?
And on his pillows that pale Knight
Who seems of marble on a tomb?
How comes it here this chamber bright
Through whose mulliorfd windows clear
The castle court all wet with rain,
The drawbridge and the moat appear,
And then the beach, and, markd with spray,
The sunken reefs, and far away
The unquiet bright Atlantic plain?—*

*What, has some glamour made me sleep,
And sent me with my dogs to sweep,
By night, with boisterous bugle peal,
Through some old, sea-side, knightly hall,
Not in the free greenwood at all?
That Knight's asleep, and at her prayer
That Lady by the bed doth kneel:
Then hush, thou boisterous bugle peal!'*—

The wild boar rustles in his lair—
The fierce hounds snuff the tainted air—
But lord and hounds keep rooted there.

Cheer, cheer thy dogs into the brake,
O Hunter! and without a fear
Thy golden-tassell'd bugle blow,
And through the glades thy pastime take!

For thou wilt rouse no sleepers here,
For these thou seest are unmov'd;
Cold, cold as those who liv'd and lov'd
A thousand years ago.

III

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

A YEAR had flown, and o'er the sea away,
 In Cornwall, Tristram and queen Iseult lay;
 In King Marc's chapel, in Tyntagel old:
 There in a ship they bore those lovers cold.
 The young surviving Iseult, one bright day,
 Had wander'd forth: her children were at play
 In a green circular hollow in the heath
 Which borders the sea-shore; a country path
 Creeps over it from the till'd fields behind.
 The hollow's grassy banks are soft inclin'd,
 And to one standing on them, far and near
 The lone unbroken view spreads bright and clear
 Over the waste:—This cirque of open ground
 Is light and green; the heather, which all round
 Creeps thickly, grows not here; but the pale grass
 Is strewn with rocks, and many a shiver'd mass
 Of vein'd white-gleaming quartz, and here and there
 Dotted with holly trees and juniper.
 In the smooth centre of the opening stood
 Three hollies side by side, and made a screen
 Warm with the winter sun, of burnish'd green,
 With scarlet berries gemm'd, the fell-fare's food.
 Under the glittering hollies Iseult stands
 Watching her children play: their little hands
 Are busy gathering spars of quartz, and streams
 Of stagshorn for their hats: anon, with screams
 Of mad delight they drop their spoils, and bound
 Among the holly clumps and broken ground,
 Racing full speed, and startling in their rush
 The fell-fares and the speckled missel-thrush
 Out of their glossy coverts: but when now
 Their cheeks were flush'd, and over each hot brow

Under the feathered hats of the sweet pair
 In blinding masses shower'd the golden hair—
 Then Iseult called them to her, and the three
 Cluster'd under the holly screen, and she
 Told them an old-world Breton history.

Warm in their mantles wrapt, the three stood there,
 Under the hollies, in the clear still air—
 Mantles with those rich furs deep glistening
 Which Venice ships do from swart Egypt bring.
 Long they stayed still—then, pacing at their ease,
 Mov'd up and down under the glossy trees;
 But still as they pursued their waj m dry road
 From Iseult's lips the unbroken story flow'd,
 And still the children listen'd, their blue eyes
 Fix'd on their mother's face in wide surprise;
 Nor did their looks stray once to the sea-side,
 Nor to the brown heaths round them, bright and wide,
 Nor to the snow which, though 'twas all away
 From the open heath, still by the hedgerows lay,
 Nor to the shining sea-fowl that with screams
 Bore up from where the bright Atlantic gleams,
 Swooping to landward; nor to where, quite clear,
 The fell-fares settled on the thickets near.
 And they would still have listen'd, till dark night
 Came keen and chill down on the heather bright;
 But, when the red glow on the sea grew cold,
 And the grey turrets of the castle old
 Look'd sternly through the frosty evening air,—
 Then Iseult took by the hand those children fair,
 And brought her tale to an end, and found the path,
 And led them home over the darkening heath.

And is she happy? Does she see unmov'd
 The days in which she might have liv'd and lov'd
 Slip without bringing bliss slowly away,
 One after one, to-morrow like to-day?
 Joy has not found her yet, nor ever will:—
 Is it this thought that makes her mien so still,

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Her features so fatigued, her eyes, though sweet,
So sunk, so rarely lifted save to meet
Her children's? She moves slow: her voice alone
Has yet an infantine and silver tone,
But even that comes languidly: in truth,
She seems one dying in a mask of youth.
And now she will go home, and softly lay
Her laughing children in their beds, and play
Awhile with them before they sleep; and then
She'll light hei; silver lamp, which fishermen
Dragging their nets through the rough waves, afar,
Along this iron coast, know like a star,
And take her broidery frame, and there she'll sit
Hour after hour, her gold curls sweeping it,
Lifting her soft-bent head only to mind
Her children, or to listen to the wind.
And when the clock peals midnight, she will move
Her work away, and let her fingers rove
Across the shaggy brows of Tristram's hound
Who lies, guarding her feet, along the ground:
Or else she will fall musing, her blue eyes
Fix'd, her slight hands clasp'd on her lap; then rise,
And at her prie-dieu kneel, until she have told
Her rosary beads of ebony tipp'd with gold,
Then to her soft sleep: and to-morrow 'll be
To-day's exact repeated effigy.

Yes, it is lonely for her in her hall.
The children, and the grey-hair'd seneschal,
Her women, and Sir Tristram's **aged** hound,
Are there the sole companions to be found.
But these she loves; and noisier life than this
She would find ill to bear, weak as she is:
She has her children too, and night and day
Is with them; and the wide heaths where they play,
The hollies, and the cliff, and the sea-shore,
The sand, the sea-birds, and the distant sails,
These arc to her dear as to them: the tales

With which this day the children she beguill'd
 She glean'd from Breton grandames when a child
 In every hut along this sea-coast wild.
 She herself loves them still, and, when they are told,
 Can forget all to hear them, as of old.

Dear saints, it is not sorrow, as I hear,
 Not suffering, that shuts up eye and ear
 To all which has delighted them before,
 And lets us be what we were once no more.
 No: we may suffer deeply, yet retain
 Power to be mov'd and sooth'd, for all our pain,
 By what of old pleas'd us, and will again.
 No: 'tis the gradual furnace of the world,
 In whose hot air our spirits are upcurl'd
 Until they crumble, or else grow like steel—
 Which kills in us the bloom, the youth, the spring—
 Which leaves the fierce necessity to feel,
 But takes away the power—this can avail,
 By drying up our joy in everything,
 To make our former pleasures all seem stale.
 This, or some tyrannous single thought, some fit
 Of passion, which subdues our souls to it,
 Till for its sake alone we live and move—
 Call it ambition, or remorse, or love—
 This too can change us wholly, and make seem
 All that we did before, shadow and dream.

And yet, I swear, it angers me to see
 How this fool passion gulls men potently;
 Being, in truth, but a diseas'd unrest,
 And an unnatural overheat at best.
 How they are full of languor and distress
 Not having it; which, when they do possess,
 They straightway are burnt up with fume and care,
 And spend their lives in posting here and there
 Where this plague drives them; and have little ease,
 Are fretful with themselves, and hard to please.

Like that bold Caesar, the fam'd Roman wight,
 Who wept at reading of a Grecian knight
 Who made a name at younger years than he:
 Or that renown'd mirror of chivalry,
 Prince Alexander, Philip's peerless son,
 Who carried the great war from Macedon
 Into the Soudan's realm, and thundered on
 To die at thirty-five in Babylon.

What tale did Iseult to the children say,
 Under the hollies, that bright winter's day?
 She told them of the fairy-haunted land
 Away the other side of Brittany,
 Beyond the heaths, edg'd by the lonely sea;
 Of the deep forest-glades of Broce-liande,
 Through whose green boughs the golden sunshine creeps,
 Where Merlin by the enchanted thorn-tree sleeps.
 For here he came with the fay Vivian,
 One April, when the warm days first began;
 He was on foot, and that false fay, his friend,
 On her white palfrey; here he met his end,
 In these lone sylvan glades, that April day.
 This tale of Merlin and the lovely fay
 Was the one Iseult chose, and she brought clear
 Before the children's fancy him and her.

Blowing between the stems the forest air
 Had loosen'd the brown curls of Vivian's hair,
 Which play'd on her flush'd cheek, and her blue eyes
 Sparkled with mocking glee and exercise.
 Her palfrey's flanks were mired and bath'd in sweat,
 For they had travell'd far and not stopp'd yet.
 A brier in that tangled wilderness
 Had scor'd her white right hand, which she allows
 To rest unglov'd on her green riding-dress;
 The other warded off the drooping boughs.
 But still she chatted on, with her blue eyes
 Fix'd full on Merlin's face, her stately prize:

Her 'haviour had the morning's fresh clear grace,
 The spirit of the woods was in her face;
 She look'd so witching fair, that learned wight
 Forgot his craft, and his best wits took flight,
 And he grew fond, and eager to obey
 His mistress, use her empire as she may.

They came to where the brushwood ceas'd, and day
 Peer'd 'twixt the stems; and the ground broke away
 In a slop'd sward down to a brawling brook,
 And up as high as where they stood to look
 On the brook's further side was clear; but then
 The underwood and trees began again.
 This open glen was studded thick with thorns
 Then white with blossom; and you saw the horns,
 Through the green fern, of the shy fallow-deer
 Which come at noon down to the water here.
 You saw the bright-eyed squirrels dart along
 Under the thorns on the green sward; and strong
 The blackbird whistled from the dingles near,
 And the light chipping of the woodpecker
 Rang lonelily and sharp: the sky was fair,
 And a fresh breath of spring stirr'd everywhere.
 Merlin and Vivian stopp'd on the slope's brow
 To gaze on the green sea of leaf and bough
 Which glistening lay all round them, lone and mild,
 As if to itself the quiet forest smil'd.
 Upon the brow-top grew a thorn; and here
 The grass was dry and moss'd, and you saw clear
 Across the hollow: white anemonies
 Starred the cool turf, and clumps of primroses
 Ran out from the dark underwood behind.
 No fairer resting-place a man could find.
 'Here let us halt,' said Merlin then; and she
 Nodded, and tied her palfrey to a tree.

They sate them down together, and a sleep
 Fell upon Merlin, more like death, so deep.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Her finger on her lips, then Vivian rose,
And from her brown-lock'd head the wimple throws,
And takes it in her hand, and waves it over
The blossom'd thorn-tree and her sleeping lover.
Nine times she wav'd the fluttering wimple round,
And made a little plot of magic ground.
And in that daisied circle, as men say
Is Merlin prisoner till the judgement-day,
But she herself whither she will can rove,
For she was passing weary of his love.

1852

PART IV

ELEGIAC POEMS

THE SCHOLAR GIPSY

There was very lately a lad in the University of Oxford, who was by his poverty forced to leave his studies there, and at last to join himself to a company of vagabond gipsies. Among these extravagant people, by the insinuating subtilty of his carriage, he quickly got so much of their love and esteem as that they discovered to him their mysterv. After he had been a pretty while well exercised in the trade, there chanced to ride by a couple of scholars, who had formerly been of his acquaintance. They quickly spied out their old friend among the gipsies; and he gave them an account of the necessity which drove him to that kind of life, and told them that the people he went with were not such impostors as they were taken for, but that they had a traditional kind of learning among them, and could do wonders by the power of imagination, their fancy binding that of others that himself had learned much of their art, and when he had compassed the whole secret, he intended, he said, to leave their company, and give the world an account of what he had learned.—GLANVIL'S *Vanity of Dogmatizing*, 1661.

Go, for they call you. Shepherd, from the hill;
Go, Shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes:
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,
Nor the cropp'd grasses shoot another head.
But when the fields are still,
And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,
And only the white sheep are sometimes seen
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanch'd green;
Come, Shepherd, and again renew the quest.

Here, where the reaper was at work of late,
In this high field's dark corner, where he leaves
His coat, his basket, and his earthen cruise,
And in the sun all morning binds the sheaves,

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Then here, at noon, comes back his stores to use;
Here will I sit and wait,
While to my ear from uplands far away
The bleating of the folded flocks is borne,
With distant cries of reapers in the corn—
All the live murmur of a summer's day.

Screen'd is this nook o'er the high, half-reap'd field,
And here till sun-down, Shepherd, will I be.
Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,
And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see
Pale blue convolvulus in tendrils creep:
And air-swept lindens yield
Their scent, and rustle down their perfum'd showers
Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,
And bower me from the August sun with shade;
And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers:

And near me on the grass lies Glanvil's book—
Come, let me read the oft-read tale again,
The story of that Oxford scholar poor
Of pregnant parts and quick inventive brain,
Who, tir'd of knocking at Preferment's door,
One summer morn forsook
His friends, and went to learn the Gipsy lore,
And roam'd the world with that wild brotherhood,
And came, as most men deem'd, to little good,
But came to Oxford and his friends no more.

But once, years after, in the country lanes,
Two scholars whom at college erst he knew
Met him, and of his way of life inquir'd.
Whereat he answer'd, that the Gipsy crew,
His mates, had arts to rule as they desir'd
The workings of men's brains;
And they can bind them to what thoughts they will:
'And I,' he said, 'the secret of their art,
When fully learn'd, will to the world impart:
But it needs heaven-sent moments for this skill.'

ELEGIAC POEMS

This said, he left them, and return'd no more,
But rumours hung about the country side
That the lost Scholar long was seen to stray,
Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,
In hat of antique shape, and cloak of grey,
The same the Gipsies wore.
Shepherds had met him on the Hurst in spring;
At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors,
On the warm ingle bench, the smock-frock'd boors
Had found him seated at their entering,

But, mid their drink and clatter, he would fly:
And I myself seem half to know thy looks,
And put the shepherds, Wanderer, on thy trace;
And boys who in lone wheatfields scare the rooks
I ask if thou hast pass'd their quiet place;
Or in my boat I lie
Moor'd to the cool bank in the summer heats,
Mid wide grass meadows which the sunshine fills,
And watch the warm green-muffled Cumner hills,
And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy retreats.

