

# Studies in Song eBook

## Studies in Song by Algernon Swinburne

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# Page 1

## DEDICATION.

*To Mrs. Lynn Linton.*

*Daughter in spirit elect and consecrate  
By love and reverence of the Olympian sire  
Whom I too loved and worshipped, seeing so great,  
And found so gracious toward my long desire  
To bid that love in song before his gate  
Sound, and my lute be loyal to his lyre,  
To none save one it now may dedicate  
Song's new burnt-offering on a century's pyre.  
And though the gift be light  
As ashes in men's sight,  
Left by the flame of no ethereal fire,  
Yet, for his worthier sake  
Than words are worthless, take  
This wreath of words ere yet their hour expire:  
So, haply, from some heaven above,  
He, seeing, may set next yours my sacrifice of love.*

*May 24, 1880.*

## SONG FOR THE CENTENARY OF WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

1.

Five years beyond an hundred years have seen  
Their winters, white as faith's and age's hue,  
Melt, smiling through brief tears that broke between,  
And hope's young conquering colours reared anew,  
Since, on the day whose edge for kings made keen  
Smote sharper once than ever storm-wind blew,  
A head predestined for the girdling green  
That laughs at lightning all the seasons through,  
Nor frost or change can sunder  
Its crown untouched of thunder  
Leaf from least leaf of all its leaves that grew  
Alone for brows too bold  
For storm to sear of old,  
Elect to shine in time's eternal view,  
Rose on the verge of radiant life  
Between the winds and sunbeams mingling love with strife.



2.

The darkling day that gave its bloodred birth  
To Milton's white republic undefiled  
That might endure so few fleet years on earth  
Bore in him likewise as divine a child;  
But born not less for crowns of love and mirth,  
Of palm and myrtle passionate and mild,  
The leaf that girds about with gentler girth  
The brow steel-bound in battle, and the wild  
Soft spray that flowers above  
The flower-soft hair of love;  
And the white lips of wayworn winter smiled  
And grew serene as spring's  
When with stretched clouds like wings  
Or wings like drift of snow-clouds massed and piled  
The godlike giant, softening, spread  
A shadow of stormy shelter round the new-born head.

3.

And o'er it brightening bowed the wild-haired hour,  
And touched his tongue with honey and with fire,  
And breathed between his lips the note of power  
That makes of all the winds of heaven a lyre  
Whose strings are stretched from topmost peaks that tower  
To softest springs of waters that suspire,  
With sounds too dim to shake the lowliest flower  
Breathless with hope and dauntless with desire:

## Page 2

And bright before his face  
That Hour became a Grace,  
As in the light of their Athenian quire  
When the Hours before the sun  
And Graces were made one,  
Called by sweet Love down from the aerial gyre  
By one dear name of natural joy,  
To bear on her bright breast from heaven a heaven-born boy.

4.

Ere light could kiss the little lids in sunder  
Or love could lift them for the sun to smite,  
His fiery birth-star as a sign of wonder  
Had risen, perplexing the presageful night  
With shadow and glory around her sphere and under  
And portents prophesying by sound and sight;  
And half the sound was song and half was thunder,  
And half his life of lightning, half of light:  
And in the soft clenched hand  
Shone like a burning brand  
A shadowy sword for swordless fields of fight,  
Wrought only for such lord  
As so may wield the sword  
That all things ill be put to fear and flight  
Even at the flash and sweep and gleam  
Of one swift stroke beheld but in a shuddering dream.

5.

Like the sun's rays that blind the night's wild beasts  
The sword of song shines as the swordsman sings;  
From the west wind's verge even to the arduous east's  
The splendour of the shadow that it flings  
Makes fire and storm in heaven above the feasts  
Of men fulfilled with food of evil things;  
Strikes dumb the lying and hungering lips of priests,  
Smites dead the slaying and ravening hands of kings;  
Turns dark the lamp's hot light,  
And turns the darkness bright



As with the shadow of dawn's reverberate wings;  
And far before its way  
Heaven, yearning toward the day,  
Shines with its thunder and round its lightning rings;  
And never hand yet earlier played  
With that keen sword whose hilt is cloud, and fire its blade.

6.

As dropping flakes of honey-heavy dew  
More soft than slumber's, fell the first note's sound  
From strings the swift young hand strayed lightlier through  
Than leaves through calm air wheeling toward the ground  
Stray down the drifting wind when skies are blue  
Nor yet the wings of latter winds unbound,  
Ere winter loosen all the AEolian crew  
With storm unleashed behind them like a hound.  
As lightly rose and sank  
Beside a green-flowered bank  
The clear first notes his burning boyhood found  
To sing her sacred praise  
Who rode her city's ways  
Clothed with bright hair and with high purpose crowned;  
A song of soft presageful breath,  
Prefiguring all his love and faith in life and death;

7.





## Page 3

Who should love two things only and only praise  
More than all else for ever: even the glory  
Of goodly beauty in women, whence all days  
Take light whereby death's self seems transitory;  
And loftier love than loveliest eyes can raise,  
Love that wipes off the miry stains and gory  
From Time's worn feet, besmirched on bloodred ways,  
And lightens with his light the night of story;  
Love that lifts up from dust  
Life, and makes darkness just,  
And purges as with fire of purgatory  
The dense disastrous air,  
To burn old falsehood bare  
And give the wind its ashes heaped and hoary;  
Love, that with eyes of ageless youth  
Sees on the breast of Freedom borne her nursling Truth.

8.

For at his birth the sistering stars were one  
That flamed upon it as one fiery star;  
Freedom, whose light makes pale the mounting sun,  
And Song, whose fires are quenched when Freedom's are.  
Of all that love not liberty let none  
Love her that fills our lips with fire from far  
To mix with winds and seas in unison  
And sound athwart life's tideless harbour-bar  
Out where our songs fly free  
Across time's bounded sea,  
A boundless flight beyond the dim sun's car,  
Till all the spheres of night  
Chime concord round their flight  
Too loud for blasts of warring change to mar,  
From stars that sang for Homer's birth  
To these that gave our Landor welcome back from earth

9.

Shine, as above his cradle, on his grave,  
Stars of our worship, lights of our desire!  
For never man that heard the world's wind rave  
To you was truer in trust of heart and lyre:  
Nor Greece nor England on a brow more brave  
Beheld your flame against the wind burn higher:



Nor all the gusts that blanch life's worldly wave  
With surf and surge could quench its flawless fire:  
No blast of all that blow  
Might bid the torch burn low  
That lightens on us yet as o'er his pyre,  
Indomitable of storm,  
That now no flaws deform  
Nor thwart winds baffle ere it all aspire,  
One light of godlike breath and flame,  
To write on heaven with man's most glorious names his name.

10.

The very dawn was dashed with stormy dew  
And freaked with fire as when God's hand would mar  
Palaces reared of tyrants, and the blue  
Deep heaven was kindled round her thunderous car,  
That saw how swift a gathering glory grew  
About him risen, ere clouds could blind or bar  
A splendour strong to burn and burst them through  
And mix in one sheer light things near and far.  
First flew before his path  
Light shafts of love and wrath,  
But winged and edged as elder warriors' are;  
Then rose a light that showed  
Across the midsea road  
From radiant Calpe to revealed Masar  
The way of war and love and fate  
Between the goals of fear and fortune, hope and hate.



## Page 4

11.

Mine own twice banished fathers' harbour-land,  
Their nursing-mother France, the well-beloved,  
By the arduous blast of sanguine sunrise fanned,  
Flamed on him, and his burning lips were moved  
As that live statue's throned on Lybian sand  
When morning moves it, ere her light faith roved  
From promise, and her tyrant's poisonous hand  
Fed hope with Corsic honey till she proved  
More deadly than despair  
And falser even than fair,  
Though fairer than all elder hopes removed  
As landmarks by the crime  
Of inundating time;  
Light faith by grief too loud too long reproved:  
For even as in some darkling dance  
Wronged love changed hands with hate, and turned his heart from France.

12.

But past the snows and summits Pyrenean  
Love stronger-winged held more prevailing flight  
That o'er Tyrrhene, Iberian, and AEgean  
Shores lightened with one storm of sound and light.  
From earliest even to hoariest years one paeon  
Rang rapture through the fluctuant roar of fight,  
From Nestor's tongue in accents Achillean  
On death's blind verge dominant over night  
For voice as hand and hand  
As voice for one fair land  
Rose radiant, smote sonorous, past the height  
Where darkling pines enrobe  
The steel-cold Lake of Gaube,  
Deep as dark death and keen as death to smite,  
To where on peak or moor or plain  
His heart and song and sword were one to strike for Spain.

13.

Resurgent at his lifted voice and hand  
Pale in the light of war or treacherous fate  
Song bade before him all their shadows stand  
For whom his will unbarred their funeral grate.



The father by whose wrong revenged his land  
Was given for sword and fire to desolate  
Rose fire-encircled as a burning brand,  
Great as the woes he wrought and bore were great.  
Fair as she smiled and died,  
Death's crowned and breathless bride  
Smiled as one living even on craft and hate:  
And pity, a star unrisen,  
Scarce lit Ferrante's prison  
Ere night unnatural closed the natural gate  
That gave their life and love and light  
To those fair eyes despoiled by fratricide of sight.

14.

Tears bright and sweet as fire and incense fell  
In perfect notes of music-measured pain  
On veiled sweet heads that heard not love's farewell  
Sob through the song that bade them rise again;  
Rise in the light of living song, to dwell  
With memories crowned of memory: so the strain  
Made soft as heaven the stream that girdles hell  
And sweet the darkness of the breathless plain,  
And with Elysian flowers  
Recrowned the wreathless hours  
That mused and mourned upon their works in vain;  
For all their works of death  
Song filled with light and breath,  
And listening grief relaxed her lightening chain;  
For sweet as all the wide sweet south  
She found the song like honey from the lion's mouth.



## Page 5

15.

High from his throne in heaven Simonides,  
Crowned with mild aureole of memorial tears  
That the everlasting sun of all time sees  
All golden, molten from the forge of years,  
Smiled, as the gift was laid upon his knees  
Of songs that hang like pearls in mourners' ears,  
Mild as the murmuring of Hymettian bees  
And honied as their harvest, that endears  
The toil of flowery days;  
And smiling perfect praise  
Hailed his one brother mateless else of peers:  
Whom we that hear not him  
For length of date grown dim  
Hear, and the heart grows glad of grief that hears;  
And harshest heights of sorrowing hours,  
Like snows of Alpine April, melt from tears to flowers.

16.

Therefore to him the shadow of death was none,  
The darkness was not, nor the temporal tomb:  
And multitudinous time for him was one,  
Who bade before his equal seat of doom  
Rise and stand up for judgment in the sun  
The weavers of the world's large-historied loom,  
By their own works of light or darkness done  
Clothed round with light or girt about with gloom.  
In speech of purer gold  
Than even they spake of old  
He bade the breath of Sidney's lips relume  
The fire of thought and love  
That made his bright life move  
Through fair brief seasons of benignant bloom  
To blameless music ever, strong  
As death and sweet as death-annihilating song.

17.

