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A SUMMER IDYL

A SUMMER IDYL

BY

MARY LEEDY FLANIGAN
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Each morn some rarer, purer incense
Should break its perfect flower ;
Each eve some sweeter, holier influence
Hallow the twilight hour.

INTRODUCTION

In offering this simple little pastoral I have to confess that I have been guided by no controlling motive, governed by no design. Possibly I shall be censured for this—for letting my pen take its own course, my own eyes curious as to how it would come out. I can only plead my helplessness to do otherwise, preferring the instinct, so to speak, of my pen rather than the uncertain guidance of an unpracticed hand.

On the whole, I cannot say that it is an expression of myself, save that my pen savors of myself without conscious direction. It is more an entity in and of itself, my part being that of a wholly impersonal agent. If design could be said to have entered into it, it was that the story should be a very crystal for purity, underlaid by that deep reverence for Deity which of itself should safeguard my hand from anything which could be construed to dishonor my God.

Proceeding upon this basis, the story has been allowed to develop naturally, the parts growing into their several relations unassisted by artifice or conscious art.

I observe, as one from the outside, it has been a calmly moving pen, depending none whatever upon the stilts of the unusual, or dramatic setting; indeed, it seems to have concerned itself little or nothing with action or stirring movement to ripple the breeze of

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interest. It would take its own road on the high seas of literary adventure—a proud vessel calmly riding the ocean of its own solitude rather than touching port with fuss and steam to blare its loud clarion.

It is offered as the infant attempt of a little flash-light of life at the deeply interesting period of budding love, wherein the little god persistently dupes the principles to what is an openly manifest fact to the initiated all along. Had they been aware—but that makes the story.

Urged by no tyrant hand to awful tasks,
I've dared to set a simple tale herein
Unfevered by a lurid atmosphere,
Or fetched-in darks to grip affrighted sense.
When noble passions surge the blood, what they
But heavy tools bent to a suffering art;
Here are enough for fullest reason's sway—
And full enough to adorn a noble play.
It has not pleased my pen to antic strange
Nor caper out a show; still less to be
The paltering medium of a thin reform.
No scourging lash of conscience bids me paint
A martyr's doom by awful penance due;
Nor ever plot nor counterplot gives rise
To curdling fear; nor ever hurry sets
Its wimple in the blood to speed the end.
But if the perfume sweet of virtue count,
Or royal robe of honor have avail
To flare sweet incense in your soul by that
Keeps ever to the skyline true in aim,
To mountain-topped desires that feel for God—

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Howe'er the feet in their attainment trip,—
Then these commended are by every art
To your most honored contemplation here.

Tho' sweet, 'tis never an impossible she—
Nor sweeter than a virgin ought to be.
Tho' lofty, never but a normal he,
Transcends ideal ne'er in what should be.

When all is told 'tis but the tale o' an hour
Where love is burst into its sweetest flower,
Tho' many throes contort the close-seal'd bud
Ere dews of happiness its petals stud;
Soft nets about the feet all subtly wind
An undiscovered helplessness to bind,
Through which they tread the living coals of
 pain,—

Disclosing at the end such pleasant plain
As one would journey o'er the route again
To find. The greetings, reader, of my pen.

THE AUTHOR.

AT NATURE'S SHRINE

What sweet communions wait the suppliant knee
At Nature's throne! what ever varying moods;
What ever new surprises for the reverent,
The casual eye ne'er looks upon, but o'er;
Disdaining all the marvel at the feet
Of blade and bloom, and all the common tongues
That make her various language eloquent,—
For yet more potent revelation lies
Beyond.

For such her meed is grudging e'er,
And offers but a dull monotony
Of plain, or mount's forbidding brow; nor aught
Relaxes of her sternest mood to fit
Into a whimsey's eye.

Her lovers true
She charms at every step; and all her moods
Are sweet. A very maiden to be wooed,
More lovable for ever-varying mood—
Her pouts, her frowns, her smiles; a despot queen—
A thousand thousand artifices make
Divinely sweet her rule. Is it her skies—
Or summer flush'd, or winter chill—what more
Of sweets could skies fulfill?—Or is it Jove,
With thunder-tread upon their plain, disputes
Their peace, and all the howling main below,
With loud artillery'd boom, and vivid glare

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Of red-tongued flame, by lightning's bloom dis-
gorged?

Nor had the gods sublimer staged a play,
With heaven for its boards.—Or earth—shall't
be?—

'Tis heaven's divinest still gives birth to spring.

And thus through all, what painted show has e'er
Fulfilled her speech? What architect hath graspt
Her summer masonry of builded bloom—

Her sculptur'd frieze of cloud on heaven's dome?

What artist's hand but faintly counterfeits

Her tint of waters ripe with purple glow,

Her gleaming coronal of diamond stars?

Who hath interpreted the soul of night,

Translated yet the glories of the morn?

What hand may print the sparkle of a tear—

Or color in the canvas of the soul?

What brush-stroke yet, tho' with a thousand
tongues

Leaping to syllable her glory there,

But vandal is to rob the shining truth,

And dull her countenance divine with youth!

I

*'Twas enough; just life—and bubbling youth—
Was divinest goblet to quaff.*

'Twas Nature's court; an orient splendor ruled,
Exacting love and worship by sheer force
Of color-glories spread was worship's due:
The trees were flowing green, and laughing winds
Their vernal waves did part; bright-vestured birds
Their flashing shuttles shot through gleam and dusk
To weave their transports in mellifluous song;
A gold lay on the hills; sheer from the skies
Blue glory dropt to crowd the river's brim.

Lay 't not to tender warblings of the lark,
Nor sweet insistence of the honeyed air;
Nor yet unto the branches, passion-swayed,
By all the red-breast's rapture spendend there;
Swear never by the rose's amorous breath,
Whose wooings lead to brink of all delight;
Nor by the pale moon-flower, cold in death,
That parts its shroud in incense to the night;
Nor wassail o' flowerfolk, dewbibbers all;
Nor spirit's challenge to the blue-moth lanes
Stretched straight unto the purpling rim o' the
world.—

Nay; nor the silvery ripple's music hest;
Nor dark wineflood deep in the forest gloom,

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Gemmed with the stars in crystal brilliance pure;
Nor sougling pines, in solemn murmurs urge
Their plaining monotone in ceaseless dirge;
Nor leaping falls; nor babel of sweet birds,
With honeyed quarrels troubling all the air;
Nor dryads' whisper of their forest loves;
Nor prattling leaves; nor grass's secret wiles
Laid at the roots of man to siege his heart.—

Nay—this nor that, nor any gone before,—
But *all of these* did weave their shining snare
To mesh him in that subtle-fabrick'd net
Is *destiny!* who knows—or sweet, or gall?

And Edmund Aubrey, splashing blossom deep
In sweet of things, betook his way, wind-shod
For lightness, as his every footprint laid
An ecstasy to line its track, or lift
Memorial joy in nodding plumes to mark
The sweet event. Unguided save alone
By instinct's digits straight to fenceless fields
Of rapture's world, his way lay anywhere—
Save never yellow tide of gold might course
Its fever flood across his peaceful path;
Nor tyrant town its fetters clank to halt
The steps in midget circling's ceaseless round;
Where never care its irksome signet set
Upon the brow to cincture with the fret
Of galling bonds: 'twas Youth and Pleasure met
To wear but joy's pure seal for coronet.
The green world in his eyes—his veins—his soul,—
His heart was full complexioned in his lay:

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O I'd take wings of the wind to roam,
A vagrant, knowing no ties of home!
Tent me in dusk o' the leafy bowers
With the social grass and the blabbing flowers!
Forth with the jackhare stalk the dews
And trick from nature the morning news.
I'd chase the long brown coil o' the road—
The pulse of rapture my only goad—
And swart my face in the gypsy brown
I would not give for a monarch's crown.
With nature'n I 'n a council o' two,
Mid a parliament of the winds and dew,
I'd smoke the pipe of a friendly peace
Out where the sachem stars release
Their glory in a silver shower,
Brings love and faith to perfect flower.
There on the secrets born of the night
I'd spend my heart in the sweet delight.
Deep in the dusk o' the sweetheart woods,
With the trailing vines for their maiden snoods,
I'd dash the cup of joy unstrained
And taste a sweet 'n each folly drained:
I'd be its lover and sway with the leaf,
Abide with the lily and be its chief.
O out of the breath of blooming things,
And out of the sheen of blazing wings
I'd build me a world of a summer's day
My soul should inhabit for ever and aye.

