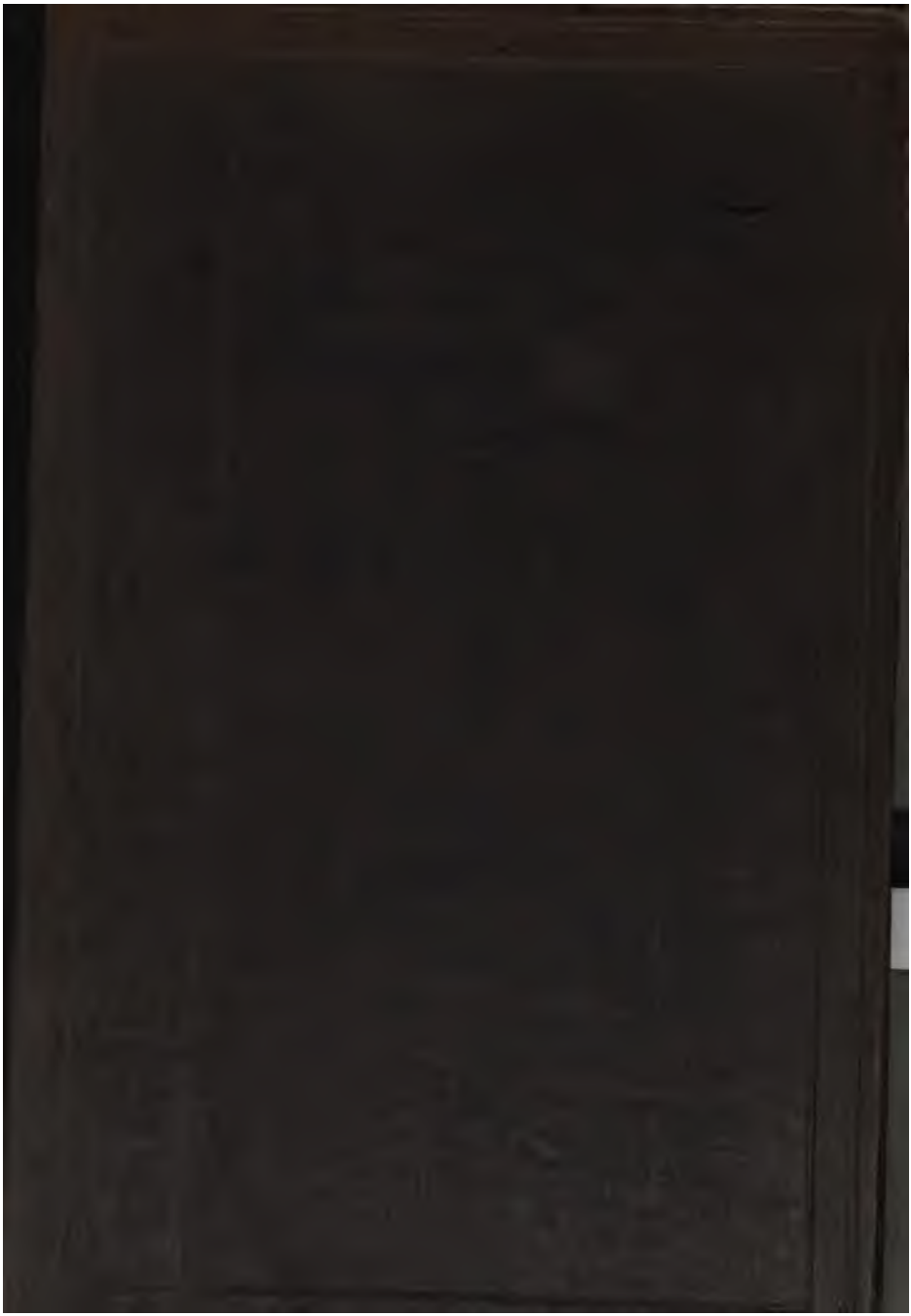


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TAMERTON CHURCH-TOWER,

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WITH

PREFATORY STUDY

ON

ENGLISH METRICAL LAW.

BY

COVENTRY PATMORE.

LONDON:
GEORGE BELL AND SONS, YORK STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.
1878.

Ballantyne Press
BALLANTYNE AND HANSON, EDINBURGH
CHANDOS STREET, LONDON

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THE adoption, by Surrey and his immediate successors, of certain foreign metres into our poetry, and the unprecedented attempt of that accomplished writer to establish "blank verse" as a narrative vehicle, first aroused conscious and scientific interest in the subject of the mechanism of English verse. From that time to this, the nature of modern verse has been a favourite problem of enthusiasts who love to dive in deep waters for diving's sake. A vast mass of nondescript matter

* This Essay appeared, almost as it now stands, in vol. xxvii. of the *North British Review*.

has been brought up from the recesses visited, but no one has succeeded in rendering any sufficient account of this secret of the intellectual deep. I have made it my business to ascertain whether any of the musical grammarians, whose science is, in great part, a mere abstraction of the laws of metre, have supplied the deficiencies of the prosodians. The sum total of my inquiries in both fields of criticism, musical and poetical, amounts to this, that upon few other subjects has so much been written with so little tangible result. Without for a moment questioning the value of certain portions of the writings of Puttenham, Gascoigne, Campion, Webbe, Daniel, Crowe, Foster, Mitford, Guest, and others, it must be confessed that no one of these writers renders anything like a full and philosophical account of the subject; and that, with the exception of Daniel, the admirable author of the "Civil Wars," and Mitford, none has treated the question, even on the superficial ground in most cases assumed, with the combined ability and competence of information from which alone any

important fruit can be looked for in such investigations. George Puttenham's "Art of English Poesy" is by very much the most bulky and laborious of the early metrical essays; but at least nine-tenths of this book consist of as unprofitable writing as ever spoilt paper. His chapter on the arrangement of rhymes to form staves is worthy of the poetical student's attention; and there is in the outset of his work an explicit acknowledgment of the fact, so often lost sight of by his successors, that English verse is not properly measurable by the rules of Latin and Greek verse. Indeed, the early poetical critics commonly manifest a much clearer discernment of the main importance of rhyme and accentual stress, in English verse, than is to be found among later writers. Their views are, for the most part, far from being expressed with that positiveness and appearance of system characterising the school of critics which received its data from Pope and his compeers; but they are, upon the whole, considerably more in accordance with the true spirit of English verse, as it appears in its

highest excellence in the writings of the poets of Elizabeth and James. The dissertations of the second class of critics, of whom Foster was the best example, are rendered comparatively useless by the adoption of false or confused opinions as the groundwork of their theories; such, for instance, as Foster's assumption that the time of syllables in English keeps the proportion usually attributed to long and short quantities in Greek and Latin, and that the metrical ictus or stress in English, is identical with elevation of tone;—mistakes which seem also to have been made by Dr. Johnson in the prosody prefixed to his Dictionary, and by various other writers of his time. Joshua Steele has the praise of having propounded more fully than had hitherto been done, the true view of metre, as being primarily based upon isochronous division by ictuses or accents; and he, for the first time, clearly declared the necessity of measuring pauses in minutely scanning English verse. He remarked the strong pause which is required for the proper delivery of adjacent accented

syllables, and without which the most beautiful verses must often be read into harsh prose. But the just and important views of this writer were mingled with so much that was erroneous and impracticable, that they made little or no general impression. Mitford's careful work on the Harmony of Language is perhaps the most significant book which has appeared upon the subject. This work, though far from containing the whole, or the unmixed truth, has not yet been superseded by any of the several elaborate essays on the same theme which have since appeared. Mr. Guest's work on English Rhythms is a laborious and, in some respects, valuable performance; but many of his observations indicate an ear defective to a degree which seriously impairs their value, when they concern the more subtle kinds of metrical effect. The value of his work is further diminished by a singular unskilfulness in the mode of arranging his materials, and communicating his views. He has fallen into the great error of endeavouring to simplify and abbreviate his statements by adopting, for

the indication of different species of verse, a notation which few persons can fairly be called upon to take the pains to comprehend and follow.

The radical faults of nearly all the writers I have mentioned, and of those who have followed in their steps, are, first, the mistake of working in ignorance of the truth declared by Quintilian, "that mere literature, without a knowledge of sounds, will not enable a man to treat properly of metre and rhythm;" and, secondly, that of having formed too light an estimate of their subject, whereby they have been prevented from sounding deep enough for the discovery of the philosophical grounds and primary laws of metrical expression. No one, with any just sense of the exalted but unobtrusive functions of art, will expect to derive much artistic instruction from the writings of men who set about their work, perhaps their life's work, with such sentiments as Dr. Burney was not ashamed to avow at the commencement of that laborious treatise which is still deservedly a text-book of musical history: "I

would rather be pronounced trivial than tiresome; for music being, at best, but an amusement, its history merits not, in reading, the labour of intense application." And again: "What is music? An innocent luxury, unnecessary indeed to existence, but a great improvement and gratification to our sense of hearing."

The nature of the relation between the poet's peculiar mode of expression and the matter expressed has engaged the curiosity of many philosophic minds. Hegel, whose chapters on music and metre contain by far the most satisfactory piece of writing I know of on the subject, admirably observes, that versification affords a necessary counterpoise to the great spiritualisation of language in poetry. "It is false," he adds, "that versification offers any obstacle to the free outpouring of poetic thought. True genius disposes with ease of sensible materials, and moves therein as in a native element, which, instead of depressing or hindering, exalts and supports its flight." Art, indeed, must have a body as well as a soul; and the higher and purer the

spiritual, the more powerful and unmistakable should be the corporeal element;—in other words, the more vigorous and various the life, the more stringent and elaborate must be the law by obedience to which life expresses itself.

The co-ordination of life and law, in the matter and form of poetry, determines the different degrees and kinds of metre, from the half-prosaic dramatic verse to the extremest elaboration of high lyric metres. The quality of all emotion which is not ignoble is to boast of its allegiance to law. The limits and decencies of ordinary speech will by no means declare high and strong feelings with efficiency. These must have free use of all sorts of figures and latitudes of speech; such latitudes as would at once be perceived by a delicately constituted mind to be lax and vicious, without the shackles of artistic form. What in prose would be shrieks and vulgar hyperbole, is transmuted by metre into graceful and impressive song. This effect of metre has often been alluded to, with more or less exactness of

thought and expression. "Bacon," says Mr. Dallas, "regards metre as a curb or shackle, where everything else is riot and lawless revelling; Wordsworth regards it as a mark of order, and so an assurance of reality needed in such an unusual state of mind as he takes poetry to be; and Coleridge would trace it to the balance struck between our passions and spontaneous efforts to hold them in check." From the truth which is implied alike in these several propositions, an important and neglected corollary follows: metre ought not only to exist as the becoming garment of poetic passion, but, furthermore, it should continually make its existence recognised. Some writers, by a peculiar facility of language, have attained to write perfect metre with almost as little metrical effect as if it were prose. Now this is no merit, but very much the reverse. The language should always seem to *feel*, though not to *suffer from* the bonds of verse. The very deformities produced, really or apparently, in the phraseology of a great poet, by the confinement of metre, are beautiful, exactly for

the same reasons that in architecture justify the bossy Gothic foliage, so unlike Nature, and yet, indeed, in its place and purpose as art, so much more beautiful than Nature. Metre never attains its noblest effects when it is altogether unproductive of those beautiful exorbitancies on the side of law. Milton and Shakspeare are full of them; and we may declare the excellence of these effects without danger to the poorer proprieties of the lower walks of art, since no small poet can originate them, or even copy them, without making himself absurd. Wordsworth's erroneous critical views of the necessity of approximating the language of poetry, as much as possible, to that of prose, especially by the avoidance of grammatical inversions, arose from his having overlooked the necessity of manifesting, as well as moving in, the bonds of verse. In the finest specimens of versification, there seems to be a perpetual conflict between the law of the verse and the freedom of the language, and each is incessantly, though insignificantly, violated for the purpose of giving effect to the

other. The best poet is not he whose verses are the most easily scanned, and whose phraseology is the commonest in its materials, and the most direct in its arrangement; but rather he whose language combines the greatest imaginative accuracy with the most elaborate and sensible metrical organisation, and who, in his verse, preserves everywhere the living sense of metre, not so much by unvarying obedience to, as by innumerable small departures from, its *modulus*. The over-smooth and "accurate" metre of much of the eighteenth century poetry, to an ear able to appreciate the music of Milton and the best parts of Coleridge, is almost as great a defect as the entire dissolution of metre displayed by some of the writers of our own century.

The reader will already have discovered that I am writing under a conviction that the musical and metrical expression of emotion is an instinct, and not an artifice. Were the vulgar and infantine delight in rhythm insufficient to justify that conviction, history itself would prove it. The earliest writings of all nations possessing regu-

larly constituted languages have been rhythmical in that high degree which takes the form of verse. "Verse," as Ellis well observes, "is anterior to prose, because our passions are anterior to reason and judgment; because vocal sounds are the natural expression of emotion, not of reflection." On examination, however, it will be found that the most ordinary speaking involves the musical and metrical element in an easily appreciable degree, and as an integral part of language, and that this element commonly assumes conspicuousness and importance in proportion to the amount of emotion intended to be expressed. Metre, in the primary degree of a simple series of isochronous intervals, marked by accents, is as natural to spoken language as an even pace is natural to walking. Prose delivery, without this amount of metre, is like a drunkard's walk, the irregularity of which is so far from being natural to a person in his senses, that it is not even to be imitated without effort. Now, as dancing is no more than an increase of the element of measure which already exists in walking,

so verse is but an additional degree of that metre which is inherent in prose speaking. Again, as there is this difference between prose and verse generically, so the same difference gives rise to specific kinds of prose and of verse; and the prose of a common law report differs from that of an impassioned piece of oratory, just in the same way that the semi-prosaic dramatic verse differs from an elaborate lyric. This is no new doctrine; it is as old as criticism. Cicero writes, "Mira est enim natura vocis: cujus quidem è tribus omnino sonis, inflexo, acuto, gravi, tanta sit et tam suavis varietas perfecta in cantibus: *est autem in dicendo etiam quidem cantus obscurior.*" And, again, Quintilian, "Nihil est prosa scriptum quod non redigi possit in quædam versiculorum genera."

The metrical and musical law in prose has been disregarded and forgotten, because its nature is so simple that its observance may be safely trusted to instinct, and requires no aid from typographical divisions. Probably many of my readers will feel as much surprised at learn-

ing that they have been speaking in metre all their lives, as the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* felt on being told that he was, without instruction, in the habit of talking prose. I certainly cannot expect them to believe so startling a proposition upon my mere assertion: I must allege a few proofs, premising, however, that the *melody*, or element of *tone* in language, is so inseparably connected with its *metre* or *time*, that the two things will scarcely consent to be considered separately. By the metre and melody of prose, I of course mean the metre and melody which exists in the common and intelligible delivery of it. Verse itself is only verse on the condition of right reading: we may, if we choose, read the most perfect verse so that all the effect of verse shall be lost. The same thing may be done with prose. We may clearly articulate all the syllables, and preserve their due connexion in the phrases they constitute; and yet, by neglecting to give them their relative tones, and to group them according to time, convert them from prose into something nameless, absurd, and unintelligible. So

far is it from being true that the time and tone of prose reading and speaking are without law, that their laws are more strict than those of grammar itself. There are never two equally good ways of reading a sentence, though there may be half a dozen of writing it. If one and the same sentence is readable in more than one way, it is because it has more than one possible meaning. "Shall you walk out to-day?" is a question which may be asked with as many variations of stress and tone as there are words in it; but every variation involves a variation of meaning.

The isochronous division of common spoken language, though quite as natural, necessary, and spontaneously observed as the laws of inflection, is more difficult to prove, by reason of the difficulty which most persons must experience when they for the first time attempt at once to speak naturally, and to take note of the time in which they speak. To those who believe that verse is itself founded on measure, it will be sufficient to point out the fact, that there is no necessary distinction

between the right reading of prose and that of verse, as there would be were the primary degree of measure, whereby a verse is divisible into a certain number of "feet" or "bars," artificial. Thus, on meeting in prose with such a passage as "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace," which is an exquisitely cadenced "iambic tetrameter brachycatalectic," we give the entire metrical effect in the ordinary reading. An argument of wider power of influence is, however, to be discovered from the consideration of a passage like the following, which, while it refuses to be read into verse, differs greatly from the ordinary character of English prose:—"These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear. Clouds they are without water, carried about of winds: trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit; twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, unto whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." Probably there is not

one unpractised reader in ten but would feel slightly embarrassed by having to read this passage of St. Jude aloud for the first time. The meaning is nevertheless plain; the places of all but one or two of the accents are unmistakable; so that, if stress and tone without measured time were the only points requiring to be given in prose reading, everybody would read it off properly at once. The peculiarity of the passage, however, consists in its singular departure from the metrical constitution of ordinary English phrases, which exhibit a great preponderance of emphatic and unemphatic syllables in consecutive couples, whereas here the accents fall, for the most part, either upon adjacent syllables, or upon every third syllable,—an arrangement requiring an exceedingly bold and emphatic style of delivery, *in order to sever accent from accent by equal measures of time.* Adjacent accents occur so seldom, that bad readers are apt to sink one of them when they do occur, or at least to abbreviate the decided intervening pause, which the ear, even of

the reader who neglects to give it, must instinctively crave.

The dependence of metre upon this primary and natural division of language by accents may be adopted as a fact which has been recognised with more or less distinctness by all critics who have written on the subject to any purpose. Yet, strange to say, the nature of accent itself has puzzled the brains even of those who have spoken most clearly concerning its metrical functions.