Thought gave his wings the width of time to roam,  
Love gave his thought strength equal to release  
From bonds of old forgetful years, like foam  
Vanished, the fame of memories that decrease;



So strongly faith had fledged for flight from home  
The soul's large pinions till her strife should cease:  
And through the trumpet of a child of Rome  
Rang the pure music of the flutes of Greece.  
As though some northern hand  
Reft from the Latin land  
A spoil more costly than the Colchian fleece  
To clothe with golden sound  
Of old joy newly found  
And rapture as of penetrating peace  
The naked north-wind's cloudiest clime,  
And give its darkness light of the old Sicilian time.

18.

He saw the brand that fired the towers of Troy  
Fade, and the darkness at Oenone's prayer  
Close upon her that closed upon her boy,  
For all the curse of godhead that she bare;  
And the Apollonian serpent gleam and toy  
With scathless maiden limbs and shuddering hair;  
And his love smitten in their dawn of joy  
Leave Pan the pine-leaf of her change to wear;  
And one in flowery coils  
Caught as in fiery toils  
Smite Calydon with mourning unaware;  
And where her low turf shrine  
Showed Modesty divine  
The fairest mother's daughter far more fair  
Hide on her breast the heavenly shame  
That kindled once with love should kindle Troy with flame.



## Page 6

19.

Nor less the light of story than of song  
With graver glories girt his godlike head,  
Reverted alway from the temporal throng  
Of lives that live not toward the living dead.  
The shadows and the splendours of their throng  
Made bright and dark about his board and bed  
The lines of life and vision, sweet or strong  
With sound of lutes or trumpets blown, that led  
Forth of the ghostly gate  
Opening in spite of fate  
Shapes of majestic or tumultuous tread,  
Divine and direful things,  
These foul as priests or kings,  
Those fair as heaven or love or freedom, red  
With blood and green with palms and white  
With raiment woven of deeds divine and words of light.

20.

The thunder-fire of Cromwell, and the ray  
That keeps the place of Phocion's name serene  
And clears the cloud from Kosciusko's day,  
Alternate as dark hours with bright between,  
Met in the heaven of his high thought, which lay  
For all stars open that all eyes had seen  
Rise on the night or twilight of the way  
Where feet of human hopes and fears had been.  
Again the sovereign word  
On Milton's lips was heard  
Living: again the tender three days' queen  
Drew bright and gentle breath  
On the sharp edge of death:  
And, staged again to show of mortal scene,  
Tiberius, ere his name grew dire,  
Wept, stainless yet of empire, tears of blood and fire.

21.

Most ardent and most awful and most fond,  
The fervour of his Apollonian eye  
Yearned upon Hellas, yet enthralled in bond  
Of time whose years beheld her and past by



Silent and shameful, till she rose and donned  
The casque again of Pallas; for her cry  
Forth of the past and future, depths beyond  
This where the present and its tyrants lie,  
As one great voice of twain  
For him had pealed again,  
Heard but of hearts high as her own was high,  
High as her own and his  
And pure as love's heart is,  
That lives though hope at once and memory die:  
And with her breath his clarion's blast  
Was filled as cloud with fire or future souls with past.

22.

As a wave only obsequious to the wind  
Leaps to the lifting breeze that bids it leap,  
Large-hearted, and its thickening mane be thinned  
By the strong god's breath moving on the deep  
From utmost Atlas even to extremest Ind  
That shakes the plain where no men sow nor reap,  
So, moved with wrath toward men that ruled and sinned  
And pity toward all tears he saw men weep,  
Arose to take man's part  
His loving lion heart,  
Kind as the sun's that has in charge to keep  
Earth and the seed thereof  
Safe in his lordly love,  
Strong as sheer truth and soft as very sleep;  
The mightiest heart since Milton's leapt,  
The gentlest since the gentlest heart of Shakespeare slept.





## Page 7

23.

Like the wind's own on her divided sea  
His song arose on Corinth, and aloud  
Recalled her Isthmian song and strife when she  
Was thronged with glories as with gods in crowd  
And as the wind's own spirit her breath was free  
And as the heaven's own heart her soul was proud,  
But freer and prouder stood no son than he  
Of all she bare before her heart was bowed;  
None higher than he who heard  
Medea's keen last word  
Transpierce her traitor, and like a rushing cloud  
That sundering shows a star  
Saw pass her thunderous car  
And a face whiter and deadlier than a shroud  
That lightened from it, and the brand  
Of tender blood that falling seared his suppliant hand.

24.

More fair than all things born and slain of fate,  
More glorious than all births of days and nights,  
He bade the spirit of man regenerate,  
Rekindling, rise and reassume the rights  
That in high seasons of his old estate  
Clothed him and armed with majesties and might  
Heroic, when the times and hearts were great  
And in the depths of ages rose the heights  
Radiant of high deeds done  
And souls that matched the sun  
For splendour with the lightnings of their lights  
Whence even their uttered names  
Burn like the strong twin flames  
Of song that shakes a throne and steel that smites;  
As on Thermopylae when shone  
Leonidas, on Syracuse Timoleon.

25.

Or, sweeter than the breathless buds when spring  
With smiles and tears and kisses bids them breathe,  
Fell with its music from his quiring string  
Fragrance of pine-leaves and odorous heath



Twined round the lute whereto he sighed to sing  
Of the oak that screened and showed its maid beneath,  
Who seeing her bee crawl back with broken wing  
Faded, a fairer flower than all her wreath,  
And paler, though her oak  
Stood scathless of the stroke  
More sharp than edge of axe or wolfish teeth,  
That mixed with mortals dead  
Her own half heavenly head  
And life incorporate with a sylvan sheath,  
And left the wild rose and the dove  
A secret place and sacred from all guests but Love.

26.

But in the sweet clear fields beyond the river  
Dividing pain from peace and man from shade  
He saw the wings that there no longer quiver  
Sink of the hours whose parting footfalls fade  
On ears which hear the rustling amaranth shiver  
With sweeter sound of wind than ever made  
Music on earth: departing, they deliver  
The soul that shame or wrath or sorrow swayed;  
And round the king of men  
Clash the clear arms again,  
Clear of all soil and bright as laurel braid,  
That rang less high for joy  
Through the gates fallen of Troy  
Than here to hail the sacrificial maid,  
Iphigeneia, when the ford  
Fast-flowing of sorrows brought her father and their lord.



## Page 8

27.

And in the clear gulf of the hollow sea  
He saw light glimmering through the grave green gloom  
That hardly gave the sun's eye leave to see  
Cymodameia; but nor tower nor tomb,  
No tower on earth, no tomb of waves may be,  
That may not sometime by diviner doom  
Be plain and perview to the poet; he  
Bids time stand back from him and fate make room  
For passage of his feet,  
Strong as their own are fleet,  
And yield the prey no years may reassume  
Through all their clamorous track,  
Nor night nor day win back  
Nor give to darkness what his eyes illumine  
And his lips bless for ever: he  
Knows what earth knows not, sings truth sung not of the sea.

28.

Before the sentence of a curule chair  
More sacred than the Roman, rose and stood  
To take their several doom the imperial pair  
Diversely born of Venus, and in mood  
Diverse as their one mother, and as fair,  
Though like two stars contrasted, and as good,  
Though different as dark eyes from golden hair;  
One as that iron planet red like blood  
That bears among the stars  
Fierce witness of her Mars  
In bitter fire by her sweet light subdued;  
One, in the gentler skies  
Sweet as her amorous eyes:  
One proud of worlds and seas and darkness rude  
Composed and conquered; one content  
With lightnings from loved eyes of lovers lightly sent.

29.

And where Alpheus and where Ladon ran  
Radiant, by many a rushy and rippling cove  
More known to glance of god than wandering man,  
He sang the strife of strengths divine that strove,



Unequal, one with other, for a span,  
Who should be friends for ever in heaven above  
And here on pastoral earth: Arcadian Pan,  
And the awless lord of kings and shepherds, Love:  
All the sweet strife and strange  
With fervid counterchange  
Till one fierce wail through many a glade and grove  
Rang, and its breath made shiver  
The reeds of many a river,  
And the warm airs waxed wintry that it clove,  
Keen-edged as ice-retempered brand;  
Nor might god's hurt find healing save of godlike hand.

30.

As when the jarring gates of thunder ope  
Like earthquake felt in heaven, so dire a cry,  
So fearful and so fierce—'Give the sword scope!'—  
Rang from a daughter's lips, darkening the sky  
To the extreme azure of all its cloudless cope  
With starless horror: nor the God's own eye  
Whose doom bade smite, whose ordinance bade hope,  
Might well endure to see the adulteress die,  
The husband-slayer fordone  
By swordstroke of her son,  
Unutterable, unimaginable on high,  
On earth abhorrent, fell  
Beyond all scourge of hell,  
Yet righteous as redemption: Love stood nigh,  
Mute, sister-like, and closer clung  
Than all fierce forms of threatening coil and maddening tongue.



## Page 9

31.

All these things heard and seen and sung of old,  
He heard and saw and sang them. Once again  
Might foot of man tread, eye of man behold  
Things un beholden save of ancient men,  
Ways save by gods untrodden. In his hold  
The staff that stayed through some AEtnean glen  
The steps of the most highest, most awful-souled  
And mightiest-mouthed of singers, even as then  
Became a prophet's rod,  
A lyre on fire of God,  
Being still the staff of exile: yea, as when  
The voice poured forth on us  
Was even of AEschylus,  
And his one word great as the crying of ten,  
Crying in men's ears of wrath toward wrong,  
Of love toward right immortal, sanctified with song.

32.

Him too whom none save one before him ever  
Beheld, nor since hath man again beholden,  
Whom Dante seeing him saw not, nor the giver  
Of all gifts back to man by time withholden,  
Shakespeare—him too, whom sea-like ages sever,  
As waves divide men's eyes from lights upholden  
To landward, from our songs that find him never,  
Seeking, though memory fire and hope embolden—  
Him too this one song found,  
And raised at its sole sound  
Up from the dust of darkling dreams and olden  
Legends forlorn of breath,  
Up from the deeps of death,  
Ulysses: him whose name turns all songs golden,  
The wise divine strong soul, whom fate  
Could make no less than change and chance beheld him great.

33.

Nor stands the seer who raised him less august  
Before us, nor in judgment frail and rathe,  
Less constant or less loving or less just,  
But fruitful-ripe and full of tender faith,



Holding all high and gentle names in trust  
Of time for honour; so his quickening breath  
Called from the darkness of their martyred dust  
Our sweet Saints Alice and Elizabeth,  
Revived and re-inspired  
With speech from heavenward fired  
By love to say what Love the Archangel saith  
Only, nor may such word  
Save by such ears be heard  
As hear the tongues of angels after death  
Descending on them like a dove  
Has taken all earthly sense of thought away but love.

34.

All sweet, all sacred, all heroic things,  
All generous names and loyal, and all wise,  
With all his heart in all its wayfarings  
He sought, and worshipped, seeing them with his eyes  
In very present glory, clothed with wings  
Of words and deeds and dreams immortal, rise  
Visible more than living slaves and kings,  
Audible more than actual vows and lies:  
These, with scorn's fieriest rod,  
These and the Lord their God,  
The Lord their likeness, tyrant of the skies  
As they Lord Gods of earth,  
These with a rage of mirth  
He mocked and scourged and spat on, in such wise  
That none might stand before his rod,  
And these being slain the Spirit alone be lord or God.