For most, I know, thou lov'st retired ground.
Thee, at the ferry, Oxford riders blithe,
Returning home on summer nights, have met
Crossing the stripling Thames at Bab-lock-hithe,
Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,
As the slow punt swings round:
And leaning backwards in a pensive dream,
And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers
Pluck'd in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers,
And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream:

And then they land, and thou art seen no more.
Maidens who from the distant hamlets come
To dance around the Fyfield elm in May,
Oft through the darkening fields have seen thee roam,
Or cross a stile into the public way.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Oft thou hast given them store
Of flowers—the frail-leaf'd, white anemone—
Dark bluebells drench'd with dews of summer
eves—
And purple orchises with spotted leaves—
But none has words she can report of thee,

And, above Godstow Bridge, when hay-time's here
In June, and many a scythe in sunshine flames,
Men who through those wide fields of breezy grass
Where black-wing'd swallows haunt the glittering Thames,
To bathe in the abandon'd lasher pass,
Have often pass'd thee near
Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown:
Mark'd thy outlandish garb, thy figure spare,
Thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air;
But, when they came from bathing, thou wert gone.

At some lone homestead in the Cumner hills,
Where at her open door the housewife darns,
Thou hast been seen, or hanging on a gate
To watch the threshers in the mossy barns.
Children, who early range these slopes and late
For cresses from the rills,
Have known thee watching, all an April day,
The springing pastures and the feeding kine;
And mark'd thee, when the stars come out and shine,
Through the long dewy grass move slow away.

In Autumn, on the skirts of Bagley wood,
Where most the Gipsies by the turf-edg'd way
Pitch their smok'd tents, and every bush you see
With scarlet patches tagg'd and shreds of grey,
Above the forest ground calPd Thessaly—
The blackbird picking food
Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all;
So often has he known thee past him stray
Rapt, twirling in thy hand a wither'd spray,
And waiting for the spark from Heaven to fall.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill
 Where home through flooded fields foot-travellers go,
 Have I not pass'd thee on the wooden bridge
 Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,
 Thy face towards Hinksey and its wintry ridge?
 And thou hast climb'd the hill
 And gain'd the white brow of the Gummer range,
 Turn'd once to watch, while thick the snowflakes fall,
 The line of festal light in Christ-Church hall—
 Then sought thy straw in some sequester'd grange.

But what—I dream! Two hundred years are flown
 Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,
 And the grave Glanvil did the tale inscribe
 That thou wert wander'd from the studious walls
 To learn strange arts, and join a Gipsy tribe:
 And thou from earth art gone
 Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid;
 Some country nook, where o'er thy unknown grave
 Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave—
 Under a dark red-fruited yew-tree's shade.

—No, no thou hast not felt the lapse of hours.
 For what wears out the life of mortal men?
 'Tis that from change to change their being rolls:
 'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,
 Exhaust the energy of strongest souls,
 And numb the elastic powers.
 Till having us'd our nerves with bliss and teen,
 And tir'd upon a thousand schemes our wit,
 To the just-pausing Genius we remit
 Our worn-out life, and are—what we have been.

Thou hast not liv'd, why should'st thou perish, so?
 Thou hadst *one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire:
 Else wert thou long since numbered with the dead—
 Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy fire.
 The generations of thy peers are fled,
 And we ourselves shall go;

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

But thou possessest an immortal lot,
And we imagine thee exempt from age
And living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's page,
Because thou hadst—what we, alas, have not!

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers
Fresh, undiverted to the world without,
Firm to their mark, not spent on other things;
Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,
Which much to have tried, in much been baffled,
brings.

O Life unlike to ours!
Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,
Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he strives,
And each half lives a hundred different lives;
Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope.

Thou waitest for the spark from Heaven: and we,
Vague half-believers of our casual creeds,
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly will'd,
Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,
Whose weak resolves never have been fulfilled;
For whom each year we see
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new;
Who hesitate and falter life away,
And lose to-morrow the ground won to-day—
Ah, do not we, Wanderer, await it too?

Yes, we await it, but it still delays,
And then we suffer; and amongst us One,
Who most has suffer'd, takes dejectedly
His seat upon the intellectual throne;
And all his store of sad experience he
Lays bare of wretched days;
Tells us his misery's birth and growth and signs,
And how the dying spark of hope was fed,
And how the breast was sooth'd, and how the head,
And all his hourly varied anodynes.

*Possibly a reference to Carlyle.

ELEGIAC POEMS

This for our wisest: and we others pine,
And wish the long unhappy dream would end,
And waive all claim to bliss, and try to bear,
With close-lipp'd Patience for our only friend,
Sad Patience, too near neighbour to Despair:
But none has hope like thine.
Thou through the fields and through the woods dost stray,
Roaming the country side, a truant boy,
Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,
And every doubt long blown by time away.

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;
Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts, was rife—
Fly hence, our contact fear!
Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood!
Averse, as Dido did with gesture stern
From her false friend's approach in Hades turn,
Wave us away, and keep thy solitude.

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
Still clutching the inviolable shade,
With a free onward impulse brushing through,
By night, the silver'd branches of the glade—
Far on the forest skirts, where none pursue,
On some mild pastoral slope
Emerge, and resting on the moonlit pales,
Freshen thy flowers, as in former years,
With dew, or listen with enchanted ears,
From the dark dingles, to the nightingales.

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!
For strong the infection of our mental strife,
Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest;
And we should win thee from thy own fair life,
Like us distracted, and like us unblest.
Soon, soon thy cheer would die,

Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfix'd thy powers,
And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made:
And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,
Fade, and grow old at last, and die like ours.

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles!
—As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,
Descried at sunrise an emerging prow
Lifting the cool-hair'd creepers stealthily,
The fringes of a southward-facing brow
Among the Aegean isles;
And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,
Freighted with amber grapes, and Chian wine,
Green bursting figs, and tunnies steep'd in brine:
And knew the intruders on his ancient home,

The young light-hearted Masters of the waves;
And snatch'd his rudder, and shook out more sail,
And day and night held on indignantly
O'er the blue Midland waters with the gale,
Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,
To where the Atlantic raves
Outside the Western Straits, and unbent sails
There, where down cloudy cliffs, through sheets of
foam,
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come;
And on the beach undid his corded bales.

1853

THYRSIS*

A MONODY, *to commemorate the author's friend, ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH, who died at Florence*[^] 1861

Thus yesterday, to-day, to-morrow come,
They hustle one another and they pass;
But all our hustling morrows only make
The smooth to-day of God.

From LUCRETIUS, an unpublished Tragedy.

How changed is here each spot man makes or fills!
In the two Hinkseys nothing keeps the same;
The village-street its haunted mansion lacks,
And from the sign is gone Sibylla's name,
And from the roofs the twisted chimney-stacks;
Are ye too changed, ye hills?
See, 'tis no foot of unfamiliar men
To-night from Oxford up your pathway strays
Here came I often, often, in old days;
' Thyrsis and I; we still had Thyrsis then.

Runs it not here, the track by Childsworth Farm,
Up past the wood, to where the elm-tree crowns
The hill behind whose ridge the sunset flames?
The signal-elm, that looks on Ilsley Downs,
The Vale, the three lone weirs, the youthful Thames?—
This winter-eve is warm,
Humid the air; leafless, yet soft as spring,
The tender purple spray on copse and briars;
And that sweet City with her dreaming spires,
She needs not June for beauty's heightening,

*Throughout this poem there is reference to another piece, *The Scholar Gipsy*, printed in the first volume of the Author's Poems.—MATTHEW ARNOLD. (See page 171).

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Lovely all times she lies, lovely to-night!

Only, methinks, some loss of habit's power

Befalls me wandering through this upland dim;

Once pass'd I blindfold here, at any hour,

Now seldom come I, since I came with him.

That single elm-tree bright

Against the west—I miss it! is it gone?

We prized it dearly; while it stood, we said,

Our friend, the Scholar-Gipsy, was not dead;

While the tree lived, he in these fields lived on.

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here!

But once I knew each field, each flower, each stick;

And with the country-folk acquaintance made

By barn in threshing-time, by new-built rick.

Here, too, our shepherd-pipes we first assay'd.

Ah me! this many a year

My pipe is lost, my shepherd's-holiday!

Needs must I lose them, needs with heavy heart

Into the world and wave of men depart;

But Thyrsis of his own will went away.

It irk'd him to be here, he could not rest.

He loved each simple joy the country yields,

He loved his mates; but yet he could not keep,

For that a shadow lower'd on the fields,

Here with the shepherds and the silly sheep.

Some life of men unblest

He knew, which made him droop, and fill'd his head.

He went; his piping took a troubled sound

Of storms that rage outside our happy ground;

He could not wait their passing, he is dead!

So, some tempestuous morn in early June,

When the year's primal burst of bloom is o'er,

Before the roses and the longest day—•

When garden-walks, and all the grassy floor,

With blossoms, red and white, of fallen May,

And chestnut-flowers are strewn—

ELEGIAC POEMS

So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,
From the wet field, through the vext garden-trees,
Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze:
The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go L

Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou go?
Soon will the high Midsummer pomps come on,
Soon will the musk carnations break and swell,
Soon shall we have gold-dusted snapdragon,
Sweet-William with its homely cottage-smell,
And stocks in fragrant blow;
Roses that down the alleys shine afar,
And open, jasmine-muffled lattices,
And groups under the dreaming garden-trees,
And the full moon, and the white evening-star.

He hearkens not! light comer, he is flown!
What matters it? next year he will return.
And we shall have him in the sweet spring-days,
With whitening hedges, and uncrumpling fern,
And blue-bells trembling by the forest-ways,
And scent of hay new-mown.
But Thyrasis never more we swains shall see!
' See him come back, and cut a smoother reed,
And blow a strain the world at last shall heed—
For Time, not Corydon, hath conquer'd thee.'

Alack, for Corydon no rival now!—
But when Sicilian shepherds lost a mate,
Some good survivor with his flute would go,
Piping a ditty sad for Bion's fate,
And cross the unpermitted ferry's flow,
And relax Pluto's brow,
And make leap up with joy the beauteous head
Of Proserpine, among whose crowned hair
Are flowers, first open'd on Sicilian air,
And flute his friend, like Orpheus, from the dead.

'Corydon and Thyrasis contended against each other in song. Thyrasis was defeated.

O easy access to the hearer's grace
 When Dorian shepherds sang to Proserpine!
 For she herself had trod Sicilian fields,
 She knew the Dorian water's gush divine,
 She knew each lily white which Enna yields,
 Each rose with blushing face;
 She loved the Dorian pipe, the Dorian strain.
 But ah, of our poor Thames she never heard!
 Her foot the Cumner cowslips never stirr'd!
 And we should tease her with our plaint in vain.

Well! wind-dispers'd and vain the words will be,
 Yet, Thyrsis, let me give my grief its hour
 In the old haunt, and find our tree-topp'd hill!
 Who, if not I for questing here hath power?
 I know the wood which hides the daffodil,
 I know the Fyfield tree,
 I know what white, what purple fritillaries
 The grassy harvest of the river-fields,
 Above by Ensham, down by Sandford, yields,
 And what sedg'd brooks are Thames's tributaries;

I know these slopes; who knows them if not I?—
 But many a dingle on the loved hill-side,
 With thorns once studded, old, white-blossom'd trees,
 Where thick the cowslips grew, and, far descried,
 High tower'd the spikes of purple orchises,
 Hath since our day put by
 The coronals of that forgotten time.
 Down each green bank hath gone the ploughboy's team,
 And only in the hidden brookside gleam
 Primroses, orphans of the flowery prime.

Where is the girl, who, by the boatman's door,
 Above the locks, above the boating throng,
 Unmoor'd our skiff, when, through the Wytham flats,
 Red loosestrife and blond meadow-sweet among,
 And darting swallows, and light water-gnats,

ELEGIAC POEMS

We track'd the shy Thames shore?
Where are the mowers, who, as the tiny swell
Of our boat passing heav'd the river-grass,
Stood with suspended scythe to see us pass?—
They all are gone, and thou art gone as well.

Yes, thou art gone! and round me too the night
In ever-nearing circle weaves her shade.
I see her veil draw soft across the day,
I feel her slowly chilling breath invade
The cheek grown thin, the brown hair sprent with grey;
I feel her finger light
Laid pausefully upon life's headlong train;
The foot less prompt to meet the morning dew,
The heart less bounding at emotion new,
And hope, once crush'd, less quick to spring again.

And long the way appears, which seem'd so short
To the unpractis'd eye of sanguine youth;
And high the mountain-tops, in cloudy air,
The mountain-tops where is the throne of Truth,
Tops in life's morning-sun so bright and bare!
Unbreachable the fort
Of the long-batter'd world uplifts its wall.
And strange and vain the earthly turmoil grows,
And near and real the charm of thy repose,
And night as welcome as a friend would fall.

But hush! the upland hath a sudden loss
Of quiet;—Look! adown the dusk hill-side,
A troop of Oxford hunters going home,
As in old days, jovial and talking, ride!
From hunting with the Berkshire hounds they come—
Quick, let me fly, and cross
Into yon further field!—Tis done; and see,
Back'd by the sunset, which doth glorify
The orange and pale violet evening-sky,
Bare on its lonely ridge, the Tree! the Tree!

I take the omen! Eve lets down her veil,
The white fog creeps from bush to bush about,
The west unflushes, the high stars grow bright,
And in the scatter'd farms the lights come out.
I cannot reach the Signal-Tree to-night,
Yet, happy omen, hail!
Hear it from thy broad lucent Arno vale
(For there thine earth-forgetting eyelids keep
The morningless and unawakening sleep
Under the flowery oleanders pale),

Hear it, O Thyrsis, still our Tree is there!—
Ah, vain! These English fields, this upland dim,
These brambles pale with mist engarlanded,
That lone, sky-pointing tree, are not for him.
To a boon southern country he is fled,
And now in happier air,
Wandering with the great Mother's train divine
(And purer or more subtle soul than thee,
I trow, the mighty Mother doth not see!)
Within a folding of the Apenmne,

Thou hearest the immortal strains of old.
Putting his sickle to the perilous grain
In the hot cornfield of the Phrygian king,
For thee the Lityerses song again
Young Daphnis with his silver voice doth sing;
Sings his Sicilian fold,
His sheep, his hapless love, his blinded eyes;
And how a call celestial round him rang
And heavenward from the fountain-brink he sprang,
And all the marvel of the golden skies.'

•Lityerses, a Phrygian king, made all travellers enter into a reaping match with him, killing those whom he vanquished. The 'Lityerses Song' was a dirge sung over the dead bodies. Daphnis was a traveller rescued from Lityerses by Hercules. A more familiar legend concerns Daphnis, a shepherd, who was blinded by a nymph whose love he failed to return. His sight was later restored and he was carried up to Heaven by Hermes.