The city, pagan at the feet of gold,
Lay all behind; here reigned primeval calm;

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Earth's wonderfest in glint and glow and gleam,
And God made manifest in what they seem.

The dream-world that brought nightmare in its
wake;

The real, this, wrought joy's ecstatic quake.
What weighed it where? What certain arch of sky
Or bend of earth, just so it was the earth,
Not stone and mortar superposed, nor tile,
Its cold opaque for sky—shut out the heaven?

So fate led like a roving bee, to lip
Of bloom, or where the wisp of waterfall
Dangles a silver veil before the wind,
Zigzagging here and there, dizzy withal,
Wherever beauty flung alluring thrall.
Did gold of daffodil its sorcery lay
Upon his heart, or roseleaf batter at
Its gate, eftsoons its unbarr'd portals told
Surrendered arms. A butterfly awing
Had power to stay his feet with sweet discourse
On honeyed themes; a sprawl-legg'd waterfly
Had entertainment for his idle quest;
And to the robin's sweet song-battery
A ready musketry, all practiced fine,
Shot rapt attention from the ear, and e'er
Surprised the sortie with full armament.

Or whether into wild toccato broke,
Or silence voiced the deep content within,—
It was the human animal escaped

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The shackles of the pent, steel-throbbing streets,
To brush the spangles from the glistening blades
And dabble in the dews that shrine their green;
To pasture in the sweets of wood and field—
Ay, brother with the bobolink and lark,—
And, brothering, sense the angel things above
In what their wild lives teach of Guardian Love.

A rustic bridge-work spann'd a silver tide;
Anon the steep road wound through giant oaks
That topp'd a frowning height with cool, sweet
gloom
Where dusky aisles in sylvan mazes met
And odorous bowers exhaled their nectar breath.

With every sense alert to charm, and naught
To caution windward, intuition taught,
He plunged into the tangled dusk with more
Of ardor than of safe discretion's mood;
Unseasoned to the whelming change from light
To dark, a web of vine made cruel sport
To hobble his impetuous speed, his steps
To chain, while all his onward motion flowed
With effervescence of the river's glee,
Impelled by its wild nature blind to race—
Or channel free—or all its sluice-gates pent.
The law of motion ruled no kinder hap—
His feet pinn'd fast, his head still marching on—
Than his downfall should be,—full shorn of will,
Or manly might to plead a protest soft.

A doughty knight with royal pursuits acquaint
Had deemed it small mischance to be thus held,

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Vine-pinioned sweet, but that it chanced a maid,
Wild-blossomed in the leaf embrasure soft—
As vine were sustenance to maiden life—
And by her presence laid a prior claim
To the rude fort of blossom masonry.
One flower-eyed as chalice stars of dew
Illumed its twilight with their beams all pure,
As stars of heaven oft gem the water's face
In some tree-shaded gloom, with night's sweet soul:
For stars are this—the speaking eyes of it—
The language of the soul translates its light.

II

*"Ye ministers meet for each passion that grieves,
Friendly sisterly, sweetheart leaves."*

A snow-starr'd clematis had flung its shroud
All mantling o'er an oak whose fringe of frost,
Down-trailing to the ground, did circle in
Such sweets of breath 'twas like a soul in bloom—
Such incense filled its inner shrine. Soft stars
Such fairy ceiling wreathed, their motion breathed
Such soft fantasias on the trancèd ear
As fell in music's snow upon the soul,
Divine as angel whisperings out of heaven.
And here a dainty maid was wont to sit
To share sweet confidences of the birds
And pour her own soul out to them in song.
And ever here her own bright joy was brought
Illuminant to other joys it wrought
On whatsoever eye its brightness fed,
What time was purchased from the maiden dues
Owed elsewhere; and while her fingers plied
Some snowy task with needle's gentle art,
A woman's heart was trembling into dawn.
And never bird but showed a beady eye
Initiate to her bosom's secret loves;
And all the wild-wood folk had come to know
Her fellowship by mute acquaintance bred—
A nature shy as theirs—as sweetly true.

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To-day her gown, some simple stuff of white,
Escaped the slender throat, the mutinous arms,
Baring a baby dimplement of flesh
Nor maiden years outgrew, but sweet confirmed.
Her bonnet careless fallen from her head,
Confined by some soft suasion to the throat,
Framed in her face like other blossom sprung
From lily's heart, a bloom within a bloom,
Since it was white, and a calla-shap'd thing.
Within the blossom of her opening heart
Such sweets exhaled them in her maiden thought
As built up worlds and creatured them untaught
Save by her dreams alone, were fairy guide
To much romance. Of these herself made part,
To live them o'er and give them fruitful speech
Here at th' woods' heart with only friendly trees
For ears; only the brooks to run and tell.
Thus had Sir Knight but fitted in her dreams,
With royal pageant come 'neath plumes of peace;
But buccaneer to storm her peace! but woke
A revolutionary breast—what lived
Beyond the shock of such intrusion bold.

The trail of vine had been her leafy screen,—
E'en now but half disclosed through sorceries green
A haunting face medallion'd in the gloom,
A face such as Velasquez might have warmed
His canvas with dabbling in life itself,
And pigment-bloom with flesh incorporate,
To mold one o' those delicious blood-warm types
Clings to his brush voluptuous-fam'd, but for

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The marble pallor gript her cheek in stone,
The terror flamed her eyes with bolts of steel.
This much defense upbore without; within,
A clutching fear carried all her courage down.
Being young, the instinct of a wild thing 'twas
Urged flight—or anywhere, or anyhow,
So't brought release; yet 'twas a woman's true
Swift-ripen'd insight calmed the tumult's pulse,
And taught the maiden breast its duteous part.

E'en swift as had the truth been flashed within,
More swift the outward signs of that within
From him. The courtier's brow, bared to the locks;
(His height reclaimed e'en momentarily as lost,)
The eye, protesting with fine speech eludes
The tongue, had preconfest the tale contrite—
The keen discomfiture bore down his pride
Neath tingling shame, ere clumsy word upsprung
Did mold the thought; the mounting wave dashed up
To flame his brow with red; the gestured phrase,
With eloquence afire: each of itself
Bore courier tongue to lay his courtesy bare.

And she, all instant thawed from fear by pain
Of his, so quickly seized it seemed her own,—
With much sweet chirp of words, like some ring-
dove

Its plaint did noise in flutterings o'er its mate
Deep-wounded by some poison-arrow'd fate,—
Of kindness babbled, and true woman-sweet,
Essayed to staunch the wound himself had wrought

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Upon himself—in blind affront to her.
The maiden Clarice, o' Cameron Hall, confest
Herself; and all its hospitage held out
For offices all meetly due, as quick
Her bended eyes uncovered stealthy act
Clapt on a shield to hide the tell-tale blood,—
And, brimming o'er with new concern awoke,
A tender dew grew in their violet depths.

He spoke; and what of heaven may live in sound
To break in sweetness on the ravished soul,
Did roll its volume on the music tongue
To quake upon the trembling ear's sweet pain,
And stab the tender bosom's calm repose;
Now passioned full of fervor's deepest note,
Like chords of inner pain repentant sobb'd
As they would wash his guilt of every stain;
Now tender as a bow drawn o'er the heart
Of mother-love to lull the babe at breast.