## Page 10

35.

For of all souls for all time glorious none  
Loved Freedom better, of all who have loved her best,  
Than he who wrote that scripture of the sun  
Writ as with fire and light on heaven's own crest,  
Of all words heard on earth the noblest one  
That ever spake for souls and left them blest:  
*Gladly we should rest ever, had we Won  
freedom: We have lost, and very gladly rest.*  
O poet hero, lord  
And father, we record  
Deep in the burning tablets of the breast  
Thankfully those divine  
And living words of thine  
For faith and comfort in our hearts imprest  
With strokes engraven past hurt of years  
And lines inured with fire of immemorial tears.

36.

But who being less than thou shall sing of thee  
Words worthy of more than pity or less than scorn?  
Who sing the golden garland woven of three,  
Thy daughters, Graces mightier than the morn,  
More godlike than the graven gods men see  
Made all but all immortal, human born  
And heavenly natured? With the first came He,  
Led by the living hand, who left forlorn  
Life by his death, and time  
More by his life sublime  
Than by the lives of all whom all men mourn,  
And even for mourning praise  
Heaven, as for all those days  
These dead men's lives clothed round with glories worn  
By memory till all time lie dead,  
And higher than all behold the bay round Shakespeare's head.

37.

Then, fairer than the fairest Grace of ours,  
Came girt with Grecian gold the second Grace,  
And verier daughter of his most perfect hours  
Than any of latter time or alien place



Named, or with hair inwoven of English flowers  
Only, nor wearing on her statelier face  
The lordlier light of Athens. All the Powers  
That graced and guarded round that holiest race,  
That heavenliest and most high  
Time hath seen live and die,  
Poured all their power upon him to retrace  
The erased immortal roll  
Of Love's most sovereign scroll  
And Wisdom's warm from Freedom's wide embrace,  
The scroll that on Aspasia's knees  
Laid once made manifest the Olympian Pericles.

38.

Clothed on with tenderest weft of Tuscan air,  
Came laughing like Etrurian spring the third,  
With green Valdelsa's hill-flowers in her hair  
Deep-drenched with May-dews, in her voice the bird  
Whose voice hath night and morning in it; fair  
As the ambient gold of wall-flowers that engird  
The walls engirdling with a circling stair  
My sweet San Gimignano: nor a word  
Fell from her flowerlike mouth  
Not sweet with all the south;  
As though the dust shrined in Certaldo stirred



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And spake, as o'er it shone  
That bright Pentameron,  
And his own vines again and chestnuts heard  
Boccaccio: nor swift Elsa's chime  
Mixed not her golden babble with Petrarca's rhyme.

39.

No lovelier laughed the garden which receives  
Yet, and yet hides not from our following eyes  
With soft rose-laurels and low strawberry-leaves,  
Ternissa, sweet as April-coloured skies,  
Bowed like a flowering reed when May's wind heaves  
The reed-bed that the stream kisses and sighs,  
In love that shrinks and murmurs and believes  
What yet the wisest of the starriest wise  
Whom Greece might ever hear  
Speaks in the gentlest ear  
That ever heard love's lips philosophize  
With such deep-reasoning words  
As blossoms use and birds,  
Nor heeds Leontion lingering till they rise  
Far off, in no wise over far,  
Beneath a heaven all amorous of its first-born star.

40.

What sound, what storm and splendour of what fire,  
Darkening the light of heaven, lightening the night,  
Rings, rages, flashes round what ravening pyre  
That makes time's face pale with its reflex light  
And leaves on earth, who seeing might scarce respire,  
A shadow of red remembrance? Right nor might  
Alternating wore ever shapes more dire  
Nor manifest in all men's awful sight  
In form and face that wore  
Heaven's light and likeness more  
Than these, or held suspense men's hearts at height  
More fearful, since man first  
Slaked with man's blood his thirst,



Than when Rome clashed with Hannibal in fight,  
Till tower on ruining tower was hurled  
Where Scipio stood, and Carthage was not in the world.

41.

Nor lacked there power of purpose in his hand  
Who carved their several praise in words of gold  
To bare the brows of conquerors and to brand,  
Made shelterless of laurels bought and sold  
For price of blood or incense, dust or sand,  
Triumph or terror. He that sought of old  
His father Ammon in a stranger's land,  
And shrank before the serpentine fold,  
Stood in our seer's wide eye  
No higher than man most high,  
And lowest in heart when highest in hope to hold  
Fast as a scripture furled  
The scroll of all the world  
Sealed with his signet: nor the blind and bold  
First thief of empire, round whose head  
Swarmed carrion flies for bees, on flesh for violets fed.[1]

42.

As fire that kisses, killing with a kiss,  
He saw the light of death, riotous and red,  
Flame round the bent brows of Semiramis  
Re-risen, and mightier, from the Assyrian dead,  
Kindling, as dawn a frost-bound precipice,  
The steely snows of Russia, for the tread  
Of feet that felt before them crawl and hiss  
The snaky lines of blood violently shed.

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Like living creeping things  
That writhe but have no stings  
To scare adulterers from the imperial bed  
Bowed with its load of lust,  
Or chill the ravenous gusts  
That made her body a fire from heel to head;  
Or change her high bright spirit and clear,  
For all its mortal stains, from taint of fraud or fear.

43.

As light that blesses, hallowing with a look;  
He saw the godhead in Vittoria's face  
Shine soft on Buonarroti's, till he took,  
Albeit himself God, a more godlike grace,  
A strength more heavenly to confront and brook  
All ill things coiled about his worldly race,  
From the bright scripture of that present book  
Wherein his tired grand eyes got power to trace  
Comfort more sweet than youth,  
And hope whose child was truth,  
And love that brought forth sorrow for a space,  
Only that she might bear  
Joy: these things, written there,  
Made even his soul's high heaven a heavenlier place,  
Perused with eyes whose glory and glow  
Had in their fires the spirit of Michael Angelo.

44.

With balms and dews of blessing he consoled  
The fair fame wounded by the black priest's fang,  
Giovanna's, and washed off her blithe and bold  
Boy-bridegroom's blood, that seemed so long to hang  
On her fair hand, even till the stain of old  
Was cleansed with healing song, that after sang  
Sharp truth by sweetest singers' lips untold  
Of pale Beatrice, though her death-note rang  
From other strings divine  
Ere his rekindling line



With yet more piteous and intolerant pang  
Pierced all men's hearts anew  
That heard her passion through  
Till fierce from throes of fiery pity sprang  
Wrath, armed for chase of monstrous beasts,  
Strong to lay waste the kingdom of the seed of priests.

45.

He knew the high-souled humbleness, the mirth  
And majesty of meanest men born free,  
That made with Luther's or with Hofer's birth  
The whole world worthier of the sun to see:  
The wealth of spirit among the snows, the dearth  
Wherein souls festered by the servile sea  
That saw the lowest of even crowned heads on earth  
Thronged round with worship in Parthenope.  
His hand bade Justice guide  
Her child Tyrannicide,  
Light winged by fire that brings the dawn to be;  
And pierced with Tyrrel's dart  
Again the riotous heart  
That mocked at mercy's tongue and manhood's knee:  
And oped the cell where kinglike death  
Hung o'er her brows discrowned who bare Elizabeth.

46.



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Toward Spenser or toward Bacon proud or kind  
He bared the heart of Essex, twain and one,  
For the base heart that soiled the starry mind  
Stern, for the father in his child undone  
Soft as his own toward children, stamped and signed  
With their sweet image visibly set on  
As by God's hand, clear as his own designed  
The likeness radiant out of ages gone  
That none may now destroy  
Of that high Roman boy  
Whom Julius and Cleopatra saw their son  
True-born of sovereign seed,  
Foredoomed even thence to bleed,  
The stately grace of bright Caesarion,  
The head unbent, the heart unbowed,  
That not the shadow of death could make less clear and proud.

47.

With gracious gods he communed, honouring thus  
At once by service and similitude,  
Service devout and worship emulous  
Of the same golden Muses once they wooed,  
The names and shades adored of all of us,  
The nurslings of the brave world's earlier brood,  
Grown gods for us themselves: Theocritus  
First, and more dear Catullus, names bedewed  
With blessings bright like tears  
From the old memorial years,  
And loves and lovely laughs, every mood  
Sweet as the drops that fell  
Of their own oenome  
From living lips to cheer the multitude  
That feeds on words divine, and grows  
More worthy, seeing their world reblossom like a rose.

48.

Peace, the soft seal of long life's closing story,  
The silent music that no strange note jars,  
Crowned not with gentler hand the years that glory  
Crowned, but could hide not all the spiritual scars  
Time writes on the inward strengths of warriors hoary  
With much long warfare, and with gradual bars



Blindly pent in: but these, being transitory,  
Broke, and the power came back that passion mars:  
And at the lovely last  
Above all anguish past  
Before his own the sightless eyes like stars  
Arose that watched arise  
Like stars in other skies  
Above the strife of ships and hurtling cars  
The Dioscurian songs divine  
That lighten all the world with lightning of their line.

49.

He sang the last of Homer, having sung  
The last of his Ulysses. Bright and wide  
For him time's dark strait ways, like clouds that clung  
About the day-star, doubtful to divide,  
Waxed in his spiritual eyeshot, and his tongue  
Spake as his soul bore witness, that descried,  
Like those twin towering lights in darkness hung,  
Homer, and grey Laertes at his side  
Kingly as kings are none  
Beneath a later sun,  
And the sweet maiden ministering in pride  
To sovereign and to sage  
In their more sweet old age:  
These things he sang, himself as old, and died.  
And if death be not, if life be,  
As Homer and as Milton are in heaven is he.

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50.

Poet whose large-eyed loyalty of love  
Was pure toward all high poets, all their kind  
And all bright words and all sweet works thereof;  
Strong like the sun, and like the sunlight kind;  
Heart that no fear but every grief might move  
Wherewith men's hearts were bound of powers that bind;  
The purest soul that ever proof could prove  
From taint of tortuous or of envious mind;  
Whose eyes elate and clear  
Nor shame nor ever fear  
But only pity or glorious wrath could blind;  
Name set for love apart,  
Held lifelong in my heart,  
Face like a father's toward my face inclined;  
No gilts like thine are mine to give,  
Who by thine own words only bid thee hail, and live.

[1] Thy lifelong works, Napoleon, who shall write?  
Time, in his children's blood who takes delight.

*From the Greek of Lander.*

## NOTES.

6. See note to the Imaginary Conversation of Leofric and Godiva for the exquisite first verses extant from the hand of Lander.

10. The Poems of Walter Savage Lander: 1795. Moral Epistle, respectfully dedicated to Earl Stanhope: 1795. Gebir.

13. Count Julian: Ines de Castro: Ippolito di Este.

14, 15. Poems 'on the Dead.'

16. Imaginary Conversations: Lord Brooke and Sir Philip Sidney.

17, 18. Idyllia Nova Quinque Heroum atque Heroidum (1815): Corythus; Dryope; Pan et Pitys; Coresus et Callirrhoe; Helena ad Pudoris Aram.

19, 20. Imaginary Conversations: Oliver Cromwell and Walter Noble; AEschines and Phocion; Kosciusko and Poniatowski; Milton and Marvell; Roger Ascham and Lady Jane Grey; Tiberius and Vipsania.