The word "accent" is notorious for the variety of meanings which have been attached to it. We are of course chiefly interested in its meaning as it is concerned in English and most modern European verse, and it is only in this regard that it is afflicted with apparently incurable ambiguity of significance. It is commonly allowed now that the Greek accent was a matter of tone exclusively. With us, the places of the *metrical* accent or "ictus"—of the accent in the sense of change of tone, and of long quantity, coincide; with the Greeks, the separation of these elements of verse

was not only permissible, but sought after; and the ictus, accent, quantity, and verbal cæsura advanced, as it were, in parallel order. Hegel rightly says, that "to feel the beauty of the rhythm on all these sides at once, is, for our ear, a great difficulty." It is indeed a difficulty which seems never truly to have been overcome by any modern reader of Greek verse, and it is probably one which could not be overcome by less than the life's habituation which every Greek had. Most people find it hard to believe what they cannot easily represent to their senses; and the fact of the above diversity is sometimes even now shirked, or confusedly admitted, by metrical critics. Mitford, however, very justly remarks, that the difficulty in question, though next to insurmountable, is not greater than that which a Frenchman ordinarily finds in regard to English versification. It is also worth observing, that although such separation is absolutely opposed to the rule of our speech, this rule is nevertheless broken by exceptions which serve at least to render the practice of

shifting the metrical ictus from one place in a word to another, and of severing "accent," in the sense of tone, from long quantity, quite intelligible. Thus, our poets claim the privilege of setting the stress on either syllable of the word "sometimes," according to the requirements of the verse; and the vulgar practice of dwelling long on the first syllables of "*prodigious, miraculous,*" &c., may convince the most sceptical that elevation of tone and ictus have no *necessary* association with long quantity: for such pronunciation in no way diminishes the decision of the ictus and the elevation of the tone upon the succeeding syllables.

Here let me call attention to a mistake which seems always to have been made concerning "accent," even under the acceptation of *tone*. The "*acute* accent" is always spoken of as if it had a permanent position in polysyllables; the fact being, that the accent is necessarily "acute," or *high*, only so long as the word stands without context or relative signification, in which case the acute accent is always used as being, in English,

generally indicative of that which is most positive and characteristic in the constitution of the word. But there is no "acute" which is not liable to be converted into a "grave" by grammatical position. In this question and answer,—"Shall Mary go?" "No, not Mary,"—the first syllable of the word "Mary" is in one case acute, and in the other grave; but in each case alike, the syllable is fully accented. This significative property of change of tone is evidently not the accident of any language, or group of languages: it lies at the foundation of the idea of music of all kinds, and a permanent tone dwelling on certain words would render poetry and song impossible. It cannot therefore be doubted, that, in every language, ancient and modern, as in our own, grammatical isolation is the condition of the permanent acute, and that, consequently, the compound change of tone, called the "circumflex" accent, is, in composition, as liable to commence with a fall as with a rise.

Let me now ask, What do we mean by "accent," as

the word is commonly used in speaking of its function in English verse?—for I may dismiss the Greek meaning as being well defined in its independence of ours, which, whatever it is, is certainly not *pure tone*. Some writers have identified our metrical accent with long quantity; others have placed it in relative loudness; others have fancied it to consist, like the Greek, in pure tone; others have regarded it as a compound of loudness and elevation of tone; and others, as a compound of height and duration of tone; others, again, have regarded it as the general prominence acquired by one syllable over another, by any or all of these elements in combination. Now, it seems to me that the only tenable view of that accent upon which it is allowed, with more or less distinctness, by all, that English metre depends, in contradistinction to the syllabic metre of the ancients, is the view which attributes to it the function of marking, *by whatever means*, certain isochronous intervals. Metre implies something measured; an assertion which sounds like a truism; but to a person much read in our

metrical critics, it will probably seem a startling novelty. It is one, however, which can afford to stand without any further recommendation than its obvious merits, for the present. The thing measured is the time occupied in the delivery of a series of words. But time measured implies something that measures, *and is therefore itself unmeasured;* an argument before which those who hold that English accent and long quantity are identical must bow. These are two indispensable conditions of metre,—first, that the sequence of vocal utterance, represented by written verse, shall be divided into equal or proportionate spaces; secondly, *that the fact of that division shall be made manifest* by an "ictus" or "beat," actual or mental, which, like a post in a chain railing, shall mark the end of one space, and the commencement of another. This "ictus" is an acknowledged condition of all possible metre; and its function is, of course, much more conspicuous in languages so chaotic in their syllabic quantities as to render it the *only* source of metre. Yet, all-important

as this time-beater is, I think it demonstrable that, for the most part, *it has no material and external existence at all,* but has its place in the mind, which craves measure in everything, and, wherever the idea of measure is uncontradicted, delights in marking it with an imaginary "beat." The Greeks, it appears, could tolerate, and even delight, in that which, to our ear, would confuse and contradict measure. Our habits require that everything which gives preponderance to a syllable shall, as a rule, be concentrated upon one, in order to render it duly capable of the mental "ictus." Those qualities which, singly, or in various combination, have hitherto been declared to *be* accent, are indeed only *the conditions of accent;* a view which derives an invincible amount of corroboration from its answering exactly to the character and conditions of accent in vocal and instrumental music, of which the laws cannot be too strictly attended to, if we would arrive at really satisfactory conclusions concerning modern European metre. People are too apt to

fancy they are employing a figure of speech when they talk of the music of poetry. The word "music" is in reality a much more accurate expression for that which delights us in good verse, apart from the meaning, than the word "rhythm," which is commonly employed by those who think to express themselves with greater propriety. Rhythm, when the term is not meant to be synonymous with a combination of varied tone and measured time, must signify an abstraction of the merely metrical character extremely difficult to realise, on account of the curious, though little noticed, tendency of the mind to connect the idea of tone with that of time or measure. There is no charm in the rhythm of monotones, unless the notion of monotone can be overcome; and, when that is the case, it is not rhythm, but rhythmical melody, whereby we are pleased. If Grétry, when a child, danced to the pulsations of a waterfall, it was because his fancy abolished their monotony. The ticking of a clock is truly monotonous; but when we listen to it, we hear, or rather seem to hear, two, or

even four, distinct tones, upon the imaginary distinction of which, and the equally imaginary emphasis of one or two, depends what we call its rhythm. In the case of the beat of a drum, this ideal apprehension of tone is still more remarkable: in imitating its tattoo, the voice expresses what the mind imagines, and, in doing so, employs several varieties of tone. In all such cases, however, the original sounds, though monotonous, are far from being pure monotones; they are metrical recurrences of the same *noise*, rather than the same tone; and it is very interesting to observe, that we cannot evoke what we thus erroneously term "rhythm" from the measured repetition of a perfectly pure tone. The tattoo of a knuckle upon the table will lose most, if not all, of its rhythm, if transferred to a bell. The drum gives "rhythm;" but the clear note of the "triangle" is nothing without another instrument, *because it does not admit of an imagined variation.*

The relation of music to language ought to be recognised as something more than that of similarity, if we

would rightly appreciate either, "The musical art," says G. Weber, "consists in the expression of feelings by means of tones." Now, all feelings have relation to thoughts or facts which may be stated, or at least suggested, in words; and the union of descriptive words with an expressive variation and measurement of tones, constitutes, according to the amount and kind of feeling, and the truth of its vocal expression, song, poetry, and even the most ordinary spoken language. *Perfect poetry and song are, in fact, nothing more than perfect speech upon high and moving subjects;* a truth upon which Grétry, one of the soundest, as well as by very much the most amusing of modern musical critics, inferentially insists, when he says, "Il est une musique qui ayant pour base la declamation des paroles, est vraie comme les passions," which is as much as to say, that there is no right melody which is not so founded. And again, "La parole est un bruit ou le chant est renfermé;" a statement which is the converse of the other, and amounts to a charge of imperfection against our ordinary modes of speaking, in so far

as, when concerned with the expression of the feelings, they do not amount to pure song. Who has not heard entire sentences, and even series of sentences, so spoken by women, who are usually incomparably better speakers than men, as to constitute a strain of melody which might at once be written down in notes, and played, but with no increase of musical effect, on the piano? Where was the "bruit" in Rachel's delivery of an impassioned passage of Racine? Her rendering of such passages was not commonly recognised as pure song because, in modern times (it was not so with the Greeks), song, by having been long regarded as an "artificial" mode of expression, has fallen into extravagance and falsehood, and is now very rarely "vrai comme les passions." Modern singing and modern declamation, as a rule, are equally far removed from that just medium at which they coalesce and become one. In song, we have gradually fallen into the adoption of an extent of scale, and a diversity of time, which is simply *nonsensical;* for such variations of tone and time correspond to no depths

or transitions of feeling of which the human breast is cognisant. The *permanent* popular instinct, which is ever the best test of truth in art, recognises the falsehood of these extremes; and Grétry well asks, "N' avons nous pas remarqué que les airs les plus connus sont ceux qui embrassent le moins d'espace, le moins de notes, le plus court diapason? Voyez, presque tous les airs que le temps a respectés, il sont dans ce cas." The musical shortcomings of ordinary recitation are not nearly so inexcusable as the extravagancies of most modern song. *Perfect* readers of high poetry are as rare as fine singers and good composers, for the sufficient reason, that they *are* fine singers and good composers, though they may not suspect it in an age of unnatural divorce of sound and sense. What is commonly accounted good reading—what indeed is such when compared with the inanimate style of most readers—falls immeasurably short of the musical sense of really fine verse. The interval between the veriest mouther and an ordinarily accomplished elocutionist, is scarcely greater

than that which separates the latter from the *ideal* actor, who should be able to effect for the poetry of Shakspeare what Rachel did for, here and there, a line of Racine. Hence, few lovers of good poetry care to hear it read or acted; for, although themselves, in all likelihood, quite unable to give such poetry a true and full vocal interpretation, their unexpressed imagination of its music is much higher than their own or any ordinary reading of it would be. Poets themselves have sometimes been very bad readers of their own verses; and it seems not unlikely that their acute sense of what such reading ought to be, discomposes and discourages them when they attempt to give their musical idea a material realisation. In this matter of the relationship of music and poetry, the voice of theory is corroborated by that of history. "These two arts," writes Dr. Burney, "were at first so intimately connected, and so dependent on each other, that rules for poetry were in general rules for music; and the properties and effects of both were so much confounded

together that it is extremely difficult to disentangle them."

Mitford, and other writers, who have treated of Latin and Greek verse as being "metrical" and "temporal," and of our own as "rhythmical" and "accentual," have fallen into the strange error of not perceiving that these four epithets must apply to all possible kinds of metre, as far as they really are metre; and that, although the non-coincidence of the grammatical with the metrical ictus, and other peculiarities of Greek and Latin verse, give rise to differences in *kind* between these and the English and other modern European modes of *verse*, the difference of *metre* can be only one of degree. It is not to be doubted that "quantity," in the ancient composition and delivery of Greek and Latin verse, did involve a stricter measurement of the time of single syllables than subsists in our verse, or in our reading of classical verse, and that a real change did occur in the transition from the "metrum" of the ancients to the "rhythmus" of the moderns,—a change represented in

Greek verse itself by the famous *versus politici* of Tzetzes; but the only change, as far as regards pure *metre*, which is reconcilable with facts and the nature of the case, is that which consists in rendering "accentual" division of time the *sole*, instead of merely the *main*, source of metre. In modern verse, those collocations of accented and unaccented syllables which we call "feet," are not true measures, as they were, though probably only approximately, in ancient verse. Our verse, for example, delights in the unclassical practice of setting a trochee before an iambus in what we call iambic verse, as—

"For one restraint, Lords of the world beside."

In the proper delivery of this line, the same time, or very nearly, is allowed to elapse between the first and second, second and third, and third and fourth accents; but between the first and second there is *one* unaccented syllable; between the second and third, *none;* and between the third and fourth there are *two;* con-

sequently, the trochee, "*Lords of*," and the iambus, "*the world*," are both temporarily deficient when considered as feet, the two unemphatic syllables, *of the*, being pronounced in the time of one of any of the other three unemphatic syllables in the line. Again—

"Come, see rural felicity,"

is a verse having the full time of four dactyls, the first two being each represented by a single syllable. Our liability to error, through an indiscriminating use of the same names for different things, may be illustrated by the fact, that *the "feet" which Quintilian says produced the even or common rhythmus, namely, the dactyl and anapæst, with us produce the uneven, or triple, and, on the contrary, the iambus and trochee give our even rhythmus.* The word *foot*, however, may be usefully retained in the criticism of modern verse, inasmuch as it indicates a reality, though not exactly that which is indicated by it with regard to classical metre. The true meaning of the word for us is to be obtained from attending to its

employment by Prinz, Calcott, and other musical writers, who speak of iambic, trochaic, and dactylic *rhythms*. Thus, a strain in "common time" beginning with the unaccented note, is called iambic; a strain in "triple time" beginning with two unaccented notes, anapæstic, and so forth. Each rhythm, in verse as in music, has a very distinct character; and it is obviously convenient that we should have a distinguishing term for it, since this is by no means supplied by the general terms, "common" and "triple cadence."

The chief source of confusion in modern writings on metre is the nature of the metrical value of the separate syllables of which feet and cadences are composed. The common notion of an exact proportion inherent in syllables themselves seems to be quite untenable. The time occupied in the actual articulation of a syllable is not necessarily its metrical value. *The time of a syllable in combination, is that which elapses from its commencement to the commencement of the succeeding syllable;* so that the monosyllables, a, as, ask, asks, ask'st, though

requiring five degrees of time for their articulation, may have precisely the same temporal value in verse, just as, in music played *staccato* on the pianoforte, the actual duration of sound in a crotchet or a quaver note may be the same, the metrical value depending altogether on the difference of the time which elapses before the commencement of the succeeding note. This may reconcile the fact, noticed by Dionysius and others, that "one short syllable differs from another short, and one long from another long," with the apparently contradictory rule, "Syllaba brevis unius est temporis, longa vero duorum." It is furthermore very necessary to be observed, that the equality or proportion of metrical intervals between accent and accent is no more than general and approximate, and that expression in reading, as in singing or playing, admits, and even requires, frequent modifications, too insignificant or too subtle for notation, of the nominal equality of those spaces. In the present day, it is the fashion, not only in music and in poetry, but in all the arts, to seek expression at too

great an expense of law, and the most approved style of reading is that which ignores the metre as far as is consistent with the possibility of recognising the verse as verse. It is certain that such reading as this would ill bear me out in my assertion of the metrical isochronism in English and other accentual verse, but the constant presence of a general intention of, and tendency towards the realisation of this character, will assuredly be always manifest in good verse, well read. Not only may metrical intervals differ thus from their nominal equality without destroying measure, but the marking of the measure by the recurrent ictus may be occasionally remitted, the position of the ictus altered, or its place supplied by a pause, without the least offence to a cultivated ear, which rather delights in, than objects to, such remission, inversion, or omission, when there is an emotional motive, as indicating an additional degree of that artistic consciousness, to the expression of which, Hegel traces the very life of metre.

A complete and truly satisfactory metrical analysis of any passage even of classical verse, would include a much fuller consideration of the element of pause than has commonly been given to that subject, even by analysts of modern metre. In the works of the most authoritative prosodians—in the work of Hermann himself—the various kinds of *catalexis*, and measurable cæsural pause, appear rather as *interruptions* than *subjects* of metrical law. Campion, Joshua Steele, and O'Brien ("Ancient Rhythmical Art Recovered"), have indeed noted middle and final pause as being the subject of measure; but the two former have done so only incidentally, and the latter has failed to obtain the consideration which, with all the deficiencies of his little work, the boldness and partial truth of his views deserve. Unless we are to go directly against the analogy of music, and to regard every verse affected with catalexis (or a deficiency in the number of syllables requisite to make it a full dimeter, trimeter, tetrameter, &c.) as constituting an entire metrical system in itself, which is obviously

absurd,* we must reckon the missing syllables as substituted by an equivalent pause; and, indeed, in reading catalectic verse, this is what a good reader does by instinct. The idea of metrical sequence between verses is equally contradicted by the notion of "hypercatalectic verse." The nine-syllable trochaics, in Mr. Tennyson's "Vision of Sin," would probably be regarded by prosodians as "hypercatalectic dimeters;" but the extraordinary pause which is required at the end of every line indicates clearly enough that such verses are really "trimeters," the time of *three* syllables being filled with a pause. This pause, when properly rendered, affects the ear as excessive; and therefore the verse, though used three centuries ago by Spenser, has never found a place among our recognised metres.

The cæsural, or middle pause, in some kinds of verse, is of such duration that the verse cannot be rightly

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* That Hermann falls practically into this absurdity, may be seen from his mode of treating *anacrusis*, or those "times" which precede the (first) "arsis:" these "times" he really excludes from the metre.

scanned without allowing for it. Cæsura plays a less refined part in modern than in ancient versification, but still its office with us is far from unimportant. Much over-refinement and many strange mistakes have been fallen into by theorists and theorising poets in connexion with this matter. The most common and injurious of such errors, is that of identifying metrical pauses with grammatical stops. Some of the early English poets were at great pains to try the experiment of making these two very different things coincide. Now, one of the most fertile sources of the "ravishing division" in fine versification is the opposition of these elements—that is to say, the breaking up of a grammatical clause by cæsural pause, whether at the end or in the middle of a verse.

The great magnitude of metrical, as compared with grammatical pauses, seems not to have had so much notice as its curiosity deserves. In beating time to the voice of a good reader of verse, it will be found that the metrical pauses are usually much longer than the longest pauses of punctuation, and that they are almost entirely

independent of them. For example, a final pause equal to an entire foot may occur between the nominative and the governed genitive, and, in the same sequence of verses, a grammatical period may occur in the middle of an accentual interval without lengthening its time, or diminishing the number of the included syllables. In fact, the "stops," or conclusions of grammatical clauses, are rather marked by *tone* than *time*. Even in the reading of prose, the metrical pauses—for so the pauses between adjacent accents may rightly be called—are of much greater duration than is given to most of the "stops."

It is very questionable, indeed, whether English verse has gained by the entire disuse of the cæsural dot, which was always employed, until the middle of the fifteenth century, to indicate the position of the cæsura in those kinds of verse of which a marked cæsura was an essential quality. Of this metrical sign Mr. Guest says, "No edition of Chaucer and his contemporaries can be complete without it." The value of the cæsural dot will be at once manifest to every reader on perusing such lines

as the following, which have been attributed to Surrey, and of the like of which plenty are to be found in the writings of him and his predecessors and immediate successors:—

"And some I see again sit still, and say but small,
That can do ten times more than they that say they can do all."