And ever on her unaccustom'd ear
The pure melodious tones divinely broke,
As some low music's thunder 'neath the bow
'Plained o'er the viol in some soft dusk hour
When waning pulse of day all faintly throbs
In that soft, slumbrous, velvet-dusk of sound
Lurks in its orient soul,—like muttering storm,
All rumbling deep along the heaven line,
Tied all of discord up in heaven of sound
Names all of sweetness on its passioned tongue.

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“The palm’s most innocent of all my hurts;
I would my feelings wore as much of balm,
Soft-swathed by tender bands your heart applied,
To hush the conscience-wound stabs deep within
To ooze a separate pain from every pore,
And gall the spirit’s lightness with the weight
Of deep remorse—that ne’er an instinct’s tongue
Its warning urged to save such presence fair
From meddling interloper on its peace.”

And died his voice like moaning under surge
Loads all the wind with pain whiles treble notes
Howl shrilly ’long the tempest-frighted air.

As one just saved from dire impending doom,
Whose tragedy yet half hung o’er, a smile
Half settled on the eaves of her sweet lips,
Half flickered into fear, like sunflecks loosed
In play, now by the leafy shadows bound;
Nor anywhere a fast abiding place,
Its hold so shaky was, all ruffled yet
By late adventure’s riot in the blood.
Unsteady as the leaf all tremulous
From the wind’s kiss, uncertain of itself,—
Finds balance never-where,—strange words up-
sprung
All cool denied her pulses’ thunder-tides.
Yet all confest by ague in the voice,
Denied her truest self by playful wiles,
And sudden archness leapt upon the tone,—
Such traitor was the voice to truth within.

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But, falling on a chord attuned, he knew!
And more of reverence graced his heart, amen.

“Tho’ you have stormed the inner court; surprised
The queenly Presence at her royal farce,
She begs to plead mock majesty alone,
All innocent of dark intrigues; nor e’er
Adventured at the court of war to wage
Unholy strife, that thus knight-errant bold
Should siege with bristling arms, nor wait upon
Her sovereign will, if so hospitably
She lodge you at the inner favor’s court
Of kindly eyes, nor darts that anger throw.
And war were in your eye, all frailly bore
These breastworks ’gainst a smoke-breath’s violence
From steely-throated enginery of death;
But poor avail’d to shield the crown’d head
Against determined foe.” So saying, shook
The blossom-bells all dainty twined to form
A crownlet for her brow.

“Most noble queen,
Your badinage doth carry deeper sting
Than venom folded in, because, perforce,
I sense ’neath words so light the inner calm
Convulsed; the maiden breast’s pure shrine
Rude violated by a hawking eye,
And talons tearing at its every peace
By such a sudden swoop of dusky wings
As bore their night upon the day; and all
The very air did faint with fright for her
It guardianed with its breath.

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More loft than queen—
That title oft its wearer but degrades—
Were all the stones that build the crown's pure
 grace,
A tongue of honor each, were honor's pledge,—
Then had its cincture gleamed like palisades
Of gold to hedge the royal safety in.
But sadly oft 'tis elsewhere we look
For that high course an honor shrines it in.
But, dwelt within this hand full-sceptered might,
The maiden brow more potent spell did work
To wrong avert, had evil here design.
Then for my gun I'd plead its amity,
Nor foul intent to search a covert fair
For e'en such prize therein surprised as knight
Of old had tasted honor tilting for;
A weapon sooner pressed this doting breast,
To still its beating heart, than carry war
In such pure camp to plant its terrors there;
To harry e'en the smallest feathered thing,
Its white-souled honor ne'er has smirched with
 guilt.
Still less that badge—the knightly honor—trailed
Within the dust to storm defenseless foe."

And eyes o'erleapt his speech with warmth to give
Assurance born of truth, while in her own
An answering glance glowed warm with quick ap-
 proof.

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“Yet fortune hath but prickt the skin of woe
A woe doth bleed to balm with such sweet dew
Of showery eyes as never rose drank up
A sweeter; and, as sweets did crowd on sweets
Till joy abashed scarce dare accept the fruit,
Betrayed to all so sweet a mercy as
Commends the royalty of the woman heart,
Queen-kind to quick forgive a subject foe;
Woman-tender, though her own breast be the sheath
Of misadventure’s cruel blade, to spend
The flashing tear upon a brother’s woe.
She wears her chiefest jewel in her heart
Who rains a pity o’er misfortune’s head
And soothes with tender hand the wound so bled.”

Her earnest eyes all gravely searching truth—
“Such gallant words undo the deed, were ’t meant;
Unmeant, still fortify a loft intent,
And bid in merit for their own reward.”

“Nay, lest my debt take on a mushroom growth
Neath added kindness, I would name the terms:
The gypsy Pleasure with her pretty wiles
Has charmed my all too willing steps, my will
Has clamped with such sweet bonds, I could nor
choose
But bask me in the sunshine of her smiles,
Till I’m at last that moral reprobate—
A lost man, subject to the changing winds;
A vagrant star, to shoot whatever heaven
More bluely glows,—a bumping earth perforce

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Recalls to lowlier paths; springs duty up;
Chides back to sense, and common laws defied.
But be the beacon-star to that lost goal,
The Crow's Nest, named and famed for dusky wood
All peopled black, not only by these birds,
But that more vandal kind of human hawk
As my late manners give them title to.
And this heart beats within with purpose none
But for your true rewarding till 't be done.

“A springing will elects myself to be
The guardian of your steps to towers so near
But, for engirdling woods, your way itself
Had clear defined; yet some of pleasure still
Grows on me thus to minister your will,
Since our estates within such radius lie
Enjoins exchange of friendly courtesy;
Hence, but to humor whimsey fortune lone,
My friendship won were better than begun
The enmity of all so near a foe.

“An enmity were that most bitter thing
Nor deserts sweetened its companioning;
And I to neighbor here had lived for naught
All other days by these sweet days untaught.”
And more, with knightly bow.

“Such flavored speech
More homage shows than theme doth bargain for,
Yet to the ear commends itself for sound.
For sound that pleasing is, more pleasing is
Than truth unsweetened by a music tongue.”

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The mood had come with the part was flung off
With badge of it—the blossom-circlet claspt
The girlish brow—and as herself more sweet
Than queen, her converse lapsed to truer tone
All finelier keyed to that was loft within.
A tiny rut of brown defined their path,
Etched out by lightnings of the twinkling feet
Of scurrying forest-folk, all sinuous wound
Its green-environed way, mid sweets of breath
As bound the sense to other senses' death.

Full soon the green gloom flung its portals wide
Upon the sunshine road all flaring white,
The forest furrowed to the bustling town
Remotely wedged within the purpling hills;
Now deep in shade, or lightly mottled here,
Where Phoebus shot his golden arrows through
To etch the leaves in lace-filmed printery there;
Now Brocken-peopled with strange monster shapes
Vomited from the clouds: a long lean line
Tapering to a distant point—gone out—
To flash its slender spiral farther up;
A pencil'd line enthrading mazy hills
Beyond.

With all these bright enchantments girt
Was something mutual 'fess'd of varying lives
Of each, gave many likes a common chord.

III

*There lives a power within the voice to mold
The passions into vital flame, or set
Such tender chords athrill divinely true
To all a love demands—divinely due.
Nor ever eye carried on its gaze the jet
Or blue, but on the tone gleams dross, or gold.*

And ever Edmond's tones, ear-rending sweet,
Commended to her heart their honor's source,
Nor kindness lacked to gild remembrance more.
So loud his clanking arms their presence spoke
Made food for speech,—their dreadful import
cleared
Of foul misuse, and with unwarrior hand
Dashed from his martial brow its austere front,
Abstracting from his gun's mouth all its sting,
In soft denial-speech of innocent innocents slain.
The woodland folk were safer for his snare,
Nor boded harm on his adventurous search
To pry their secrets out; his huntsman's guise
Was tongue to what he coveted—never!
And certes what an empty bag bore out,
And all that traveled eye or tongue, in what
Of words, spoke never of an eye was trapt
To freight a fear on shyest creature round.