ELEGIAC POEMS

There thou art gone, and me thou leavest here
Sole in these fields; yet will I not despair;
Despair I will not, while I yet descry
'Neath the soft canopy of English air
That lonely Tree against the western sky.
Still, still these slopes, 'tis clear,
Our Gipsy-Scholar haunts, outliving thee!
Fields where soft sheep from cages pull the hay,
Woods with anemonies in flower till May,
Know him a wanderer still; then why not me?

A fugitive and gracious light he seeks,
Shy to illumine; and I seek it too.
This does not come with houses or with gold,
With place, with honour, and a flattering crew;
'Tis not in the world's market bought and sold.
But the smooth-slipping weeks
Drop by, and leave its seeker still untired;
Out of the heed of mortals he is gone,
He wends unfollow'd, he must house alone;
Yet on he fares, by his own heart inspired.

Thou too, O Thyrsis, on like quest wert bound,
Thou wanderest with me for a little hour;
Men gave thee nothing, but this happy quest,
If men esteem'd thee feeble, gave thee power,
If men procured thee trouble, gave thee rest.
And this rude Cumner ground,
Its fir-topped Hurst, its farms, its quiet fields,
Here cam'st thou in thy jocund youthful time,
Here was thine height of strength, thy golden prime;
And still the haunt beloved a virtue yields.

What though the music of thy rustic flute
Kept not for long its happy, country tone,
Lost it too soon, and learnt a stormy note
Of men contention-tost, of men who groan,
Which task'd thy pipe too sore, and tired thy throat—
It fail'd, and thou wast mute;

Yet hadst thou always visions of our light,
And long with men of care thou couldst not stay,
And soon thy foot resumed its wandering way,
Left human haunt, and on alone till night.

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here!
'Mid city-noise, not, as with thee of yore,
Thyrsis, in reach of sheep-bells is my home!
Then through the great town's harsh, heart-wearying
roar,
Let in thy voice a whisper often come,
To chase fatigue and fear:
Why faintest thou? I wander'd till I died.
Roam on; the light we sought is shining still.
Dost thou ask proof? Our Tree yet crowns the At//,
Our Scholar travels yet the loved hillside.

1866

HEINE'S GRAVE

'HENRI HEWE'——'tis here!
The black tombstone, the name
Carved there—no more! and the smooth,
Swarded alleys, the limes
Touch'd with yellow by hot
Summer, but under them still
In September's bright afternoon
Shadow, and verdure, and cool!
Trim Montmartre! the faint
Murmur of Paris outside;
Crisp everlasting-flowers,
Yellow and black, on the graves.

[186!]

ELEGIAC POEMS

Half blind, palsied, in pain,
Hither to come, from the streets'
Uproar, surely not loath
Wast thou, Heine!—to lie
Quiet! to ask for closed
Shutters, and darken'd room,
And cool drinks, and an eased
Posture, and opium, no more!
Hither to come, and to sleep
Under the wings of Renown.

Ah! not little, when pain
Is most quelling, and man
Easily quell'd, and the fine
Temper of genius alive
Quickest to ill, is the praise
Not to have yielded to pain!
No small boast, for a weak
Son of mankind, to the earth
Pinn'd by the thunder, to rear
His bolt-scathed front to the stars;
And, undaunted, retort
'Gainst thick-crashing, insane,
Tyrannous tempests of bale,
Arrowy lightnings of soul!

Hark! through the alley resounds
Mocking laughter! A film
Creeps o'er the sunshine; a breeze
Ruffles the warm afternoon,
Saddens my soul with its chill.
Gibing of spirits in scorn
Shakes every leaf of the grove,
Mars the benignant repose
Of this amiable home of the dead.

Bitter spirits! ye claim
Heine?—Alas, he is yours!
Only a moment I long'd
[18?]

Here in the quiet to snatch
From such mates the outworn
Poet, and steep him in calm.
Only a moment! I knew
Whose he was who is here
Buried, I knew he was yours!
Ah, I knew that I saw
Here no sepulchre built
In the laurell'd rock, o'er the blue
Naples bay, for a sweet
Tender Virgil! no tomb
On Ravenna sands, in the shade
Of Ravenna pines, for a high
Austere Dante! no grave
By the Avon side, in the bright
Stratford meadows, for thee,
Shakespeare! loveliest of souls,
Peerless in radiance, in joy.

What so harsh and malign,
Heine! distils from thy life,
Poisons the peace of thy grave?

I chide with thee not, that thy sharp
Upbraidings often assail'd
England, my country; for we,
Fearful and sad, for her sons,
Long since, deep in our hearts,
Echo the blame of her foes.
We, too, sigh that she flags;
We, too, say that she now,
Scarce comprehending the voice
Of her greatest, golden-mouth'd sons
Of a former age any more,
Stupidly travels her round
Of mechanic business, and lets
Slow die out of her life
Glory, and genius, and joy.

ELEGIAC POEMS

So thou arraign'st her, her foe;
So we arraign her, her sons.

Yes, we arraign her! but she,
The weary Titan! with deaf
Ears, and labour-dimm'd eyes,
Regarding neither to right
Nor left, goes passively by,
Staggering on to her goal;
Bearing on shoulders immense,
Atlantean, the load,
Wellnigh not to be borne,
Of the too vast orb of her fate.

But was it thou—I think
Surely it was—that bard
Unnamed, who, Goethe said,
Had every other gift, but wanted love;
Love, without which the tongue
Even of angels sounds amiss?

Charm is the glory which makes
Song of the poet divine;
Love is the fountain of charm.
How without charm wilt thou draw,
Poet! the world to thy way?
Not by the lightnings of wit!
Not by the thunder of scorn!
These to the world, too, are given;
Wit it possesses, and scorn—
Charm is the poet's alone.
Hollow and dull are the great.
And artists envious, and the mob profane.
We know all this, we know!
Cam'st thou from heaven, O child
Of light! but this to declare?
Alas! to help us forget
Such barren knowledge awhile,
God gave the poet his song.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Therefore a secret unrest
Tortured thee, brilliant and bold!
Therefore triumph itself
Tasted amiss to thy soul.
Therefore, with blood of thy foes,
Trickled in silence thine own.
Therefore the victor's heart
Broke on the field of his fame.

Ah! as of old, from the pomp
Of Italian Milan, the fair
Flower of marble of white
Southern palaces—steps
Border'd by statues, and walks
Terraced, and orange bowers
Heavy with fragrance—the blond
German Kaiser full oft
Long'd himself back to the fields,
Rivers, and high-roof'd towns
Of his native Germany; so,
So, how often! from hot
Paris drawing-rooms, and lamps
Blazing, and brilliant crowds,
Starr'd and jewell'd, of men
Famous, of women the queens
Of dazzling converse, and fumes
Of praise—hot, heady fumes, to the poor brain
That mount, that madden!—how oft
Heine's spirit outworn
Long'd itself out of the din
Back to the tranquil, the cool
Far German home of his youth!

See! in the May afternoon,
O'er the fresh short turf of the Hartz,
A youth, with the foot of youth,
Heine! thou climbest again.
Up, through the tall dark firs
Wanning their heads in the sun,

ELEGIAC POEMS

Chequering the grass with their shade—
Up, by the stream with its huge
Moss-hung boulders and thin
Musical water half-hid—
Up, o'er the rock-strewn slope,
With the sinking sun, and the air
Chill, and the shadows now
Long on the grey hill-side—
To the stone-roof'd hut at the top.

Or, yet later, in watch
On the roof of the Brocken tower
Thou standest, gazing! to see
The broad red sun, over field
Forest and city and spire
And mist-track'd stream of the wide
Wide German land, going down
In a bank of vapours——again
Standest! at nightfall, alone.

Or, next morning, with limbs
Rested by slumber, and heart
Freshened and light with the May
O'er the gracious spurs coming down
Of the Lower Hartz, among oaks,
And beechen coverts, and copse
Of hazels green in whose depth
Use, the fairy transform[^],
In a thousand water-breaks light
Pours her petulant youth—
Climbing the rock which juts
O'er the valley, the dizzily perch'd
Rock! to its Iron Cross
Once more thou cling'st; to the Cross
Clingest! with smiles, with a sigh.

Goethe, too, had been there.
In the long-past winter he came
To the frozen Hartz, with his soul

Passionate, eager, his youth
All in ferment;—but he
Destined to work and to live
Left it, and thou, alas!
Only to laugh and to die.

But something prompts me: Not thus
Take leave of Heine, not thus
Speak the last word at his grave!
Not in pity and not
With half censure—with awe
Hail, as it passes from earth
Scattering lightnings, that soul!

The spirit of the world
Beholding the absurdity of men—
Their vaunts, their feats—let a sardonic smile
For one short moment wander o'er his lips.
That smile was Heine; for its earthly hour
The strange guest sparkled; now 'tis pass'd away.

That was Heine! and we,
Myriads who live, who have lived,
What are we all, but a mood,
A single mood, of the life
Of the Being in whom we exist,
Who alone is all things in one.

Spirit, who fillest us all!
Spirit who utterest in each
New-coming son of mankind
Such of thy thoughts as thou wilt!

O thou, one of whose moods,
Bitter and strange, was the life
Of Heine—his strange, alas!
His bitter life—may a life
Other and milder be mine!

ELEGIAC POEMS

May'st thou a mood more serene,
Happier, have utter'd in mine!
May'st thou the rapture of peace
Deep have embreathed at its core!
Made it a ray of thy thought!
Made it a beat of thy joy!

1867

MEMORIAL VERSES

GOETHE in Weimar sleeps, and Greece,
Long since, saw Byron's struggle cease.*
But one such death remain'd to come.
The last poetic voice is dumb.
What shall be said o'er Wordsworth's tomb?

When Byron's eyes were shut in death,
We bow'd our head and held our breath.
He taught us little: but our soul
Had felt him like the thunder's roll.
With shivering heart the strife we saw
Of Passion with Eternal Law;
And yet with reverential awe
We watch'd the fount of fiery life
Which serv'd for that Titanic strife.

When Goethe's death was told, we said—
Sunk, then, is Europe's sagest head.
Physician of the Iron Age,
Goethe ha' done his pilgrimage.
He took the suffering human race,

*Goethe died in 1832; Byron at Missolonghi in 1824.

He read each wound, each weakness clear—
 And struck his finger on the place
 And said—*Thou attest here, and here.*—
 He look'd on Europe's dying hour
 Of fitful dream and feverish power;
 His eye plung'd down the weltering strife,
 The turmoil of expiring life;
 He said—*The end is everywhere:*
Art still has truth, take refuge there.
 And he was happy, if to know
 Causes of things, and far below
 His feet to see the lurid flow
 Of terror, and insane distress,
 And headlong fate, be happiness.

And Wordsworth!—Ah, pale Ghosts, rejoice!
 For never has such soothing voice
 Been to your shadowy world convey'd,
 Since erst, at morn, some wandering shade
 Heard the clear song of Orpheus come
 Through Hades, and the mournful gloom.
 Wordsworth has gone from us—and ye,
 Ah, may ye feel his voice as we.
 He too upon a wintry clime
 Had fallen—on this iron time
 Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.
 He found us when the age had bound
 Our souls in its benumbing round;
 He spoke, and loos'd our heart in tears.
 He laid us as we lay at birth
 On the cool flowery lap of earth;
 Smiles broke from us and we had ease.
 The hills were round us, and the breeze
 Went o'er the sun-lit fields again:
 Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.
 Our youth return'd: for there was shed
 On spirits that had long been dead,
 Spirits dried up and closely-furl'd,
 The freshness of the early world.

ELEGIAC POEMS

Ah, since dark days stiH bring to light
Man's prudence and man's fiery might,
Time may restore us in his course
Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force:
But where will Europe's latter hour
Again find Wordsworth's healing power?
Others will teach us how to dare,
And against fear our breast to steel:
Others will strengthen us to bear—
But who, ah who, will make us feel?
The cloud of mortal destiny,
Others will front it fearlessly—
But who, like him, will put it by?

Keep fresh the grass upon his grave,
O Rotha! with thy living wave.
Sing him thy best! for few or none
Hears thy voice right, now he is gone.

1850

HAWORTH CHURCHYARD

WHERE, under Loughrigg, the stream
Of Rotha sparkles, the fields
Are green, in the house of one
Friendly and gentle, now dead,
Wordsworth's son-in-law, friend—
Four years since, on a mark'd
Evening, a meeting I saw.

Two friends met there, two fam'd
Gifted women.' The one,
Brilliant with recent renown,
Young, unpractis'd, had told
With a Master's accent her feign'd
Story of passionate life:

*Charlotte Bronte" and Harriet Martineau.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

The other, maturer in fame,
Earning, she too, her praise
First in Fiction, had since
Widen'd her sweep, and survey'd
History, Politics, Mind.

They met, held converse: they wrote
In a book which of glorious souls
Held memorial: Bard,
Warrior, Statesman, had left
Their names:—chief treasure of all,
Scott had consign'd here his last
Breathings of song, with a pen
Tottering, a death-stricken hand.

I beheld; the obscure
Saw the famous. Alas!
Years in number, it seem'd,
Lay before both, and a fame
Heighten'd, and multiplied power.
Behold! The elder, to-day,
Lies expecting from Death,
In mortal weakness, a last
Summons: the younger is dead.

First to the living we pay
Mournful homage: the Muse
Gains not an earth-deafen'd ear.

Hail to the steadfast soul,
Which, unflinching and keen,
Wrought to erase from its depth
Mist, and illusion, and fear!
Hail to the spirit which dar'd
Trust its own thoughts, before yet
Echoed her back by the crowd!
Hail to the courage which gave
Voice to its creed, ere the creed
Won consecration from Time I

ELEGIAC POEMS

Turn, O Death, on the vile,
Turn on the foolish the stroke
Hanging now o'er a head
Active, beneficent, pure!
But, if the prayer be in vain—
But, if the stroke *must* fall—
Her, whom we cannot save,
What might we say to console?

She will not see her country lose
Its greatness, nor the reign of fools prolong'd.
She will behold no more
This ignominious spectacle,
Power dropping from the hand
Of paralytic factions, and no soul
To snatch and wield it: will not see
Her fellow people sit
Helplessly gazing on their own decline.

Myrtle and rose fit the young,
Laurel and oak the mature.
Private affections, for these,
Have run their circle, and left
Space for things far from themselves,
Thoughts of the general weal,
Country, and public cares:
Public cares, which move
Seldom and faintly the depth
Of younger passionate souls
Plung'd in themselves, who demand
Only to live by the heart,
Only to love and be lov'd.