- 21, 22, 23. Hellenics: To Corinth.
24. Hellenics: Regeneration.
25. The Hamadryad; Acon and Rhodope.
26. The Shades of Agamemnon and Iphigeneia.
27. Enallos and Cymodameia.
28. The Children of Venus.
29. Cupid and Pan.
30. The Death of Clytemnestra; The Madness of Orestes; The Prayer of Orestes.
32. The Last of Ulysses.
33. Imaginary Conversations. Lady Lisle and Elizabeth Gaunt.
35. *Pro monumento super milites regio jussu interemptos.*
36. The Citation and Examination of William Shakespeare.
37. Pericles and Aspasia.
38. The Pentameron.
39. Imaginary Conversations: Epicurus, Leontion, and Ternissa.
40. Marcellus and Hannibal: P. Scipio AEmilianus, Polybius, and Panaetius.
41. Alexander and Priest of Ammon: Bonaparte and the President of the Senate.
42. The Empress Catherine and Princess Dashkoff.
43. Vittoria Colonna and Michel-Angelo Buonarroti.
44. Andrea of Hungary, Giovanna of Naples, Fra Rupert; a Trilogy: Five Scenes (Beatrice Cenci).



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45. Luther's Parents: The Death of Hofer: (*Imaginary Conversations*) Andrew Hofer, Count Metternich, and the Emperor Francis; Judge Wolfgang and Henry of Melchthal: The Coronation. Tyrannicide (*The Last Fruit off an Old Tree*): Walter Tyrrel and William Rufus: Henry VIII. and Anne Boleyn.

46. Essex and Spenser (*Imaginary Conversations*): Essex and Bacon: Antony and Octavius (*Scenes for the Study*).

47. Critical Essays on Theocritus and Catullus.

48, 49. Heroic Idyls; Homer, Laertes, and Agatha.

'J'en passe, et des meilleurs.' But who can enumerate all or half our obligations to the illimitable and inexhaustible genius of the great man whose life and whose labour lasted even from the generation of our fathers' fathers to our own? Hardly any reader can feel, I think, so deeply as I feel the inadequacy of my poor praise and too imperfect gratitude to the majestic subject of their attempted expression; but 'such as I had have I given him.'

## GRAND CHORUS OF BIRDS

FROM

## ARISTOPHANES

*Attempted in English verse after the original metre.*

I was allured into the audacity of this experiment by consideration of a fact which hitherto does not seem to have been taken into consideration by any translator of the half divine humourist in whose incomparable genius the highest qualities of Rabelais were fused and harmonized with the supremest gifts of Shelley: namely, that his marvellous metrical invention of the anapaestic heptameter was almost exactly reproducible in a language to which all variations and combinations of anapaestic, iambic, or trochaic metre are as natural and pliable as all dactylic and spondaic forms of verse are unnatural and abhorrent. As it happens, this highest central interlude of a most adorable masterpiece is as easy to detach from its dramatic setting, and even from its lyrical context, as it was easy to give line for line of it in English. In two metrical points only does my version vary from the verbal pattern of the original. I have of course added rhymes, and double rhymes, as necessary makeweights for the imperfection of an otherwise inadequate language; and equally of course I have not attempted the impossible and undesirable task of reproducing the rare exceptional effect of a line overcharged on purpose with a preponderance of heavy-footed spondees: and this for the obvious reason that even if such a line—which I doubt—



could be exactly represented, foot by foot and pause for pause, in English, this English line would no more be a verse in any proper sense of the word than is the line I am writing at this moment. And my main intention, or at least my main desire, in the undertaking of this brief adventure, was to renew as far as possible for English ears the music of this resonant and triumphant metre, which goes ringing at full gallop as of horses who



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'dance as 'twere to the music  
Their own hoofs make.'

I would not seem over curious in search of an apt or inapt quotation: but nothing can be fitter than a verse of Shakespeare's to praise at once and to describe the most typical verse of Aristophanes.

*THE BIRDS.*

(685-723.)

Come on then, ye dwellers by nature in darkness, and like to the leaves'  
generations,  
That are little of might, that are moulded of mire, unenduring and  
shadowlike nations,  
Poor plumeless ephemerals, comfortless mortals, as visions of creatures  
fast fleeing,  
Lift up your mind unto us that are deathless, and dateless the date of  
our being:  
Us, children of heaven, us, ageless for aye, us, all of whose thoughts  
are eternal;  
That ye may from henceforth, having heard of us all things aright as to  
matters supernal,  
Of the being of birds and beginning of gods, and of streams, and the  
dark beyond reaching,  
Truthfully knowing aright, in my name bid Prodicus pack with his preaching.

It was Chaos and Night at the first, and the blackness of darkness, and  
hell's broad border,  
Earth was not, nor air, neither heaven; when in depths of the womb of the  
dark without order  
First thing first-born of the black-plumed Night was a wind-egg hatched  
in her bosom,  
Whence timely with seasons revolving again sweet Love burst out as a  
blossom,  
Gold wings glittering forth of his back, like whirlwinds gustily turning. He, after his  
wedlock with Chaos, whose wings are of darkness, in hell  
broad-burning,  
For his nestlings begat him the race of us first, and upraised us to  
light new-lighted.  
And before this was not the race of the gods, until all things by Love  
were united;  
And of kind united with kind in communion of nature the sky and the sea  
are



Brought forth, and the earth, and the race of the gods everlasting and  
blest. So that we are  
Far away the most ancient of all things blest. And that we are of Love's  
generation  
There are manifest manifold signs. We have wings, and with us have the  
Loves habitation;  
And manifold fair young folk that forswore love once, ere the bloom of  
them ended,  
Have the men that pursued and desired them subdued, by the help of us  
only befriended,  
With such baits as a quail, a flamingo, a goose, or a cock's comb staring  
and splendid.

All best good things that befall men come from us birds, as is plain to  
all reason:  
For first we proclaim and make known to them spring, and the winter and  
autumn in season;  
Bid sow, when the crane starts clanging for Afric,

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in shrill-voiced  
    emigrant number,  
And calls to the pilot to hang up his rudder again for the season, and  
    slumber;  
And then weave a cloak for Orestes the thief, lest he strip men of theirs  
    if it freezes.  
And again thereafter the kite reappearing announces a change in the  
    breezes,  
And that here is the season for shearing your sheep of their spring wool.  
    Then does the swallow  
Give you notice to sell your greatcoat, and provide something light for  
    the heat that's to follow.  
Thus are we as Ammon or Delphi unto you, Dodona, nay, Phoebus Apollo. For, as first  
ye come all to get auguries of birds, even such is in all  
    things your carriage,  
Be the matter a matter of trade, or of earning your bread, or of any  
    one's marriage.  
And all things ye lay to the charge of a bird that belong to discerning  
    prediction:  
Winged fame is a bird, as you reckon: you sneeze, and the sign's as a  
    bird for conviction:  
All tokens are 'birds' with you—sounds too, and lackeys, and donkeys.  
    Then must it not follow  
That we are to you all as the manifest godhead that speaks in prophetic  
    Apollo?

*October 19, 1880.*

*OFF SHORE.*

When the might of the summer  
Is most on the sea;  
When the days overcome her  
With joy but to be,  
With rapture of royal enchantment, and sorcery that sets her not free,

But for hours upon hours  
As a thrall she remains  
Spell-bound as with flowers  
And content in their chains,  
And her loud steeds fret not, and lift not a lock of their deep white  
manes;



Then only, far under  
In the depths of her hold,  
Some gleam of its wonder  
Man's eye may behold,  
Its wild-weed forests of crimson and russet and olive and gold.

Still deeper and dimmer  
And goodlier they glow  
For the eyes of the swimmer  
Who scans them below  
As he crosses the zone of their flowerage that knows not of sunshine and snow.

Soft blossomless frondage  
And foliage that gleams  
As to prisoners in bondage  
The light of their dreams,  
The desire of a dawn un beholden, with hope on the wings of its beams.

Not as prisoners entombed  
Waxen haggard and wizen,  
But consoled and illumed  
In the depths of their prison  
With delight of the light everlasting and vision of dawn on them risen,

From the banks and the beds  
Of the waters divine  
They lift up their heads  
And the flowers of them shine  
Through the splendour of darkness that clothes them of water that glimmers like wine.

Bright bank over bank  
Making glorious the gloom,  
Soft rank upon rank,  
Strange bloom after bloom,  
They kindle the liquid low twilight, the dusk of the dim sea's womb.



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Through the subtle and tangible  
Gloom without form,  
Their branches, infrangible  
Ever of storm  
Spread softer their sprays than the shoots of the woodland when April is warm.

As the flight of the thunder, full  
Charged with its word,  
Dividing the wonderful  
Depths like a bird,  
Speaks wrath and delight to the heart of the night that exults to have heard,

So swiftly, though soundless  
In silence's ear,  
Light, winged from the boundless  
Blue depths full of cheer,  
Speaks joy to the heart of the waters that part not before him, but hear.

Light, perfect and visible  
Godhead of God,  
God indivisible,  
Lifts but his rod,  
And the shadows are scattered in sunder, and darkness is light at his nod.

At the touch of his wand,  
At the nod of his head  
From the spaces beyond  
Where the dawn hath her bed,  
Earth, water, and air are transfigured, and rise as one risen from the dead.

He puts forth his hand,  
And the mountains are thrilled  
To the heart as they stand  
In his presence, fulfilled  
With his glory that utters his grace upon earth, and her sorrows are stilled.

The moan of her travail  
That groans for the light  
Till dayspring unravel  
The weft of the night,



At the sound of the strings of the music of morning, falls dumb with delight.

He gives forth his word,  
And the word that he saith,  
Ere well it be heard,  
Strikes darkness to death;  
For the thought of his heart is the sunrise, and dawn as the sound of his breath.

And the strength of its pulses  
That passion makes proud  
Confounds and convulses  
The depths of the cloud  
Of the darkness that heaven was engirt with, divided and rent as a shroud,

As the veil of the shrine  
Of the temple of old  
When darkness divine  
Over noonday was rolled;  
So the heart of the night by the pulse of the light is convulsed and controlled.

And the sea's heart, groaning  
For glories withdrawn,  
And the waves' mouths, moaning  
All night for the dawn,  
Are uplift as the hearts and the mouths of the singers on leaside and lawn.

And the sound of the quiring  
Of all these as one,  
Desired and desiring  
Till dawn's will be done,  
Fills full with delight of them heaven till it burns as the heart of the sun.

Till the waves too inherit  
And waters take part  
In the sense of the spirit  
That breathes from his heart,  
And are kindled with music as fire when the lips of the morning part,

With music unheard  
In the light of her lips,  
In the life-giving word  
Of the dewfall that drips





On the grasses of earth, and the wind that enkindles the wings of the ships.

White glories of wings  
As of seafaring birds  
That flock from the springs  
Of the sunrise in herds  
With the wind for a herdsman, and hasten or halt at the change of his words.



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As the watchword's change  
When the wind's note shifts,  
And the skies grow strange,  
And the white squall drifts  
Up sharp from the sea-line, vexing the sea till the low cloud lifts.