“But your gun,” she faltering urged. “What of hurt
It holds is deadly to a kindness meant.”

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“ ’Tis but an all too velvet heart behind
This mask assumed, to glance the transient eye
From what a weakness is to what it seems,
And thus unferreted nurse an inward love
Woke scorn to gaze irreverent bared. E’en so
This gun my faithful partner is to share
My vices; hoodwink every eye to see
Its muzzle charged with fearful menace, whiles
Respect doth deepen on the brow of all,
To our elate importance. So with good
Snatched from the teeth of ill, we spur our way
To our own will, and joy of all the wood,
Since ne’er a helpless creature therein laired
Has tasted its death-wound from lead of ours.
A pair too foolish far to look on death,
Or plug a life with anguish tho’ a hare’s.
Dissemblers both, nor savage instinct wakes
Tho’ covey of the speckled partridge brushed
Brown noses wi’ us. The flashing fins o’ the trout—
The jack-hare’s ear attent to every sound
Belabors it,—the lift of startled wings,—
’Tis Motion’s sweetest tongue to speak her grace,
And tempt the eye from every evil’s aim.
These wood-folk all, how pretty their devices;
What dainty snares they set to trap our love!”

“ ’Tis Poet you are, hates butcheries e’er,” she said.

“Ay, if a smuggler could be one with that.
Who flies a pennant false, tho’t be to hide
A weakness all too truly brands him ‘fool,’

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Is but a knave disowns himself, and soon
Or late dishonor must be on his head,
Uncovered of its puny artifice.
I would I knew your heart more soft to find
A verdict kinder for this fraud confest."

"And I myself had sentenced to your scorn,
To self most false; and all you've named so dark
To crown dishonor's brow were meetly mine,
Failed I to own my heart has leapt to meet
Your words with fervid welcome; their most kind
Intent divined ere they were spoke. And I
Were left to name your fault, 't would strip the
heart
To truth, nor e'er obeisance made without
To custom sanctioned not by every conscience beat.
And your own words should be the tools employed
To work your error's instant doom; disguise
Should elsewhere look for consort true; e'er more
My linke'd mail should be unfailing sign
Without, of honor cherished fair within."

"Your words are jewels to be treasured 'yond
That diamond or ruby claspt in bonds
Of fire. Henceforth my loves are blazoned on
My helmet's front; and I to war for them
Shall take the blazing meteor's course for right,
That all who see may feel my honor's sun,
And taste my blade in tilt and tourney for't."

A SUMMER IDYL

“Thenceforth all men more clean their honor held
For one man’s honor thus in purity washed.
For Honor is that brightest steel e’er flashed
A blade to speak its own defense. These woods,
Could speak, did wound the air with piteous plaint
Of wrong from stalking vandal’s trail. I would
A love so keen did dignify the chase
As ruled to elevate it into art
Disdains the poacher’s cunning; loft disclaims
The dissolute hand would dabble noisome stain
At honor’s very root by unkind snares,
And reckless pillage in the royal preserves
Of nature; claps a felon-brand on him
So wanton as unmercied takes his way
These lower creatures ’mong, as midnight masks
Did fit become, being thus assassin-bent.
Lords of the Chase a noble Order, e’er
Should knighted be for chivalry where, free
To rule, sweet mercy did admix therewith
As something Godlike speaks its government;
With courage all so high disdains a mean
Advantage; seeks open field, pledges rights
To all; whose warm blood bounds exultingly
At splendid fight put up—to taste in this
More exquisite thrill than crowding to the death.
True ingrained with that finer grace of soul
Uncovers t’ heaven—for all these creature-viands
Fill up this banquet-board of nature free,—
Nor dines thereat without a grace to God.”—
With close-claspt palms, and little flickering lips

A SUMMER IDYL

That trembled off a smile—"I dare not crave
That higher thing would stay the murderous hand
Forever. Then all men were e'en as you,
On a mountain apart, and nothing left
To set such goodness on that pedestal
As shrines it quite alone."

Low went the head,
As the warm eyes flashed their deep obeisance.

Then,—

"Full knowing, I came unto the fount of nature—
All blind 'twas wisdom's fount as well. New suns
Of consciousness break dawn to flash their light
O'er darkened covert of the mind. Methought
Deep draughts and holy of the silences
At mountain-top of things, whose ichor feeds
The thinning veins and leaner shanks of age,
Warming the wintry soul to ripened glow,
There only Wisdom's golden fruits hung low;
There lone her holy palms were touched in that
Soul adytum—that inner solitude
Grasps the Eternal with familiar eyes—
All dimming here; e'en so I had believed.
But lo! there flashes up deep-fathom'd truth
On lips scarce fluttered from their baby tongue;
And wisdom's lore doth crowd itself in such
A bright-apparel'd speech as takes by storm
The wavering judgment, all unbalanced quite
As willow-bough keen whipping in the blast,—
Stung to't by all its tempest-lash of facts."

A SUMMER IDYL

And more, uncovered eloquence of soul
Through eyes that burned a loftier, purer speech.

And ever such discourse hung on their lips
To light the moments up as flint struck flint,
To set a sunshaft free in every spark,
As on new wing some newer theme arose
To find its poise upon the blade of wit.
For youth ofttimes inherits age in what
Its genius is—so wears its mantle ripe
With honors full becoming it; draws in
With mother-milk its deep philosophies.
And something of its soul is there to claim
Deep-rooted fellowship at very dawn.

As on the low night-wind the nightingale
Has poured its soul—when every note has died
Its passion still rocks on the memory's tide,—
So when he'd pass'd with all a courtier's grace,
And only memory eyed him face to face,—
For memory hath a sticking power for sweets,
Lets all the bitterer things fall through atween,—
The sense of him so bore upon the air
He seemed to linger still in converse there.
The music flow of words, the soul of him,
The eyes of him, hung essenced on its breath,
And e'er should hang down to the gates of death.
For all unguessed was writ within their souls
That evermore should deck a memory's brow
With what a memory's keenest relish is,
Tho' quivering with that memory's dagger-thrust.

A SUMMER IDYL

For e'en as day succeeded day their hearts
Were yielded guiltless as the potter's clay—
All blind unto the sculptured grace it takes
As dreaming marble into glory wakes;
Nor felt the chain whose links all idly lay,
Nor clanked an iron tongue of bitter day,
Within whose fetters should their peace decay.

IV

Such mold divine woke envy of the gods.

To th' pure young eyes of Clarice Cameron
He was of men she'd ever seen most fair.
The courtly grace, the kingly brow, and all
That goes to satisfy a woman's heart,
Were his, and more, in grandeur's noble cast
As men are made; not of the softer type
Yields feminine grace, with scarcely more of
 strength,
But like the Oak—king of his kind. A dome
With intellect lit, wherein the soul and eyes
Flashed searchlight out, nor rudeness in the act
Ransacked your own—but probe his mastery
Brought you under, your inner soul to sound,—
As fumbling for a pearl within its depths—
Honored him for the faith, and you the more
For glimpse of beauty such a promise bore.

V

A lily maid all blossom pure.