The reader is almost sure to destroy the metre of these lines in his first perusal, for want of an indication of the strong cæsura, equal to a pause of an entire foot, in the first line, on the sixth syllable. In a language like ours, abounding in monosyllables to such a degree, that ten, twenty, thirty, forty, or even fifty of them, may follow in uninterrupted sequence, as in a passage in the third Act of King John, quoted by Mitford, this assistance is absolutely required in verses exceeding the length of the common "heroic;" and the consequence of its disuse has naturally been the disuse of those of the ancient English metres, some very fine ones, which required it. Mr. Lettsom's excellent version of the Nibelungen Lied,

though singularly faultless in its rhythm for a translation of such magnitude, is continually liable to be misread for want of the cæsural sign.

Hitherto I have had occasion to speak only of that primary metrical division which is common to verse and prose. I have now to speak of that which constitutes the distinctive quality of verse. Nothing but the unaccountable disregard, by prosodians, of final pauses could have prevented the observation of the great general law, which I believe that I am now, for the first time, stating, that the *elementary measure, or integer, of English verse is double the measure of ordinary prose,*—that is to say, it is the space which is bounded by *alternate* accents; *that every verse proper contains two, three, or four of these "metres,"* or, as with a little allowance they may be called, "dipodes;" *and that there is properly no such thing as hypercatalexis.* All English verses in common cadence are therefore dimeters, trimeters, or tetrameters, and consist, when they are *full—i.e.*, without *catalexis*, of eight, twelve, or sixteen syllables. Verses

in triple cadence obey the same law, only their length never—except in the Anglo-Saxon alliterative metre, of the peculiar laws of which I shall have to speak—exceeds that of the trimeter, on account of the great number of syllables or places of syllables (twenty-four) which would be involved in a tetrameter in such cadence. Monometers cannot stand in series as verses, though, as terminations of stanzas and interruptions of measure for peculiar purposes involving extended pauses, the effect of their introduction is often admirable. A few simple considerations will place this sectional admeasurement of English verse beyond question. It has been rightly felt by Mitford and others, that "verses" of less than six syllables are essentially absurd and burlesque in their character. The reason is, no doubt, the absurd comparative length of the final pause, required to render lines of five syllables in common cadence into consecutive verse; or the equally absurd alternative of the omission of the pause: such lines—and there are plenty of them in Skelton, and the burlesque lyrists—are at once felt to

be *a mockery of verse*. It happens, however, that in metre, there is but half a foot between the ridiculous and the sublime. The six-syllable "iambic" is the most solemn of all our English measures. It is scarcely fit for anything but a dirge; the reason being, that the final pause in this measure is greater, when compared with the length of the line, than in any other verse. Here is an example, which I select on account of the peculiar illustration of its nature as a "dimeter brachycatalectic," which is supplied by the *filling up* of the measure in the seventh line:—

"How strange it is to wake
And watch, while others sleep,
Till sight and hearing ache
For objects that may keep
The awful inner sense
Unroused, lest it should mark
The life that haunts the emptiness
And horror of the dark."

We have only to *fill up* the measure in every line as well as in the seventh, in order to change this verse from the

slowest and most mournful, to the most rapid and high-spirited of all English metres, the common eight-syllable quatrain; a measure particularly recommended by the early critics, and continually chosen by poets in all times, for erotic poetry, on account of its joyous air. The reason of this unusual rapidity of movement is the unusual character of the eight-syllable verse as *acatalectic*, almost all other kinds of verse being catalectic on at least one syllable, implying a final pause of corresponding duration.

The iambic ode, erroneously called "irregular," of which there exist few legitimate examples in our language, is, if I mistake not, a tetrameter, with almost unlimited liberty of catalexis, to suit the variations of the high and stately lyrical feeling which can alone justify the use of this measure. The existence of an amount of catalectic pause varying from the time of two to fourteen syllables—for the line, in this kind of metre, may change at once to that extent—is justified by the analogy of the pauses, or stops, in a similar style of music; and the

fact of this amount of catalexis being of the essence of this metre, seems to have been unconsciously felt and acknowledged by almost all who have written or attempted to write in it; for almost all have tried to represent the varying pauses, and to prepare the ear for them, by printing the lines affected with catalexis with shorter or longer blank spaces at the beginning; a precaution which seems to me to be unnecessary; for, if the feeling justifies the metre, the ear will take naturally to its variations; but if there is not sufficient motive power of passionate thought, no typographical aids will make anything of this sort of verse but *metrical nonsense*—which it nearly always is, even in Cowley, whose brilliant wit and ingenuity are strangely out of harmony with most of his measures.

It is necessary, in connexion with this part of the subject, to remark, that although every complete verse, in common cadence, must have the time of two or more metres or *sections* (as it may be more expedient to call these primary accentual divisions of verse),

it by no means follows that the verse must begin or end with the commencement or termination of a section. In the quotation given above, the first accentual section begins with the second syllable of the first verse, and the second section commences with the last syllable of that verse; and, taking in the pause equivalent to two syllables, ends with the first syllable of the next, and so on, exactly as is the case with the sections in musical composition, which seldom begin with the first note of the strain or end with the last. When every line in a passage of poetry begins with the beginning of an accentual section, the effect is an increase of emphasis, but a great diminution of the impression of continuity, and, in general, of rhythmical beauty. Unmixed "trochaics" or "dactylics" have seldom been written by poets of fine musical feeling.

It will generally be found that in verses which strike the ear as extraordinarily musical, the peculiarity is mainly owing to an unusually distinct and emphatic accentuation of the first syllable in the metrical sec-

tion, as in the following lines from the "Merchant of Venice:"—

> "The crów doth sing as swéetly as the lárk
> When néither is atténded; and I thínk
> The níghtingale, if shé should sing by dáy,
> When every goose is cáckling, would be thóught
> No bétter a musícian than the wrén."

In these blank trimeters, properly read, there is a major and a minor accent in every section but one. Shakspeare, the most musical of writers, affords more examples of lines of this constitution than any other English poet. Dryden and Pope would have called these verses weak. Their "full resounding line" studiously avoided these melodious remissions of the alternate accents. Curiously enough, Mitford quotes the above lines as an example of *departure* from the modulus of heroic verse, although his own principle of referring the metre of verse and that of music to a common law, should have taught him that they exemplify the most exact fulfilment of that

modulus. The lovely song in "Measure for Measure," beginning—

"Take, oh take those lips away,"

Gray's Ode—

"Ruin seize thee, ruthless king,"

and probably most other pieces which have become famous for their music, will be found, on examination, to depend for much of their mysterious charm upon the marking of the section by extra emphasis on the first accent. Indeed, this indication of the section would seem to be a necessity deducible from the fact of verse being measurable by sections, which would have no meaning, unless their existence were made apparent by at least an occasional marking of them.

English poetry (including Anglo-Saxon) divides itself into three great classes: *alliterative, rhyming,* and *rhymeless.* The distinctions between these kinds are more real and vital than is commonly imagined; and I shall now state, as briefly as may be, the main characteristics of each.

There could scarcely have been devised a worse illustration of alliteration than Pope's often-quoted example, "apt alliteration's artful aid." A young writer who, had he lived a few years longer, would probably have been famous without the monument of the most beautiful elegiac poem of modern times, in one of the thoughtful essays privately printed in his remarkable "Remains," observes justly that, "Southern languages abound in vowels, and rhyme is the resonance of vowels, while the Northern overflow with consonants, and naturally fall into alliteration." Now, alliteration is so essentially consonantal, that, in Anglo-Saxon and Icelandic poetry, in which this assonance has been cultivated as an art, there is properly no such thing as alliteration of vowels; although, when the requisite number of alliterating consonants in each verse or distich cannot conveniently be produced, three words beginning with vowels are permitted to take the place of alliterating consonants, provided *that all these vowels are different.* Like rhyme, alliteration is no mere

"ornament" of versification: it is a real and powerful metrical adjunct, when properly employed. If rhyme, as I shall soon show, is the great means, in modern languages, of marking essential metrical pauses, alliteration is a very effective mode of conferring emphasis on the accent, which is the primary foundation of metre. Could any rule be fixed for the place, in modern verse, of that which may be said partly to owe its effect to surprise, as rhyme has been said to appeal to memory and hope, we should allot its position to principal accents only; that is, to the major accents at the beginning of sections; to those on either side of the strong cæsura in "asynartete" verses, that is, verses having a fixed place for the cæsura; and so forth. To certain kinds of metre of the class just named, alliteration might be applied systematically with considerable profit, not in every line, perhaps, as in the ancient alliterative metres, but in such lines only, as, on account of the irregular suppression or multiplication of unaccented syllables, leave the place of the indispensable pause so

doubtful as sometimes to require a second reading to determine it. Although superfluous alliteration, like all kinds of superfluous emphasis, is vulgar and disgusting, the verse of the most classical of our poets is often much more indebted for its music to alliteration than is commonly supposed. By a poet, who is a master of his art, and knows how to conceal such assonances by alliterating initial letters with others in the middle of words, or by employing similar consonantal sounds represented by different letters, and so on, the most delicate, as well as the most forcible effects, of emphasis may be given, as if by magic, and the impression of metre everywhere enhanced as if by an invisible agent. Furthermore, as rhyme gracefully used has a certain charm proper to itself, and apart from its metrical value, so alliteration is sometimes a real ornament when it is little else, as in this epitaph "On a Virgin," by Herrick :—

"Hush'd be all things; no noise here,
But the toning of a tear;
Or a sigh of such as bring
Cowslips for her covering."

But alliteration has served, and, in Icelandic verse, still serves, a far more important and systematic purpose. One of the most scientifically perfect metres ever invented, if, indeed, it be not perfect beyond all others, when considered with reference to the language for which it was destined, is the great Gothic alliterating metre, the only metre of which we can affirm that it has been the main vehicle of the whole poetry of any one language, much less of a group of languages. The general law of this metre is, that it shall consist of a series of verses, each of which is divided, by a powerful cæsura, into two sections, or hemistichs. Each hemistich contains two accented syllables, and an indefinite number of unaccented ones; the accents being occasionally, though rarely, adjacent, and sometimes, though not less rarely, preceded, separated, or followed by as many as three syllables without accent, that being as large a number as can be articulated without destroying the approximate equality of time between accent and accent, which, I cannot too often repeat, is

the primary condition of metre in all languages. In the first hemistich, the two accented syllables alliterate, and this alliteration is continued on to one, and that one most usually, though not, as Rask would have it, regularly, the first of the accented syllables in the second. This law, which seems to have been regarded by Mitford, Percy, Rask, Guest, Hegel, and others, as an arbitrary one, is *most admirably adapted to fulfil the conditions of a truly accentual metre*, that is to say, of a metre which, totally abandoning the element of natural syllabic quantity, takes the isochronous *bar* for the metrical integer, and uses the same kind of liberty as is claimed by the musical composer, in filling up that space. Of this metre, which in England outlived the Anglo-Saxon language several centuries, the following lines from "Pierce Plowman'sVisions," may serve as an illustration; it being understood that the two distichs are usually written as one line in Anglo-Saxon verse.

"I looked on my left halfe
As the lady me taught,

And was ware of a woman
Worthlyith clothed,
Purfiled with pelure,
The finest upon erthe;
Crowned with a crowne,
The king hath no better."

This rule must appear extremely simple even to those to whom it may be presented for the first time. The artistical effect which results from its observance cannot be expected to strike so immediately, but we venture to say that no good ear, when once accustomed to it, can fail to perceive in this law a fountain of pure and beautiful metrical character,* or at least to absolve it from the charge of any essential quaintness or oddity, though an appearance of such character inevitably attaches itself at first to what is so far from our daily notions. The

* Since these lines were written, Mr. William Morris has used, with sometimes excellent effect, a metre very similar to this in his poem called "Love is Enough." His verses, however, would frequently have been the better for adhering more closely than they do to the alliterative law of the original metre.

meaning of this law, the cause of its just effect, seems, as I have hinted, to have been overlooked by critics. If I do not err, the following is the right account of this interesting matter. It is to be observed, first, that, according to the rule of this measure, the hemistich or versicle of two accents may contain from three to seven, or even more syllables; secondly, that this metre, like all others, depends for its existence on having the metrical accents in easily recognisable positions, a doubtful place for the accent being ruinous to any metre; thirdly, that, in a language consisting, as the Anglo-Saxon does, chiefly of monosyllables, the place of the accent in a series of several syllables must often be doubtful, unless it occurs pretty regularly on every second or every third syllable, as in iambic and anapæstic verse, or unless the immediate recognition of its place be assisted by some artifice. *Now, this artifice is supplied by the alliteration, which marks, as a rule, at least two out of the four emphatic syllables in each pair of versicles, and these two are precisely those which, in asynartete verse, like*

the Anglo-Saxon, it is most essential that there should be no doubt about, namely, the emphatic syllable which precedes, and that which follows the strongly marked cæsura by which the versicles are separated. The metrical dot which, in ancient MSS. commonly marks the main cæsura in Anglo-Saxon and other Old English asynartete verse, is unessential in this place, if the alliteration be properly adhered to. The dot was most likely used at first only to distinguish verses,* and its further employment to mark the cæsura seems likely to have arisen from the lax observance, by some poets, of the alliterative law, which, in Anglo-Saxon verse, is sometimes neglected to a degree for which we can only account by the supposition that this unartistic use of the cæsural dot reacted upon the practice of the poets, and increased the

* "Anglo-Saxon poetry," says Mr. Guest, "was written continuously like prose. In some MSS. the point separated the sections," *i.e.*, versicles or hemistichs; "in others it separated the couplets," (*i.e.*, verses); "in others the point was used merely to close a period, and the versification had nothing but the rhythm to indicate it."

laxity which it was employed to counteract. This, however, it could only do in very small part; it quite fails to supply the needful assistance to the accentuation in such a metre, although it marks the place of a pause. In fact, *the law of alliteration is the only conceivable intrinsic mode of immediately indicating the right metrical accentuation where the language consists mainly of monosyllables and the verse admits of a varying number of unemphatic syllables, before, between, and after the accented ones.*

The weak point of Rask's approximate statement of the laws of Anglo-Saxon versification has been pointed out by Mr. Guest, but the writer's view of *why* it is the weak point seems to me to be erroneous. Rask says that all the syllables preceding the alliterating syllable in the second hemistich are unaccented, and form a "complement" which must be carefully separated from the verse, of which this "complement" forms no part. Mr. Guest rightly thinks that, when, as sometimes happens, the alliterating syllable is preceded by four,

five, or more syllables, it is impossible to read them all without accentuation; but the more forcible answer is, that the very notion of a "complement," as stated by Rask, is contrary to the nature of metre. The "anacrusis," or unaccented portion of a foot or bar, which generally commences a verse or a strain of melody, is the nearest approximation to Rask's idea of a "complement" which the nature of metre will admit; but "anacrusis" is always less than the isochronous metrical or musical spaces which succeed it, whereas Rask's "complement," as we understand, and as Mr. Guest understands it, may be of indefinite length, to the utter destruction of all metrical continuity. The true account of all those cases in which more than two, or at most three, syllables precede the alliterating syllable in the second hemistich is, that, when they are not erroneous transcriptions, they are metrical laxities, from which we have no reason to suppose that Anglo-Saxon poets were singularly exempt.

The view which I have taken of the metrical motive

of alliteration in Anglo-Saxon verse, as a means of emphasising to the hearer, and of immediately certifying to the reader, the places of the principal accents, is further confirmed by the fact, that, whereas, when the Anglo-Saxon poets used rhyme, they lavished it with an abundance which showed that it had no metrical value in their eyes, and was introduced for the mere pleasure of the jingle, and to such an extent, that every word in a famous poem quoted by Conybeare rhymes with some other, it was just the reverse with the alliteration, which is almost invariably limited to three syllables. Now, had it not been for the existence of the metrical motive which I have indicated, the liking for jingle which led to the composition of such rhymes would have also led to a similar profusion of alliteration; but this limitation of the alliteration to the places of the most important accents was strictly observed, and immoderate alliteration only manifested itself in English verse, when the alliterative *metre* had given place to metres regulated by *rhyme*, after which

change, rhyme assumed metrical strictness and moderation, and alliteration, when used at all, was confined by no rule, but was sometimes carried through every word in a verse, without any regard to the accentual quality of the syllables.*

It seems to have afforded matter of surprise to some, that the Anglo-Saxon poets, though fully understanding the metrical use of final rhyme, should have employed it *metrically* only when writing in *Latin*. A little consideration, however, will suffice to show that final rhyme is not only not necessary, but that it is contrary to the nature of Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse, of which the greatest commendation is the vast variety allowed for the position of the accents—a variety not possible where the accents are not artificially indicated. It is obvious, that

* Welsh **poetry**, from the earliest times, has made an abundant use of **alliteration**, the rules for its employment having even been fixed at congresses of the bards; but, as far as I can judge from examination of the verse without a knowledge of the language, the alliteration in Welsh poetry is not *metrical*, but "*ornamental*."

this variety would be very much diminished by the use of final rhyme, which, as in the only regularly rhyming Anglo-Saxon poem known, namely, that which Conybeare gives in his "Introduction," both supersedes the object of alliteration, and compels a like arrangement of accented and unaccented syllables in the latter part of each versicle. The accentual variations possible in an Anglo-Saxon verse—(Rask would call it a couplet)—of four accents, are computed by Mr. Guest as being 324 in number. Final rhyming of the versicles or hemistichs would greatly reduce this number.