At the charge of his word  
Bidding pause, bidding haste,  
When the ranks are stirred  
And the lines displaced,  
They scatter as wild swans parting adrift on the wan green waste.

At the hush of his word  
In a pause of his breath  
When the waters have heard  
His will that he saith,  
They stand as a flock penned close in its fold for division of death.

As a flock by division  
Of death to be thinned,  
As the shades in a vision  
Of spirits that sinned;  
So glimmer their shrouds and their sheetings as clouds on the stream of the wind.

But the sun stands fast,  
And the sea burns bright,  
And the flight of them past  
Is no more than the flight  
Of the snow-soft swarm of serene wings poised and afloat in the light.

Like flowers upon flowers  
In a festival way  
When hours after hours  
Shed grace on the day,  
White blossomlike butterflies hover and gleam through the snows of the spray.

Like snow-coloured petals  
Of blossoms that flee  
From storm that unsettles  
The flower as the tree  
They flutter, a legion of flowers on the wing, through the field of the sea.



Through the furrowless field  
Where the foam-blossoms blow  
And the secrets are sealed  
Of their harvest below  
They float in the path of the sunbeams, as flakes or as blossoms of snow.

Till the sea's ways darken,  
And the God, withdrawn,  
Give ear not or hearken  
If prayer on him fawn,  
And the sun's self seem but a shadow, the noon as a ghost of the dawn.

No shadow, but rather  
God, father of song,  
Shew grace to me, Father  
God, loved of me long,  
That I lose not the light of thy face, that my trust in thee work me not  
wrong.

While yet I make forward  
With face toward thee  
Not turned yet in shoreward,  
Be thine upon me;  
Be thy light on my forehead or ever I turn it again from the sea.

As a kiss on my brow  
Be the light of thy grace,  
Be thy glance on me now  
From the pride of thy place:  
As the sign of a sire to a son be the light on my face of thy face.

Thou wast father of olden  
Times hailed and adored,  
And the sense of thy golden  
Great harp's monochord  
Was the joy in the soul of the singers that hailed thee for master and  
lord.

Fair father of all  
In thy ways that have trod,  
That have risen at thy call,  
That have thrilled at thy nod,  
Arise, shine, lighten upon me, O sun that we see to be God.

As my soul has been dutiful  
Only to thee,  
O God most beautiful,

Lighten thou me,  
As I swim through the dim long rollers, with eyelids uplift from the sea.



## Page 20

Be praised and adored of us  
All in accord,  
Father and lord of us  
Always adored,  
The slayer and the stayer and the harper, the light of us all and our lord.

At the sound of thy lyre,  
At the touch of thy rod,  
Air quickens to fire  
By the foot of thee trod,  
The saviour and healer and singer, the living and visible God.

The years are before thee  
As shadows of thee,  
As men that adore thee,  
As cloudlets that flee:  
But thou art the God, and thy kingdom is heaven, and thy shrine is the sea.

*AFTER NINE YEARS.*

TO JOSEPH MAZZINI.

*Prima dicte mihi, summa dicende Camena.*

1.

The shadows fallen of years are nine  
Since heaven grew seven times more divine  
With thy soul entering, and the dearth  
Of souls on earth  
Grew sevenfold sadder, wanting One  
Whose light of life, quenched here and done,  
Burns there eternal as the sun.

2.

Beyond all word, beyond all deed,  
Beyond all thought beloved, what need  
Has death or love that speech should be,  
Hast thou of me?  
I had no word, no prayer, no cry,  
To praise or hail or mourn thee by,  
As when thou too wast man as I.

3.



Nay, never, nor as any born  
Save one whose name priests turn to scorn,  
Who haply, though we know not now,  
Was man as thou,  
A wanderer branded with men's blame,  
Loved past man's utterance: yea, the same,  
Perchance, and as his name thy name.

4.

Thou wast as very Christ—not he  
Degraded into Deity,  
And priest-polluted by such prayer  
As poisons air,  
Tongue-worship of the tongue that slays,  
False faith and parricidal praise:  
But the man crowned with suffering days.

5.

God only, being of all mankind  
Most manlike, of most equal mind  
And heart most perfect, more than can  
Be heart of man  
Once in ten ages, born to be  
As haply Christ was, and as we  
Knew surely, seeing, and worshipped thee.

6.

To know thee—this at least was ours,  
God, clothed upon with human hours,  
O face beloved, O spirit adored,  
Saviour and lord!  
That wast not only for thine own  
Redeemer—not of these alone  
But all to whom thy word was known.

7.

Ten years have wrought their will with me  
Since last my words took wing for thee  
Who then wast even as now above  
Me, and my love.  
As then thou knewest not scorn, so now  
With that beloved benignant brow  
Take these of him whose light wast thou.



*FOR A PORTRAIT OF FELICE ORSINI.*

Steadfast as sorrow, fiery sad, and sweet  
With underthoughts of love and faith, more strong  
Than doubt and hate and all ill thoughts which throng,  
Haply, round hope's or fear's world-wandering feet  
That find no rest from wandering till they meet

## Page 21

Death, bearing palms in hand and crowns of song;  
His face, who thought to vanquish wrong with wrong,  
Erring, and make rage and redemption meet,  
Havoc and freedom; weaving in one weft  
Good with his right hand, evil with his left;  
But all a hero lived and erred and died;  
Looked thus upon the living world he left  
So bravely that with pity less than pride  
Men hail him Patriot and Tyrannicide.

### *EVENING ON THE BROADS.*

Over two shadowless waters, adrift as a pinnace in peril,  
Hangs as in heavy suspense, charged with irresolute light,  
Softly the soul of the sunset upholden awhile on the sterile  
Waves and wastes of the land, half repossessed by the night.  
Inland glimmer the shallows asleep and afar in the breathless  
Twilight: yonder the depths darken afar and asleep.  
Slowly the semblance of death out of heaven descends on the deathless  
Waters: hardly the light lives on the face of the deep—  
Hardly, but here for awhile. All over the grey soft shallow  
Hover the colours and clouds of the twilight, void of a star.  
As a bird unfledged is the broad-winged night, whose winglets are callow  
Yet, but soon with their plumes will she cover her brood from afar,  
Cover the brood of her worlds that cumber the skies with their blossom  
Thick as the darkness of leaf-shadowed spring is encumbered with flowers.  
World upon world is enwound in the bountiful girth of her bosom,  
Warm and lustrous with life lovely to look on as ours.  
Still is the sunset adrift as a spirit in doubt that dissembles  
Still with itself, being sick of division and dimmed by dismay—  
Nay, not so; but with love and delight beyond passion it trembles,  
Fearful and fain of the night, lovely with love of the day:  
Fain and fearful of rest that is like unto death, and begotten  
Out of the womb of the tomb, born of the seed of the grave:  
Lovely with shadows of loves that are only not wholly forgotten,  
Only not wholly suppressed by the dark as a wreck by the wave.  
Still there linger the loves of the morning and noon, in a vision  
Blindly beheld, but in vain: ghosts that are tired, and would rest.  
But the glories beloved of the night rise all too dense for division,  
Deep in the depth of her breast sheltered as doves in a nest.





Fainter the beams of the loves of the daylight season enkindled  
Wane, and the memories of hours that were fair with the love of them  
fade:  
Loftier, aloft of the lights of the sunset stricken and dwindled,  
Gather the signs of the love at the heart of the night new-made.  
New-made night, new-born of the sunset, immeasurable, endless,  
Opens the secret of love hid from of old in her heart,  
In the deep sweet heart full-charged with faultless love of the friendless  
Spirits of men that are eased when the wheels of the sun depart.

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Still is the sunset afloat as a ship on the waters upholden  
Full-sailed, wide-winged, poised softly for ever asway—  
Nay, not so, but at least for a little, awhile at the golden  
Limit of arching air fain for an hour to delay.  
Here on the bar of the sand-bank, steep yet aslope to the gleaming  
Waste of the water without, waste of the water within,  
Lights overhead and lights underneath seem doubtfully dreaming  
Whether the day be done, whether the night may begin.  
Far and afar and farther again they falter and hover,  
Warm on the water and deep in the sky and pale on the cloud:  
Colder again and slowly remoter, afraid to recover  
Breath, yet fain to revive, as it seems, from the skirt of the shroud.  
Faintly the heartbeats shorten and pause of the light in the westward  
Heaven, as eastward quicken the paces of star upon star  
Hurried and eager of life as a child that strains to the breast-ward  
Eagerly, yearning forth of the deeps where the ways of them are,  
Glad of the glory of the gift of their life and the wealth of its wonder,  
Fain of the night and the sea and the sweet wan face of the earth.  
Over them air grows deeper, intense with delight in them: under  
Things are thrilled in their sleep as with sense of a sure new birth.  
But here by the sand-bank watching, with eyes on the sea-line, stranger  
Grows to me also the weight of the sea-ridge gazed on of me,  
Heavily heaped up, changefully changeless, void though of danger  
Void not of menace, but full of the might of the dense dull sea.  
Like as the wave is before me, behind is the bank deep-drifted;  
Yellow and thick as the bank is behind me in front is the wave.  
As the wall of a prison imprisoning the mere is the girth of it lifted:  
But the rampire of water in front is erect as the wall of a grave.  
And the crests of it crumble and topple and change, but the wall is not  
broken:  
Standing still dry-shod, I see it as higher than my head,  
Moving inland alway again, reared up as in token  
Still of impending wrath still in the foam of it shed.  
And even in the pauses between them, dividing the rollers in sunder,  
High overhead seems ever the sea-line fixed as a mark,  
And the shore where I stand as a valley beholden of hills whence thunder  
Cloud and torrent and storm, darkening the depths of the dark.  
Up to the sea, not upon it or over it, upward from under  
Seems he to gaze, whose eyes yearn after it here from the shore:  
A wall of turbid water, aslope to the wide sky's wonder



Of colour and cloud, it climbs, or spreads as a slanted floor.  
And the large lights change on the face of the mere like things that were  
living,  
Winged and wonderful, beams like as birds are that pass and are free:  
But the light is dense as darkness, a gift withheld in the giving,  
That lies as dead on the fierce dull face



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of the landward sea.

Stained and stifled and soiled, made earthier than earth is and duller,

Grimly she puts back light as rejected, a thing put away:

No transparent rapture, a molten music of colour;

No translucent love taken and given of the day.

Fettered and marred and begrimed is the light's live self on her falling,

As the light of a man's life lighted the fume of a dungeon mars:

Only she knows of the wind, when her wrath gives ear to him calling;

The delight of the light she knows not, nor answers the sun or the stars.

Love she hath none to return for the luminous love of their giving:

None to reflect from the bitter and shallow response of her heart

Yearly she feeds on her dead, yet herself seems dead and not living,

Or confused as a soul heavy-laden with trouble that will not depart.

In the sound of her speech to the darkness the moan of her evil remorse is,

Haply, for strong ships gnawed by the dog-toothed sea-bank's fang

And trampled to death by the rage of the feet of her foam-lipped horses

Whose manes are yellow as plague, and as ensigns of pestilence hang,

That wave in the foul faint air of the breath of a death-stricken city;

So menacing heaves she the manes of her rollers knotted with sand,

Discoloured, opaque, suspended in sign as of strength without pity,

That shake with flameless thunder the low long length of the strand.