Rooted on brow of hill, so fair as 'twere
Its crown, stood Cameron Hall, the pride of all
The countryside; its casement jewels sweet
With rosy flames new-budded in the east,
Or weight with farewell shimmer of the day,
Flung backward to the dying skies the last
Pale flutterings of the dipping sunset wings.
Or was it pallor of the grayish morn—
All laden guarded what was throned within.
Rose towers mediaeval for their hint
Of mystery and doom; wee balconies,
Like eagles perched on some steep cliff, hung there
To guard their young. And on the verdurous lawns,
Abeard with bristling gems in morning's fire,
Were Beauty's vestments careless flung, or bloom,
Or quivering leaf their perch, or flashed a sign
Of kindled glory on some burning peak
Remote. Or green caresses open flung
Their honeyed fetters round the sleeping stone,
Like orient ruin stood brow-deep in vine,
And laboring with sweet breath beneath the load,—
Or roof repined neath amorous years whose fell
Conviction lived in many wintered stains
Of silent-revel'd kisses on its brow,—
'Twas Beauty's very self—the artisan.

A SUMMER IDYL

The landscape offered changing vistas; new
Delights crept in to fill the eye, or hill,
Or vale, or slumbrous water's gloom in dusk
Of forest-deeps, or open-eyed in sun
Shot glinting arrows of its hoarded light;
Blue-hooded hills reached up to marry blue
Of brooding skies, and, plighting holy troth
In bridegroom's name, made heaven of all.

And Clarice loved it all, as meet she should.
'Twas here the mother in her blossom-flush
Had drooped to death, and left such tiny bud
With faint pulsations scarce took hold on life,
So languid lay for want of mother-love;
But to the father's prayer flared up to be
Joy's beaming sun held up the dear dead face
In newly-blossom'd sweets on baby-stalk.
Was sorrow sweetened thus with light of her,
And closer-link'd their love for her they mourned.
While he his own with mother arts combined
To fill up interval of wounded space,
To graft her in a woman's strengthful grace,—
Looked partial on her tender baby wiles
With half a mother's doting eyes to feast
Their full—all of his soul's sunshine orb'd there.

Thus she, being lone, grew up herself the more,
Nor frigid bent to artificial rule,
Nor soul-starved on a cold-world regimen.
A wilding flower sweet as violet's self,
Initiate to their every sweetful art,

A SUMMER IDYL

And pure as snow-crest queenly lily is,
Whose snow was guardian to her virgin breast;
Nor grander empire craved than being one
With these—e'en as the stars,—God's children all.
A sweet 'mong sweets, divined she not by aught
Of contrast what of sweet she was; nor when
She spoke was it the lightning's flash so keened
Her wit with edge of fire it blistered where
It struck; but sweet as honeyed stores strained out
The cells of love. The ill she wrought, if ill,
Was knowing her did whet so keen a taste
Spoiled relish for all tamer sweets. And yet
Her virtues of the violet borrowed sought
The covert rather than the show of them.

Her eyes were chalices of heaven, night-blue,
Where stars burned deep as heaven's lamps aglow
To light that blue-dusk sphere with such pure rays
As daylight's glare denied its violet maze,
And in their depths the violet story lurked
Breathed modesty, and innocence, and truth.

Were you a man, and they had put their trust
In you, given you their wells of confidence
Not every bolt of hell had fired you from
The trust, nor broke the chains did rigid bind
Your every impulse of the pleased will,
Where all of honor leapt to meet the faith:
To range glad heights on lifted wings; to sail
The clear blue of the steadfast skies,—above
Deceit's low vaults,—where dwells eternal truth;

A SUMMER IDYL

To own a purer self; a purer world.
Your nature reveled in companionships
Of nobler purpose flashed to you; one look
Smit passion's cheek all pale; the tingling blood
Caroused no more its heated channel's course,
But took its pulse from such calm moon of eyes
As nobly sways the ocean-depths of soul
To such proud surge as owns but heaven's high rule.
Tho' all your past had been a lie, it fell
As foul robe dropt, the while your inner soul
Ascended white,—baptized in their light pure
As she was pure; as true as heaven is true:
So true it is,—man looks on virtue ne'er
But vice wakes to its nakedness, ashamed.
In their pure light you'd earned the sacred trust.

Did pensiveness e'er drift its shade o'er light
Their starshine bred, or tear globe crystal there,
'Twas like the dew on flowers—new glories wed;
New star of earnestness broke through the dusk.

And e'er was character writ in woman's face,
In her had climbed nor height of woman's grace,
'Twas beamed forth here in tender light of morn
To deck her frontlet fair with burning truth.
Nor ever had she touched at woman's goal,
In that rose-prism'd light turns all to love,
To know the faintings of a heart beneath
Its loaded bliss; its yielded store of pain.
The red mouth drooped as from o'erweight of
sweets;

A SUMMER IDYL

The lips, proud mold of sculptor's passion'd art,
Blossoming speech sweet as the rose's breath—
As sweetly kind—were rosy petals twain
Their union owed to common bond of sweets
A dallying bee might lightly part to suck
The honey from their ruby cells; hard by,
Rose-lightnings played their mantling surges o'er
The soft surrendered oval of the cheek,
Like summer cloud warmed up the evening sky
With conscious blush, eyed by the sweetheart sun,—
A soft May-bloom, pink-ripened in his glow,
Half-bent the columned neck with loaded sweets.

Herself the fairest product 'mong most fair
Of nature's husbandry, loved all her works:
The rustic lanes; the fields ashine with dew;
The tender vocals of the wind and wave;
The woodbirds' chorals in the dawn's sweet breath;
The swelling curves, or bolder flashing peaks,
Of mountain's climb to kiss the shimmering blue;
The pomp of rose at evening's portals flared
To gild the glories of the dying day;
The jewel'd blazes tangled in the blue
That tents the mourning earth in night's sweet
gloom:

These, teachers all, each of itself did thrust
Some part to bring to bloom one perfect flower,
Molded of all—yet fairer than them all
In such presentment of transparent grace
As folded tint of all in beauty's face:

A SUMMER IDYL

The cheek that glowed and paled with changing
breath,
The eyes that shrined the heaven's tropic deeps;
The tawny tresses' shredded gold, the pose,
The haughty little airs, the mounting curves
Were tongue to womanhood's maturing grace—
Each flashed a vesper in the darkest place.

VI

*And I such madness wooed from nature's charm
As made me blind to every face of harm.*

*Nor wind hath sails of such unerring scent
To search a covert for the soul's content
As devotee bent low at Cupid's shrine
To drink in love in draughts of joy divine.*

'Twas destined they should meet. Shall pretty bird
Forsake its nest because a vandal bird
Has found it out? Still less, if vandal bird
Knight-errant be, with all the title brings,
And goodly fair; and he, the knight, by choice
Surrenders to the instinct leads him there,
To lose himself again in just such bower—
What would you? Shall a maiden scorn her own—
Her throne-seat bower because, forsooth, a knight
Had wandered there to storm its frail defense?
The more a guard had need for this, the bower!
Ay, destined they should meet again, and oft—
The leapt-up vine fed by this scantest root
Of circumstance should grow and interlace
Their hearts ere wisdom's might had ruled to train
Their course apart.

To him, from this plateau
Of wind-pured skies and blossom-nectar'd airs,
His whole past seemed but sicklier for the town.
Shut in with that vast hive of human bees

A SUMMER IDYL

Whose search was given o'er to plunder e'er
The sweets of things for yellow-honeyed gold.
What were its miles of puny cells at last,
But ant-hills swarmed by human insects starved
For but a pinch of sky—a glimpse of heaven!
Here nature offered camps of unrestraint,
Unvext by social clamps; her wide free airs;
The blue of heaven unfiltered through the cloud
Of poison'd smoke till sun but sickened there;
Glad ranges of the lanes and fields and groves,
'Mid harping winds and minstrelsie of birds.

Looked back upon from this cloud-soaring vast
Serene of soul, this cool porch of the heavens,
How artificial cold gleamed all its world!
The bulging majesty of puffing pride;
The sensuous air warmed by exotic breath
To spell a lotus-trance o'er virtue's heart;
The dizzy mazes of the reeling dance;
The thin-brew'd ale that spiced the viands of
thought . . . !
'Twas but the husks his o'erstarved nature spurned.