Before taking leave of this part of my subject, something must be said concerning the question of the cadence of Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse. This question, at first sight, appears to be one of more difficulty than it really is. The actual metrical delivery of any long passage of Anglo-Saxon verse might puzzle the best Anglo-Saxon scholar, owing to the impossibility of settling, in every case, the right pronunciation of words, and to the fact that the laws of alliteration, as stated by

Rask, though they must have afforded most sufficing assistance to those for whom Anglo-Saxon was a living language, are by no means so invariably observed as to afford *infallible* guidance to *us*. The cadence, however, may be settled theoretically, by a consideration of the constant nature of metre. Indeed, I hold, against the opinion of Mr. Guest, that Mitford has settled the question, and has proved that the cadence is triple. Mr. Guest maintains that, in our ancient poetry, the common and triple cadences were inextricably mixed, and that "it is not till a period comparatively modern, that the common and triple measures disentangle themselves from the heap, and form, as it were, the two limits of our English rhythm." Now, in support of Mitford's view:—First: There is a strong natural probability that the verse of a language like the Anglo-Saxon, which, when spoken, would fall into "common" or "iambic" time, on account of the great preponderance of monosyllables, and the consequently usual alternation of one accented and one unaccented syllable,

would assume the "triple" or "anapæstic" cadence, as the simplest and most obvious distinction from prose and ordinary speaking. Secondly: The triple and common cadences cannot be mixed, as Mr. Guest supposes them to have been, without destroying cadence altogether. The example which Mr. Guest gives of this imaginary mixture, tells strikingly the other way, and proves the defective ear, which seems to have led the writer into this and other mistakes. Mr. Guest quotes the following lines by Sir Walter Scott:—

> "Merrily swim we: the moon shines bright:
> Downward we drift through shadow and light:
> Under yon rock the eddies sleep
> Calm and silent, dark and deep."

The last line, Mr. Guest says, is in common cadence. Now, its excellent effect, on the contrary, depends entirely upon the obligation to read it into triple cadence, by dwelling very long on the accented syllables, an obligation which results from its forming an integral part of a passage in that cadence. Forget the three

preceding lines, and read the last as if it formed one of a series of seven-syllable trochaics, and its movement and character are totally changed. *Thus we see that an entire line may be in common or triple cadence, according to the cadence of the context.* In "Paradise Lost" there are several lines, which, if they stood alone, or in juxtaposition with others like them, would naturally read into triple cadence. Thirdly and lastly: Much, if not all, the supposed difficulty in the way of regarding Anglo-Saxon verse as altogether in triple time, disappears when we remember that it was originally meant to be sung to the harp, and that its rhythmical movement might very well be obscure, confused, and apparently "mixed," until developed by highly emphatic delivery, and musical accompaniment.

The metrical function of rhyme, like that of alliteration, has never yet been fully recognised. The battle of rhyme was fought with much ability between Campion and Daniel, in the beginning of the seventeenth century. Campion, in his "Observations on the Art of English

Poesy," violently attacked "the vulgar and unartificiall custome of riming," and supported his destructive with a constructive attempt, giving specimens of several modes of rhymeless English metre, his example of heroic verse being remarkable for its studied, and almost Miltonic science, as compared with the like attempts of Surrey and Grimoald. Daniel meets Campion's vituperation of rhyme, as a superfluous and barbarous excrescence, with solid, and sometimes profound, arguments. He justly says, "Our rhyme is an excellencie added to this worke of measure," and though himself a scholar, in a time of strong scholastic prejudices, declares it to be "a harmonie farre happier than any proportion antiquitie could ever shew us," adding, concerning the classic numbers advocated by his adversary, the following remarks, which are worth the consideration of those who, in our own day, would revive Campion's heresy:—

"If ever they become anything, it must be by the approbation of ages, that must give them their strength for any

operation, or before the world will feel where the pulse, life, and energy lies, which now we're sure where to find in our rymes, whose knoune frame hath those due stayes for the mind, those incounters of touch as make the motion certaine, though the varietie be infinite. Nor will the generall sort, for whom we write (the wise being above bookes), taste these laboured measures but as an orderlie prose when we have done all. For this kinde acquaintance and continuall familiarity ever had betwixt our ear and this cadence, is growne to so intimate a freindship as it will now hardly ever be brought to misse it. For bee the verse never so good, never so full, it seems not to satisfie nor breede that delight as when it is met and combined with like sounding accent which seemes as the jointure without which it hangs loose and cannot subsist, but runs wildely on, like a tedious fancie without a close."

This writer was the first to do justice to rhyme as a means of indefinitely extending the limits, and multiplying the symmetry of measure by the formation of stanzas.

"These limited proportions and rests of stanzas are of that happiness, both for the disposition of the matter, and the apt planting of the sentence, where it may best stand to hit the certaine close of delight, with the full body of a just period

well carried, as neither the Greeks nor the Latins ever attained unto."

The transcendent genius of Milton succeeded in establishing one kind of rhymeless narrative metre, in the face of the obstacles justly alleged by Daniel; and the ever-increasing familiarity of that metre to English ears, has given rise, in our days, to renewed doubts of the legitimacy of rhyme, and to renewed occasion for insisting on its claim. Rhyme is so far from being extra-metrical and merely "ornamental," as most persons imagine it to be, that it is the quality to which nearly all our metres owe their very existence. The octo-syllabic couplet and quatrain, two of the most important measures we have, are measures only by virtue of the indication, supplied by rhyme, of the limits of the verse; for they have no catalectic pause, without which "blank verse" in English is impossible. All staves, as Daniel remarks, are created by rhyme. It is almost impossible, by even the most skilful arrangement of unrhymed verses, to produce a recurrent metre of several lines long. Campion, in his

beautiful lines, beginning "Rose-cheek'd Laura, come;" Collins, in his "Ode to Evening;" Mr. Tennyson, in his famous song, "Tears, Idle Tears," and a few other poets, in one or two short poems each, have succeeded in forming the stave without rhyme; but the rareness of these attempts proves the difficulty of succeeding in them, and, after all, the success seems scarcely worth the pains. Sir Philip Sydney and George Puttenham agree with Daniel in regarding rhyme as the highest metrical power we have. Mr. Guest, in modern days, does rhyme the justice to say, that "it marks and defines the accent, and thereby strengthens and supports the rhythm. Its advantages have been felt so strongly, that no people have ever adopted an accentual rhythm without also adopting rhyme." Mitford and others have also recognised the function of rhyme as a time-beater, though their imperfect apprehension of the accentual constitution of our verse has necessarily prevented a clear understanding of that function. Hegel, whose observation on the necessity of the material coun-

terpoise afforded by metre to the high spirituality of poetic thought has been already quoted, remarks, in comparing ancient with modern versification, that, whereas in the first, that counterpoise is mainly supplied by the natural length or brevity of syllables, which spiritual expression is not permitted to alter or destroy, in the latter, the verbal accent, conferred by the signification, gives length wherever it chances to fall. *Du liebst* is a spondee, an iambus, or a trochee, according to the signification borne by the words. The material or external element of syllabic quantity, is thus dissolved and lost in the spirituality which produces quantity instead of obeying it; and this loss, he maintains, is not compensated by the law of accentual division which remains. A new power, working *ab extra*, is required; and this is found in rhyme, of which the very grossness, as compared with syllabic quantity, is a great advantage, inasmuch as the greater spirituality of modern thought and feeling, demand a more forcible material contrast.

The influence of rhyme upon measure is most

remarkably shown in its simplest operation; for, in stanzas of elaborate construction, its powers, though always metrical and decisive, are too intricately involved, and too much connected, in their working, with other metrical principles, to be traced and described in this brief summary. Every one feels that, in a rhymed couplet, there is an accentual emphasis upon the second line, which tends to a corresponding concentration of meaning. But this very power of concentration implies a power of distribution. Perhaps the stateliest and most truly "heroic" measure in any language, dead or living, is the "rhythm royal," a stanza of seven ten-syllable lines, with three sets of rhymes so distributed that the emphasis derived from rhyme, in one part, is exactly neutralised by a similar concentration upon another. This, according to Puttenham, "is the chief of our ancient proportions used by any rimer writing anything of historical or grave import." This was the heroic measure of Chaucer and his successors for nearly three centuries, during which period "the heroic

couplet" was regarded as fit only for humorous subjects.

A rhymed stave has its criterion for length in the length of the period. That which is too long for a period is too long for a stave, which, as a rule, requires that there shall be no full stop except at the end. But the average length of the period will vary with the stateliness of the style. As the "Pope couplet" takes the narrowest, "Rhythm royal" assumes the widest limit practicable for a long poem. The former measure, after enjoying more than a century of unequalled favour, has now relapsed into its old disrepute; and most persons will now agree with Daniel, when he writes: "I must confesse that, to mine own eare, those continuall cadences of couplets, used in long and continued poems, are very tiresome and unpleasing." The fault of this couplet is not only its essentially epigrammatic character, which is but a relative defect; it is, furthermore, absolutely faulty, inasmuch as the combination of immediately recurrent rhyme, with the long final pause, gives an

emphasis contrasting too strongly with the very weak accentual construction of the line, which, *as it is ordinarily treated,* has no sectional—*i.e.*, "dipodal"—division. This measure, having thus no place for the major accents *unmistakably* fixed, as is the case with all true dimeters and tetrameters, most poets have, throughout their writings, neglected those accents, or misplaced them. The poverty of this metre, no less than its epigrammatic character, fits it, however, for the purposes of satire, which, in most of its kinds, has any property rather than that of "voluntary moving harmonious numbers."

The class of metres, which, of all others, is proved, by theory as well as experience, to be the best adapted to the popular mind in all ages, could not exist in modern languages, without rhyme. This is the tetrameter of the trochaic or "common" cadence. Many metres come under this head, and all of them have been really *popular,* which cannot be said of any form of trimeter in the same cadence. The ancient "Saturnian," though described by Hermann as a catalectic dimeter iambic,

followed, with the division of a powerful cæsura, by three trochees, is, when scanned with allowance for the cæsural and final pause, obviously a tetrameter, as any one may satisfy himself from this illustration,

"The Queen was in her parlour, eating bread and honey,"

which Macaulay, in a note to the "Lays of Ancient Rome," gives as an example of "a perfect Saturnian line." The "Cid" and "Nibelungen Lied" are both in this metre, though the authors have adopted the great latitude, falsely called license, in the use or omission of middle pauses and catalexis, which Hermann remarks in the employment of this metre by Livius Andronicus and Nævius. To this head also belongs the once popular "Alexandrine," as it appears in the Polyolbion. I suppose that most critics would call this a trimeter, but I defy any one to read it into anything but a tetrameter, having a middle and a final pause each equal to a foot. *The so-called "Alexandrine," at the end of the Spenserian stanza, is quite a different verse, though including the*

same number of syllables; it is the mere filling up of the trimeter; and that Spenser intended it so is proved by the innumerable instances in which he has made middle pause impossible. Between the true Alexandrine, then, which is loaded with pause and catalexis to the utmost the tetrameter will bear, and the acatalectic tetrameter, as represented by the sixteen syllables constituting the half of the eight syllable quatrain, there are as many metres, which are real tetrameters, as there are possible variations of the middle and final pause. Of these, none has taken so strong a hold upon the English ear as the ballad metre of fourteen syllables, with the stress on the eighth, or, what is the same thing, the stave of "eight and six." Here, it may be remarked by the way, that Dr. Johnson's assertion that the ballad stanza of seven accents "taught the way to the Alexandrines of the French poetry," instead of being, as Mitford says, a proof of his ignorance of French poetry, appears to indicate his just appreciation of their heroic verse, as belonging to the tetrameter stock and not the trimeter.

This ancient narrative metre, which, though almost excluded from the "polite literature" of the eighteenth century, never lost its charm for the people, has lately recovered something of its ancient credit. Its true force, however, can only be shown in more sustained flights than have been attempted in it by modern poets. Properly managed, there is no other metre so well able to represent the combined dignity and impetuosity of the heroic hexameter. This was felt by the old writers, and, accordingly, we have Chapman's Homer, Phaer's Virgil, Golding's Ovid, and other notable translations in that grand measure. Of these, Chapman was the best poet, but Phaer the best metrist; and, as this measure is again coming into fashion, I may be allowed to point out one interesting peculiarity in the versification of the latter. It is the use of what is commonly, but erroneously regarded as elision, as a deliberately adopted mode of relieving the cadence and approximating it to the rhythm of the hexameter. Here are four average lines :—

"Thus, rolling in her burning breast, she strait to Acolia hied,
Into the countrie of cloudy skies, where blustering windes abide.
King Œolus the wrastling windes in caves he locks full low;
In prison strong the storms he keeps, forbidden abroad to blow."

In these four lines, we have no fewer than six real anapæsts, counting "wrastling" as one. When we say *real anapæsts*, we mean to exclude those which are commonly called anapæsts, as—

"And we order our subjects of every degree,
To believe all his verses were written by me."

In this, our vulgar triple cadence, the feet, by temporal measurement of the syllables, are nearer to tribrachs or molossi than anapæsts; whereas, in cases of so called elision like the above, two syllables really are read into about the time of one, and *such cases constitute the only element of true temporal metre, in the classical sense, of which our language is capable.* Many poets have introduced a superfluous syllable for peculiar

effects, but Phaer is the only writer I know of who has turned it into a *metrical* element in this way. The poet who may be courageous enough to repeat, in our day, Phaer's experiment (the success of which, in his time, is proved by its never having been remarked), must fortify himself against the charge of being "rough," "unmusical," and so forth, with the assurance, that, wherever there is true adherence to law and proportion, there is also beauty, though want of custom may often make his law seem license to his readers. A considerable step has been taken towards the recognition of this element, as a regular part of English metre, in the omission, from the pages of our poets, of the comma indicative of an elision which does not really exist. This little digression may be concluded with Foster's remark, made at a time when the mark of elision was always used, that "the anapæst is common in every place (of English iambic verse), and it would appear much oftener, with propriety and grace, *if abbreviations were more avoided.*"

"This tynkerly verse, which we call rhyme,"* includes, then, all the forms of the tetrameter, *the major accents of which could not be expressed to an English ear by any other means*, except alliteration, which is a sort of rhyme. I need not inquire into any of the minor and better recognised functions of rhyme in order to secure the student's respect for it.

Campion has given examples of eight kinds of "blank verse;" and with the dogmatism for which his interesting essay is remarkable, he asserts that these are the only kinds of which the language is capable; but it would not be difficult to double that number, reckoning blank staves or strophes as he does. That which limits the number of such measures is the necessity that the lines should be always catalectic, since, in the absence of rhyme, a measurable final pause is the only means of marking the separate existence of the verses, and, furthermore, that the strophes or staves

* Webbe.

should consist of lines of unequal length, in order to render symmetry possible. The common eight-syllable iambic, for example, ceases to be metre on the removal of the rhyme, although the six-syllable iambic, which is catalectic on, or has a final pause equal to, two syllables, makes very good blank verse; and a stave of equal lines, like that of Gray's Elegy, on the omission of the rhyme, though it may continue to be verse, has lost the means of symmetrical opposition of line to line, whereby it became an independent whole. But, notwithstanding the practibility of various kinds of unrhymed verse, there is only one which has established itself with us as a standard measure; and that is, of all recognised English metres, the most difficult to write well in, because it, of all others, affords the greatest facilities to mediocrity. Cowper, whose translation of Homer contains a great deal of the second-best blank verse in the language, says, in his Preface, that the writer in this kind of metre, "in order that he may be musical, must exhibit all the variations, as he proceeds, of

which ten syllables are susceptible. Between the first and the last, there is no place at which he must not occasionally pause, and the place of the pause must be continually shifted." This is what is commonly supposed to constitute the main requirement of blank verse; but this is very far from a sufficient statement of the "variety" required by the metre in question. In the first place, pause is but one, and, perhaps, not the most important means of "variety." Milton, who first taught us what this kind of verse ought to be, is careful to vary the movement by an occasional inversion of the iambic accentuation in each of the five places: the variation of the vowel sounds is also most laboriously attended to by him; and rightly, for the absence of the emphasis which is conferred by rhyme, when it exists, upon one vowel sound, renders every repetition of vowel sound, within the space of two or three lines, unpleasant, unless it appears to have had a distinct musical motive. But the great difficulty, as well as delight, of this measure is not in variety of

pause, tone, and stress, for its own sake. Such variety must be incessantly inspired by, and expressive of, ever-varying emotion. Every alteration of the position of the grammatical pause, every deviation from the strict and dull iambic rhythm, must be either sense or nonsense. *Such change is as real a mode of expressing emotion as words themselves are of expressing thought;* and when the means exist without reference to their proper ends, the effect of the "variety" thereby obtained, is more offensive to a right judgment, than the dulness which is supposed to be avoided. Hence it is the nature of blank verse to be dull, or worse, without that which only the highest poetical inspiration can confer upon it. I am afraid to say how very small is the amount of good narrative, or "heroic" blank verse, of which our literature can boast, if I have truly stated its essential quality. No poet, unless he feels himself to be above discipline, and therefore above the greatest poets of whose modes of composition we have any record, ought to think of beginning his career with blank verse. It

will sound very paradoxical to some, when I assert that the most inflexibly rigid, and as they are commonly thought, difficult metres, are the easiest for a novice to write decently in. The greater the frequency of the rhyme, and the more fixed the place of the grammatical pause, and the less liberty of changing the fundamental foot, the less will be the poet's obligation to originate his own rhythms. Most rhymed metres have a rhythm peculiar to themselves, and only require that the matter for which they are employed shall not be foreign to their key; but blank verse—when treated as it hitherto always has been, except occasionally by Shakspeare, that is, without any predominating reference to the normal places of the major and minor accents—has little or no rhythm of its own, and therefore the poet has to create the rhythm as he writes.

AMELIA,

TAMERTON CHURCH-TOWER,

ETC.

AMELIA.

WHENE'ER mine eyes do my Amelia greet
It is with such emotion
As when, in childhood, turning a dim street,
I first beheld the ocean.