Here, far off in the farther extreme of the shore as it lengthens

Northward, lonely for miles, ere ever a village begin,

On the lapsing land that recedes as the growth of the strong sea

strengthens

Shoreward, thrusting further and further its outworks in,

Here in Shakespeare's vision, a flower of her kin forsaken,

Lay in her golden raiment alone on the wild wave's edge,

Surely by no shore else, but here on the bank storm-shaken,

Perdita, bright as a dew-drop engilt of the sun on the sedge.

Here on a shore unbeheld of his eyes in a dream he beheld her

Outcast, fair as a fairy, the child of a far-off king:

And over the babe-flower gently the head of a pastoral elder

Bowed, compassionate, hoar as the hawthorn-blossom in spring,

And kind as harvest in autumn: a shelter of shade on the lonely

Shelterless unknown shore scourged of implacable waves:

Here, where the wind walks royal, alone in his kingdom, and only

Sounds to the sedges a wail as of triumph that conquers and craves.

All these waters and wastes are his empire of old, and awaken

From barren and stagnant slumber at only the sound of his breath:

Yet the hunger is eased not that aches in his heart, nor the goal overtaken

That his wide wings yearn for and labour as hearts that yearn after

death.

All the solitude sighs and expects with a blind expectation

Somewhat unknown of its own sad heart, grown heart-sick of strife:

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Till sometime its wild heart maddens, and moans, and the vast ululation  
Takes wing with the clouds on the waters, and wails to be quit of its  
life.

For the spirit and soul of the waste is the wind, and his wings with their  
waving

Darken and lighten the darkness and light of it thickened or thinned;  
But the heart that impels them is even as a conqueror's insatiably craving  
That victory can fill not, as power cannot satiate the want of the wind.

All these moorlands and marshes are full of his might, and oppose not  
Aught of defence nor of barrier, of forest or precipice piled:

But the will of the wind works ever as his that desires what he knows not,  
And the wail of his want unfulfilled is as one making moan for her child.

And the cry of his triumph is even as the crying of hunger that maddens

The heart of a strong man aching in vain as the wind's heart aches

And the sadness itself of the land for its infinite solitude saddens

More for the sound than the silence athirst for the sound that slakes.

And the sunset at last and the twilight are dead: and the darkness is  
breathless

With fear of the wind's breath rising that seems and seems not to sleep:

But a sense of the sound of it alway, a spirit unsleeping and deathless,

Ghost or God, evermore moves on the face of the deep.

*THE EMPEROR'S PROGRESS.*

A STUDY IN THREE STAGES.

(On the Busts of Nero in the Uffizj.)

I.

A child of brighter than the morning's birth

And lovelier than all smiles that may be smiled

Save only of little children undefiled,

Sweet, perfect, witless of their own dear worth,

Live rose of love, mute melody of mirth,

Glad as a bird is when the woods are mild,

Adorable as is nothing save a child,

Hails with wide eyes and lips his life on earth,

His lovely life with all its heaven to be.



And whoso reads the name inscribed or hears  
Feels his own heart a frozen well of tears,  
Child, for deep dread and fearful pity of thee  
Whom God would not let rather die than see  
The incumbent horror of impending years.

## II.

Man, that wast godlike being a child, and now,  
No less than kinglike, art no more in sooth  
For all thy grace and lordliness of youth,  
The crown that bids men's branded foreheads bow  
Much more has branded and bowed down thy brow  
And gnawn upon it as with fire or tooth  
Of steel or snake so sorely, that the truth  
Seems here to bear false witness. Is it thou,  
Child? and is all the summer of all thy spring  
This? are the smiles that drew men's kisses down  
All faded and transfigured to the frown  
That grieves thy face? Art thou this weary thing?  
Then is no slave's load heavier than a crown  
And such a thrall no bondman as a king.



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### III.

Misery, beyond all men's most miserable,  
Absolute, whole, defiant of defence,  
Inevitable, inexplicable, intense,  
More vast than heaven is high, more deep than hell,  
Past cure or charm of solace or of spell,  
Possesses and pervades the spirit and sense  
Whereto the expanse of the earth pays tribute; whence  
Breeds evil only, and broods on fumes that swell  
Rank from the blood of brother and mother and wife.  
'Misery of miseries, all is misery,' saith  
The heavy fair-faced hateful head, at strife  
With its own lusts that burn with feverous breath  
Lips which the loathsome bitterness of life  
Leaves fearful of the bitterness of death.

#### *THE RESURRECTION OF ALCILIA.*

(Gratefully inscribed to Dr. A.B. Grosart.)

Sweet song-flower of the Mayspring of our song,  
Be welcome to us, with loving thanks and praise  
To his good hand who travelling on strange ways  
Found thee forlorn and fragrant, lain along  
Beneath dead leaves that many a winter's wrong  
Had rained and heaped through nigh three centuries' maze  
Above thy Maybloom, hiding from our gaze  
The life that in thy leaves lay sweet and strong.  
For thine have life, while many above thine head  
Piled by the wind lie blossomless and dead.  
So now disburdened of such load above  
That lay as death's own dust upon thee shed  
By days too deaf to hear thee like a dove  
Murmuring, we hear thee, bird and flower of love.

#### *THE FOURTEENTH OF JULY.*

(On the refusal by the French Senate of the plenary amnesty demanded by Victor Hugo, in his speech of July 3rd, for the surviving exiles of the Commune.)

Thou shouldst have risen as never dawn yet rose,  
Day of the sunrise of the soul of France,





Dawn of the whole world's morning, when the trance  
Of all the world had end, and all its woes  
Respite, prophetic of their perfect close.

Light of all tribes of men, all names and clans,  
Dawn of the whole world's morning and of man's  
Flower of the heart of morning's mystic rose,  
Dawn of the very dawn of very day,  
When the sun brighter breaks night's ruinous prison,  
Thou shouldst have risen as yet no dawn has risen,  
Evoked of him whose word puts night away,  
Our father, at the music of whose word  
Exile had ended, and the world had heard.

*July 5, 1880.*

## LAUNCH OF THE LIVADIA

Mala soluta navis exit alite.  
HOR.

Rigged with curses dark.  
MILTON.

*THE LAUNCH OF THE LIVADIA.*

I.

## Page 26

Gold, and fair marbles, and again more gold,  
And space of halls afloat that glance and gleam  
Like the green heights of sunset heaven, or seem  
The golden steeps of sunrise red and cold  
On deserts where dark exile keeps the fold  
Fast of the flocks of torment, where no beam  
Falls of kind light or comfort save in dream,  
These we far off behold not, who behold  
The cordage woven of curses, and the decks  
With mortal hate and mortal peril paven;  
From stem to stern the lines of doom engraven  
That mark for sure inevitable wrecks  
Those sails predestinate, though no storm vex,  
To miss on earth and find in hell their haven.

### II.

All curses be about her, and all ill  
Go with her; heaven be dark above her way,  
The gulf beneath her glad and sure of prey,  
And, wheresoe'er her prow be pointed, still  
The winds of heaven have all one evil will  
Conspirant even as hearts of kings to slay  
With mouths of kings to lie and smile and pray,  
And chiefliest his whose wintrier breath makes chill  
With more than winter's and more poisonous cold  
The horror of his kingdom toward the north,  
The deserts of his kingdom toward the east.  
And though death hide not in her direful hold  
Be all stars adverse toward her that come forth  
Nightly, by day all hours till all have ceased:

### III.

Till all have ceased for ever, and the sum  
Be summed of all the sumless curses told  
Out on his head by all dark seasons rolled  
Over its cursed and crowned existence, dumb  
And blind and stark as though the snows made numb  
All sense within it, and all conscience cold,  
That hangs round hearts of less imperial mould  
Like a snake feeding till their doomsday come.



O heart fast bound of frozen poison, be  
All nature's as all true men's hearts to thee,  
A two-edged sword of judgment; hope be far  
And fear at hand for pilot oversea  
With death for compass and despair for star,  
And the white foam a shroud for the White Czar.

*September 30, 1880.*

*SIX YEARS OLD.*

To H.W.M.

Between the springs of six and seven,  
Two fresh years' fountains, clear  
Of all but golden sand for leaven,  
Child, midway passing here,  
As earth for love's sake dares bless heaven,  
So dare I bless you, dear.

Between two bright well-heads, that brighten  
With every breath that blows  
Too loud to lull, too low to frighten,  
But fain to rock, the rose,  
Your feet stand fast, your lit smiles lighten,  
That might rear flowers from snows.

You came when winds unleashed were snarling  
Behind the frost-bound hours,  
A snow-bird sturdier than the starling,  
A storm-bird fledged for showers,  
That spring might smile to find you, darling,  
First born of all the flowers.



## Page 27

Could love make worthy things of worthless,  
My song were worth an ear:  
Its note should make the days most mirthless  
The merriest of the year,  
And wake to birth all buds yet birthless  
To keep your birthday, dear.

But where your birthday brightens heaven  
No need has earth, God knows,  
Of light or warmth to melt or leaven  
The frost or fog that glows  
With sevenfold heavenly lights of seven  
Sweet springs that cleave the snows.

Could love make worthy music of you,  
And match my Master's powers,  
Had even my love less heart to love you,  
A better song were ours;  
With all the rhymes like stars above you,  
And all the words like flowers.

*September 30, 1880.*

*A PARTING SONG.*

(To a friend leaving England for a year's residence in Australia.)

These winds and suns of spring  
That warm with breath and wing  
The trembling sleep of earth, till half awake  
She laughs and blushes ere her slumber break,  
For all good gifts they bring  
Require one better thing,  
For all the loans of joy they lend us, borrow  
One sharper dole of sorrow,  
To sunder soon by half a world of sea  
Her son from England and my friend from me.

Nor hope nor love nor fear  
May speed or stay one year,  
Nor song nor prayer may bid, as mine would fain,  
The seasons perish and be born again,  
Restoring all we lend,



Reluctant, of a friend,  
The voice, the hand, the presence and the sight  
That lend their life and light  
To present gladness and heart-strengthening cheer,  
Now lent again for one reluctant year.

So much we lend indeed,  
Perforce, by force of need,  
So much we must; even these things and no more  
The far sea sundering and the sundered shore  
A world apart from ours,  
So much the imperious hours,  
Exact, and spare not; but no more than these  
All earth and all her seas  
From thought and faith of trust and truth can borrow,  
Not memory from desire, nor hope from sorrow.

Through bright and dark and bright  
Returns of day and night  
I bid the swift year speed and change and give  
His breath of life to make the next year live  
With sunnier suns for us  
A life more prosperous,  
And laugh with flowers more fragrant, that shall see  
A merrier March for me,  
A rosier-girdled race of night with day,  
A goodlier April and a tenderer May.

For him the inverted year  
Shall mark our seasons here  
With alien alternation, and revive  
This withered winter, slaying the spring alive  
With darts more sharply drawn  
As nearer draws the dawn  
In heaven transfigured over earth transformed  
And with our winters warmed  
And wasted with our summers, till the beams  
Rise on his face that rose on Dante's dreams.



## Page 28

Till fourfold morning rise  
Of starshine on his eyes,  
Dawn of the spheres that brand steep heaven across  
At height of night with semblance of a cross  
Whose grace and ghostly glory  
Poured heaven on purgatory  
Seeing with their flamelets risen all heaven grow glad  
For love thereof it had  
And lovely joy of loving; so may these  
Make bright with welcome now their southern seas.