From this glad urn that nature offered him
He drank the sparkling foam of pure delight.
And Clarice was the listening world he sought,
That other half, without which is no whole
Of happiness—the ears we tell it to.
Her taper fingers held out joy to him
In all so pure a vessel, he looked through,
As through a vase's crystal purity,

A SUMMER IDYL

Nor paused to trace the vessel's chaste design,
Save through wine-bibber's eyes—enchantment laid
Impartial where they saw: looked through the cup
Upon the dimpled, laughing face of Joy,
And eager toss'd the draught, as parching earth
Drinks rain, and is full glad, not asking why.
At Nature's board where all was sweet, and all
Divinely new, that Cupid lay in wait—
Was chiefest sauce to banquet bounteous spread,
He yet was honorably girdled blind.

By every lover's vow was he not plight
To one imperious swayed that other world—
To this sweet hour had been the all he knew?

And as each pleased hour succeeded each,
Amaze did spread its wings and soar afar,
And ever outward sought, or everywhere
But there within, to name the reason why
The earth was so transcendent fair—the sky.

Of mother orphan'd ere he lispt that name,
Or had a sister's darling love prevailed
To save from harm ere threatening dart had sped,
By fair example set—thus arm'd had known
Nor flashing eye, nor pouting lips did breed
So much of beauty's worth as lily-soul
Neath honor's breast, pure as its snow. For aught
He knew, save for that instinct vague within
Pointed to better things by hunger pled
For them, no loftier skies crown'd woman's world

A SUMMER IDYL

Than that low-vaulted arch her willing soul
Assented to—roofed o'er the pleasure world:
The canopy herself had stretched, shut out
The tender blue above; its holy stars!

Had but some prescience warned to sparing taste
Delights so sweet at this child maiden's court!

Or murmur rose within to wake alarm;
Or tocsin from without shrill'd danger's ambush!
Such noble passions swayed his manhood's breast
As molded honor's very law; nor steel
Did clasp more rigid bonds of right than those
His temper yielded, glad impulsed thereto:
'Tis all so subtle cord that trips our feet
As dewy rope of cobweb makes more show;
'Tis all so subtle temptress bids our fall,
Cloaked whitely pure—it shines an angel's garb.
The rose-heart, pounding at its scented walls,
Think ye, thrills not with rapture born within,
Tho' blind to every agent of its bliss;
Thrills not with ecstasy of bloom, despite
The canker at its heart breeds deadly bane,—
Without the aid of outer air or light
To show it why? So was he housed in bliss
Was very blindfold to his dazzled eyes.
The world with such a shining web was hung
As all delicious wooed the willing sense.
Was't his to part and peer, all blindly urged,
Why flashed the silvery sheen all dewy here,
Why duller there? In this pure atmosphere,

A SUMMER IDYL

Whose breath was stranger to the town, nor aught
That flowered here was strange. 'N that tropic night
Of things the human firefly's blazing torch
Oft seared the touch too tender trusted there ;
And brows lacked innocence for diadems.
The poisons there, tho' subtly distill'd e'er,
Yet prated of the drug on the sensuous air.
In this pure world, or e'er their bitter lurked,
'Twas under sugar-coat did break no law
An honor ruled to take the sweets. Such power
Hath what we would to wear the face of what
We should, and with its blinkings false deceive
The heart elected it—to be its own
Cup-bearer of the dregs of bitterest woe !

VII

*The flowers blab of wisdom's lore;
The winds philosophers are.*

O sweet is the breath of the heather,
And glad is the bird on the wing,
Nor ever the flash of a feather
But woodlands with melody ring.

O sweet is the brier of the hedges,
And tender the blue of the sky;
Nor ever a sorrow it pledges
In ever a sunbeam's eye.

O tender the waters are wooing,
And idle the shallop at play;
Comes never the breath of a rueing
To shadow the syren-sweet lay.

The gold of the sun is in flower,
The rose feeds on dewdrops and love;
'Tis Joy gives his wings to the hour—
For joy beam the heavens above.

A pomp is enshrined in the roses;
A snow to the lily doth cling;
Nor ever a bloom but discloses
New raptures of perfume awing.

A SUMMER IDYL

Each blade is a-tremble with jewels,
To nature's tiara belong;
Each songster's protesting renewals—
Of ardors undying—his song.

The world is a-shimmer before us;
The leaflets are laughing o'erhead;
The blue of the sky's bending o'er us:
'Tis now—and with Joy to be wed.

And near, and nearer came the witching tones,
Deep, resonant, heart-flung with pulses mad.
And Clarice caught their lilt within her breast—
Joy's ferment sweet, its riot in her veins.
'Twas boom of waters in the thundered wave,
The laugh o' the plunging brine, the crystal peal
Of waterfalls. 'Twas sky and sun and wind
Inwrought, woke nature's mad carousal in
The human throat. 'Twas Joy incarnate there.

A moment more and two glad eyes outpoured
Their brilliance in her own. 'Twas sun on sun
Noon radiance broke. The wind had commenced
with
His cheeks to blotch their tan a gypsy red;
His locks had felt its breath—a thatch toss'd o'er
Like tumbled grass, to th' blade's tip freight with
joy;
The bared throat showed commingling of the sun
And wind—bassoon for every music breath.
Dismounting, Clarice stood upon the bridge

A SUMMER IDYL

High-arching spann'd the silver tide below,
An arm thrown o'er the chestnut's flowing mane.
The gold of her hair was a coronal fair,
A molten flame in wavy billows flowed,
Whose yellow fires, corona-like, hedged in
More glorious beauty was the sun o' her face.

“ 'Tis such a fortune greets me here as shames
My best deserts; joy sailed on broken wing
Before—a whole bird shall be now to cleave
The sunny air of where a gladness beams.”
And from his eyes the world took fire for joy—
Where Clarice was the world, and her heart fire.
Despite the tender eyes her bodice blue
But latticed in her bosom's snow; nor spoke
The timid flutterings ruled within her breast.

“The very airs of heaven do braid delight,
And all the roads of earth are privy to't.
The sun, proud courser of the blue, descants
On flowery meads, and boasts a glory's pomp
On whate'er nursery his eye doth feed.
Your song sticks in my breast to character
A radiance unequal'd save by one
Just flung to me from perch of yonder tree—
My breast confessional made of all his joy.
Both shall be kept memorial of the day,
Whose brighter ne'er hath crowned the June, or
May.

“The top o' the world to you
And skies are ever blue.

A SUMMER IDYL

Be't sun that shines above,
Or clouds, 'tis full of love.
The earth is glad with flowers—
The fruit of shining showers.
I'm glad for very breath,—
Who'd frighten me with death?
Who bred my heart to song
Will keep me from all wrong.
Listen to me,—
'Tis sweet just to be!
The world is a-lee
For you and for me.

“ 'Tis to the playing the day is—
E'er to the straying the way is
To joy is beaming plight.
On the breezes the breath is
To diseases the death is—
And all that molds a blight.
'Tis to the roamer the joy is,
But a misnomer the cloy is
Of aught that buds to sight.
To the dancing the tune is;
To the glancing the boon is
To coin a pure delight.”

“Your madrigal is mirror to your mind,
Child of free airs, and all unhindered suns;
Your breath is native to these haunts; your soul,
At one with Nature's secret self, gives throne
To seal a majesty on all your speech.

A SUMMER IDYL

Yourself shall my preceptor be in lore
Unseals her rites, till I initiate be
In that most deep and holy mystery,
Her Order—rules the earth and sky and sea.”