How shall we honour the young,
The ardent, the gifted? how mourn?
Console we cannot; her ear
Is deaf. Far northward from here,
In a churchyard high mid the moors
Of Yorkshire, a little earth
Stops it for ever to praise.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Where, behind Keighley, the road
Up to the heart of the moors
Between heath-clad showery hills
Runs, and colliers' carts
Poach the deep ways coming down,
And a rough, grim'd race have their homes—
There, on its slope, is built
The moorland town. But the church
Stands on the crest of the hill,
Lonely and bleak; at its side
The parsonage-house and the graves.

See! in the desolate house
The childless father! *Alas-*
Age, whom the most of us chide,
Chide, and put back, and delay—
Come, unupbraided for once!
Lay thy benumbing hand,
Gratefully cold, on this brow!
Shut out the grief, the despair!
Weaken the sense of his loss!
Deaden the infinite pain!

Another grief I see,
Younger: but this the Muse,
In pity and silent awe
Revering what she cannot soothe,
With veiled face and bow'd head,
Salutes, and passes by.

Strew with roses the grave
Of the early-dying. *Alas!*
Early she goes on the path
To the Silent Country, and leaves
Half her laurels unwon,
Dying too soon: yet green
Laurels she had, and a course
Short, but redoubled by Fame.

ELEGIAC POEMS

For him who must live many years
That life is best which slips away
Out of the light, and mutely; which avoids
Fame, and her less-fair followers, Envy, Strife,
Stupid Detraction, Jealousy, Cabal,
Insincere Praises:—which descends
The mossy quiet track to Age.

But, when immature Death
Beckons too early the guest
From the half-tried Banquet of Life,
Young, in the bloom of his days;
Leaves no leisure to press,
Slow and surely, the sweet
Of a tranquil life in the shade—
Fuller for him be the hours!
Give him emotion, though pain!
Let him live, let him feel, / *have liv'd*.
Heap up his moments with life!
Quicken his pulses with Fame!

And not friendless, nor yet
Only with strangers to meet,
Faces ungreeting and cold,
Thou, O Mourn'd One, to-day
Enterest the House of the Grave.
Those of thy blood, whom thou lov'dst,
Have preceded thee; young,
Loving, a sisterly band:
Some in gift, some in art
Inferior; all in fame.
They, like friends, shall receive
This comer, greet her with joy;
Welcome the Sister, the Friend;
Hear with delight of thy fame.

Round thee they lie; the grass
Blows from their graves toward thine.

She,' whose genius, though not
 Puissant like thine, was yet
 Sweet and graceful: and Shef—
 (How shall I sing her?) — whose soul
 Knew no fellow for might,
 Passion, vehemence, grief,
 Daring, since Byron died —
 That world-fam'd Son of Fire; She, who sank
 Baffled, unknown, self-consum'd;
 Whose too bold dying song
 Shook, like a clarion-blast, my soul.

Of one too I have heard,
 A Brother J — sleeps he here? —
 Of all his gifted race
 Not the least gifted; young,
 Unhappy, beautiful; the cause
 Of many hopes, of many tears.
 O Boy, if here thou sleep'st, sleep well!
 On thee too did the Muse
 Bright in thy cradle smile:
 But some dark Shadow came
 (I know not what) and interpos'd.

Sleep, O cluster of friends,
 Sleep! or only, when May,
 Brought by the West Wind, returns
 Back to your native heaths,
 And the plover is heard on the moors,
 Yearly awake, to behold
 The opening summer, the sky,
 The shining moorland; to hear
 The drowsy bee, as of old,
 Hum o'er the thyme, the grouse
 Call from the heather in bloom:

Sleep; or only for this
 Break your united repose.

1855

* Anne Bronte † Emily Bronte ‡ Branwell Bronte.

ELEGIAC POEMS

LINES WRITTEN BY A DEATH-BED

YES, now the longing is o'erpast,
Which, dogg'd by fear and fought by shame,
Shook her weak bosom day and night,
Consum'd her beauty like a flame,
And dimm'd it like the desert blast.
And though the curtains hide her face,
Yet were it lifted to the light
The sweet expression of her brow
Would charm the gazer, till his thought
Eras'd the ravages of time,
Fill'd up the hollow cheek, and brought
A freshness back as of her prime—
So healing is her quiet now.
So perfectly the lines express
A placid, settled loveliness;
Her youngest rival's freshest grace.

But ah, though peace indeed is here,
And ease from shame, and rest from fear;
Though nothing can disarm now
The smoothness of that limpid brow;
Yet is a calm like this, in truth,
The crowning end of life and youth?
And when this boon rewards the dead,
Are all debts paid, has all been said?
And is the heart of youth so light,
Its step so firm, its eye so bright,
Because on its hot brow there blows
A wind of promise and repose
From the far grave, to which it goes?
Because it has the hope to come,
One day, to harbour in the tomb?
Ah no, the bliss youth dreams is one
For daylight, for the cheerful sun,

For feeling nerves and living breath—
Youth dreams a bliss on this side death.
It dreams a rest, if not more deep,
More grateful than this marble sleep.
It hears a voice within it tell—
'Calm 's not life's crown, though calm is well.'
Tis all perhaps which man acquires:
But 'tis not what our youth desires.

1852

THE PROGRESS OF POESY

A Variation

YOUTH rambles on life's arid mount,
And strikes the rock, and finds the vein,
And brings the water from the fount,
The fount which shall not flow again.

The man mature with labour chops
For the bright stream a channel grand,
And sees not that the sacred drops
Ran off and vanish'd out of hand.

And then the old man totters nigh
And feebly rakes among the stones.
The mount is mute, the channel dry;
And down he lays his weary bones.

1867

REQUIESCAT

STREW on her roses, roses,
And never a spray of yew.
In quiet she reposes:
Ah! would that I did too.

Her mirth the world required:
She bath'd it in smiles of glee.
But her heart was tired, tired,
And now they let her be.

Her life was turning, turning,
In mazes of heat and sound.
But for peace her soul was yearning,
And now peace laps her round.

Her cabin'd, ample Spirit,
It flutter'd and fail'd for breath.
To-night it doth inherit
The vasty Hall of Death.

1853

A SOUTHERN NIGHT

THE sandy spits, the shore-lock'd lakes,
Melt into open, moonlit sea;
The soft Mediterranean breaks
At my feet, free.

Dotting the fields of corn and vine
Like ghosts, the huge, gnarl'd olives stand;
Behind, that lovely mountain-line!
While by the strand

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Cette, with its glistening houses white,
Curves with the curving beach away
To where the lighthouse beacons bright
Far in the bay.

Ah, such a night, so soft, so lone,
So moonlit, saw me once of yore
Wander unquiet, and my own
Vext heart deplore!

But now that trouble is forgot;
Thy memory, thy pain, to-night,
My brother!' and thine early lot,
Possess me quite

The murmur of this Midland deep
Is heard to-night around thy grave
There where Gibraltar's cannon'd steep
O'erfrowns the wave.

For there, with bodily anguish keen,
With Indian heats at last fordone,
With public toil and private teen,
Thou sank'st, alone.

Slow to a stop, at morning grey,
I see the smoke-crown'd vessel come;
Slow round her paddles dies away
The seething foam.

A boat is lower'd from her side;
Ah, gently place him on the bench:
That spirit—if all have not yet died—
A breath might quench.

Is this the eye, the footstep fast,
The mien of youth we used to see,
Poor, gallant boy!—for such thou wast,
Still art, to me.

*William De-la-field Arnold, died at Gibraltar, 1859.

ELEGIAC POEMS

The limbs their wonted tasks refuse,
The eyes are glazed, thou canst not speak;
And whiter than thy white burnous
That wasted cheek!

Enough! The boat, with quiet shock,
Unto its haven coming nigh,
Touches, and on Gibraltar's rock
Lands thee, to die.

Ah me! Gibraltar's strand is far,
But farther yet across the brine
Thy dear wife's ashes buried are,
Remote from thine.

For there where Morning's sacred fount
Its golden rain on earth confers,
The snowy Himalayan Mount
O'crshadows hers.

Strange irony of Fate, alas,
Which for two jaded English saves,
When from their dusty life they pass,
Such peaceful graves!

In cities should we English lie,
Where cries are rising ever new,
And men's incessant stream goes by;
We who pursue

Our business with unslackening stride,
Traverse in troops, with care-fill'd breast,
The soft Mediterranean side,
The Nile, the East.

And see all sights from pole to pole,
And glance, and nod, and bustle by;
And never once possess our soul
Before we die.

Not by those hoary Indian hills,
Not by this gracious Midland sea
Whose floor to-night sweet moonshine fills,
Should our graves be!

Some sage, to whom the world was dead,
And men were specks, and life a play;
Who made the roots of trees his bed,
And once a day

With staff and gourd his way did bend
To villages and homes of man,
For food to keep him till he end
His mortal span,

And the pure goal of Being reach;
Grey-headed, wrinkled, clad in white,
Without companion, without speech,
By day and night

Pondering God's mysteries untold,
And tranquil as the glacier snows—
He by those Indian mountains old
Might well repose!

Some grey crusading knight austere
Who bore Saint Louis company
And came home hurt to death and here
Landed to die;

Some youthful troubadour whose tongue
Fill'd Europe once with his love-pain,
Who here outwearied sunk, and sung
His dying strain;

Some girl who here from castle-bower,
With furtive step and cheek of flame,
Twixt myrtle-hedges all in flower
By moonlight came

ELEGIAC POEMS

To meet her pirate-lover's ship,
And from the wave-kiss'd marble stair
Beckon'd him on, with quivering lip
And unbound hair,

And lived some moons in happy trance,
Then learnt his death, and pined away—
Such by these waters of romance
Twas meet to lay!

But you—a grave for knight or sage,
Romantic, solitary, still,
O spent ones of a work-day age!
Befits you ill.

So sang I; but the midnight breeze
Down to the brimm'd moon-charmed main
Comes softly through the olive-trees,
And checks my strain.

I think of her, whose gentle tongue
All plaint in her own cause controlled;
Of thee I think, my brother! young
In heart, high-soul'd;

That comely face, that cluster'd brow,
That cordial hand, that beaming free,
I see them still, I see them now,
Shall always see!

And what but gentleness untired,
And what but noble feeling warm,
Wherever shown, howe'er attired,
Is grace, is charm?

What else is all these waters are,
What else is steep'd in lucid sheen,
What else is bright, what else is fair,
What else serene?

Mild o'er her grave, ye mountains, shine!
Gently by his ye waters, glide!
To that in you which is divine
They were allied.

1861

STANZAS COMPOSED AT CARNAC

FAR on its rocky knoll descried
Saint Michael's chapel cuts the sky.
I climb'd;—beneath me, bright and wide,
Lay the lone coast of Brittany.

Bright in the sunset, weird and still,
It lay beside the Atlantic wave,
As if the wizard Merlin's will
Yet charm'd it from his forest grave.

Behind me on their grassy sweep,
Bearded with lichen, scrawl'd and grey,
The giant stones of Carnac sleep,
In the mild evening of the May.

No priestly stern procession now
Streams through their rows of pillars old;
No victims bleed, no Druids bow;
Sheep make the furze-grown aisles their fold.

From bush to bush the cuckoo flies,
The orchis red gleams everywhere;
Gold broom with furze in blossom vies,
The blue-bells perfume all the air.

And o'er the glistening, lonely land,
Rise up, all round, the Christian spires.
The church of Carnac, by the strand,
Catches the westering sun's last fires.

ELEGIAC POEMS

And there across the watery way,
See, low above the tide at flood,
The sickle-sweep of Quiberon bay
Whose beach once ran with loyal blood!

And beyond that, the Atlantic wide!—
All round, no soul, no boat, no hail!
But, on the horizon's verge descried,
Hangs, touch'd with light, one snowy sail!

Ah, where is he, who should have come
Where that far sail is passing now,
Past the Loire's mouth, and by the foam
Of Finistère's unquiet brow,

Home, round into the English wave?—
He tarries where the Rock of Spain
Mediterranean waters lave;
He enters not the Atlantic main.

Oh, could he once have reach'd this air
Freshen'd by plunging tides, by showers!
Have felt this breath he loved, of fair
Cool northern fields, and grass, and flowers!

He long'd for it—press'd on!—In vain.
At the Straits fail'd that spirit brave.
The South was parent of his pain,
The South is mistress of his grave.

1867

•See note to *A Southern Night*.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY

(*The Day of Bund, in the Abbey of* ARTHUR PENRHYN STANLEY,
Dean of Westminster.)

'Ailred of Rievaulx, and several other writers, assert that Sebert, king of the East Saxons and nephew of Ethelbert, founded the Abbey of Westminster very early in the seventh century.

⁴Sulcardus, who lived in the time of William the Conqueror, gives a minute account of the miracle supposed to have been worked at the consecration of the Abbey.

The church had been prepared against the next day for dedication. On the night preceding, St. Peter appeared on the opposite side of the water to a fisherman, desiring to be conveyed to the farther shore. Having left the boat, St. Peter ordered the fisherman to wait, promising him a reward on his return. An innumerable host from heaven accompanied the apostle, singing choral hymns, while everything was illuminated with a supernatural light. The dedication having been completed, St. Peter returned to the fisherman, quieted his alarm at what had passed, and announced himself as the apostle. He directed the fisherman to go as soon as it was day to the authorities, to state what he had seen and heard, and to inform them that, in corroboration of his testimony, they would find the marks of consecration on the walls of the church. In obedience to the apostle's direction, the fisherman waited on Mellitus, Bishop of London, who, going to the church, found not only marks of the chrism, but of the tapers with which the church had been illuminated. Mellitus, therefore, desisted from proceeding to a new consecration, and contented himself with the celebration of the mass'—DUGDALE, *Monasticon Anglicanum*.

WHAT! for a term so scant
Our shining visitant
Cheer'd us, and now is pass'd into the night?
 Couldst thou no better keep, O Abbey old,
 The boon thy dedication-sign foretold,
The presence of that gracious inmate, light?—
 A child of light appear'd;
Hither he came, late-born and long-desired,
 And to men's hearts this ancient place endear'd;
What, is the happy glow so soon expired?

ELEGIAC POEMS

—Rough was the winter eve;
Their craft the fishers leave,
And down over the Thames the darkness drew.
One still lags last, and turns, and eyes the Pile
Huge in the gloom, across in Thorney Isle,
King Sebert's work, the wondrous Minster new.
—'Tis Lambeth now, where then
They moor'd their boats among the bulrush stems;
And that new Minster in the matted fen
The world-famed Abbey by the westering Thames.