O happy stars, whose mirth  
The saddest soul on earth  
That ever soared and sang found strong to bless,  
Lightening his life's harsh load of heaviness  
With comfort sown like seed  
In dream though not in deed  
On sprinkled wastes of darkling thought divine,  
Let all your lights now shine  
With all as glorious gladness on his eyes  
For whom indeed and not in dream they rise.

As those great twins of air  
Hailed once with oldworld prayer  
Of all folk alway faring forth by sea,  
So now may these for grace and guidance be,  
To guard his sail and bring  
Again to brighten spring  
The face we look for and the hand we lack  
Still, till they light him back,  
As welcome as to first discovering eyes  
Their light rose ever, soon on his to rise.

As parting now he goes  
From snow-time back to snows,  
So back to spring from summer may next year  
Restore him, and our hearts receive him here,  
The best good gift that spring  
Had ever grace to bring  
At fortune's happiest hour of star-blest birth  
Back to love's homebright earth,  
To eyes with eyes that commune, hand with hand,  
And the old warm bosom of all our mother-land.



Earth and sea-wind and sea  
And stars and sunlight be  
Alike all prosperous for him, and all hours  
Have all one heart, and all that heart as ours.  
All things as good as strange  
Crown all the seasons' change  
With changing flower and compensating fruit  
From one year's ripening root;  
Till next year bring us, roused at spring's recall, A heartier flower and goodlier fruit than  
all.

March 26, 1880.

## BY THE NORTH SEA

TO WALTER THEODORE WATTS.

'We are what suns and winds and waters make us.'—LANDOR.

*Sea, wind, and sun, with light and sound and breath  
The spirit of man fulfilling—these create  
That joy wherewith man's life grown passionate  
Gains heart to hear and sense to read and faith  
To know the secret word our Mother saith  
In silence, and to see, though doubt wax great,  
Death as the shadow cast by life on fate,  
Passing, whose shade we call the shadow of death.*

Brother, to whom our Mother as to me  
Is dearer than all dreams of days undone,  
This song I give you of the sovereign three  
That are as life and sleep and death are, one:  
A song the sea-wind gave me from the sea,  
Where nought of man's endures before the sun.\_



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### BY THE NORTH SEA

#### I.

##### 1.

A land that is lonelier than ruin;  
A sea that is stranger than death:  
Far fields that a rose never blew in,  
Wan waste where the winds lack breath;  
Waste endless and boundless and flowerless  
But of marsh-blossoms fruitless as free:  
Where earth lies exhausted, as powerless  
To strive with the sea.

##### 2.

Far flickers the flight of the swallows,  
Far flutters the weft of the grass  
Spun dense over desolate hollows  
More pale than the clouds as they pass:  
Thick woven as the weft of a witch is  
Round the heart of a thrall that hath sinned,  
Whose youth and the wrecks of its riches  
Are waifs on the wind.

##### 3.

The pastures are herdless and sheepless,  
No pasture or shelter for herds:  
The wind is relentless and sleepless,  
And restless and songless the birds;  
Their cries from afar fall breathless,  
Their wings are as lightnings that flee;  
For the land has two lords that are deathless:  
Death's self, and the sea.

##### 4.

These twain, as a king with his fellow,  
Hold converse of desolate speech:  
And her waters are haggard and yellow  
And crass with the scurf of the beach:





And his garments are grey as the hoary  
Wan sky where the day lies dim;  
And his power is to her, and his glory,  
As hers unto him.

5.

In the pride of his power she rejoices,  
In her glory he glows and is glad:  
In her darkness the sound of his voice is,  
With his breath she dilates and is mad:  
'If thou slay me, O death, and outlive me,  
Yet thy love hath fulfilled me of thee.'  
'Shall I give thee not back if thou give me,  
O sister, O sea?'

6.

And year upon year dawns living,  
And age upon age drops dead:  
And his hand is not weary of giving,  
And the thirst of her heart is not fed:  
And the hunger that moans in her passion,  
And the rage in her hunger that roars,  
As a wolf's that the winter lays lash on,  
Still calls and implores.

7.

Her walls have no granite for girder,  
No fortalice fronting her stands:  
But reefs the bloodguiltiest of murder  
Are less than the banks of her sands:  
These number their slain by the thousand;  
For the ship hath no surety to be,  
When the bank is abreast of her bows and  
Aflush with the sea.

8.

No surety to stand, and no shelter  
To dawn out of darkness but one,  
Out of waters that hurtle and welter  
No succour to dawn with the sun  
But a rest from the wind as it passes,  
Where, hardly redeemed from the waves,  
Lie thick as the blades of the grasses  
The dead in their graves.



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9.

A multitude noteless of numbers,  
As wild weeds cast on an heap:  
And sounder than sleep are their slumbers,  
And softer than song is their sleep;  
And sweeter than all things and stranger  
The sense, if perchance it may be,  
That the wind is divested of danger  
And scatheless the sea.

10.

That the roar of the banks they breasted  
Is hurtless as bellowing of herds,  
And the strength of his wings that invested  
The wind, as the strength of a bird's;  
As the sea-mew's might or the swallow's  
That cry to him back if he cries,  
As over the graves and their hollows  
Days darken and rise.

11.

As the souls of the dead men disburdened  
And clean of the sins that they sinned,  
With a lovelier than man's life guerdoned  
And delight as a wave's in the wind,  
And delight as the wind's in the billow,  
Birds pass, and deride with their glee  
The flesh that has dust for its pillow  
As wrecks have the sea.

12.

When the ways of the sun wax dimmer,  
Wings flash through the dusk like beams;  
As the clouds in the lit sky glimmer,  
The bird in the graveyard gleams;  
As the cloud at its wing's edge whitens  
When the clarions of sunrise are heard,  
The graves that the bird's note brightens  
Grow bright for the bird.



13.

As the waves of the numberless waters  
That the wind cannot number who guides  
Are the sons of the shore and the daughters  
Here lulled by the chime of the tides:  
And here in the press of them standing  
We know not if these or if we  
Live truest, or anchored to landing  
Or drifted to sea.

14.

In the valley he named of decision  
No denser were multitudes met  
When the soul of the seer in her vision  
Saw nations for doom of them set;  
Saw darkness in dawn, and the splendour  
Of judgment, the sword and the rod;  
But the doom here of death is more tender  
And gentler the god.

15.

And gentler the wind from the dreary  
Sea-banks by the waves overlapped,  
Being weary, speaks peace to the weary  
From slopes that the tide-stream hath sapped;  
And sweeter than all that we call so  
The seal of their slumber shall be  
Till the graves that embosom them also  
Be sapped of the sea.

## II.

1.

For the heart of the waters is cruel,  
And the kisses are dire of their lips,  
And their waves are as fire is to fuel  
To the strength of the sea-faring ships,  
Though the sea's eye gleam as a jewel  
To the sun's eye back as he dips.

2.



Though the sun's eye flash to the sea's  
Live light of delight and of laughter,  
And her lips breathe back to the breeze  
The kiss that the wind's lips waft her  
From the sun that subsides, and sees  
No gleam of the storm's dawn after.



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3.

And the wastes of the wild sea-marches  
Where the borderers are matched in their might—  
Bleak fens that the sun's weight parches,  
Dense waves that reject his light—  
Change under the change-coloured arches  
Of changeless morning and night

4.

The waves are as ranks enrolled  
Too close for the storm to sever:  
The fens lie naked and cold,  
But their heart fails utterly never:  
The lists are set from of old,  
And the warfare endureth for ever.

### III.

1.

Miles, and miles, and miles of desolation!  
Leagues on leagues on leagues without a change!  
Sign or token of some eldest nation  
Here would make the strange land not so strange.  
Time-forgotten, yea since time's creation,  
Seem these borders where the sea-birds range.

2.

Slowly, gladly, full of peace and wonder  
Grows his heart who journeys here alone.  
Earth and all its thoughts of earth sink under  
Deep as deep in water sinks a stone.  
Hardly knows it if the rollers thunder,  
Hardly whence the lonely wind is blown.

3.

Tall the plumage of the rush-flower tosses,  
Sharp and soft in many a curve and line  
Gleam and glow the sea-coloured marsh-mosses,  
Salt and splendid from the circling brine.



Streak on streak of glimmering seashine crosses  
All the land sea-saturate as with wine.

4.

Far, and far between, in divers orders,  
Clear grey steeples cleave the low grey sky;  
Fast and firm as time-unshaken warders,  
Hearts made sure by faith, by hope made high.  
These alone in all the wild sea-borders  
Fear no blast of days and nights that die.

5.

All the land is like as one man's face is,  
Pale and troubled still with change of cares.  
Doubt and death pervade her clouded spaces:  
Strength and length of life and peace are theirs;  
Theirs alone amid these weary places.  
Seeing not how the wild world frets and fares.

6.

Firm and fast where all is cloud that changes  
Cloud-clogged sunlight, cloud by sunlight thinned,  
Stern and sweet, above the sand-hill ranges  
Watch the towers and tombs of men that sinned  
Once, now calm as earth whose only change is  
Wind, and light, and wind, and cloud, and wind.

7.

Out and in and out the sharp straits wander,  
In and out and in the wild way strives,  
Starred and paved and lined with flowers that squander  
Gold as golden as the gold of hives,  
Salt and moist and multiform: but yonder,  
See, what sign of life or death survives?

8.

Seen then only when the songs of olden  
Harps were young whose echoes yet endure,  
Hymned of Homer when his years were golden,  
Known of only when the world was pure,  
Here is Hades, manifest, beholden,  
Surely, surely here, if aught be sure!

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9.

Where the border-line was crossed, that, sundering  
Death from life, keeps weariness from rest,  
None can tell, who fares here forward wondering;  
None may doubt but here might end his quest.  
Here life's lightning joys and woes once thundering  
Sea-like round him cease like storm suppressed.

10.

Here the wise wave-wandering steadfast-hearted  
Guest of many a lord of many a land  
Saw the shape or shade of years departed,  
Saw the semblance risen and hard at hand,  
Saw the mother long from love's reach parted,  
Anticleia, like a statue stand.

11.

Statue? nay, nor tissued image woven  
Fair on hangings in his father's hall;  
Nay, too fast her faith of heart was proven,  
Far too firm her loveliest love of all;  
Love wherethrough the loving heart was cloven,  
Love that hears not when the loud Fates call.

12.

Love that lives and stands up re-created  
Then when life has ebbed and anguish fled;  
Love more strong than death or all things fated,  
Child's and mother's, lit by love and led;  
Love that found what life so long awaited  
Here, when life came down among the dead.

13.

Here, where never came alive another,  
Came her son across the sundering tide  
Crossed before by many a warrior brother  
Once that warred on Ilion at his side;  
Here spread forth vain hands to clasp the mother  
Dead, that sorrowing for his love's sake died.



14.

Parted, though by narrowest of divisions,  
Clasp he might not, only might implore,  
Sundered yet by bitterest of derisions,  
Son, and mother from the son she bore—  
Here? But all dispeopled here of visions  
Lies, forlorn of shadows even, the shore.

15.