“Glad would I speak for nature-folk,” she said,
“Whose beauteous laws bid never for revoke,
Were half you load on me but honest load—
Weighs secret sources of the Infinite Mind;
For Nature but the true exponent is
Of her Creator’s self. I can but guide
An erring tongue attempts to speak for all
What mystic Truth has never yet laid bare.
But yonder mead brims o’er with flowers,—shall
they
Be Nature’s tongue to plead for me such art
As makes my own but pulseless, pale, and cold.
Sweet Ministrant to man’s diseased soul,
Sweet Artist, o’er whose painted curtains roll
Perspectives of the Infinite, be my
Enchantress here! load silver on my tongue
To melt and forge its bright transparent way
Through that speech pure as water’s crystal tide,
Most eloquent is thine—the truth alone.”

“Already is my soul’s obeisance won
By sageness of your prayer; nor can such lips,
So pured, be prostitute to error’s law.
Nor shall a craven doubt slip in to crowd
With unbelief, tho’ every face of truth
Beam false. Your gallant listener hence,” he said.

A SUMMER IDYL

Thus spoke; and most surprised herself at words
Upsprung from tender shoots all new to her,
Had root within; nor guess'd his eyes alone
The sun-touch was to flare their ready bloom;
Nor knew the miracle was of the heart,
All momentarily matured, as folded rose,
Full ripe within, bursts open at the kiss
Of sun, or flaunt of wind,—so sweetly did
Both mind and heart uncloset; so sweetly did
The budding thought to such pure petals ope.

“This frailest little star-eyed daisy lives
To battle with the what of strength it owns
Against the heart grown adamant to all
The loftier language of a Father's love.
It prattles cheer in such familiar tongue,
Such dear familiar ways as do intreat
Not only willing slaves of high degree,
But captive takes the obdurate ears; the eyes,
O'er-callous'd by a flinty fate, to own
Their friendly ways; the morals that they teach,
Where stars too coldly gleam, or lofty are.
'Tis like a pallid wine strained through the teeth
Clenched tight against such flow of medicine
As palls upon the tongue, to feed at last
But most indifferent life to their sore need.
Here are the spangled heavens all mirrored bright
In thick-sown stars below, whose softer lights
Uphold the fainting gaze for loftier sights.
Their little daisy souls are seed from heaven,

A SUMMER IDYL

I like to think, to grow the angels on:
For whoso loves these little innocents
Within the heart feels little wings astir.”
With more such lovely words she spoke, and pass'd,
Their little heads all nodding bright farewells
Where'er her foot did plant a trembling bliss.

“Nor shall a daisy hence but speak to me
Of something God would have me know,” from him.

From out a soft nest wove of tumbled grass
A wild-rose lifted up its blushing cheek,
All guilty sweet as maid did stammer out
Confession of the truth she seeks to hide—
In tender bloom's incriminating surge.

“Within this lovely blossom's sweet shy face
I catch this little grace,— tho' not to be
The thing whose seeming it doth wear yields this
Of truth: the habit brings somewhat of growth,
The virtue snares. This flower sculpt in sweets,
Innocent of those pretty shames that wake
The blush's glow, is yet lovelier for what
It paints upon the thought of these— tincturing
All modesty sweet, being like it. Nor is all
But seeming: where instinct doth seek a grace,
It is its own surest guide unto that end.
Nor were this true, still did the semblance load
Somewhat the real grace on whom it sits:
Living in thought of him who puts it there,
Others seeing so, mirror back; thus all

A SUMMER IDYL

Unconscious help to set the virtue fast.
Or be it evil's face,— here still did cling
As very mottles to the serpent's skin."

He, plodding on with e'er top-heavy step,
Lest his uncertain foot prove juggernaut
To some sweet life, gave quick assent to all
Herself, a flower-nymph—their Oracle,
Gave forth. Nor had his glances blossom-wise
Been schooled to see if aught of fault there lay
In her philosophy; nor yet his mind
Had will to raise a shattering hand against
The lightest thought she flashed in speech. Just
that

She said it sealed it true, because 'twas said,
And seemed at instant sight the thing he'd known
Alway—so eternal she did set all truth
Herself made truth by simple utterance sweet.
So said: "Profoundly I acknowledge what
No dusty lips of ages gone could more
Impress with world-old truth, and wisdom's lore;
Nor in that city's belt, my home, is half
So sage a tongue to pluck so sweet a truth
From hardened shell of fact, save in some hoar
And grizzled head, abstracted from long search
Through musty tomes, and mustier aisles of life,
And given wind from all so dry and crack'd
A tongue as withers up its fruit." Then she:

" 'Tis nature's tongue gives boldness where my own
Had falter'd neath the load its frailty bore.

A SUMMER IDYL

“This floating thistle-down this lesson brings:
An evil may fly afar on gossamer wings
To plant with velvet touch the venom thorn
Doth bristle up to wound the heart’s sweet peace,
And feed a festering memory with its hurt.
E’en so—the panther borrows an angel’s tread
To flaunt that grace himself law-giver is
Thereof to give his pillage more of state.
And Calibans there be ’neath outer cloak
Takes on the puring snow, while hell beneath
Its fiery-furnaced hate doth smoldering seethe.”

She spoke; and still her words beamed more than
said.

So fine is dust of gold, mere frame of words
Is like a cage confines the bird itself
While countless lyrics burst their bondage bars
To sow the air with golden melody.
So pure the elements admixt within,
The grosser, outer air could ill contain
Their conduit unpervert. Most loving touch,
Attempted paintings of their sphere did halt
At lameness spelled perfection with a fault;
Most loving art but ended in despair
To limn the soul that featured it most fair.

VIII

*With blackest falsehood's front withheld the truth,
And forged the manacles of bitter days.*

And as the sweet dawn fountained newer days
Each brought to light a tend'rer employment's ways;
And e'er they strolled the shadow-mottled path
To denser gloom of dusk-brow'd woods to find
Sweet Reason's throne all dark beshrouded o'er—
With all such feeble flickerings of her light
As nothing steadied was the uncertain pulse.
When once a rustling stirred the leaves, tho' slight,
It set a panic in her face spoke fear
Of what, she knew not what, and Clarice clung
A timid moment to the manly arm,—
It set such currents coursing in his veins
Transcended call for such a tumult in
The fright he owned. And now remembrance
tugg'd
To warn when yester's ball went gleaming past,
So close its breath made commerce with her hair,
He'd shivered at the consequence with some
Unreasoning fear.—Nor intuition woke
E'en then to see had selfsame threat hung o'er
Another head nor had his heart stood still.

A cloudy light of reason, wherein no sun
Shot out his certain rays to set facts clear;

A SUMMER IDYL

Or but the moon's illusive glamour held
Him in such Romeo-trance as he himself
Betrayed to every motion of the tide
Engulphed. A golden mesh of glory hung
Its tapestry round to girdle all the world.
That this should be that cosmic speck, himself,
Revolving round its central sun, the heart,
And all this glamour fed from that bright orb,
Was still unbroken dawn to densest night.

Who looked on beauty as Divinity's mold,
Who down and worshipt at the shrine of dews,
An earthly heaven, atwinkle with the stars—
Flashing its million million little suns
To fill his eye with ecstasy; who saw
A thousand glories on a single blade
Of grass, where blue and topaz torches flared
With this sweet breath,—or that, turned kindling
rose;

Or paled with spirit green of inner fires;
A changing blue and green in one, woke up,
Or all of crimson fill the glowing cup;
In this sweet light, a-load with twin blue stars
Astride one stem, to wink up claret eye,
Now turned to little deep-blue wells of light:
Who saw the fields a sheeted flame of pearl
With rose-stars flushed, or nursing pale-green bloom
In prism'd glory's bed; a ghost-white beam,
A yellow, on the rose-scorched crystal's flash,
A gold-heart fountain on the blood, blood rose,
A rose-fire on the diamond's glinting blue;

A SUMMER IDYL

Each facet there a dissipation's shrine,
Each glory spoke a newer heaven to worship:
Who saw in every wink of Gheber flame
A taper blazing out its Author's name,—
A holy beam reflected in each ray,—
How could mere beauty lead the heart astray?
Or that another worshipt with him there—
Did that blare tongue 'twas her sun made them fair?
Intoxicate with every breath of morn,
What steadier gaze should sudden rise to greet
Rose-shimmered rapture in the dawn of love?