There, where the little, bright, surf-breathing town,
That shew'd me first her beauty and the sea,
Gathers its skirts against the gorse-gilt down
And scatters gardens o'er the southern lea,
Abides this Maid

Within a kind, yet sombre Mother's shade,
Who of her daughter's graces seems almost afraid
Viewing them ofttimes with a scared forecast,
Caught, haply, from obscure love-peril past.
Howe'er that be,
She scants me of my right,
Is cunning careful evermore to balk
Sweet separate talk,
And fevers my delight
By frets, if, on Amelia's cheek of peach,
I touch the notes which music cannot reach,
Bidding "Good-night!"
Wherefore it came that, till to-day's dear date,
I curs'd the weary months which yet I have to w
Ere I find heaven, one-nested with my mate.
To-day, the Mother gave,
To urgent pleas and promise to behave
As she were there, her long-besought consent

To trust Amelia with me to the grave
Where lay my once-betrothed, Millicent:
" For," said she, hiding ill a moistening eye,
" Though, Sir, the word sounds hard,
" God makes as if He least knew how to guard
" The treasure He loves best, simplicity."
And there Amelia stood, for fairness shewn
Like a young apple-tree, in flush'd array
Of white and ruddy flow'r, auroral, gay,
With chilly blue the maiden branch between;
And yet to look on her moved less the mind
To say " How beauteous!" than " How good and kind!"
And so we went alone
By walls o'er which the lilac's numerous plume
Shook down perfume;
Trim plots close blown
With daisies, in conspicuous myriads seen,
Engross'd each one

With single ardour for her spouse, the sun;
Garths in their glad array
Of white and ruddy branch, auroral, gay,
With azure chill the maiden flow'r between;
Meadows of fervid green,
With sometime sudden prospect of untold
Cowslips, like chance-found gold;
And broadcast buttercups at joyful gaze,
Rending the air with praise,
Like the six-hundred-thousand-voiced shout
Of Jacob camp'd in Midian put to rout;
Then through the Park,
Where Spring to livelier gloom
Quicken'd the cedars dark,
And, 'gainst the clear sky cold,
Which shone afar
Crowded with sunny alps oracular,
Great chestnuts raised themselves abroad like cliffs of bloom;

And everywhere,
Amid the ceaseless rapture of the lark,
With wonder new
We caught the solemn voice of single air,
"Cuckoo!"
And when Amelia, 'bolden'd, saw and heard
How bravely sang the bird,
And all things in God's bounty did rejoice,
She who, her Mother by, spake seldom word,
Did her charm'd silence doff,
And, to my happy marvel, her dear voice
Went as a clock does, when the pendulum's off.
Ill Monarch of man's heart the Maiden who
Does not aspire to be High-Pontiff too!
So she repeated soft her Poet's line,
"By grace divine,
"Not otherwise, O Nature, are we thine!"
And I, up the bright steep she led me, trod,

And the like thought pursued
With, "What is gladness without gratitude,
"And where is gratitude without a God?"
And of delight, the guerdon of His laws,
She spake, in learned mood;
And I, of Him loved reverently, as Cause,
Her sweetly, as Occasion of all good.
Nor were we shy,
For souls in heaven that be
May talk of heaven without hypocrisy.
And now, when we drew near
The low, grey Church, in its sequester'd dell,
A shade upon me fell.
Dead Millicent indeed had been most sweet,
But I how little meet
To call such graces in a Maiden mine!
A boy's proud passion free affection blunts;
His well-meant flatteries oft are blind affronts;

And many a tear
Was Millicent's before I, manlier, knew
That maidens shine
As diamonds do,
Which, though most clear,
Are not to be seen through;
And, if she put her virgin self aside
And sate her, crownless, at my conquering feet,
It should have bred in me humility, not pride.
Amelia had more luck than Millicent:
Secure she smiled and warm from all mischance
Or from my knowledge or my ignorance,
And glow'd content
With my—some might have thought too much—
superior age,
Which seem'd the gage
Of steady kindness all on her intent.
Thus nought forebade us to be fully blent.

While, therefore, now
Her pensive footstep stirr'd
The darnell'd garden of unheedful death,
She ask'd what Millicent was like, and heard
Of eyes like her's, and honeysuckle breath,
And of a wiser than a woman's brow,
Yet fill'd with only woman's love, and how
An incidental greatness character'd
Her unconsider'd ways.
But all my praise
Amelia thought too slight for Millicent,
And on my lovelier-freighted arm she leant,
For more attent;
And the tea-rose I gave,
To deck her breast, she dropp'd upon the grave.
"And this was her's," said I, decoring with a band
Of mildest pearls Amelia's milder hand.
"Nay, I will wear it for *her* sake," she said:

For dear to maidens are their rivals dead.

And so,

She seated on the black yew's tortured root,

I on the carpet of sere shreds below,

And nigh the little mound where lay that other,

I kiss'd her lips three times without dispute,

And, with bold worship suddenly aglow,

I lifted to my lips a sandall'd foot,

And kiss'd it three times thrice without dispute.

Upon my head her fingers fell like snow,

Her lamb-like hands about my neck she wreathed,

Her arms like slumber o'er my shoulders crept,

And with her bosom, whence the azalea breathed,

She did my face full favourably smother,

To hide the heaving secret that she wept!

Now would I keep my promise to her Mother;

Now I arose, and raised her to her feet,

My best Amelia, fresh-born from a kiss,

Moth-like, full-blown in birthdew shuddering sweet,
With great, kind eyes, in whose brown shade
Bright Venus and her Baby play'd!
At inmost heart well pleased with one another,
What time the slant sun low
Through the plough'd field does each clod sharply shew
And softly fills
With shade the dimples of our homeward hills,
With little said,
We left the 'wilder'd garden of the dead,
And gain'd the gorse-lit shoulder of the down
That keeps the north-wind from the nestling town,
And caught, once more, the vision of the wave,
Where, on the horizon's dip,
A many-sailed ship
Pursued alone her distant purpose grave;
And, by steep steps rock-hewn, to the dim street
I led her sacred feet;

And so the Daughter gave,

Soft, moth-like, sweet,

Showy as damask-rose and shy as musk,

Back to her Mother, anxious in the dusk.

And now "Good-night!"

Me shall the phantom months no more affright.

For heaven's gates to open well waits he

Who keeps himself the key.

L'ALLEGRO.

FELICITY!

Who ope'st to none that knocks, yet, laughing weak,
Yield'st all to Love that will not seek,
And who, though won, wilt droop and die,
Unless wide doors bespeak thee free,
How safe's the bond of thee and me,
Since thee I cherish and defy!
Is't Love or Friendship, Dearest, we obey?

Ah, thou art young, and I am grey;

But happy man is he who knows

How well time goes,

With no unkind intruder by,

Between such friends as thou and I!

'Twould wrong thy favour, Sweet, were I to say,

'Tis best by far,

When best things are not possible,

To make the best of those that are;

For, though it be not May,

Sure, few delights of Spring excel

The beauty of this mild September day!

So with me walk,

And view the dreaming field and bossy Autumn wood,

And how in humble russet goes

The Spouse of Honour, fair Repose,

Far from a world whence love is fled

And truth is dying because joy is dead;

And, if we hear the roaring wheel
Of God's remoter service, public zeal,
Let us to stiller place retire
And glad admire
How, near Him, sounds of working cease
In little fervour and much peace;
And let us talk
Of holy things in happy mood,
Learnt of thy blest twin-sister, Certitude;
Or let's about our neighbours chat,
Well praising this, less praising that,
And judging outer strangers by
Those gentle and unsanction'd lines
To which remorse of equity
Of old hath moved the School divines.
Or linger where this willow bends,
And let us, till the melody be caught,
Harken that sudden, singing thought,

On which unguess'd increase to life perchance depends.
He ne'er hears twice the same who hears
The songs of heaven's unanimous spheres,
And this may be the song to make, at last, amends
For many sighs and boons in vain long sought!
Now, careless, let us stray, or stop
To see the partridge from the covey drop,
Or, while the evening air's like yellow wine,
From the pure stream take out
The playful trout,
That jerks with rasping check the struggled line;
Or to the Farm, where, high on trampled stacks,
The labourers stir themselves amain
To feed with hasty sheaves of grain
The deaf'ning engine's boisterous maw,
And snatch again,
From to-and-fro tormenting racks,
The toss'd and hustled straw;

Whilst others tend the shedded wheat
That fills yon row of shuddering sacks,
Or shift them quick, and bind them neat,
And dogs and boys with sticks
Wait, murderous, for the rats that leave the ruin'd ricks;
And, all the bags being fill'd and rank'd fivefold, they pour
The treasure on the barn's clean floor,
And take them back for more,
Until the whole bared harvest beauteous lies
Under our pleased and prosperous eyes.
Then let us give our idlest hour
To the world's wisdom and its power;
Hear famous Golden-Tongue refuse
To gander sauce that's good for goose,
Or the great Clever Party con
How many grains of sifted sand,
Heap'd, make a likely house to stand,
How many fools one Solomon.

Science, beyond all other lust
Endow'd with appetite for dust,
We glance at where it grunts, well-sty'd,
And pass upon the other side.
Pass also by, in pensive mood,
Taught by thy kind twin-sister, Certitude,
Yon puzzled crowd, whose tired intent
Hunts like a pack without a scent.
And now come home,
Where none of our mild days
Can fail, though simple, to confess
The magic of mysteriousness;
For there 'bide charming Wonders three,
Besides, Sweet, thee,
To comprehend whose commonest ways,
Ev'n could that be,
Were coward's 'vantage and no true man's praise.

TAMERTON CHURCH-TOWER;

OR,

FIRST-LOVE.

1

We left the Church at Tamerton
  In gloomy western air;
To greet the day we gallop'd on,
  A merry-minded pair.
The hazy East hot noon did bode;
  Our horses snuff'd the dawn;
We made ten Cornish miles of road
  Before the dew was gone.

We clomb the hill where Lanson's Keep
Fronts Dartmoor's distant ridge;
Thence trotted South; walk'd down the steep
That slants to Gresson Bridge;
And paused awhile, where Tamar waits,
In many a shining coil,
And teeming Devon separates
From Cornwall's sorry soil.

2

Our English skies contain'd, that Spring,
A Caribbean sun;
The singing birds forgot to sing,
The rivulets to run.
For three noons past, the skies had frown'd,
Obscured with blighting shades
That only mock'd the thirsty ground
And unrejoicing glades.

To-day, before the noon was nigh,
Bright-skirted vapours grew,
And on the sky hung languidly;
The sky was languid too.
Our horses dropp'd their necks, and nosed
The dusty wayside grass,
Whilst we beneath still boughs reposed
And watch'd the water pass.
We spoke of plighted Bertha: Frank
Shot pebbles in the stream;
And I lay by him on the bank,
But dreamt no lover's dream.
She was a blythe and bashful maid,
Much blushing in her glee;
Yet gracing all she did and said
With sweet sufficiency.
'Is Blanche as fair?' ask'd I, who yearn'd
To feel my life complete;
To taste unselfish pleasures earn'd
By service strict and sweet.

'Well, some say fairer: she'll surprise
Your heart with crimson lips;
Fat underlids, that hold bright eyes
In laughing half-eclipse;
Alluring locks, done up with taste
Behind her dainty ears;
And manners full of wayward haste,
Tho' facile as the deer's.'

3

'You paint a leaflet, here and there;
And not the blossom: tell
What mysteries of good and fair
These blazon'd letters spell.'

4

'Her mouth and teeth, by Cupid's bow!
Are letters spelling "kiss;"
And, witchingly withdrawn below
Twin worlds of baby-bliss,

Her waist, so soft and small, may mean,
'O, when will some one come
'To make me catch my breath between
'His finger and his thumb!'

5

My life, 'twas like a land of dreams,
Where nothing noble throve:
Dull seem'd it as to maiden seems
The verse that's not of love.
'See where,' sigh'd I, 'the water dim
Repeats, with leaden hue,
The fervid sun, the cloud's hot rim,
The gap of dazzling blue!'
Quoth Frank, 'I do, and thence foresee
And all too plainly scan
Some sentimental homily
On Duty, Death, or Man.

'Tis this;' said I, 'our senses mar,
Ev'n so, sweet Nature's face,
Unless by love revived they are,
Or lit by heavenly grace.
Below the hazel talks the rill;
My heart speaks not again;
The solemn cloud, the stately hill,
I look on each in vain.
Sure he for whom no Power shall strike
This darkness into day—'
'Is damn'd,' said Frank, who morall'd like
The Fool in an old Play.
'That's true!' cried I, 'yet, as the worm
That sickens ere it change—'
'Or as the pup that nears the term
At which pups have the mange—
Pooh! Come, Man, let us on,' he said,
'For now the storm is nigh!'
And whilst we rode quaint sense we read
Within the changing sky.

Above us bent a prophet wild,
  Pointing to hidden harm;
Beyond, a magic woman smiled,
  And wove some wondrous charm;
Past that, a censer jetted smoke:
  Black convolutions roll'd
Sunwards, and caught the light, and broke
  In crowns of shining gold.

6

The gaps of blue shrank fast in span;
  The long-forgotten breeze,
By lazy starts and fits, began
  To stir the higher trees.
At noon, we came to Tavistock;
  And sunshine still was there,
But gloomy Dartmoor seem'd to mock
  Its weak and yellow glare.

The swallows, in the wrathful light,
Were pitching up and down;
A string of rooks made rapid flight,
Due southward, o'er the town,
Where, baiting at the Tiger-Inn,
We talk'd by windows wide,
Of Blanche and all my unseen kin,
Who did our coming bide.

7

The heavy sign-board swung and shriek'd,
In dark air whirl'd the vane,
Blinds flapp'd, dust rose, and, straining, creak'd
The shaken window-pane;
And, just o'erhead, a huge cloud flung,
For earnest of its stores,
A few calm drops, that struck among
The light-leaved sycamores.
Hot to be gone, Frank rose and eyed
Dark cloud and swinging branch;

But less long'd he to greet his Bride,
Than I to look on Blanche.
Her name, pair'd still with praise at home,
Would make my pulses start;
The hills between us were become
A weight upon my heart.
'Behold,' I cried, 'the storm comes not;
The northern heavens grow fair.'
'Look South,' said Frank, ''tis one wide blot
Of thunder-threatening air.'
The string of rooks had travell'd on,
Against the southern shroud,
And, like some snaky skeleton,
Lay twisted in the cloud.
'No storm to-day!' said I, 'for, see,
Yon black thing travels south.'
We follow'd soon; our spirits free,
Our bodies slaked from drouth.
rode in silence; Frank, with tongue
Made lax by too much port,

Soliloquising, said or sung
After this tipsy sort:

'Yea, nerves they are the Devil's mesh,
And pups begin quite blind,
And health is oft-times in the flesh,
And measles in the mind!

'Foolish and fair was Joan without;
Foolish and foul within;
High as a hunted pig his snout,
She carried a foolish chin.

'The Boy beheld, and brisk rose he
At this badly painted fly:
That boys less wise than fish will be
Is cause why men do sigh.'

8

On, on we toil'd, amidst the blaze
From Dartmoor's ridges bare;

Beneath the hush'd and scorching haze,
And through the twinkling air;
Along the endless mountain-side,
That seem'd with us to move;
Past dreary mine-mouths, far and wide;
Huge dross-heap, wheel, and groove;
Dark towns by disembowell'd hills,
Where swarthy tribes abode,
Who, in hard rocks with harder wills,
Pursued the crooked lode;
Up heights, that seem'd against us match'd;
Until, from table-land,
Before the teasing midge was hatch'd,
We hail'd the southern strand.
Then pleasantly, on level ground
And through the lighter air,
We paced along and breathed around,
A merry-minded pair.
A western night of even cloud
Suck'd in the sultry disk;

Bright racks look'd on, a fiery crowd,
To seamen boding risk;
The late crow wing'd his silent way
Across the shadowy East;
The gnat danced out his little day,
His ceaseless singing ceased;
Along the dim horizon round
Fled faint electric fires;
Blue glow-worms lit the fresher ground
By moisture-harbouring briers;
Far northward twinkled lonely lights,
The peopled vales among;
In front, between the gaping heights,
The mystic ocean hung.

9

Our weary spirits flagg'd beneath
The still and loaded air;
We left behind the freër heath,
A moody-minded pair.

With senses slack and sick of mirth,
Tho' near the happy goal,
I murmur'd, fearing nought on earth
Could quite content the soul:
'Suppose your love prove such a light
As yonder glow-worm's lamp,
That gleams, at distance, strong and bright,
Approach'd, burns weak and damp.
Perchance, by much of bliss aroused,
Your heart will pant for more;
And then the worm of want lies housed
Within the sweet fruit's core!
Far worse, if, led by fancy blind,
But undeceiv'd by use—'
'I dream,' yawn'd Frank, 'and wake to find
My Goddess a green goose!'
'Vain, vain,' said I, 'is worldly weal:
We faint within the heart,
For good which all we see and feel
Foreshadows but in part.'

Frank answer'd, 'What you faint for, win!
Faint not, but forward press.
Heav'n proffers all: 'twere grievous sin
To live content in less.
The Sun rolls by us every day;
And it and all things speak
To the sinking heart of man, and say,
'Tis wicked to be weak.
We would not hear the hated sound;
But, by the Lord, we must:
If not, the heavy world goes round,
And grinds us into dust.'
With each a moral in his mouth,
We rein'd our sweating nags,
Where quiet Ocean, on the South,
Kiss'd Edgecumb's ruddy crags.

II

1

So subtly love within me wrought,
  So excellent she seem'd,
Daily of Blanche was all my thought,
  Nightly of Blanche I dream'd;
And this was all my wish, and all
  The work now left for life,
To make this Wonder mine, to call
  This laughing Blanche my Wife.

2

I courted her till hope grew bold;
  Then sought her in her place,
And all my passion freely told,
  Before her blushing face.
I kiss'd her twice, I kiss'd her thrice,
  Thro' tresses and thro' tears;
I kiss'd her lips, I kiss'd her eyes,
  And calm'd her joys and fears.

So woo'd I Blanche, and so I sped,
And so, with small delay,
I and the patient Frank were wed
Upon the self-same day.
And friends all round kiss'd either Bride,
I Frank's, Frank mine; and he
Laugh'd as for once we thus defied
Love's sweet monopoly.
And then we drove by garth and grove;
And soon forgot the place
Where all the world had look'd shy Love
So rudely in the face.

III

1

The noon was hot and close and still,
When, steadying Blanche's hand,
I led her down the southern hill,
And row'd with her from land.