All too sweet such men's Hellenic speech is,  
All too fain they lived of light to see,  
Once to see the darkness of these beaches,  
Once to sing this Hades found of me  
Ghostless, all its gulfs and creeks and reaches,  
Sky, and shore, and cloud, and waste, and sea.

## IV.

1.

But aloft and afront of me faring  
Far forward as folk in a dream  
That strive, between doubting and daring  
Right on till the goal for them gleam,  
Full forth till their goal on them lighten,  
The harbour where fain they would be,  
What headlands there darken and brighten?  
What change in the sea?

2.

What houses and woodlands that nestle  
Safe inland to lee of the hill  
As it slopes from the headlands that wrestle  
And succumb to the strong sea's will?  
Truce is not, nor respite, nor pity,  
For the battle is waged not of hands  
Where over the grave of a city  
The ghost of it stands.

3.

Where the wings of the sea-wind slacken,  
Green lawns to the landward thrive,  
Fields brighten and pine-woods blacken,





And the heat in their heart is alive;  
They blossom and warble and murmur,  
For the sense of their spirit is free:  
But harder to shoreward and firmer  
The grasp of the sea.



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4.

Like ashes the low cliffs crumble,  
The banks drop down into dust,  
The heights of the hills are made humble,  
As a reed's is the strength of their trust:  
As a city's that armies environ,  
The strength of their stay is of sand:  
But the grasp of the sea is as iron,  
Laid hard on the land.

5.

A land that is thirstier than ruin;  
A sea that is hungrier than death;  
Heaped hills that a tree never grew in;  
Wide sands where the wave draws breath;  
All solace is here for the spirit  
That ever for ever may be  
For the soul of thy son to inherit,  
My mother, my sea.

6.

O delight of the headlands and beaches!  
O desire of the wind on the wold,  
More glad than a man's when it reaches  
That end which it sought from of old  
And the palm of possession is dreary  
To the sense that in search of it sinned;  
But nor satisfied ever nor weary  
Is ever the wind.

7.

The delight that he takes but in living  
Is more than of all things that live:  
For the world that has all things for giving  
Has nothing so goodly to give:  
But more than delight his desire is,  
For the goal where his pinions would be  
Is immortal as air or as fire is,  
Immense as the sea.



8.

Though hence come the moan that he borrows  
From darkness and depth of the night,  
Though hence be the spring of his sorrows,  
Hence too is the joy of his might;  
The delight that his doom is for ever  
To seek and desire and rejoice,  
And the sense that eternity never  
Shall silence his voice.

9.

That satiety never may stifle  
Nor weariness ever estrange  
Nor time be so strong as to rifle  
Nor change be so great as to change  
His gift that renews in the giving.  
The joy that exalts him to be  
Alone of all elements living  
The lord of the sea.

10.

What is fire, that its flame should consume her?  
More fierce than all fires are her waves:  
What is earth, that its gulfs should entomb her?  
More deep are her own than their graves.  
Life shrinks from his pinions that cover  
The darkness by thunders bedinned:  
But she knows him, her lord and her lover,  
The godhead of wind.

11.

For a season his wings are about her,  
His breath on her lips for a space;  
Such rapture he wins not without her  
In the width of his worldwide race.  
Though the forests bow down, and the mountains  
Wax dark, and the tribes of them flee,  
His delight is more deep in the fountains  
And springs of the sea.

12.

There are those too of mortals that love him,  
There are souls that desire and require,



Be the glories of midnight above him  
Or beneath him the daysprings of fire:  
And their hearts are as harps that approve him  
And praise him as chords of a lyre  
That were fain with their music to move him  
To meet their desire.



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13.

To descend through the darkness to grace them,  
Till darkness were lovelier than light:  
To encompass and grasp and embrace them,  
Till their weakness were one with his might:  
With the strength of his wings to caress them,  
With the blast of his breath to set free;  
With the mouths of his thunders to bless them  
For sons of the sea.

14.

For these have the toil and the guerdon  
That the wind has eternally: these  
Have part in the boon and the burden  
Of the sleepless unsatisfied breeze,  
That finds not, but seeking rejoices  
That possession can work him no wrong:  
And the voice at the heart of their voice is  
The sense of his song.

15.

For the wind's is their doom and their blessing;  
To desire, and have always above  
A possession beyond their possessing,  
A love beyond reach of their love.  
Green earth has her sons and her daughters,  
And these have their guerdons; but we  
Are the wind's and the sun's and the water's,  
Elect of the sea.

## V.

1.

For the sea too seeks and rejoices,  
Gains and loses and gains,  
And the joy of her heart's own choice is  
As ours, and as ours are her pains:  
As the thoughts of our hearts are her voices,  
And as hers is the pulse of our veins.



2.

Her fields that know not of dearth  
Nor lie for their fruit's sake fallow  
Laugh large in the depth of their mirth  
But inshore here in the shallow,  
Embroided with encumbrance of earth,  
Their skirts are turbid and yellow.

3.

The grime of her greed is upon her,  
The sign of her deed is her soil;  
As the earth's is her own dishonour,  
And corruption the crown of her toil:  
She hath spoiled and devoured, and her honour  
Is this, to be shamed by her spoil.

4.

But afar where pollution is none,  
Nor ensign of strife nor endeavour,  
Where her heart and the sun's are one,  
And the soil of her sin comes never,  
She is pure as the wind and the sun,  
And her sweetness endureth for ever.

## VI.

1.

Death, and change, and darkness everlasting,  
Deaf, that hears not what the daystar saith,  
Blind, past all remembrance and forecasting,  
Dead, past memory that it once drew breath;  
These, above the washing tides and wasting,  
Reign, and rule this land of utter death.

2.

Change of change, darkness of darkness, hidden,  
Very death of very death, begun  
When none knows,—the knowledge is forbidden—  
Self-begotten, self-proceeding, one,  
Born, not made—abhorred, unchained, unchidden,  
Night stands here defiant of the sun.

3.

Change of change, and death of death begotten,  
Darkness born of darkness, one and three,  
Ghostly godhead of a world forgotten,  
Crowned with heaven, enthroned on land and sea,  
Here, where earth with dead men's bones is rotten,  
God of Time, thy likeness worships thee.



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4.

Lo, thy likeness of thy desolation,  
Shape and figure of thy might, O Lord,  
Formless form, incarnate miscreation,  
Served of all things living and abhorred;  
Earth herself is here thine incarnation,  
Time, of all things born on earth adored.

5.

All that worship thee are fearful of thee;  
No man may not worship thee for fear:  
Prayers nor curses prove not nor disprove thee,  
Move nor change thee with our change of cheer:  
All at last, though all abhorred thee, love thee,  
God, the sceptre of whose throne is here.

6.

Here thy throne and sceptre of thy station,  
Here the palace paven for thy feet;  
Here thy sign from nation unto nation  
Passed as watchword for thy guards to greet,  
Guards that go before thine exaltation,  
Ages, clothed with bitter years and sweet.

7.

Here, where sharp the sea-bird shrills his ditty,  
Flickering flame-wise through the clear live calm,  
Rose triumphal, crowning all a city,  
Roofs exalted once with prayer and psalm,  
Built of holy hands for holy pity,  
Frank and fruitful as a sheltering palm.

8.

Church and hospice wrought in faultless fashion,  
Hall and chancel bounteous and sublime,  
Wide and sweet and glorious as compassion,  
Filled and thrilled with force of choral chime,  
Filled with spirit of prayer and thrilled with passion  
Hailed a God more merciful than Time.





9.

Ah, less mighty, less than Time prevailing,  
Shrunk, expelled, made nothing at his nod,  
Less than clouds across the sea-line sailing,  
Lies he, stricken by his master's rod.  
'Where is man?' the cloister murmurs wailing;  
Back the mute shrine thunders—'Where is God?'

10.

Here is all the end of all his glory—  
Dust, and grass, and barren silent stones.  
Dead, like him, one hollow tower and hoary  
Naked in the sea-wind stands and moans,  
Filled and thrilled with its perpetual story:  
Here, where earth is dense with dead men's bones.

11.

Low and loud and long, a voice for ever,  
Sounds the wind's clear story like a song.  
Tomb from tomb the waves devouring sever,  
Dust from dust as years relapse along;  
Graves where men made sure to rest, and never  
Lie dismantled by the seasons' wrong.

12.

Now displaced, devoured and desecrated,  
Now by Time's hands darkly disinterred,  
These poor dead that sleeping here awaited  
Long the archangel's re-creating word,  
Closed about with roofs and walls high-gated  
Till the blast of judgment should be heard,

13.

Naked, shamed, cast out of consecration,  
Corpse and coffin, yea the very graves,  
Scoffed at, scattered, shaken from their station,  
Spurned and scourged of wind and sea like slaves,  
Desolate beyond man's desolation,  
Shrink and sink into the waste of waves.



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14.

Tombs, with bare white piteous bones protruded,  
Shroudless, down the loose collapsing banks,  
Crumble, from their constant place detruded,  
That the sea devours and gives not thanks.  
Graves where hope and prayer and sorrow brooded  
Gape and slide and perish, ranks on ranks.

15.

Rows on rows and line by line they crumble,  
They that thought for all time through to be.  
Scarce a stone whereon a child might stumble  
Breaks the grim field paced alone of me.  
Earth, and man, and all their gods wax humble  
Here, where Time brings pasture to the sea.

## VII.

1.

But afar on the headland exalted,  
But beyond in the curl of the bay,  
From the depth of his dome deep-vaulted  
Our father is lord of the day.  
Our father and lord that we follow,  
For deathless and ageless is he;  
And his robe is the whole sky's hollow,  
His sandal the sea.

2.

Where the horn of the headland is sharper,  
And her green floor glitters with fire,  
The sea has the sun for a harper,  
The sun has the sea for a lyre.  
The waves are a pavement of amber,  
By the feet of the sea-winds trod  
To receive in a god's presence-chamber  
Our father, the God.

3.



Time, haggard and changeful and hoary,  
Is master and God of the land:  
But the air is fulfilled of the glory  
That is shed from our lord's right hand.  
O father of all of us ever,  
All glory be only to thee  
From heaven, that is void of thee never,  
And earth, and the sea.

4.

O Sun, whereof all is beholden,  
Behold now the shadow of this death,  
This place of the sepulchres, olden  
And emptied and vain as a breath.  
The bloom of the bountiful heather  
Laughs broadly beyond in thy light  
As dawn, with her glories to gather,  
At darkness and night.

5.

Though the Gods of the night lie rotten  
And their honour be taken away  
And the noise of their names forgotten,  
Thou, Lord, art God of the day.  
Thou art father and saviour and spirit,  
O Sun, of the soul that is free  
And hath grace of thy grace to inherit  
Thine earth and thy sea.

6.

The hills and the sands and the beaches,  
The waters adrift and afar,  
The banks and the creeks and the reaches,  
How glad of thee all these are!  
The flowers, overflowing, overcrowded,  
Are drunk with the mad wind's mirth:  
The delight of thy coming unclouded  
Makes music of earth.

7.

I, last least voice of her voices,  
Give thanks that were mute in me long  
To the soul in my soul that rejoices  
For the song that is over my song.

Time gives what he gains for the giving  
Or takes for his tribute of me;  
My dreams to the wind everliving,  
My song to the sea.

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