His mates are gone, and he
For mist can scarcely see
A strange wayfarer coming to his side,
Who bade him loose his boat, and fix his oar,
And row him straightway to the further shore,
And wait while he did there a space abide.
The fisher awed obeys,
That voice had note so clear of sweet command;
Through pouring tide he pulls, and drizzling haze,
And sets his freight ashore on Thorney strand.

The Minster's outlined mass
Rose dim from the morass,
And thitherward the stranger took his way.
Lo, on a sudden all the Pile is bright!
Nave, choir and transept glorified with light,
While tongues of fire on coign and carving play!
And heavenly odours fair
Come streaming with the floods of glory in,
And carols float along the happy air,
As if the reign of joy did now begin.

Then all again is dark;
And by the fisher's bark
The unknown passenger returning stands.
*O Saxon fisher I thou hast had with thee
The fisher from the Lake of Galilee—*

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

So saith he, blessing him with outspread hands;
 Then fades, but speaks the while:
At dawn thou to King Sebert shall relate
 How his St. Peter's Church in Thorney Isle
Peter, his friend, with light did consecrate.

 Twelve hundred years and more
 Along the holy floor
Pageants have pass'd, and tombs of mighty kings
 Efface the humbler graves of Sebert's line,
 And, as years sped, the minster-aisles divine
Grew used to the approach of Glory's wings.
 Arts came, and arms, and law,
And majesty, and sacred form and fear;
 Only that primal guest the fisher saw,
Light, only light, was slow to reappear.

 The Saviour's happy light,
 Wherein at first was dight
His boon of life and immortality,
 In desert ice of subtleties was spent
 Or drown'd in mists of childish wonderment,
Fond fancies here, there false philosophy!
 And harsh the temper grew
Of men with mind thus darken'd and astray;
 And scarce the boon of life could struggle through,
For want of light which should the boon convey.

 Yet in this latter time
 The promise of the prime
Seem'd to come true at last, O Abbey old!
 It seem'd, a child of light did bring the dower
 Foreshown thee in thy consecration-hour,
And in thy courts his shining freight unroll'd:
 Bright wits, and instincts sure,
And goodness warm, and truth without alloy,
 And temper sweet, and love of all things pure,
And joy in light, and power to spread the joy.

ELEGIAC POEMS

And on that countenance bright
Shone oft so high a light,
That to my mind there came how, long ago,
Lay on the hearth, amid a fiery ring,
The charm'd babe of the Eleusinian king—
His nurse, the Mighty Mother, will'd it so.
Warm in her breast, by day,
He slumber'd, and ambrosia balm'd the child;
But all night long amid the flames he lay,
Upon the hearth, and play'd with them, and smiled.

But once, at midnight deep,
His mother woke from sleep,
And saw her babe amidst the fire, and scream'd.
A sigh the Goddess gave, and with a frown
Pluck'd from the fire the child, and laid him down;
Then raised her face, and glory round her stream'd.
The mourning-stole no more
Mantled her form, no more her head was bow'd;
But raiment of celestial sheen she wore,
And beauty fill'd her, and she spake aloud:—

'O ignorant race of man!
Achieve your good who can,
If your own hands the good begun undo?
Had human cry not marr'd the work divine,
Immortal had I made this boy of mine;
But now his head to death again is due
And I have now no power
Unto this pious household to repay
Their kindness shown me in my wandering hour.'
—She spake, and from the portal pass'd away.

The Boy his nurse forgot,
And bore a mortal lot.
Long since, his name is heard on earth no more.
In some chance battle on Cithaeron-side
The nursling of the Mighty Mother died,
And went where all his fathers went before,

—On thee too, in thy day
Of childhood, Arthur! did some check have power,
That, radiant though thou wert, thou couldst
but stay,
Bringer of heavenly light, a human hour?

Therefore our happy guest
Knew care, and knew unrest,
And weakness warn'd him, and he fear'd decline.
And in the grave he laid a cherish'd wife,
And men ignoble harass'd him with strife,
And deadly airs his strength did undermine.
Then from his Abbey fades
The sound beloved of his victorious breath;
And light's fair nursling stupor first invades,
And next the crowning impotence of death.

But hush! This mournful strain,
Which would of death complain,
The oracle forbade, not ill-inspired.—
That Pair, whose head did plan, whose hands did forge
The Temple in the pure Parnassian gorge,
Finish'd their work, and then a meed required.
'Seven days,' the God replied,
'Live happy, then expect your perfect meed!'
Quiet in sleep, the seventh night, they died.
Death, death was judged the boon supreme indeed.

And truly he who here
Hath run his bright career,
And served men nobly, and acceptance found,
And borne to light and right his witness high,
What could he better wish than then to die,
And wait the issue, sleeping underground?
Why should he pray to range
Down the long age of truth that ripens slow;
And break his heart with all the baffling change,
And all the tedious tossing to and fro?

ELEGIAC POEMS

For this and that way swings
The flux of mortal things,
Though moving inly to one far-set goal.—
What had our Arthur gain'd, to stop and see,
After light's term, a term of cecity,
A Church once large and then grown strait in soul?
To live, and see arise,
Alternating with wisdom's too short reign,
Folly revived, re-furbish'd sophistries,
And pullulating rites externe and vain?

Ay me! 'Tis deaf, that ear
Which joy'd my voice to hear;
Yet would I not disturb thee from thy tomb,
Thus sleeping in thine Abbey's friendly shade,
And the rough waves of life for ever laid!
I would not break thy rest, nor change thy doom.
Even as my father, thou—
Even as that loved, that well-recorded friend—
Hast thy commission done; ye both may now
Wait for the leaven to work, the let to end.

And thou, O Abbey grey!
Predestined to the ray
By this dear guest over thy precinct shed—
Fear not but that thy light once more shall burn,
Once more thine immemorial gleam return,
Though sunk is now this bright, this gracious head!
Let but the light appear
And thy transfigured walls be touch'd with flame—
Our Arthur will again be present here,
Again from lip to lip will pass his name.

1881

POOR MATTHIAS

POOR MATTHIAS!—Found him lying
Fall'n beneath his perch and dying?
Found him stiff, you say, though warm--
All convulsed his little form?
Poor canary! many a year
Well he knew his mistress dear;
Now in vain you call his name,
Vainly raise his rigid frame,
Vainly warm him in your breast,
Vainly kiss his golden crest,
Smooth his ruffled plumage fine,
Touch his trembling beak with wine.
One more gasp—it is the end!
Dead and mute our tiny friend!
—Songster thou of many a year,
Now thy mistress brings thee here,
Says, it fits that I rehearse,
Tribute due to thee, a verse,
Meed for daily song of yore
Silent now for evermore.

Poor Matthias! Wouldst thou have
More than pity? claim'st a stave?
—Friends more near us than a bird
We dismiss'd without a word.
Rover, with the good brown head,
Great Atossa, they are dead;
Dead, and neither prose nor rhyme
Tells the praises of their prime.
Max a dachshound without blot—
Kaiser should be, but is not.
Max, with shining yellow coat,
Prinking ears and dewlap throat—

ELEGIAC POEMS

Kaiser, with his collie face,
Penitent for want of race.
—Which may be the first to die,
Vain to augur, they or I!
But, as age comes on, I know,
Poet's fire gets faint and low;
If so be that travel they
First the inevitable way,
Much I doubt if they shall have
Dirge from me to crown their grave.

Yet, poor bird, thy tiny corse
Moves me, somehow, to remorse;
Something haunts my conscience, brings
Sad, compunctious visitings.
Other favourites, dwelling here,
Open lived to us, and near;
Well we knew when they were glad,
Plain we saw if they were sad,
Joy'd with them when they were gay,
Soothed them in their last decay;
Sympathy could feel and show
Both in weal of theirs and woe.

Birds, companions more unknown,
Live beside us, but alone;
Finding not, do all they can,
Passage from their souls to man.
Kindness we bestow, and praise,
Laud their plumage, greet their lays;
Still, beneath their feather'd breast,
Stirs a history unexpress'd.
Wishes there, and feelings strong,
Incommunicably throng;
What they want, we cannot guess,
Fail to track their deep distress—
Dull look on when death is nigh,
Note no change, and let them die.

Poor Matthias! couldst thou speak,
 What a tale of thy Jast week!
 Every morning did we pay
 Stupid salutations gay,
 Suited well to health, but how
 Mocking, how incongruous now!
 Cake we offer'd, sugar, seed,
 Never doubtful of thy need;
 Praised, perhaps, thy courteous eye,
 Praised thy golden livery.
 Gravely thou the while, poor dear!
 Sat'st upon thy perch to hear,
 Fixing with a mute regard
 Us, thy human keepers hard,
 Troubling, with our chatter vain,
 Ebb of life, and mortal pain—
 Us, unable to divine
 Our companion's dying sign,
 Or o'erpass the severing sea
 Set betwixt ourselves and thee,
 Till the sand thy feathers smirch
 Fallen dying off thy perch!

Was it, as the Grecian sings,
 Birds were born the first of things,
 Before the sun, before the wind,
 Before the gods, before mankind,
 Airy, ante-mundane throng—
 Witness their unworldly song!
 Proof they give, too, primal powers,
 Of a prescience more than ours—
 Teach us, while they come and go,
 When to sail, and when to sow.
 Cuckoo calling from the hill,
 Swallow skimming by the mill,
 Swallows trooping in the sedge,
 Starlings swirling from the hedge,
 Mark the seasons, map our year,
 As they show and disappear.

But, with all this travail sage
 Brought from that anterior age,
 Goes an unreversed decree
 Whereby strange are they and we;
 Making want of theirs, and plan.
 Indiscernible by man.

No, away with tales like these
 Stol'n from Aristophanes!
 Does it, if we miss your mind,
 Prove us so remote in kind?
 Birds! we but repeat on you
 What amongst ourselves we do.
 Somewhat more or somewhat less,
 Tis the same unskilfulness.
 What you feel, escapes our ken—
 Know we more our fellow men?
 Human suffering at our side,
 Ah, like yours is undescried!
 Human longings, human fears,
 Miss our eyes and miss our ears.
 Little helping, wounding much,
 Dull of heart, and hard of touch,
 Brother man's despairing sign
 Who may trust us to divine?
 Who assure us, sundering powers
 Stand not 'twixt his soul and ours?

Poor Matthias! See, thy end
 What a lesson doth it lend!
 For that lesson thou shalt have,
 Dead canary bird, a stave!
 Telling how, one stormy day,
 Stress of gale and showers of spray
 Drove my daughter small and me
 Inland from the rocks and sea.
 Driv'n inshore, we follow down
 Ancient streets of Hastings town—
 Slowly thread them—when behold,

French canary-merchant old
 Shepherding his flock of gold
 In a low dim-lighted pen
 Scann'd of tramps and fishermen!
 There a bird, high-coloured, fat,
 Proud of port, though something squat—
 Pursy, play'd-out Philistine—
 Dazzled Nelly's youthful eyne.
 But, far in, obscure, there stirr'd
 On his perch a sprightlier bird,
 Courteous-eyed, erect and slim;
 And I whisper'd: 'Fix on Aim/'
 Home we brought him, young and fair,
 Songs to trill in Surrey air.
 Here Matthias sang his fill,
 Saw the cedars of Pains Hill;
 Here he pour'd his little soul,
 Heard the murmur of the Mole.
 Eight in number now the years
 He hath pleased our eyes and ears;
 Other favourites he hath known
 Go, and now himself is gone.
 —Fare thee well, companion dear!
 Fare for ever well, nor fear,
 Tiny though thou art, to stray
 Down the uncompanion'd way!
 We without thee, little friend,
 Many years have not to spend;
 What are left, will hardly be
 Better than we spent with thee.

1882

KAISER DEAD

WHAT, Kaiser dead? The heavy news
 Post-haste to Cobham calls the Muse,
 From where in Farringford she brews
 The ode sublime,
 Or with Pen-bryn's bold bard' pursues
 A rival rhyme.

Kai's bracelet tail, Kai's busy feet,
 Were known to all the village-street.
 'What, poor Kai dead?' say all I meet;
 'A loss indeed!'
 O for the croon pathetic sweet,
 Of Robin's reed!

Six years ago I brought him down,
 A baby dog, from London town;
 Round his small throat of black and brown
 A ribbon blue,
 And vouch'd by glorious renown
 A dachshound true.

His mother, most majestic dame,
 Of blood unmix'd, from Potsdam came;
 And Kaiser's race we deem'd the same—
 No lineage higher.
 And so he bore the imperial name.
 But ha, his sire!

Soon, soon the days conviction bring.
 The collie hair, the collie swing,
 The tail's indomitable ring,
 The eye's unrest—
 The case was clear; a mongrel thing
 Kai stood confest.

•This refers to Sir Lewis Morris, a popular minor poet of the day.

But all those virtues, which commend
The humbler sort who serve and tend,
Were thine in store, thou faithful friend.

What sense, what cheer I
To us, declining tow'rd's our end,
A mate how dear!

For Max, thy brother-dog, began
To flag, and feel his narrowing span.
And cold, besides, his blue blood ran,
Since, 'gainst the classes,
He heard, of late, the Grand Old Man
Incite the masses.

Yes, Max and we grew slow and sad;
But Kai, a tireless shepherd-lad,
Teeming with plans, alert, and glad
In work or play,
Like sunshine went and came, and bade
Live out the day!

Still, still I see the figure smart—
Trophy in mouth, agog to start,
Then, home return'd, once more depart;
Or prest together
Against thy mistress, loving heart,
In winter weather.

I see the tail, like bracelet twirl'd,
In moments of disgrace uncurPd,
Then at a pardoning word re-furPd,
A conquering sign;
Crying, 'Come on, and range the world,
And never pine.'

Thine eye was bright, thy coat it shone;
Thou hadst thine errands, off and on;
In joy thy last morn flew; anon,
A fit! All's over;

ELEGIAC POEMS

And them art gone where Geist hath gone.
And Toss, and Rover.

Poor Max, with downcast, reverent head,
Regards his brother's form outspread;
Full well Max knows the friend is dead
Whose cordial talk,
And jokes in doggish language said,
Beguiled his walk.

And Glory, stretch'd at Burwood gate,
Thy passing by doth vainly wait;
And jealous Jock, thy only hate,
The chiel from Skye,
Lets from his shaggy Highland pate
Thy memory die.

Well, fetch his graven collar fine,
And rub the steel, and make it shine,
And leave it round thy neck to twine,
Kai, in thy grave.
There of thy master keep that sign,
And this plain stave.