Ere summer's prime that year the wasp
  Lay gorged within the peach;
The tide, as though the sea did gasp,
  Fell lax upon the beach.
Quietly dipp'd the dripping scull,
  And all beside was calm;
But o'er the strange and weary lull
  No angel waved his palm.
The sun was rayless, pale the sky,
  The distance thick with light:
We glided past the fort and by
  The war-ship's sleeping might.
Her paddle stirr'd: without a breeze,
  A mimic tempest boil'd:
The sailors on the silent seas
  With storm-tuned voices toil'd.
I could not toil; I seldom pray'd:
  What was to do or ask?
Love's purple glory round me play'd,
  Unfed by prayer or task.

All perfect my contentment was,
For Blanche was all my care;
And heaven seem'd only heaven because
My goddess would be there.
No wafted breeze the ships did strike,
No wish unwon moved me;
The peace within my soul was like
The peace upon the sea.
At times, when action sleeps, unstirr'd
By any motive gale,
A mystic wind, with warning heard,
Ruffles life's idle sail.
The fancy, then, a fear divines,
And, borne on gloomy wings,
Sees threats and formidable signs
In simply natural things.
It smote my heart, how, yesternight,
The moon rose in eclipse,
And how her maim'd and shapeless light
O'erhung the senseless ships.

The passion pass'd, as, lightning-lit,
Red cloud-scenes show and close;
And soon came wonder at the fit,
And smiles and full repose.
Again I turn'd me, all devote,
To my sweet Idol's shrine;
Again I gazed where, on the boat,
Her shadow mix'd with mine.

2

Cried Frank, who, with his Wife, was there,
'We dream! sing each a song.'
And he sang first an old, brave air,
And pull'd the boat along.

'Sir Pelles woo'd, in scorn's despite;
He cherish'd love's sweet smart;
Ettarde proved light; then, like a Knight,
He turn'd her from his heart.

'O, the remorse with which we pay
For duties done too well!
But conscience gay does grief allay;
As all true knights can tell.'

3

'Alas, poor Knight!' cried Blanche. 'Nay hear,'
Said Frank, 'the saddest half!'
And drearily he troll'd, while clear
Rose Blanche's puzzled laugh.

'Sir Lob was drunk; the stars were bright.
Within an empty ditch,
Sir Lob all night lay right and tight
As a Saint within his niche.

'Now, well, quoth he, goes life with me:
I've liquor and to spare;
I hate the herd that vulgar be;
And, O, the stars are fair!

'The mill-dam burst: Sir Lob lay sunk
In that celestial swound:
The mill-stream found the knight dead drunk,
And the Jury found him drown'd.'

4

'The tunes are good; the words,' said I,
'Are hard to understand.'
And soon I prefaced with a sigh
This pagan love-song grand.

'When Love's bright Ichor fills the veins,
Love's Amaranth lights the brow,
The Past grows dark, the Future wanes,
Before the golden Now.

'Marc Antony the war-flags furl'd,
For Egypt's Queen said, 'Stay:'
He reck'd not of the worthless world,
Well lost by that delay.

'Quoth Antony, Here set I up
My everlasting rest:
Leave me to drain Joy's magic cup,
To dream on Egypt's breast.'

5

Frank smiled, and said my note was wrong;
'Twas neither Man's nor Boy's;
And Blanche sang next, some modern song,
Of 'Flowers' and 'Fairy Joys.'
As bright disparted skies that break
To let a cherub through,
So seem'd her mouth: my sight did ache,
Glitt'ring with fiery dew;
And, in the laugh of her brown eye,
My heart, contented so,
Lay like the honey-thirsty fly
Drows'd in the cactus' glow.

Nor heeded I what sang my Saint,
Such magic had the sound.
The myrtle in her breath made faint
The air that hearken'd round.

6

'Now, Wife,' said Frank, 'to shame our lays,
Try you in turn your power;
And sing your little song in praise
Of Love's selectest flower.'
Her hand felt his: thus sang she then,
Submitted to his rule,
Tho' shyer than the water-hen
On Tamar's shadiest pool.

'The Myrtle sates with scent the air
That flows by Grecian hills;
Its fervid leaflets glisten fair
By warm Italian rills.

'The North too has its Lover's-Flower,
The glad Forget-me-not;
Too bold thro' sunshine, wind, and shower,
Too blue to be forgot.'

7

Pointing far East, Frank said, 'Do you see
Yon porpoise-droves at play?'
We gazed, and saw, with failing glee,
Bright lines of spotted spray.
Once more the boded terror shook
My heart, and made me dumb.
'To land! to land!' cried Frank, 'for, look,
The storm, at last, is come!'
Above us, heated fields of mist
Precipitated cloud;
For shore we pull'd; the swift keel hiss'd;
Above us grew the shroud.

The pale gull flapp'd the stagnant air;
The thunder-drop fell straight;
The first wind lifted Blanche's hair;
Looking to me she sate.
Across the mighty mirror crept,
In dark'ning blasts, the squall;
And round our terror lightly leapt
Mad wavelets, many and small.
The oars cast by, convuls'd outflew
Our perilous hope the sail.
None spoke; all watch'd the waves, that grew
Under the splashing hail.
With urgent hearts and useless hands,
We sate and saw them rise,
Coursing to shore in gloomy bands,
Below the appalling skies.
The wrathful thunder scared the deeps,
And where, upon our wake,
The sea got up in ghastly heaps,
White lines of lightning strake.

On, on, with fainting hope we fled,
Hard-hunted by the grave;
Slow seem'd it, though like wind we sped
Over the shouldering wave;
In front swift rose the crags, where still
A storm of sunshine pour'd;
At last, beneath the southern hill,
The pitiless breakers roar'd.
O, bolt foreseen before it burst!
O, chastening hard to bear!
O, cup of sweetness quite revers'd,
And turn'd to void despair
Blanche in fear swooning, I let go
The helm; we struck the ground;
The sea fell in from stern to prow,
And Blanche, my Bride, was drown'd.
What guilt was hers? But God is great,
And all that may be known
To each of any other's fate
Is, that it helps his own.

IV

1

In a swift vortex go the years,
  Each swifter than the last,
And seasons four their set careers
  Pursued, and somehow pass'd.
The spirit of Spring, this year, was quench'd
  With clouds and wind and rain;
All night the gust-blown torrent drench'd
  The gloomy window-pane;
Against the pane the flapping blind
  Flapp'd ever, dismally;
And ever, above the rain and wind,
  Sounded the dismal sea.
The billows, like some guilty crew
  Devour'd by vain remorse,
Dash'd up the beach, sighing withdrew,
  And mix'd, with murmurs hoarse.

The morning was a cheerless sight,
Amongst the turbid skies;
But sweet was the relief of light
Within my restless eyes;
For then I rose to prayer and toil,
Forgat the ocean's moan,
Or faced the dizzy crash and coil
That drown'd its mournfuller tone.
But never, when the tide drew back,
Trod I the weltering strand;
For horribly my single track
Pursued me in the sand.

2

One morn I watch'd the rain subside;
And then fared singly forth,
Below the clouds, till eve to ride
From Edgecumb to the North.

Once, only once, I paused upon
The sea-transcending height,
And turn'd to gaze: far breakers shone,
Slow gleams of silent light.
Into my horse I struck the spur;
Sad was the soul in me;
Sore were my lids with tears for her
Who slept beneath the sea.
But soon I sooth'd my startled horse,
And check'd that sudden grief,
And look'd abroad on crag and gorse
And Dartmoor's cloudy reef.
Far forth the air was dark and clear,
The crags acute and large,
The clouds uneven, black, and near,
And ragged at the marge.
The spider, in his rainy mesh,
Shook not, but, as I rode,
The opposing air, sweet, sharp, and fresh,
Against my hot lids flow'd.

Peat-cutters pass'd me, carrying tools;
Hawks glimmer'd on the wing;
The ground was glad with grassy pools,
And brooklets galloping;
And sparrows chirp'd, with feathers spread,
And dipp'd and drank their fill,
Where, down its sandy channel, fled
The lessening road-side rill.

3

I cross'd the furze-grown table-land,
And near'd the northern vales,
That lay perspicuously plann'd
In lesser hills and dales.
Then rearward, in a slow review,
Fell Dartmoor's jagged lines;
Around were dross-heaps, red and blue,
Old shafts of gutted mines:

Impetuous currents copper-stain'd,
Wheels stream-urged with a roar,
Sluice-guiding grooves, strong works that strain'd
With freight of upheaved ore.
And then, the train, with shock on shock,
Swift rush and birth-scream dire,
Grew from the bosom of the rock,
And pass'd in noise and fire.
With brazen throb, with vital stroke,
It went, far heard, far seen,
Setting a track of shining smoke
Against the pastoral green.
Then, bright drops, lodged in budding trees,
Were loos'd in sudden showers,
Touch'd by the novel western breeze,
Friend of the backward flowers.
Then rose the Church at Tavistock,
The rain still falling there;
But sunny Dartmoor seem'd to mock
The gloom with cheerful glare.

About the West the gilt vane reel'd
And pois'd; and, with sweet art,
The sudden, jangling changes peal'd,
Until, around my heart,
Conceits of brighter times, of times
The brighter for past storms,
Clung thick as bees, when brazen chimes
Call down the hiveless swarms.

4

I rested at the Tiger-Inn,
There half-way on my ride,
And mused with joy of friends and kin
Who did my coming bide.
The Vicar, in his sombre wear
That shone about the knees,
Before me stood, his aspect fair
With godly memories.

I heard again his kind 'Good-bye:
Christ speed and keep thee still
From frantic passions, for they die
And leave a frantic will.'
My fond, old Tutor, learn'd and meek!
A soul, in strangest truth,
As wide as Asia and as weak;
Not like his daughter Ruth.
A Girl of fullest heart she was;
Her spirit's lovely flame
Nor dazzled nor surprised, because
It always burn'd the same;
And in the maiden path she trod
Fair was the wife foreshown,
A Mary in the house of God,
A Martha in her own.
Charms for the sight she had; but these
Were tranquil, grave, and chaste,
And all too beautiful to please
A rash, untutor'd taste.

5

In love with home, I rose and eyed
The rainy North; but there
The distant hill-top, in its pride,
Adorn'd the brilliant air;
And, as I pass'd from Tavistock,
The scatter'd dwellings white,
The Church, the golden weather-cock,
Were whelm'd in happy light;
The children 'gan the sun to greet,
With song and senseless shout;
The lambs to skip, their dams to bleat;
In Tavy leapt the trout;
Across a fleeting eastern cloud,
The splendid rainbow sprang,
And larks, invisible and loud,
Within its zenith sang.

6

So lay the Earth that saw the skies
Grow clear and bright above,
As the repentant spirit lies
In God's forgiving love.
The lark forsook the waning day,
And all loud songs did cease;
The Robin, from a wither'd spray,
Sang like a soul at peace.
Far to the South, in sunset glow'd
The peaks of Dartmoor ridge,
And Tamar, full and tranquil, flow'd
Beneath the Gresson Bridge.
There, conscious of the numerous noise
Of rain-awaken'd rills,
And gathering deep and sober joys
From the heart-enlarging hills,
I sat, until the first white star
Appear'd, with dewy rays,

And the fair moon began to bar
With shadows all the ways.
O, well is thee, whate'er thou art,
And happy shalt thou be,
If thou hast known, within thy heart,
The peace that came to me.
O, well is thee, if aught shall win
Thy spirit to confess,
God proffers all, 'twere grievous sin
To live content in less!

7

I mounted, now, my patient nag;
And scaled the easy steep;
And soon beheld the quiet flag
On Lanson's solemn Keep.
And now, whenas the waking lights
Bespake the valley'd Town,
A child o'ertook me, on the heights,
In cap and russet gown.

It was an alms-taught scholar trim,
Who, on her happy way,
Sang to herself the morrow's hymn ;
For this was Saturday.

'Saint Stephen, stoned, nor grieved nor groan'd :
'Twas all for his good gain ;
For Christ him blest, till he confess'd
A sweet content in pain.

'Then Christ His cross is no way loss,
But even a present boon :
Of His dear blood fair shines a flood
On heaven's eternal noon.'

8

My sight, once more, was dim for her,
Who slept beneath the sea,
As on I sped, without the spur,
By homestead, heath, and lea.

O'erhead the perfect moon kept pace,
In meek and brilliant power,
And lit, ere long, the eastern face
Of Tamerton Church-tower.

THE YEW-BERRY.

1

I CALL this idle history the 'Berry of the Yew;'
Because there's nothing sweeter than its husk of scarlet glue,
And nothing half so bitter as its black core bitten through.

I loved, saw hope, and said so; learn'd that Laura loved again;
Wherefore speak of joy then suffer'd? My head throbs, and I would fain
Find words to lay the spectre starting now before my brain.

She loved me: all things told it; eye to eye, and palm to palm:
As the pause upon the ceasing of a thousand-voiced psalm
Was the mighty satisfaction and the full eternal calm.

On her face, when she was laughing, was the seriousness within;
Her sweetest smiles, (and sweeter did a lover never win,)
In passing, grew so absent that they made her fair cheek thin.

On her face, when she was speaking, thoughts unworded used to live;
So that when she whisper'd to me, 'Better joy Earth cannot give,'
Her following silence added, 'But Earth's joy is fugitive.'

For there a nameless something, though suppress'd, still
spread around;
The same was on her eyelids, if she look'd towards the
ground;
In her laughing, singing, talking, still the same was in
the sound;—

A sweet dissatisfaction, which at no time went away,
But shadow'd so her spirit, even at its brightest play,
That her mirth was like the sunshine in the closing of
the day.

2

Let none ask joy the highest, save those who would
have it end:
There's weight in earthly blessings; they are earthy,
and they tend,
By predetermin'd impulse, at their highest, to de-
scend.

I still for a happy season, in the present, saw the past,
Mistaking one for the other, feeling sure my hold was fast
On that of which the symbols vanish'd daily: but, at last,

As when we watch bright cloud-banks round about the low sun ranged,
We suddenly remember some rich glory gone or changed,
All at once I comprehended that her love was grown estranged.

From this time, spectral glimpses of a darker fear came on:
They came; but, since I scorn'd them, were no sooner come than gone.—
At times, some gap in sequence frees the spirit, and, anon,

We remember states of living ended ere we left the
womb,
And see a vague aurora flashing to us from the
tomb,
The dreamy light of new states, dash'd tremendously
with gloom.

We tremble for an instant, and a single instant
more
Brings absolute oblivion, and we pass on as before!
Ev'n so those dreadful glimpses came, and startled, and
were o'er.

3

One morning, one bright morning, Wortley met me.
He and I,
As we rode across the country, met a friend of his.
His eye
Caught Wortley's, who rode past him. 'What,' said
he, 'pass old friends by?

So I've heard your game is grounded! Why your life's one long romance
After your last French fashion. But, ah! ha! should Herbert chance——'
'Nay, Herbert's here,' said he, and introduced me, with a glance

Of easy smiles, ignoring this embarrassment; and then
This pass'd off, and soon after I went home, and took a pen,
And wrote the signs here written, with much more, and where, and when;

And, having read them over once or twice, sat down to think,
From time to time beneath them writing more, till, link by link,
The evidence against her was fulfill'd: I did not shrink,

But I read them all together, and I found it was no dream.
What I felt I can't remember; an oblivion which the gleam
Of light which oft comes through it shows for blessedness extreme.

At last I moved, exclaiming, 'I will not believe, until
I've spoken once with Laura.' Thereon all my heart grew still:
For doubt and faith are active, and decisions of the will.

4

I found my Love. She started: I suppose that I was pale.
We talk'd; but words on both sides, seem'd to sicken, flag, and fail.
Then I gave her what I'd written, watching whether she would quail.

In and out flew sultry blushes: so, when red reflections rise
From conflagrations, filling the alarm'd heart with surmise,
They lighten now, now darken, up and down the gloomy skies.

She finish'd once; but fearing to look from it, read it o'er
Ten times at least. Poor Laura, had those readings been ten score,
That refuge from confusion had confused thee more and more!

I said, 'You're ill, sit Laura,' and she sat down and was meek.
'Ah tears! not lost to God then. But pray Laura, do not speak:
I understand you better by the moisture on your cheek.'

She shook with sobs, in silence. I yet checking
passion's sway,
Said only, 'Farewell Laura!' then got up, and strode
away;
For I felt that she would burst my heart asunder should
I stay.

Oh, ghastly corpse of Love so slain! it makes the world
its hearse;
Or, as the sun extinct and dead, after the doomsday
curse,
It rolls, an unseen danger, through the darken'd
universe.

I struggled to forget this; but, forgetfulness too
sweet!
It startled with its sweetness, thus involv'd its own
defeat;
And, every time this happen'd, aching memory would
repeat

The shock of that discovery: so at length I learn'd by heart,
And never, save when sleeping, suffer'd thenceforth to depart,
The feeling of my sorrow: and in time this sooth'd the smart.

Yet even now not seldom, in my leisure, in the thick
Of other thoughts, unchallenged, words and looks come crowding thick—
They do while I am writing, till the sunshine makes me sick.

THE RIVER.

It is a venerable place,
  An old ancestral ground,
So broad, the rainbow wholly stands
  Within its lordly bound;
And here the river waits and winds
  By many a wooded mound.

Upon a rise, where single oaks
And clumps of beeches tall
Drop pleasantly their shade beneath,
Half-hid amidst them all,
Stands in its quiet dignity
An ancient manor-hall.

About its many gable-ends
The swallows wheel their flight;
The huge fantastic weather-vanes
Look happy in the light;
The warm front through the foliage gleams,
A comfortable sight.

The ivied turrets seem to love
The low, protected leas;
And, though this manor-hall hath seen
The snow of centuries,
How freshly still it stands amid
Its wealth of swelling trees!

The leafy summer-time is young;
The yearling lambs are strong
The sunlight glances merrily;
The trees are full of song;
The valley-loving river flows
Contentedly along.

Look where the merry weather-vanes
Veer upon yonder tower:
There, amid starry jessamine
And clasping passion-flower,
The sweetest Maid of all the land
Is weeping in her bower.

Alas, the lowly Youth she loves
Loves her, but fears to sue:
He came this morning hurriedly;
Then forth her blushes flew!
But he talk'd of common things, and so
Her eyes are fill'd with dew.

Time passes on; the clouds are come;
The river, late so bright,
Rolls foul and black, and gloomily
Makes known across the night,
In far-heard plash and weary drench,
The passage of its might.

The noble Bridegroom counts the hours;
The guests are coming fast;
(The vanes are creaking drearily
Within the dying blast!)
The bashful Bride is at his side;
And night is here at last.

The guests are gay; the minstrels play;
'Tis liker noon than night;
From side to side, they toast the Bride,
Who blushes ruby light:
For one and all within that hall,
It is a cheerful sight.

But unto one, who stands alone,
Among the mists without,
Watching the windows, bright with shapes
Of king and saint devout,
Strangely across the muffled air
Pierces the laughter-shout.

No sound or sight this solemn night
But moves the soul to fear:
The faded saints stare through the gloom,
Askant, and wan, and blear;
And wither'd cheeks of watchful kings
Start from their purple gear.

The burthen of the wedding-song
Comes to him like a wail;
The stream, athwart the cedar-grove,
Is shining ghastly pale:
His cloudy brow clears suddenly!
Dark soul, what does thee ail?

He turns him from the lighted hall;
The pale stream curls and heaves
And moans beyond the gloomy wood,
Through which he breaks and cleaves;
And now his footfall dies away
Upon the wither'd leaves.

The restless moon, among the clouds,
Is loitering slowly by;
Now in a circle like the ring
About a weeping eye;
Now left quite bare and bright; and now
A pallor in the sky;

And now she's looking through the mist,
Cold, lustreless, and wan,
And wildly, past her dreary form,
The watery clouds rush on,
A moment white beneath her light,
And then, like spirits, gone.

Silent and fast they hurry past,
  Their swiftness striketh dread,
For earth is hush'd, and no breath sweeps
  The spider's rainy thread,
And everything, but those pale clouds,
  Is dark, and still, and dead.

The lonely stars are here and there,
  But weak and wasting all;
The winds are dead, the cedars spread
  Their branches like a pall;
The guests, by laughing twos and threes,
  Have left the bridal hall.

Beneath the mossy, ivied bridge,
  The river slippeth past:
The current deep is still as sleep,
  And yet so very fast!
There's something in its quietness
  That makes the soul aghast.

No wind is in the willow-tree
That droops above the bank;
The water passes quietly
Beneath the sedges dank;
Yet the willow trembles in the stream,
And the dry reeds talk and clank.

The weak stars swoon; the jagged moon
Is lost in the cloudy air.
No thought of light! save where the wave
Sports with a fitful glare.
The dumb and dreadful world is full
Of darkness and night-mare.

The hall-clocks clang; the watch-dog barks;
What are his dreams about?
Marsh lights leap, and tho' fast asleep
The owlets shriek and shout;
The stars, thro' chasms in utter black,
Race like a drunken rout.

'Wake, wake, oh wake!' the Bridegroom now
Calls to his sleeping Bride:
'Alas, I saw thee, pale and dead,
Roll down a frightful tide!'
He takes her hand: 'How chill thou art!
What is it, sweet my Bride?'

The Bride bethinks her now of him
Who last night was no guest.
'Sweet Heaven! and for me? I dream!
Be calm, thou throbbing breast.'
She says, in thought, a solemn prayer
And sinks again to rest.

Along, along, swiftly and strong
The river slippeth past;
The current deep is still as sleep,
And yet so very fast!
There's something in its quietness
That makes the soul aghast.

The morn has risen: wildly by
The water glides to-day;
Outspread upon its eddying face,
Long weeds and rushes play;
And on the bank the fungus rots,
And the grass is foul'd with clay.

Time passes on: the park is bare;
The year is scant and lean;
The river's banks are desolate;
The air is chill and keen;
But, now and then, a sunny day
Comes with a thought of green.

Amid blear February's flaw,
Tremulous snow-drops peep;
The crocus, in the shrewd March morn,
Starts from its wintry sleep;
The daisies sun themselves in hosts,
Among the pasturing sheep.

The waters, in their old content,
Between fresh margins run;
The pike, as trackless as a sound,
Shoots thro' the current dun;
And languid new-born chestnut-leaves
Expand beneath the sun.

The summer's prime is come again;
The lilies bloom anew;
The current keeps the doubtful past
Deep in its bosom blue,
And babbles low thro' quiet fields
Grey with the falling dew.

The sheep-bell tolls the curfew-time;
The gnats, a busy rout,
Fleck the warm air; the distant owl
Shouteth a sleepy shout:
The voiceless bat, more felt than seen,
Is flitting round about;

The poplar's leaflet scarcely stirs;
The river seems to think;
Across the dusk, the lily broad
Looks coolly from the brink;
And knee-deep in the freshet's fall,
The meek-eyed cattle drink.

The chafers boom; the white moths rise
Like spirits from the ground;
The grey-flies sing their weary tune,
A distant, dream-like sound;
And far, far off, in the slumberous eve,
Bayeth a restless hound.

At this sweet time, the Lady walks
Beside the gentle stream;
She marks the waters curl along,
Beneath the sunset gleam,
And in her soul a sorrow moves,
Like memory of a dream.

She passes on. How still the earth,
And all the air above!
Here, where of late the scritch-owl shriek'd,
Whispers the happy dove;
And the river, through the ivied bridge,
Flows calm as household love.

THE FALCON.

WHO would not be Sir Hubert, for his birth and bearing fine,
His rich sky-skirted woodlands, valleys flowing oil and wine;
Sir Hubert, to whose sunning all the rays of fortune shine?

So most men praised Sir Hubert, and some others warm'd with praise
Of Hubert noble-hearted, than whom none went on his ways
Less spoilt by splendid fortune, whom no peril could amaze.

To Ladies all, save one, he was the rule by which the worth
Of other men was reckon'd; so that many a maid, for dearth
Of such a knight to woo her, love forswore, and with it mirth.

No prince could match his banquets, when proud Mabel was his guest;
And shows and sumptuous triumphs day by day his hope express'd
That love e'en yet might burgeon in her young unburgeon'd breast.

Time pass'd, and use for riches pass'd with hope, which slowly fled;
And want came on unheeded; and report in one day spread
Of good Sir Hubert houseless, and of Mabel richly wed.

Forth went he from the city where she dwelt, to one
poor farm,
All left of all his valleys: there Sir Hubert's single
arm
Served Hubert's wants; and labour soon relieved love's
rankling harm.

Much hardship brought much easement of the melan-
choly freight
He bore within his bosom; and his fancy was elate
And proud of Love's rash sacrifice which led to this
estate.

One friend was left, a falcon, famed for beauty, skill,
and size,
Kept from his fortune's ruin, for the sake of its great
eyes,
That seem'd to him like Mabel's. Of an evening he
would rise,

And wake its royal glances and reluctantly flapp'd
wings,
And looks of grave communion with his lightsome ques-
tionings,
That broke the drowsy sameness, and the sense like fear
that springs

At night, when we are conscious of our distance from
the strife
Of cities, and the memory of the spirit in all things
rife
Endows the silence round us with a grim and ghastly
life.

His active resignation wrought, in time, a heartfelt
peace,
And though, in noble bosoms, love once lit can never
cease,
He could walk and think of Mabel, and his pace would
not increase.

Who say, when somewhat distanced from the heat and
fiercer might,
'Love's brand burns us no longer; it is out,' use not
their sight:
For ever and for ever we are lighted by the light:

And ere there be extinguish'd one minutest flame, love-
fann'd,
The Pyramids of Egypt shall have no place in the
land,
But as a nameless portion of its ever-shifting sand.

News came at last that Mabel was a widow; but, with
this,
That all her dead Lord's wealth went first to her one
child and his;
So she was not for Hubert, had she beckon'd him to
bliss;

For Hubert felt, tho' Mabel might, like him, become
resign'd
To poverty for Love's sake, she might never, like him,
find
That poverty is plenty, peace, and freedom of the
mind.

One morning, while he rested from his delving, spade in
hand,
He thought of her and blest her, and he look'd about
the land,
And he, and all he look'd at, seem'd to brighten and
expand.

The wind was newly risen; and the airy skies were
rife
With fleets of sailing cloudlets, and the trees were all in
strife,
Extravagantly triumphant at their newly gotten life.

Birds wrangled in the branches, with a trouble of sweet noise,
Even the conscious cuckoo, judging wisest to rejoice,
Shook round his 'cuckoo, cuckoo,' as if careless of his voice.

But Hubert mused and marvell'd at the glory in his breast;
The first glow turn'd to passion, and he nursed it unexpress'd;
And glory gilding glory turn'd, at last, to sunny rest.

Then again he look'd around him, like an angel, and, behold,
The scene was changed; no cloudlets cross'd the serious blue, but, roll'd
Behind the distant hill-tops, gleam'd aërial hills of gold.

The wind too was abated, and the trees and birds were grown
As quiet as the cloud-banks; right above, the bright sun shone,
Down looking from the forehead of the giant sky alone.

Then the nightingale, awaken'd by the silence, shot a throng
Of notes into the sunshine; cautious first, then swift and strong;
Then he madly smote them round him, till the bright air throbb'd with song,

And suddenly stopp'd singing, all amid his ecstasies:—
Myrtles rustle; what sees Hubert? sight is sceptic, but his knees
Bend to the Lady Mabel, as she blossoms from the trees.

She spoke, her eyes cast downwards, while upon them,
dropp'd half way,
Lids fairer than the bosom of an unblown lily lay:
'In faith of ancient amity, Sir Hubert, I this day

'Would beg a boon, and bind me your great debtor.'
O, her mouth
Was sweet beyond new honey, or the bean-perfumed
South,
And better than pomegranates to a pilgrim dumb for
drouth!

She look'd at his poor homestead; at the spade beside
his hand;
And then her heart reproach'd her, What inordinate
demand
Was she come there for making! Then she says, in
accents bland,

Her Page and she are weary, and her wish can wait; she'll share
His noontide meal, by his favour. This he hastens to prepare;
But, lo! the roost is empty, and his humble larder bare.

No friend has he to help him; no one near of whom to claim
The tax, and force its payment in his passion's sovereign name;
No time to set the pitfalls for the swift and fearful game;

Too late to fly his falcon, which, as if it would assist
Its master's trouble, perches on his idly proffer'd fist,
With busy, dumb caresses, treading up and down his wrist.

But now a gleam of comfort and a shadow of dismay
Pass o'er the good knight's features; now it seems he would essay
The fatness of his falcon, while it flaps both wings for play;

Now, lo, the ruthless lover takes it off its trusted stand;
Grasps all its frighten'd body with his hard remorseless hand;
Puts out its faithful life, and plucks and broils it on the brand.

In midst of this her dinner, Mabel gave her wish its word:
'My wilful child, Sir Hubert, pines from fancy long deferr'd;
And now he raves in fever to possess your famous bird.'

'Alas!' he said, 'behold it there.' Then nobly did she say:

'It grieves my heart, Sir Hubert, that I'm much too poor to pay
For this o'er-queenly banquet I am honour'd with to-day;

But if, Sir, we two, henceforth, can converse as friends, my board
To you shall be as open as it would were you its Lord.'
And so she bow'd and left him, from his vex'd mind unrestored.

Months pass'd, and Hubert went not, but lived on in his old way;
Until to him, one morning, Mabel sent her Page to say,
That, should it suit his pleasure, she would speak with him that day.

'Ah, welcome Sir!" said Mabel, rising courteous, kind
and free:
'I hoped, ere this, to have had you for my guest, but
now I see
'That you are even prouder than they whisper you to
be.'

Made grave by her great beauty, but not dazzled, he
replied,
With every noble courtesy, to her words; and spoke
beside
Such things as are permitted to bare friendship; not in
pride,

Or wilful overacting of the right, which often blends
Its sacrificial pathos, bitter-sweet, with lover's ends,
Or that he now remember'd her command to meet 'as
friends;'

But having not had knowledge that the infant heir was dead,
Whose life made it more loving to preserve his love unsaid,
He waited, calmly wondering to what mark this summons led.

She, puzzled with a strangeness by his actions disavow'd,
Spoke further: 'Once, Sir Hubert, I was thoughtless, therefore proud;
Your love on me shone sunlike. I, alas, have been your cloud,

'And, graceless, quench'd the light that made me splendid. I would fain
Pay part of what I owe you, that is, if,—alas, but then
I know not! Things are changed, and you are not as other men.'

She strove to give her meaning, yet blush'd deeply with dismay
Lest he should find it. Hubert fear'd she purpos'd to repay
His love with less than love. Thought he, 'Sin 'twas my hawk to slay!'

His eyes are dropp'd in sorrow from their worshipping: but, lo!
Upon her sable vesture they are fall'n: with progress slow,
Through dawning apprehension to sweet hope, his features glow;

And all at once are lighted with a light, as when the moon,
Long labouring to the margin of a cloud, still seeming soon
About to swim beyond it, bursts at last as bare as noon.

'O, Lady, I have loved, and long kept silence; but I see
The time is come for speaking. O, sweet Lady, I should be
The blessedest knight in Christendom, were I beloved by thee!'

One small hand's weight of whiteness on her bosom did she press;
The other, woo'd with kisses bold, refused not his caress;
Feasting the hungry silence came, sob-clad, her silver 'Yes.'

Now who would not be Hubert, for his dark-eyed Bride divine,
Her rich, sky-skirted woodlands, valleys flowing oil and wine,
Sir Hubert to whose sunning all the rays of fortune shine!

THE WOODMAN'S DAUGHTER.

In Gerald's Cottage by the hill,
Old Gerald and his child,
Innocent Maud, dwelt happily;
He toil'd, and she beguiled
The long day at her spinning-wheel,
In the garden now grown wild.

At Gerald's stroke the jay awoke;
Till noon back follow'd back,
Before the nearest hill had time
To give its echo back;
And evening mists were in the lane
Ere Gerald's arm grew slack.

Meanwhile, below the scented heaps
Of honeysuckle flower,
That made their simple cottage-porch
A cool, luxurious bower,
Maud sat beside her spinning-wheel,
And spun from hour to hour.

The growing thread thro' her fingers sped;
Round flew the polish'd wheel;
Merrily rang the notes she sang
At every finish'd reel;
From the hill again, like a glad refrain,
Follow'd the rapid peal.

But all is changed. The rusting axe
Reddens a wither'd bough;
A spider spins in the spinning-wheel,
And Maud sings wildly now;
And village gossips say she knows
Grief she may not avow.

Her secret's this: In the sweet age
When heaven's our side the lark,
She follow'd her old father, where
He work'd from dawn to dark,
For months, to thin the crowded groves
Of the old manorial Park.

She fancied and he felt she help'd;
And, whilst he hack'd and saw'd,
The rich Squire's son, a young boy then,
Whole mornings, as if awed,
Stood silent by, and gazed in turn
At Gerald and on Maud.

And sometimes, in a sullen tone,
He offer'd fruits, and she
Received them always with an air
So unreserved and free,
That shame-faced distance soon became
Familiarity.

Therefore in time, when Gerald shook
The woods, no longer coy,
The young heir and the cottage-girl
Would steal out to enjoy
The sound of one another's talk,
A simple girl and boy.

Spring after Spring, they took their walks
Uncheck'd, unquestion'd; yet
They learn'd to hide their wanderings
By wood and rivulet,
Because they could not give themselves
A reason why they met.

Once Maud came weeping back. 'Poor Child!'
Was all her father said:
And he would steady his old hand
Upon her hapless head,
And think of her as tranquilly
As if the child were dead.

But he is gone: and Maud steals out,
This gentle day of June;
And having sobb'd her pain to sleep,
Help'd by the stream's soft tune,
She rests along the willow-trunk,
Below the calm blue noon.

The shadow of her shame and her
Deep in the stream, behold!
Smiles quake over her parted lips:
Some thought has made her bold;
She stoops to dip her fingers in,
To feel if it be cold.

'Tis soft and warm, and runs as 'twere
Perpetually at play:
But then the stream, she recollects,
Bears everything away.
There is a dull pool hard at hand
That sleeps both night and day.

She marks the closing weeds that shut
The water from her sight;
They stir awhile, but now are still;
Her arms fall down; the light
Is horrible, and her countenance
Is pale as a cloud at night.

Merrily now from the small church-tower
Clashes a noisy chime;
The larks climb up thro' the heavenly blue,
Carolling as they climb:
Is it the twisting water-eft
That dimples the green slime?

The pool reflects the scarlet West
With a hot and guilty glow;
The East is changing ashy pale;
But Maud will never go
While those great bubbles struggle up
From the rotting weeds below.

The light has changed. A little since
You scarcely might descry
The moon, now gleaming sharp and bright,
From the small cloud slumbering nigh;
And, one by one, the timid stars
Step out into the sky.

The night blackens the pool; but Maud
Is constant at her post,
Sunk in a dread, unnatural sleep,
Beneath the skiey host
Of drifting mists, thro' which the moon
Is riding like a ghost.

NOTE.—My excuse for reprinting this and the three preceding poems, which bear many and indelible marks of the immature period of life at which they were written, is my—probably groundless—fear lest at some future time they might otherwise be reprinted, without such condensation and approximate finish as I have been able to give them.—C. P.

THE STORM.

WITHIN the pale blue haze above,
  Some pitchy shreds took size and form,
And, like a madman's wrath or love,
  From nothing rose a sudden storm.
The blossom'd limes, which seem'd to exhale
  Her breath, were swept with one strong sweep,
And up the dusty road the hail
  Came like a flock of hasty sheep,

Driving me under a cottage-porch,
Whence I could see the distant Spire,
Which, in the darkness, seem'd a torch
Touch'd with the sun's retreating fire.
A voice, so sweet that even her voice,
I thought, could scarcely be more sweet,
As thus I stay'd against my choice,
Did mine attracted hearing greet;
And presently I turn'd my head
Where the kind music seem'd to be,
And where, to an old blind man, she read
The words that teach the blind to see.
She did not mark me; swift I went,
Thro' the fierce shower's whistle and smoke,
To her home, and thence her woman sent
Back with umbrella, shoes and cloak.
The storm soon pass'd; the sun's quick glare
Lay quench'd in vapour fleecy, fray'd;
And all the moist, delicious air
Was fill'd with shine that cast no shade;

And, when she came, forth the sun gleam'd,
And clash'd the trembling Minster chimes;
And the breath with which she thank'd me seem'd
Brought thither from the blossom'd limes.