1887

PART V

POEMS OF REST

SELF-DEPENDENCE

WEARY of myself, and sick of asking
What I am, and what I ought to be,
At the vessel's prow I stand, which bears me
Forwards, forwards, o'er the starlit sea.

And a look of passionate desire
O'er the sea and to the stars I send:
'Ye who from my childhood up have calm'd me,
Calm me, ah, compose me to the end.

'Ah, once more,' I cried, 'ye Stars, ye Waters,
On my heart your mighty charm renew:
Still, still let me, as I gaze upon you,
Feel my soul becoming vast like you.'

From the intense, clear, star-sown vault of heaven,
Over the lit sea's unquiet way,
In the rustling night-air came the answer—
'Wouldst thou *be* as these are? *Live* as they.

'Unaffrighted by the silence round them,
Undistracted by the sights they see,
These demand not that the things without them
Yield them love, amusement, sympathy.

POEMS OF REST

'And with joy the stars perform their shining,
And the sea its long moon-silver'd roll.
For alone they live, nor pine with noting
All the fever of some differing soul.

'Bounded by themselves, and unobservant
In what state God's other works may be,
In their own tasks all their powers pouring,
These attain the mighty life you see.'

O air-born Voice! long since, severely clear,
A cry like thine in my own heart I hear.
'Resolve to be thyself: and know, that he
Who finds himself, loses his misery.'

1852

PALLADIUM

SET where the upper streams of Simois flow
Was the Palladium, high 'mid rock and wood;
And Hector was in Ilium, far below,
And fought, and saw it not, but there it stood.

It stood; and sun and moonshine rain'd their light
On the pure columns of its glen-built hall.
Backward and forward roll'd the waves of fight
Round Troy; but while this stood, Troy could not fall.

So, in its lovely moonlight, lives the soul.
Mountains surround it, and sweet virgin air;
Cold plashing, past it, crystal waters roll;
We visit it by moments, ah! too rare.

Men will renew the battle in the plain
To-morrow; red with blood will Xanthus be;
Hector and Ajax will be there again;
Helen will come upon the wall to see.

Then we shall rust in shade, or shine in strife,
And fluctuate 'twixt blind hopes and blind despairs,
And fancy that we put forth all our life,
And never know how with the soul it fares.

Still doth the soul, from its lone fastness high,
Upon our life a ruling effluence send;
And when it fails, fight as we will, we die,
And while it lasts, we cannot wholly end.

1867

THEKLA'S ANSWER

WHERE I am, thou ask'st, and where I wended
When my fleeting shadow pass'd from thee?—
Am I not concluded now, and ended?
Have not life and love been granted me?

Ask, where now those nightingales are singing,
Who, of late, on the soft nights of May,
Set thine ears with soul-fraught music ringing—
Only, while their love liv'd, lasted they.

Find I him, from whom I had to sever?—
Doubt it not, we met, and we are one.
There, where what is join'd, is join'd for ever,
There, where tears are never more to run.

POEMS OF REST

There thou too shalt live with us together,
When thou too hast borne the love we bore:
There, from sin deliver'd, dwells my Father,
Track'd by Murder's bloody sword no more.

There he feels, it was no dream deceiving
Lur'd him starwards to uplift his eye:
God doth match his gifts to man's believing;
Believe, and thou shalt find the Holy nigh.

All thou augurest here of lovely seeming
There shall find fulfilment in its day:
Dare, O Friend, be wandering, dare be dreaming;
Lofty thought lies oft in childish play.

1857

MORALITY

WE cannot kindle when we will
The fire that in the heart resides,
The spirit bloweth and is still,
In mystery our soul abides:
But tasks in hours of insight will'd
Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.

With aching hands and bleeding feet
We dig and heap, lay stone on stone;
We bear the burden and the heat
Of the long day, and wish 'twere done.
Not till the hours of light return
All we have built do we discern.

Then, when the clouds are off the soul,
When thou dost bask in Nature's eye,
Ask, how *she* view'd thy self-control,

Thy struggling task'd morality.

Nature, whose free, light, cheerful air,
Oft made thee, in thy gloom, despair.

And she, whose censure thou dost dread,
Whose-eye thou wert afraid to seek,
See, on her face a glow is spread,
A strong emotion on her cheek.

'Ah child,' she cries, 'that strife divine—
Whence was it, for it is not mine?

'There is no effort on *my* brow—
I do not strive, I do not weep.
I rush with the swift spheres, and glow
In joy, and, when I will, I sleep.—

Yet that severe, that earnest air,
I saw, I felt it once—but where?

'I knew not yet the gauge of Time,
Nor wore the manacles of Space.
I felt it in some other clime—
I saw it in some other place.

—'Twas when the heavenly house I trod.
And lay upon the breast of God.'

1852

A SUMMER NIGHT

IN the deserted moon-blanch'd street
How lonely rings the echo of my feet!
Those windows, which I gaze at, frown,
Silent and white, unopening down,
Repellent as the world:—but sec!

POEMS OF REST

A break between the housetops shows
The moon, and, lost behind her, fading dim
Into the dewy dark obscurity
Down at the far horizon's rim,
Doth a whole tract of heaven disclose.

And to my mind the thought
Is on a sudden brought
Of a past night, and a far different scene.
Headlands stood out into the moon-lit deep
As clearly as at noon;
The spring-tide's brimming flow
Heav'd dazzlingly between;
Houses with long white sweep
Girdled the glistening bay:
Behind, through the soft air,
The blue haze-cradled mountains spread away.

The night was far more fair;
But the same restless pacings to and fro,
And the same vainly-throbbing heart was there,
And the same bright calm moon.

And the calm moonlight seems to say—
*Hast thou then still the old unquiet breast
That neither deadens into rest
Nor everfeels the fiery glow
That whirls the spirit from itself away,
But fluctuates to and fro
Never by passion quite possessed
And never quite benumb'd by the world's sway?—*
And I, I know not if to pray
Still to be what I am, or yield, and be
Like all the other men I see.

For most men in a brazen prison live,
Where in the sun's hot eye,
With heads bent o'er their toil, they languidly
Their lives to some unmeaning taskwork give,

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Dreaming of naught beyond their prison wall.
And as, year after year,
Fresh products of their barren labour fall
From their tired hands, and rest
Never yet comes more near,
Gloom settles slowly down over their breast.
And while they try to stem
The waves of mournful thought by which they
are prest,
Death in their prison reaches them
Unfreed, having seen nothing, still unblest.

And the rest, a few,
Escape their prison, and depart
On the wide Ocean of Life anew.
There the freed prisoner, where'er his heart
Listeth, will sail;
Nor does he know how there prevail,
Despotic on life's sea,
Trade-winds that cross it from eternity.

Awhile he holds some false way, undebarr'd
By thwarting signs, and braves
The freshening wind and blackening waves.
And then the tempest strikes him, and between
The lightning bursts is seen
Only a driving wreck,
And the pale Master on his spar-strewn deck
With anguish'd face and flying hair
Grasping the rudder hard,
Still bent to make some port he knows not where,
Still standing for some false impossible shore.

And sterner comes the roar
Of sea and wind, and through the deepening gloom
Fainter and fainter wreck and helmsman loom,
And he too disappears, and comes no more.

Is there no life, but these alone?
Madman or slave, must man be one?

POEMS OF REST

Plainness and clearness without shadow of stain!
Clearness divine!
Ye Heavens, whose pure dark regions have no sign
Of languor, though so calm, and though so great
Are yet untroubled and unpassionate:
Who though so noble share in the world's toil,
And though so task'd keep free from dust and soil:
I will not say that your mild deeps retain
A tinge, it may be, of their silent pain
Who have long'd deeply once, and long'd in vain;
But I will rather say that you remain
A world above man's head, to let him see
How boundless might his soul's horizons be,
How vast, yet of what clear transparency.
How it were good to sink there, and breathe free.
How fair a lot to fill
Is left to each man still.

1852

CONSOLATION

MIST clogs the sunshine,
Smoky dwarf houses
Hem me round everywhere.
A vague dejection
Weighs down my soul.

Yet, while I languish,
Everywhere, countless
Prospects unroll themselves,
And countless beings
Pass countless moods.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Far hence, in Asia,
On the smooth convent-roofs,
On the gold terraces
 Of holy Lassa,
Bright shines the sun.

Grey time-worn marbles
Hold the pure Muses.
In their cool gallery,
 By yellow Tiber,
They still look fair.

Strange unlov'd uproar'
Shrills round their portal.
Yet not on Helicon
 Kept they more cloudless
Their noble calm.

Through sun-proof alleys
In a lone, sand-hemm'd
City of Africa,
 A blind, led beggar,
Age-bow'd, asks alms.

No bolder Robber
Erst abode ambush'd
Deep in the sandy waste:
 No clearer eyesight
Spied prey afar.

Saharan sand-winds
Sear'd his keen eyeballs.
Spent is the spoil he won
 For him the present
Holds only pain.

•Written during the siege of Rome by the French [1849].

POEMS OF REST

Two young, fair lovers,
Where the warm June wind,
Fresh from the summer fields,
Plays fondly round them,
Stand, tranc'd in joy.

With sweet, join'd voices,
And with eyes brimming—
'Ah,' they cry, 'Destiny!
Prolong the present!
Time! stand still here!'

The prompt stern Goddess
Shakes her head, frowning.
Tune gives his hour-glass
Its due reversal.
Their hour is gone.

With weak indulgence
Did the just Goddess
Lengthen their happiness,
She lengthen'd also
Distress elsewhere.

The hour, whose happy
Unalloy'd moments
I would eternalize,
Ten thousand mourners
Well pleas'd see end.

The bleak stern hour,
Whose severe moments
I would annihilate,
Is pass'd by others
In warmth, light, joy.

Time, so complain'd of,
Who to no one man
Shows partiality,
 Brings round to all men
Some undimm'd hours.

1852

EPILOGUE TO LESSING'S LAOCOON

ONE morn as through Hyde Park we walk'd,
My friend and I, by chance we talk'd
Of Lessing's famed Laocoon;
And after we awhile had gone
In Lessing's track, and tried to see
What painting is, what poetry—
Diverging to another thought,
'Ah,' cries my friend, 'but who hath taught
Why music and the other arts
Oftener perform aright their parts
Than poetry? why she, than they,
Fewer real successes can display?

Tor 'tis so, surely! Even in Greece
Where best the poet framed his piece,
Even in that Phoebus-guarded ground
Pausamas on his travels found
Good poems, if he look'd, more rare
(Though many) than good statues were—
For these, in truth, were everywhere!
Of bards full many a stroke divine
In Dante's, Petrarch's, Tasso's line,
The land of Ariosto show'd;
And yet, e'en there, the canvas glow'd
With triumphs, a yet ampler brood,
Of Raphael and his brotherhood.

POEMS OF REST

And nobly perfect, in our day
Of haste, half-work, and disarray,
Profound yet touching, sweet yet strong,
Hath risen Goethe's, Wordsworth's song;
Yet even I (and none will bow
Deeper to these!) must needs allow,
They yield us not, to soothe our pains,
Such multitude of heavenly strains
As from the kings of sound are blown,
Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn.'

While thus my friend discoursed, we pass
Out of the path, and take the grass.
The grass had still the green of May,
And still the unblacken'd elms were gay;
The kme were resting in the shade,
The flies a summer murmur made;
Bright was the morn and south the air,
The soft-couch'd cattle were as fair
As those that pastured by the sea,
That old-world morn, in Sicily,
When on the beach the Cyclops lay,
And Galatea from the bay
Mock'd her poor lovelorn giant's lay.
'Behold,' I said, 'the painter's sphere!
The limits of his art appear!
The passing group, the summer morn,
The grass, the elms, that blossom'd thorn;
Those cattle couch'd, or, as they rise,
Their shining flanks, their liquid eyes;
These, or much greater things, but caught
Like these, and in one aspect brought.
In outward semblance he must give
A moment's life of things that live;
Then let him choose his moment well,
With power divine its story tell!'

Still we walk'd on, in thoughtful mood,
And now upon the Bridge we stood.

Full of sweet breathings was the air,
 Of sudden stirs and pauses fair;
 Down o'er the stately Bridge the breeze
 Came rustling from the garden trees
 And on the sparkling waters play'd.
 Light-plashing waves an answer made,
 And mimic boats their haven near'd.
 Beyond, the Abbey towers appear'd,
 By mist and chimneys unconfined,
 Free to the sweep of light and wind;
 While, through the earth-moor'd nave below,
 Another breath of wind doth blow,
 Sound as of wandering breeze—but sound
 In laws by human artists bound.
 The world of music! I exclaim'd,
 'This breeze that rustles by, that famed
 Abbey recall it! what a sphere,
 Large and profound, hath genius here!
 Th' inspired musician what a range,
 What power of passion, wealth of change!
 Some pulse of feeling he must choose
 And its lock'd fount of beauty use,
 And through the stream of music tell
 Its else unutterable spell;
 To choose it rightly is his part,
 And press into its inmost heart.

'Miserere, Domine!

The words are utter'd, and they flee.
 Deep is their penitential moan,
 Mighty their pathos, but 'tis gone!
 They have declared the spirit's sore
 Sore load, and words can do no more.
 Beethoven takes them then—those two
 Poor, bounded words—and makes them new;
 Infinite makes them, makes them young,
 Transplants them to another tongue
 Where they can now, without constraint,
 Pour all the soul of their complaint,

POEMS OF REST

And roll adown a channel large
The wealth divine they have in charge.
Page after page of music turn,
And still they live and still they burn,
Eternal, passion-fraught and free—
Miserere, Domine!

Onward we moved, and reached the Ride
Where gaily flows the human tide.
Afar, in rest the cattle lay,
We heard, afar, faint music play;
But agitated, brisk, and near,
Men, with their stream of life, were here.
Some hang upon the rails, and some,
On foot, behind them, go and come.
This through the Ride upon his steed
Goes slowly by, and this at speed;
The young, the happy, and the fair,
The old, the sad, the worn were there;
Some vacant, and some musing went,
And some in talk and merriment.
Nods, smiles, and greetings, and farewells¹
And now and then, perhaps, there swells
A sigh, a tear—but in the throng
All changes fast, and hies along;
Hies, ah, from whence, what native ground?
And to what goal, what ending, bound?
'Behold at last the poet's sphere!
But who,' I said, 'suffices here?