THE BARREN SHORE.

Full many sing to me and thee
Their riches gather'd by the sea;
But I will sing, for I'm footsore,
The burthen of the barren shore.

The hue of love how lively shown
In this sole found cerulean stone
By twenty leagues of ocean roar.
O, burthen of the barren shore!

And these few crystal fragments bright,
As clear as truth, as strong as right,
I found in footing twenty more.
O, burthen of the barren shore!

And how far did I go for this
Small, precious piece of ambergris?
Of weary leagues I went three-score.
O, burthen of the barren shore!

The sand is poor, the sea is rich,
And I, I am I know not which;
And well it were to know no more
The burthen of the barren shore!

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Or with, my Wife, with whom I plan

To pass some evenings when I can,

After the chattering girls and boys

Are gone, or the less grateful noise

[illegible]er, of grown tongues that chime

[illegible]ly, once upon a time

Prevail'd with me to change my mind
Of reading out how Rosalind
In Arden jested, and to go
Where people whom I ought to know,
She said, would meet that night. And I,
Who inly murmur'd, 'I will try
'Some dish more sharply spiced than this
'Milk-soup men call domestic bliss,'
Took, as she, laughing, bade me take,
Our eldest boy's brown wide-awake
And straw box of cigars, and went
Where, like a careless parliament
Of gods olympic, six or eight
Authors and else, reputed great,
Were met in council jocular
On many things, pursuing far
Truth, only for the chase's glow,
Quick as they caught her letting go,
Or, when at fault the view-halloo,
Playing about the missing clue.

And coarse jests came; 'But gods are coarse,'
Thought I, yet not without remorse,
While memory of the gentle words,
Wife, Mother, Sister, flash'd like swords.
And so, after two hours of wit,
That burnt a hole where'er it hit,
I said I would not stay to sup,
Because my Wife was sitting up;
And walk'd home with a sense that I
Was no match for that company.
Smelling of smoke, which, always kind,
Amelia said she did not mind,
I sipp'd her tea, saw Baby scold
And finger at the muslin fold,
Through which he push'd his nose at last,
And choked and chuckled, feeding fast;
And, he asleep and sent upstairs,
She rang the servants in to prayers;
And after heard what men of fame
Had urged 'gainst this and that. 'For shame!'

She said, but argument show'd not.
'If I had answer'd thus,' I thought,
''Twould not have pass'd for very wise.
'But I have not her voice and eyes!
'Howe'er it be, I'm glad of home,
'Yea, very glad at heart to come,
'And lay a happy head to rest
'On her unreasonable breast.'

THE ROSY BOSOM'D HOURS.

A FLORIN to the willing Guard
Secured, for half the way,
(He lock'd us in, ah, lucky-starr'd,)
A curtain'd, front coupé.
The sparkling sun of August shone;
The wind was in the West;
Your gown and all that you had on
Was what became you best;

And we were in that seldom mood
When soul with soul agrees,
Mingling, like flood with equal flood,
In agitated ease.
Far round, each blade of harvest bare
Its little load of bread;
Each furlong of that journey fair
With separate sweetness sped.
The calm of use was coming o'er
The wonder of our wealth,
And now, maybe, 'twas not much more
Than Eden's common health.
We paced the sunny platform, while
The train at Havant changed:
What made the people kindly smile,
Or stare with looks estranged?
Too radiant for a wife you seem'd,
Serener than a bride;
Me happiest born of men I deem'd,
And show'd perchance my pride.

I loved that girl, so gaunt and tall,
Who whispered loud, "Sweet Thing!"
Scanning your figure, slight yet all
Round as your own gold ring.
At Salisbury you stray'd alone
Within the shafted glooms,
Whilst I was by the Verger shown
The brasses and the tombs.
At tea we talk'd of matters deep,
Of joy that never dies;
We laugh'd, till love was mix'd with sleep
Within your great sweet eyes.
The next day, sweet with luck no less
And sense of sweetness past,
The full tide of our happiness
Rose higher than the last.
At Dawlish, 'mid the pools of brine,
You stept from rock to rock,
One hand quick tightening upon mine,
One holding up your frock.

On starfish and on weeds alone
You seem'd intent to be:
Flash'd those great gleams of hope unknown
From you, or from the sea?
Ne'er came before, ah, when again
Shall come two days like these:
Such quick delight within the brain,
Within the heart such peace?
I thought, indeed, by magic chance,
A third from Heaven to win,
But as, at dusk, we reach'd Penzance,
A drizzling rain set in.

THE AFTER-GLOW.

SUSPICION'S playful counterfeit
  Begot your question strange:
The only thing that I forget
  Is that there's any change.
Did that long blight which fell on you
  My zeal of heart assuage?
Less willing shall I watch you through
  The milder illness, age?

To my monopoly first blind
When risks no longer live,
And careless of the hand so kind
That has no more to give,
Shall I forget Spring like a tree,
Nor boast, "Her honied cup
Of beauty to his lips save me
No man has lifted up!"
Mine are not memories that come
Of joys that could not last:
They *are;* and you, Dear, are the sum
Of all your lovely past.
Yet if, with all this conscious weal,
I still should covet more,
The joy behind me shall reveal
The joy that waits before:
I'll mind from sickness how to life
You came, by tardy stealth,
Till, one spring day, I clasp'd my wife
Abloom with blandest health.

THE GIRL OF ALL PERIODS.

AN IDYLL.

"And even our women," lastly grumbles Ben,
"Leaving their nature, dress and talk like men!"
A damsel, as our train stops at Five Ashes,
Down to the station in a dog-cart dashes.
A footman buys her ticket, "Third class, parly;"
And, in huge-button'd coat and "Champagne Charley"
And such scant manhood else as use allows her,
Her two shy knees bound in a single trouser,

With, 'twixt her shapely lips, a violet
Perch'd as a proxy for a cigarette,
She takes her window in our smoking carriage,
And scans us, calmly scorning men and marriage.
Ben frowns in silence; older, I know better
Than to read ladies 'haviour in the letter.
This aping man is crafty Love's devising
To make the woman's difference more surprising;
And, as for feeling wroth at such rebelling,
Who'd scold the child for now and then repelling
Lures with "I won't!" or for a moment's straying
In its sure growth towards more full obeying?
"Yes, she had read the 'Legend of the Ages,'
And George Sand too, skipping the wicked pages."
And, whilst we talk'd, her protest firm and perky
Against mankind, I thought, grew lax and jerky;
And, at a compliment, her mouth's compressure
Nipt in its birth a little laugh of pleasure;
And smiles, forbidden her lips, as weakness horrid,
Broke, in grave lights, from eyes and chin and forehead;

And, as I push'd kind 'vantage 'gainst the scorner,
The two shy knees press'd shier to the corner;
And Ben began to talk with her, the rather
Because he found out that he knew her father,
Sir Francis Applegarth, of Fenny Compton,
And danced once with her sister Maude at Brompton;
And then he stared until he quite confused her,
More pleased with her than I, who but excused her;
And, when she got out, he, with sheepish glances,
Said he'd stop too, and call on old Sir Francis.

NIGHT AND SLEEP.

1

How strange at night to wake
  And watch, while others sleep,
Till sight and hearing ache
  For objects that may keep
The awful inner sense
  Unroused, lest it should mark
The life that haunts the emptiness
  And horror of the dark!

2

How strange at night the bay
Of dogs, how wild the note
Of cocks that scream for day,
In homesteads far remote;
How strange and wild to hear
The old and crumbling tower,
Amid the darkness, suddenly
Take tongue and speak the hour!

3

Albeit the love-sick brain
Affects the dreary moon,
Ill things alone refrain
From life's nocturnal swoon:
Men melancholy mad,
Beasts ravenous and sly,
The robber, and the murderer,
Remorse, with lidless eye.

4

The nightingale is gay,
For she can vanquish night;
Dreaming, she sings of day,
Notes that make darkness bright;
But when the refluent gloom
Saddens the gaps of song,
Men charge on her the dolefulness,
And call her crazed with wrong.

A LONDON FÊTE.

All night fell hammers, shock on shock;
With echoes Newgate's granite clang'd:
The scaffold built, at eight o'clock
They brought the man out to be hang'd.
Then came from all the people there
A single cry, that shook the air;
Mothers held up their babes to see,
Who spread their hands, and crow'd for glee;

Here a girl from her vesture tore
A rag to wave with, and join'd the roar;
There a man, with yelling tired,
Stopp'd, and the culprit's crime inquired;
A sot, below the doom'd man dumb,
Bawl'd his health in the world to come;
These blasphemed and fought for places;
Those, half-crush'd, cast frantic faces,
To windows, where, in freedom sweet,
Others enjoy'd the wicked treat.
At last, the show's black crisis pended;
Struggles for better standings ended;
The rabble's lips no longer curst,
But stood agape with horrid thirst;
Thousands of breasts beat horrid hope;
Thousands of eyeballs, lit with hell,
Burnt one way all, to see the rope
Unslacken as the platform fell.
The rope flew tight; and then the roar
Burst forth afresh; less loud, but more

Confused and affrighting than before.
A few harsh tongues for ever led
The common din, the chaos of noises,
But ear could not catch what they said.
As when the realm of the damn'd rejoices
At winning a soul to its will,
That clatter and clangour of hateful voices
Sicken'd and stunn'd the air, until
The dangling corpse hung straight and still.
The show complete, the pleasure past,
The solid masses loosen'd fast:
A thief slunk off, with ample spoil,
To ply elsewhere his daily toil;
A baby strung its doll to a stick;
A mother praised the pretty trick;
Two children caught and hang'd a cat;
Two friends walk'd on, in lively chat;
And two, who had disputed places,
Went forth to fight, with murderous faces.

THE CIRCLES.

'WITHIN yon world-wide cirque of war
What's hidden which they fight so for?'
My guide made answer, 'Rich increase
Of virtue and use, which are by peace,
And peace by war. That inner ring
Are craftsmen, working many a thing
For use, and, these within, the wise
Explore the grass and read the skies.'

'Can the stars' motions give me peace,
Or the herbs' virtues mine increase?
Of all this triple shell,' said I,
'Would that I might the kernel spy!'
A narrower circle then I reach'd,
Where sang a few and many preach'd
Of life immortal. 'But,' I said,
'The riddle yet I have not read.
Life I must know, that care I may
For life in me to last for aye.'
Then he, 'Those voices are a charm
To keep yon dove-cot out of harm.'
In the centre, then, he show'd a tent
Where, laughing safe, a woman bent
Over her babe, and, her above,
Lean'd in his turn a graver love.
'Behold the two idolatries
By which,' cried he, 'the world defies
Chaos and death, and for whose sake
All else must war and work and wake.'

A DREAM.

Amid the mystic fields of Love
I wander'd, and beheld a grove.
Breathlessly still was part, and part
Was breathing with an easy heart;
And there below, in lamblike game,
Were virgins, all so much the same,
That each was all. A youth drew nigh,
And on them gazed with wandering eye,

And would have pass'd, but that a maid,
Clapping her hands above her, said,
'My time is now!' and laughing ran
After the dull and strange young man,
And bade him stop and look at her.
And so he call'd her lovelier
Than any else, only because
She only then before him was.
And, while they stood and gazed, a change
Was seen in both, diversely strange:
The youth was ever more and more
That good which he had been before;
But the glad maiden grew and grew
Such that the rest no longer knew
Their sister, who was now to sight
The young man's self, yet opposite,
As the outer rainbow is the first,
But weaker, and the hues reversed.
And whereas, in the abandon'd grove,
The virgin round the Central Love

Had blindly circled in her play,
Now danced she round her partner's way;
And, as the earth the moon's, so he
Had the responsibility
Of her diviner motion. 'Lo,'
He sang, and the heavens began to glow,
'The pride of personality,
'Seeking its highest, aspires to die,
'And in unspeakably profound
'Humiliation Love is crown'd!
'And from his exaltation still
'Into his ocean of good-will
'He curiously casts the lead
'To find strange depths of lowlihead.'
To one same tune, but higher, 'Bold,'
The maiden sang, 'is Love! For cold
'On Earth are blushes, and for shame
'Of such an ineffectual flame
'As ill consumes the sacrifice!'

THE YEAR.

THE crocus, while the days are dark,
Unfolds its saffron sheen;
At April's touch, the crudest bark
Discovers gems of green.

Then sleep the seasons, full of might;
While slowly swells the pod
And rounds the peach, and in the night
The mushroom bursts the sod.

The Winter falls; the frozen rut
Is bound with silver bars;
The snow-drift heaps against the hut,
And night is pierc'd with stars.

THE SCORCHED FLY.

WHO sins in hope; who, sinning, says,
'Sorrow for sin God's judgment stays!'
Against God's Spirit he lies; quite stops
Mercy with insult; dares, and drops,
Like a scorch'd fly, that spins in vain
Upon the axis of its pain,
Then takes its doom, to limp and crawl,
Blind and forgot, from fall to fall.

EROS.

BRIGHT thro' the valley gallops the brooklet;
Over the welkin travels the cloud;
Touch'd by the zephyr, dances the harebell;
Cuckoo sits somewhere, singing so loud;
Two little children, seeing and hearing,
Hand in hand wander, shout, laugh, and sing
Lo, in their bosoms, wild with the marvel,
Love, like the crocus, is come ere the Spring.

Young men and women, noble and tender,
Yearn for each other, faith truly plight,
Promise to cherish, comfort and honour;
Vow that makes duty one with delight.
Oh, but the glory, found in no story,
Radiance of Eden unquench'd by the Fall;
Few may remember, none may reveal it,
This the first first-love, the first love of all!

MA BELLE.

FAREWELL, dear Heart! Since needs it must I go,
Dear Heart, farewell!
Fain would I stay, but that I love thee so.
One kiss, ma Belle!
What hope lies in the Land we do not know,
Who, Dear, can tell?
But thee I love, and let thy 'plaint be, "Lo,
"He loved me well!"

REGINA CŒLI.

Say, did his Sisters wonder what could Joseph see
In a mild, silent little Maid like thee?
And was it awful, in that narrow house,
With God for Babe and Spouse?
Nay, like thy simple, female sort, each one
Apt to find Him in Husband and in Son,
Nothing to thee came strange in this
Thy wonder was but wondrous bliss:

Wondrous, for, though
True Virgin lives not but does know,
(Howbeit none ever yet confess'd,)
That God lies really in her breast,
Of thine He made His special nest!
And so
All mothers worship little feet,
And kiss the very ground they've trod;
But, ah, thy little Baby sweet
Who was indeed thy God

THE SIGN OF THE PROPHET JONAH.

Voices of Earth and Heaven and Hell
So sequent spell
The shy, celestial, supreme fact
For which alone God did the worlds enact,
Which Was not, and which Is, and Is to come,
That, but that He ordaineth souls
Nearly all deaf and the others dumb,
The very skies

Would shrivel up, like scorched scrolls,
At man's responding blasphemies.
In shameful Hell
The Lily in last corruption lies,
Where known 'tis, rotten-lily-wise,
By the strange foulness of the smell.
The Heavens repeat no other Song,
And, plainly or in parable,
The Angels trust, in each man's tongue,
The Treasure's safety to its size.
(I, haply, blab o'erbold that tell
Searchers to turn their thumb-conn'd Book,
And on the flaming blazon look !)
Earth, that, in this arcanum, spies
Proof of high kinship unconceiv'd,
By all desired and disbeliev'd,
Shews fancies, in each thing that is,
Which nothing mean, not meaning this,

Yea, does from her own law, to hint it, err,
As 'twere a trust too huge for her.
Maiden and Youth pipe wondrous clear
The tune they are the last to hear.
'Tis the strange gem in Pleasure's cup.
Physician and Philosopher,
In search of acorns, plough it up,
But count it nothing 'mong their gains;
Nay, call it pearl, they'd answer, "Lo,
"Blest Land where pearls as large as pumpkins grow!"
And would not even rend you for your pains.
To tell men truth, yet keep them dark
And shooting still beside the mark,
God, as in jest, gave to their wish,
The Sign of Jonah and the Fish.
'Tis the name new, on the white stone,
To none but them that have it known;
And even these can scarce believe, but cry,

" When turn'd was Sion's captivity,

" Then were we, yea, and yet we seem

" Like them that dream !"

In Spirit 'tis a punctual ray

Of peace that sheds more light than day;

In Will and Mind

'Tis the easy path so hard to find;

In Heart, a pain not to be told,

Were words mere honey, milk, and gold;

I' the Body 'tis the bag of the bee;

In all, the present, thousandfold amends

Made to the sad, astonish'd life

Of him that leaves house, child, and wife,

And on God's 'hest, almost despairing, wends,

As little guessing as the herd

What a strange Phœnix of a bird

Builds in this tree,

But only intending all that He intends.

To this, the Life of them that live,
If God would not, thus far, give tongue,
Ah, why did He his secret give
To one that has the gift of song?
But all He does He doubtless means,
And, if the Mystery that smites Prophets dumb
Here, to the grace-couch'd eyes of some,
Shapes to its living face the clinging shroud,
Perchance the Skies grow tired of screens,
And 'tis His Advent in the Cloud.

THE KISS.

In arms and policy and books
Prince Victor was a Prince indeed.
Amanda, Princess of sweet looks,
Of such things had no heed.
But once, both acting in a Play,
Victor, who found it in his Part,
Gave the cold Maid, with all his heart,
A kiss which took her breath away;

And, thenceforth, they were hand and glove,
He Prince in arms, books, policy,
Prince of Amanda too, and she
A little, laughing flame of love.
"Arms, policy and books must go,"
He sigh'd, "since she loves kisses so!"
But she, his bee by honey caught,
Would only now her sweetness yield
For meed of arduous honour, sought
In Study, Parliament, or Field.
And ever thus from kisses grow
The thoughts that soar 'bove kisses so!

PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE AND HANSON
LONDON AND EDINBURGH