Tor, ah! so much he has to do!
Be painter and musician too!
The aspect of the moment show,
The feeling of the moment know!
The aspect not, I grant, express
Clear as the painter's art can dress,
The feeling not, I grant, explore
So deep as the musician's lore—
But clear as words can make revealing,

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

And deep as words can follow feeling.
But, ah, then comes his sorest spell
Of toil! he must life's *movement* tell!
The thread which binds it all in one,
And not its separate parts alone!
The movement he must tell of life,
Its pain and pleasure, rest and strife;
His eye must travel down, at full,
The long, unpausing spectacle;
With faithful unrelaxing force
Attend it from its primal source,
From change to change and year to year
Attend it of its mid career,
Attend it to the last repose
And solemn silence of its close.

'The cattle rising from the grass
His thought must follow where they pass;
The penitent with anguish bow'd
His thought must follow through the crowd.
Yes, all this eddying, motley throng
That sparkles in the sun along,
Girl, statesman, merchant, soldier bold,
Master and servant, young and old,
Grave, gay, child, parent, husband, wife,
He follows home, and lives their life!

'And many, many are the souls
Life's movement fascinates, controls.
It draws them on, they cannot save
Their feet from its alluring wave;
They cannot leave it, they must go
With its unconquerable flow.
But, ah, how few of all that try
This mighty march, do aught but die!
For ill prepared for such a way,
III found in strength, in wits, are they!
They faint, they stagger to and fro,
And wandering from the stream they go;

POEMS OF REST

In pain, in terror, in distress,
They see, all round, a wilderness.
Sometimes a momentary gleam
They catch of the mysterious stream;
Sometimes, a second's space, their ear
The murmur of its waves doth hear.
That transient glimpse in song they say,
But not as painter can pourtray!
That transient sound in song they tell,
But not, as the musician, well!
And when at last these snatches cease,
And they are silent and at peace,
The stream of life's majestic whole
Hath ne'er been mirror'd on their soul.

¹Only a few the life-stream's shore
With safe unwandering feet explore,
Untired its movement bright attend,
Follow its windings to the end.
Then from its brimming waves their eye
Drinks up delighted ecstasy,
And its deep-toned, melodious voice,
For ever makes their ear rejoice.
They speak! the happiness divine
They feel, runs o'er in every line.
Its spell is round them like a shower;
It gives them pathos, gives them power.
No painter yet hath such a way
Nor no musician made, as they;
And gathered on immortal knolls
Such lovely flowers for cheering souls!
Beethoven, Raphael, cannot reach
The charm which Homer, Shakespeare, teach.
To these, to these, their thankful race
Gives, then, the first, the fairest place!
And brightest is their glory's sheen
For greatest has their labour been.'

1867

LINES WRITTEN IN KENSINGTON GARDENS

IN this lone open glade I lie,
Screen'd by deep boughs on either hand;
And at its head, to stay the eye,
Those black-crown'd, red-boled pine-trees stand.

Birds here make song, each bird has his,
Across the girdling city's hum.
How green under the boughs it is!
How thick the tremulous sheep-cries come!

Sometimes a child will cross the glade
To take his nurse his broken toy;
Sometimes a thrush flit overhead
Deep in her unknown day's employ.

Here at my feet what wonders pass,
What endless, active life is here!
W^hat blowing daisies, fragrant grass!
An air-stirr'd forest, fresh and clear.

Scarce fresher is the mountain sod
Where the tired angler lies, stretch'd out,
And, eased of basket and of rod,
Counts his day's spoil, the spotted trout.

In the huge world which roars hard by
Be others happy, if they can!
But in my helpless cradle I
Was breathed on by the rural Pan.

I, on men's impious uproar hurlM,
Think often, as I hear them rave,
That peace has left the upper world,
And now keeps only in the grave.

POEMS OF REST

Yet here is peace for ever new!
When I, who watch them, am away,
Still all things in this glade go through
The changes of their quiet day.

Then to their happy rest they pass;
The flowers close, the birds are fed,
The night comes down upon the grass,
The child sleeps warmly in his bed.

Calm soul of all things! make it mine
To feel, amid the city's jar,
That there abides a peace of thine,
Man did not make, and cannot mar!

The will to neither strive nor cry,
The power to feel with others give!
Calm, calm me more! nor let me die
Before I have begun to live.

1852

PROGRESS

THE Master stood upon the Mount, and taught.
He saw a fire in his disciples' eyes;
'The old law,' they said, 'is wholly come to naught!
Behold the new world rise!

'Was it,' the Lord then said, 'with scorn ye saw
The old law observed by Scribes and Pharisees?
I say unto you, see ye keep that law
More faithfully than these!

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

'Too hasty heads for ordering worlds, alas!
Think not that I to annul the law have will'd;
No jot, no tittle from the law shall pass,
Till all hath been fulfill'd.'

So Christ said eighteen hundred years ago.
And what then shall be said to those to-day
Who cry aloud to lay the old world low
To clear the new world's way?

'Religious fervours! ardour misapplied!
Hence, hence,' they cry, 'ye do but keep man blind!
But keep him self-immersed, preoccupied,
And lame the active mind.'

Ah! from the old world let some one answer give:
'Scorn ye this world, their tears, their inward cares?
I say unto you, see that your *souls* live
A deeper life than theirs.

'Say ye: The spirit of man has found new roads,
And we must leave the old faiths, and walk therein?—
Leave then the cross as ye have left carved gods,
But guard the fire within!

'Bright, else, and fast the stream of life may roll,
And no man may the other's hurt behold;
Yet each will have one anguish—his own soul
Which perishes of cold.'

Here let that voice make end! then let a strain
From a far lonelier distance, like the wind
Be heard, floating through heaven, and fill again
These men's profoundest mind:

'Children of men! The unseen Power, whose eye
For ever doth accompany mankind,
Hath look'd on no religion scornfully
That man did ever find.

'Which has not taught weak wills how much they can,
Which has not fall'n on the dry heart like rain,
Which has not cried to sunk, self-weary man:

Thou must be born again!

'Children of men! not that your age excel
In pride of life the ages of your sires,
But that *you* think clear, feel deep, bear fruit well,
The friend of man desires.'

1852

RESIGNATION

To die be given us, or attain!

Fierce work it were, to do again.

So pilgrims, bound for Mecca, pray'd
At burning noon: so warriors said,
Scarf'd with the cross, who watch'd the miles
Of dust that wreath'd their struggling files
Down Lydian mountains: so when snows
Round Alpine summits eddying rose,
The Goth, bound Rome-wards: so, the Hun,
Grouch'd on his saddle, when the sun
Went lurid down o'er flooded plains
Through which the groaning Danube strains
To the drear Euxine: so pray all,
Whom labours, self-ordam'd, enthrall;
Because they to themselves propose
On this side the all-common close
A goal which, gain'd, may give repose.
So pray they: and to stand again
Where they stood once, to them were pain;
Pain to thread back and to renew
Past straits, and currents long steer'd through.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

But milder natures, and more free;
Whom an unblam'd severity
Hath freed from passions, and the state
Of struggle these necessitate;
Whom schooling of the stubborn mind
Hath made, or birth hath found, resign'd;
These mourn not, that their goings pay
Obedience to the passing day:
These claim not every laughing Hour
For handmaid to their striding power;
Each in her turn, with torch uprear'd,
To await their march; and when appear'd,
Through the cold gloom, with measur'd race,
To usher for a destin'd space,
(Her own sweet errands all foregone)
The too imperious Traveller on.
These, Fausta, ask not this: nor thou,
Time's chafing prisoner, ask it now.

We left, just ten years since, you say,
That wayside inn we left to-day:¹
Our jovial host, as forth we fare,
Shouts greeting from his easy chair;
High on a bank our leader stands,
Reviews and ranks his motley bands;
Makes clear our goal to every eye,
The valley's western boundary.
A gate swings to: our tide hath flow'd
Already from the silent road.
The valley pastures, one by one,
Are threaded, quiet in the sun:
And now beyond the rude stone bridge
Slopes gracious up the western ridge.
Its woody border, and the last
Of its dark upland farms is past;
Cool farms, with open-lying stores,
Under their burnish'd sycamores:

¹At Wythburn in the Lake District.

POEMS OF REST

All past: and through the ties we glide
Emerging on the green hill-side.
There climbing hangs, a far-seen sign,
Our wavering, many-colour'd line;
There winds, upstreaming slowly still
Over the summit of the hill.
And now, in front, behold outspread
Those upper regions we must tread;
Mild hollows, and clear heathy swells,
The cheerful silence of the fells.
Some two hours' march, with serious air,
Through the deep noontide heats we fare:
The red-grouse, springing at our sound,
Skims, now and then, the shining ground;
No life, save his and ours, intrudes
Upon these breathless solitudes.
O joy! again the farms appear;
Cool shade is there, and rustic cheer:
There springs the brook will guide us down,
Bright comrade, to the noisy town.
Lingering, we follow down: we gain
The town, the highway, and the plain.
And many a mile of dusty way,
Parch'd and road-worn, we made that day;
But, Fausta, I remember well
That, as the balmy darkness fell,
We bath'd our hands, with speechless glee,
That night, in the wide-glimmering Sea.

Once more we tread this self-same road
Fausta, which ten years since we trod:
Alone we tread it, you and I;
Ghosts of that boisterous company.
Here, where the brook shines, near its head,
In its clear, shallow, turf-fring'd bed;
Here, whence the eye first sees, far down,
Capp'd with faint smoke, the noisy town;
Here sit we, and again unroll,
Though slowly, the familiar whole.

The solemn wastes of heathy hill
 Sleep in the July sunshine still:
 The self-same shadows now, as then,
 Play through this grassy upland glen:
 The loose dark stones on the green way
 Lie strewn, it seems, where then they lay:
 On this mild bank above the stream,
 (You crush them) the blue gentians gleam.
 Still this wild brook, the rushes cool,
 The sailing foam, the shining pool.—
 These are not chang'd: and we, you say,
 Are scarce more changed, in truth, than they.

The Gipsies, whom we met below,
 They too have long roam'd to and fro.
 They ramble, leaving, where they pass,
 Their fragments on the cumber'd grass.
 And often to some kindly place,
 Chance guides the migratory race
 Where, though long wanderings intervene,
 They recognize a former scene.
 The dingy tents are pitch'd: the fires
 Give to the wind their wavering spires;
 In dark knots crouch round the wild flame
 Their children, as when first they came;
 They see their shackled beasts again
 Move, browsing, up the grey-walPd lane.
 Signs are not wanting, which might raise
 The ghosts in them of former days:
 Signs are not wanting, if they would;
 Suggestions to disquietude.
 For them, for all, Time's busy touch,
 While it mends little, troubles much:
 Their joints grow stiffer; but the year
 Runs his old round of dubious cheer:
 Chilly they grow; yet winds in March,
 Still, sharp as ever, freeze and parch:
 They must live still; and yet, God knows,
 Crowded and keen the country grows:

POEMS OF REST

It seems as if, in their decay,
The Law grew stronger every day.
So might they reason; so compare,
Fausta, times past with times that are.
But no:—they rubb'd through yesterday
In their hereditary way;
And they will rub through, if they can,
To-morrow on the self-same plan;
Till death arrives to supersede,
For them, vicissitude and need.

The Poet, to whose mighty heart
Heaven doth a quicker pulse impart,
Subdues that energy to scan
Not his own course, but that of Man.
Though he move mountains; though his day
Be pass'd on the proud heights of sway;
Though he hath loos'd a thousand chains;
Though he hath borne immortal pains;
Action and suffering though he know;
—He hath not liv'd, if he lives so.
He sees, in some great-historied land,
A ruler of the people stand;
Sees his strong thought in fiery flood
Roll through the heaving multitude;
Exults: yet for no moment's space
Envies the all-regarded place.
Beautiful eyes meet his; and he
Bears to admire uncravmgly:
They pass; he, mingled with the crowd,
Is in their far-off triumphs proud.
From some high station he looks down,
At sunset, on a populous town;
Surveys each happy group that fleets,
Toil ended, through the shining streets,
Each with some errand of its own;—
And does not say, / *am along*.
He sees the gentle stir of birth
When Morning purifies the earth;

He leans upon a gate, and sees
 The pastures, and the quiet trees.
 Low woody hill, with gracious bound,
 Folds the still valley almost round;
 The cuckoo, loud on some high lawn,
 Is answer'd from the depth of dawn;
 In the hedge straggling to the stream,
 Pale, dew-drench'd, half-shut roses gleam:
 But where the further side slopes down
 He sees the drowsy new-wak'd clown
 In his white quamt-embroider'd frock
 Make, whistling, towards his mist-wreath'd flock;
 Slowly, behind the heavy tread,
 The wet flower'd grass heaves up its head.—
 Lean'd on his gate, he gazes: tears
 Are in his eyes, and in his ears
 The murmur of a thousand years:
 Before him he sees Life unroll,
 A placid and continuous whole;
 That general Life, which does not cease,
 Whose secret is not joy, but peace;
 That Life, whose dumb wish is not miss'd
 If birth proceeds, if things subsist:
 The Life of plants, and stones, and rain:
 The Life he craves; if not in vain
 Fate gave, what Chance shall not control,
 His sad lucidity of soul.

You listen:—but that wandering smile,
 Fausta, betrays you cold the while.
 Your eyes pursue the bells of foam
 Wash'd, eddying, from this bank, their home.
*Those Gipsies, so your thoughts I scan,
 Are less, the Poet more, than man.
 They feel not, though they move and see'
 Deeply the Poet feels; but he
 Breathes, when he will, immortal air,
 Where Orpheus and where Homer are.*

POEMS OF REST

*In the day's life, whose iron round
Hems us all in, he is not bound.
He escapes thence, but we abide.
Not deep the Poets sees, but wide.*

The World in which we live and move
Outlasts aversion, outlasts love:
Outlasts each effort, interest, hope,
Remorse, grief, joy:—and were the scope
Of these affections wider made,
Man still would see, and see dismay'd,
Beyond his passion's widest range
Far regions of eternal change.
Nay, and since death, which wipes out man,
Finds him with many an unsolved plan,
With much unknown, and much untried,
Wonder not dead, and thirst not dried,
Still gazing on the ever full
Eternal mundane spectacle;
This World in which we draw our breath,
In some sense, Fausta, outlasts death.

Blame thou not therefore him, who dares
Judge vain beforehand human cares.
Whose natural insight can discern
What through experience others learn.
Who needs not love and power, to know
Love transient, power an unreal show.
Who treads at ease life's uncheer'd ways:—
Him blame not, Fausta, rather praise.
Rather thyself for some aim pray
Nobler than this—to fill the day.
Rather, that heart, which burns in thee,
Ask, not to amuse, but to set free.
Be passionate hopes not ill resigned
For quiet, and a fearless mind.
And though Fate grudge to thee and me
The Poet's rapt security,

Yet they, believe me, who await
 No gifts from Chance, have conquer'd Fate.
 They, winning room to see and hear,
 And to men's business not too near,
 Through clouds of individual strife
 Draw homewards to the general Life.
 Like leaves by suns not yet uncurl'd:
 To the wise, foolish; to the world,
 Weak: yet not weak, I might reply,
 Not foolish, Fausta, in His eye,
 To whom each moment in its race,
 Crowd as we will its neutral space,
 Is but a quiet watershed
 Whence, equally, the Seas of Life and Death are fed.

Enough, we live:—and if a life,
 With large results so little rife,
 Though bearable, seem hardly worth
 This pomp of worlds, this pain of birth;
 Yet, Fausta, the mute turf we tread,
 The solemn hills around us spread,
 This stream that falls incessantly,
 The strange-seawl'd rocks, the lonely sky,
 If I might lend their life a voice,
 Seem to bear rather than rejoice.
 And even could the intemperate prayer
 Man iterates, while these forbear,
 For movement, for an ampler sphere,
 Pierce Fate's impenetrable ear;
 Not milder is the general lot
 Because our spirits have forgot,
 In action's dizzying eddy whirl'd,
 The something that infects the world.

1849

SHAKESPEARE

OTHERS abide our question. Thou art free.
 We ask and ask: Thou smilest and art still,
 Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill
 That to the stars uncrowns his majesty,
 Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,
 Making the Heaven of Heavens his dwelling-place,
 Spares but the cloudy border of his base
 To the foil'd searching of mortality:
 And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
 Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure,
 Didst walk on Earth unguess'd at. Better so!
 All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
 All weakness that impairs, all griefs that bow,
 Find their sole voice in that victorious brow.

1849

A WISH

I ASK not that my bed of death
 From bands of greedy heirs be free;
 For these besiege the latest breath
 Of fortune's favour'd sons, not me.

I ask not each kind soul to keep
 Tearless, when of my death he hears;
 Let those who will, if any, weep!
 There are worse plagues on earth than tears.

I ask but that my death may find
 The freedom to my life denied;
 Ask but the folly of mankind,
 Then, then at last, to quit my side.

Spare me the whispering, crowded room,
The friends who come, and gape, and go;
The ceremonious air of gloom—
All, that makes death a hideous show!

Nor bring, to see me cease to live,
Some doctor full of phrase and fame,
To shake his sapient head and give
The ill he cannot cure a name.

Nor fetch, to take the accustom'd toll
Of the poor sinner bound for death,
His brother doctor of the soul,
To canvass with official breath

The future and its viewless things—
That undiscover'd mystery
Which one who feels death's winnowing wings
Must needs read clearer, sure, than he!

Bring none of these! but let me be,
While all around in silence lies,
Moved to the window near, and see
Once more before my dying eyes

Bathed in the sacred dews of morn
The wide aerial landscape spread—
The world which was ere I was born,
The world which lasts when I am dead.

Which never was the friend of *one*,
Nor promised love it could not give
But lit for all its generous sun,
And lived itself, and made us live.

There let me gaze, till I become
In soul with what I gaze on wed!
To feel the universe my home;
To have before my mind—instead

POEMS OF REST

Of the sick-room, the mortal strife,
The turmoil for a little breath—
The pure eternal course of life,
Not human combatings with death.

Thus feeling, gazing, let me grow
Compos'd, refresh'd, ennobled, clear;
Then willing let my spirit go
To work or wait elsewhere or here!

1867

OBERMANN ONCE MORE

Savez-vous quelque bien qm console du regret d'un monde?
OBERMANN.

GLION?—Ah, twenty years, it cuts
All meaning from a name!
White houses prank where once were huts!
Glion! but not the same,

And yet I know not. All unchanged
The turf, the pines, the sky!
The hills in their old order ranged!
The lake, with Chillon by!

And 'neath those chestnut-trees, where stiff
And stony mounts the way,
Their crackling husk-heaps burn, as if
I left them yesterday.

Across the valley, on that slope.
The huts of Avant shine—
Its pines under their branches ope
Ways for the tinkling kine.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Full-foaming milk-pails, Alpine fare,
Sweet heaps of fresh-cut grass,
Invite to rest the traveller there
Before he climb the pass—

The gentian-flower'd pass, its crown
With yellow spires aflame,
Whence drops the path to Alliere down
And walls where Byron came,

By their green river who doth change
His birth-name just below—'
Orchard, and croft, and full-stored grange
Nursed by his pastoral flow.

But stop!—to fetch back thoughts that stray
Beyond this gracious bound,
The cone of Jaman, pale and grey,
See, in the blue profound!

Ah, Jaman! delicately tall
Above his sun-warm'd firs—
What thoughts to me his rocks recall!
What memories he stirs!

And who but thou must be, in truth,
Obermann! with me here?
Thou master of my wandering youth,
But left this many a year!

Yes, I forget the world's work wrought,
Its warfare waged with pain!
An eremite with thee, in thought
Once more I slip my chain

*The river Saane becomes the Sarine below Montbovon, the Vails where Byron came'.

'POEMS OF REST

And to thy mountain-chalet come
And lie beside its door
And hear the wild bee's Alpine hum
And thy sad, tranquil lore.

Again I feel its words inspire
Their mournful calm—serene,
Yet tinged with infinite desire
For all that *might* have been.

The harmony from which man swerved
Made his life's rule once more!
The universal order served!
Earth happier than before!

While thus I mused, night gently ran
Down over hill and wood.
Then, still and sudden, Obermann
On the grass near me stood.

Those pensive features well I knew,
On my mind, years before,
Imaged so oft, imaged so true!
A shepherd's garb he wore,

A mountain-flower was in his hand,
A book was in his breast;
Bent on my face, with gaze that scann'd
My soul, his eyes did rest.

'And is it thou,' he cried, 'so long
Held by the world which we
Loved not, who turnest from the throng
Back to thy youth and me?

'And from thy world, with heart opprest,
Chooseth thou *now* to turn?—
Ah me, we anchorites knew it best!
Best can its course discern!

'Thou fledd'st me when the ungenial earth,
Thou soughtest, lay in gloom.
Return'st thou in her hour of birth,
Of hopes and hearts in bloom?

'Wellnigh two thousand years have brought
Their load, and gone away,
Since last on earth there lived and wrought
A world like ours to-day.

'Like ours it look'd in outward air!
Its head was clear and true,
Sumptuous its clothing, rich its fare,
No pause its action knew;

'Stout was its arm, each pulse and bone
Seem'd puissant and alive—
But, ah, its heart, its heart was stone,
And so it could not thrive!

'On that hard Pagan world disgust
And secret loathing fell.
Deep weariness and sated lust
Made human life a hell.

'In his cool hall, with haggard eyes,
The Roman noble lay;
He drove abroad, in furious guise,
Along the Appian way;

'He made a feast, drank fierce and fast,
And crown'd his hair with flowers—
No easier nor no quicker pass'd
The impracticable hours.

'The brooding East with awe beheld
Her impious younger world;
The Roman tempest swell'd and swell'd,
And on her head was hurl'd.

POEMS OF REST

'The East bow'd low before the blast,
In patient, deep disdain.
She let the legions thunder past,
And plunged in thought again.

'So well she mused, a morning broke
Across her spirit grey.
A conquering, new-born joy awoke,
And fill'd her life with day.

' "Poor world," she cried, "so deep accurst!
That runn'st from pole to pole
To seek a draught to slake thy thirst—
Go, seek it in thy soul!"

'She heard it, the victorious West!
In crown and sword array'd.
She felt the void which mined her breast,
She shiver'd and obey'd.

'She veild her eagles, snapp'd her sword,
And laid her sceptre down;
Her stately purple she abhorr'd,
And her imperial crown;

'She broke her flutes, she stopp'd her sports,
Her artists could not please;
She tore her books, she shut her courts,
She fled her palaces;

'Lust of the eye and pride of life
She left it all behind,
And hurried, torn with inward strife,
The wilderness to find.

'Tears wash'd the trouble from her face!
She changed into a child.
'Mid weeds and wrecks she stood—a place
Of ruin—but she smiled!

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

'Oh, had I lived in that great day,
How had its glory new
Fill'd earth and heaven, and caught away
My ravish'd spirit too!

'No cloister-floor of humid stone
Had been too cold for me;
For me no Eastern desert lone
Had been too far to flee.

'No thoughts that to the world belong
Had stood against the wave
Of love which set so deep and strong
From Christ's then open grave.

'No lonely life had pass'd too slow
When I could hourly see
That wan, naiPd Form, with head droop'd low,
Upon the bitter tree;

'Could see the Mother with the Child
Whose tender winning arts
Have to his little arms beguiled
So many wounded hearts!

'And centuries came, and ran their course,
And unspent all that time
Still, still went forth that Child's dear force,
And still was at its prime.

'Ay, ages long endured his span
Of life, 'tis true received,
That gracious Child, that thorn-crown'd Man!
He lived while we believed.

'While we believed, on earth he went,
And open stood his grave.
Men call'd from chamber, church, and tent,
And Christ was by to save.

'Now he is dead. Far hence he lies
 In the lorn Syrian town,
 And on his grave, with shining eyes,
 The Syrian stars look down.

'In vain men still, with hoping new,
 Regard his death-place dumb,
 And say the stone is not yet to,
 And wait for words to come.

'Ah, from that silent sacred land,
 Of sun, and arid stone,
 And crumbling wall, and sultry sand,
 Comes now one word alone!

'From David's lips this word did roll,
 Tis true and living yet:
*No man can save his brother's soul,
 Nor pay his brothers debt.*

'Alone, self-poised, henceforward man
 Must labour; must resign
 His all too human creeds, and scan
 Simply the way divine.

'But slow that tide of common thought,
 Which bathed our life, retired.
 Slow, slow the old world wore to naught,
 And pulse by pulse expired.

'Its frame yet stood without a breach
 When blood and warmth were fled;
 And still it spake its wonted speech—
 But every word was dead.

'And oh, we cried, that on this corse
 Might fall a freshening storm!
 Rive its dry bones, and with new force
 A new-sprung world inform!

'Down came the storm! In ruin fell
The outworn world we knew.
It pass'd, that elemental swell!
Again appear'd the blue.

'The sun shone in the new-wash'd sky—
And what from heaven saw he?
Blocks of the past, like icebergs high,
Float in a rolling sea.

'Upon them ply the race of man
All they before endeavour'd;
They come and go, they work and plan,
And know not they are sever'd.

'Poor fragments of a broken world
Whereon we pitch our tent!
Why were ye too to death not hurl'd
When your world's day was spent?

'The glow of central fire is done
Which with its fusing flame
Knit all your parts, and kept you one;—
But ye, ye are the same!

'The past, its mask of union on,
Had ceased to live and thrive.
The past, its mask of union gone,
Say, is it more alive?

'Your creeds are dead, your rites are dead,
Your social order too.
Where tarries he, the power who said:
See, I make all things new?

'The millions suffer still, and grieve;
And what can helpers heal
With old-world cures men half believe
For woes they wholly feel?

POEMS OF REST

'And yet they have such need of joy!
And joy whose grounds are true!
And joy that should all hearts employ
As when the past was new!

'Ah, not the emotion of that past,
Its common hope, were vain!
A new such hope must dawn at last,
Or man must toss in pain.

'But now the past is out of date,
The future not yet born—
And who can be *alone* elate,
While the world lies forlorn?

'Then to the wilderness I fled.
There among Alpine snows
And pastoral huts I hid my head,
And sought and found repose.

'It was not yet the appointed hour.
Sad, patient, and resign'd,
I watch'd the crocus fade and flower,
I felt the sun and wind.

'The day I lived in was not mine—
Man gets no second day.
In dreams I saw the future shine,
But ah, I could not stay!

'Action I had not, followers, fame.
I pass'd obscure, alone.
The after-world forgets my name,
Nor do I wish it known.

'Gloom-wrapt within, I lived and died,
And knew my life was vain.
With fate I murmur not, nor chide;
At S&vres by the Seine

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

'(If Paris that brief flight allow)
My humble tomb explore;
It bears: *Eternity, be thou*
My refuge! and no more.

'But thou, whom fellowship of mood
Did make from haunts of strife
Come to my mountain solitude
And learn my frustrate life;

'O thou, who, ere thy flying span
Was past of cheerful youth,
Didst seek the solitary man
And love his cheerless truth—

'Despair not thou as I despair'd,
Nor be cold gloom thy prison!
Forward the gracious hours have fared,
And see! the sun is risen.

'He melts the icebergs of the past,
A green, new earth appears.
Millions, whose life in ice lay fast,
Have thoughts, and smiles, and tears.

The world's great order dawns in sheen
After long darkness rude,
Divinelier imaged, clearer seen,
With happier zeal pursued.

'With hope extinct and brow composed
I mark'd the present die;
Its term of life was nearly closed,
Yet it had more than I.

'But thou, though to the world's new hour
Thou come with aspect marr'd,
Shorn of the joy, the bloom, the power,
Which best beseem its bard;

POEMS OF REST

Though more than half thy years be past,
And spent thy youthful prime;
Though, round thy firmer manhood cast,
Hang weeds of our sad time,

'Whereof thy youth felt all the spell,
And traversed all the shade—
Though late, though dimm'd, though weak, yet tell
Hope to a world new-made!

'Help it to reach our deep desire,
The dream which filPd our brain,
Fix'd in our soul a thirst like fire
Immedicable pain!

'Which to the wilderness drove out
Our life, to Alpine snow;
And palsied all our deed with doubt
And all our word with woe—

'What still of strength is left, employ,
That end to help men gain:
One mighty wave of thought and joy
Lifting mankind amain!'

The vision ended; I awoke
As out of sleep, and no
Voice moved—only the torrent broke
The silence, far below.

Soft darkness on the turf did lie;
Solemn, o'er hut and wood,
In the yet star-sown nightly sky,
The peak of Jaman stood.

Still in my soul the voice I heard
Of Obermann—away
I turn'd; by some vague impulse stirr'd,
Along the rocks of Nave

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

And Sonchaud's piny flanks I gaze
And the blanch'd summit bare
Of Malatrait, to where in haze
The Valais opens fair,

And the domed Velan with his snows
Behind the upcrowding hills
Doth all the heavenly opening close
Which the Rhone's murmur fills—

And glorious there, without a sound,
Across the glimmering lake,
High in the Valais depth profound,
I saw the morning break.

1867