The wine-bred air with sweetest tinglings roused
His dormant self till every vein caroused;
Gave him a thousand eyes to see a joy—
Was night before. The buoyant nature, freed
From erstwhile clamps, took sudden sail to soar
And taste but stars in this sweet heaven of things,
Nor felt the solid earth beneath his feet
To chain him to her laws. Sprung from himself—
His past, 'twas like a shooting star, nor whence,
Nor whither of a certain path; a reeling,
Wheeling orb, drunk with its own ecstasy,
What reasoning, sober world should train its course?

Air sparkled purity; the sun beamed it;
His heart was as his nature fed, all pure.
With a new heaven above, a new earth round,
Was't strange, just born into't, that he should feel
His way with tottering steps,—nay, sometimes fall?

A SUMMER IDYL

And shall it be thy judgment, critic world,
Denies a honeyed mercy's store? O man,
Withhold thy blame till in thy own soul's depths
Thou'st known a crystal purity's purging tide,
The whiteness of a soul untaint with guile—
The majesty may there erect itself
Upon that ego, proud yclept yourself,
A very snow of conscience in the heart.
'Twas happiness ran the whole stage o' the eye,
And not its course to reason calmly why:
All fool-sweet innocent, a baby's path
Had parallel'd it with as dark intent.

'Twas like the rose—sweet 'cause 'twas sweet, and
not

Because it labored so; or rose-scent breeze
Its breath is, not knowing so. 'Twas innocence
So filled the being it could but echo there
The majesty that lined the road all fair,
Tho' ne'er of majesty itself aware.

Had he come out to Nature's house aful
Of bladder-words that puffed a judgment's face,
Or prudence clamoring for untitled grace?
For nature's physic he had come, and this
The goblet offered. Was't his to quarrel raise
Because 'twas sweet? The tiger purrs content,
Nor whets his claws against a peaceful air.
Man, but a few removes above the brute,
Blinks sleepy in the sun, his watch relaxt,

A SUMMER IDYL

Unarmor'd for a tilt with skulking foe—
To taste his steel too oft with honor's death.

He only was aware of nature new,
Wherein a sudden sun blazed up to show
His past all dark. New promptings from within
Their sweet stress laid upon him, urging love
For all mankind; a tender fret bore in
Bespoke unravelings of their woe, if shine
Of his could something of their dark unknot.
At heart a new Sir Galahad rose up
With brain and nerve on fire for th' holy Cup;
A giant to unchain the woe-bound world,
And plant a balm in every breeze unfurled:—
Did ONE so fill his eyes with sweets her own
The world reduced to facts—meant Clarice lone.

And for so sweet a world poured knighthood's blood
Since ever was a world to drink its flood.

All sudden opened in the flare of light
No eyes but feebly bore the blinding sight.
His tendered vision could but feel its way
All vague. Joy's sun had maimed the optic nerve,
And something of the judgment's stature due
Suffered a stunt, to reason not at all,
Or thusly; leisure brought the warming sun
'Neath which his thawing heart did melting run
To philanthropic love. So, in this wise,
That Clarice, being one, did move him so
Gave proof of his abounding love for all:

A SUMMER IDYL

For was it not humanity's sore hurt
Brought harm unto the least—since, being part,
Through one did misery's inlet deluge all?
Was't not so in that other Paradise?
He reasoned thus? Nay, what of reason's need
Where faith so beautiful sufficed for all?

Where reason takes its stumbling way, the faith,
Sunlit, all easy as the silver shad,
Eludes slow-plodding logic's slippery hold—
To touch a goal in every gleam of gold.
Where spoke his faith, then spoke the truth behind:
The love of one does breed a love for all.
He *was* in love with all the world! Thus he,
O'ertrue to love's own innocence, the last
To fathom tender troublings girt within,
All blind gave in to every transport's rush—
To plant a sting in every transport's hush.
So sweet remembered sweets,—so bitter are,
Flared o'er the soul's night but a waning star.

The hours were sped on happy wings all pure
As some snow-wing'd processional aloft
With graceful pinions skims the aerial blue,
And Sunday bore upon their gleaming crests
As sanctuary for too happy breasts.
Nor Sunday-virtued in her Sundays 'lone
Was Clarice. Tho' to other days the spire
No less the other six caught up its fire;
Nor false note fell from any day where all
Was blent in one sweet choir the Sunday woke—

A SUMMER IDYL

Nor let the memory wane its leaven had
Miscarried. Loud the clanging bell intoned
A welcome to the kirk for each and all.
And Edmond found his way; and Clarice, too.
When halfway there a bird with helpless wing
Lay fluttering in their path. A tremulous hand
With touch of down, all tender hovered o'er
The mangled mite, while all her heart was poured
In soothing care. The dusk-blue, tender eyes,
Chance-raised, held in their depths the rain, as they
Were flowers freight with morning dews; and he
The beauteous vision drank while some tight cord
Gript at his heart to tear its seals of dew,
And mingle breath with breath of passion in
Her breast—a passion all divine as heaven.
And both were stronger for the help she gave
The mute appealing bird, as ever must
Men reap the fruitage of their deeds. Whate'er
Of beauty caps the beauteous deed, its crown,
Or likeness of't, sits on the doer's head
To give him glory for't; and true it is—
The deed, tho' black or white, is but the certain
Lineage of that the heart is parent to,
Tho' struck from the will, as sparks from the forge,
By impact sudden as surprises there
An unknown force—tongue to its own bright glory,
Or fell conviction of't. 'Tis even so
Nature hath raised a voice against a vice
By myriad tongues of white 'gainst one of black
In snowy-petal'd blooms that line her track.

IX

*Nor all of poison loads the aspic tongue;
Nor all of tragedy is lived in show:
The lead of fate is oft the plummet swung
By our own hands to sound the depths of woe.*

Over the daily cup of joy light views
Were clashed of noisy themes about, or now
More delicately waged. Of Poesy's art
Her tender fancies lightly brushed to skim
Defects all curdled in her violet eyes
To cloud the perfect brightness of its face.

“The rhyme a hobble is to maim the flow
Of that pure current is the poet's speech—
The visioned fire that pins the poet's gaze,
The picture kindled in his soul with all
Of eager life and motion in its wings,
Shall't senseless hammered be to dull-orb'd light,
Reflecting nought but that insistent note
All shining polished as a shaft of steel,
Must ring, tho' but to sound an empty vault;
A thing of iron pounded into shape,
Or ductile drawn to fill a desert space?
The eagle 'loft whose splendid pinions brush
The sun—'twere meeter he should clip their might
To practice but a pigeon-strut confines
Him to the ground; or lordly oak should stoop

A SUMMER IDYL

To cram his giant boughs piecemeal to fit
The whimses of a cage the rhyme claps on.
'Tis motion's freedom gives it all its grace
Must take its way unhampered in its space,
Free as the tread of stars, as pure of face.
Where sounds the bell with empty tinkle lone
The sense but drowns for the ceaseless drone.
Thought is a blade to cut its own keen way;
To cramp it is to taste its biting edge
In flow of blood whose stain is murder to't."

His soul, as from a deeper motive stirred,
Like twin stars glowed through midnight of his
eyes—

"And I had dared to set a fault in place
I'd lodged it in a pair of rebel eyes:
To let the form so sit upon the sense,
Is't not to crush the soul for mean surtout?
Where strength a beauty is it often shows
But hideous lines in detail—taken whole's
A masterpiece of art. Take some seam'd face
And strip its hull to what is fair beneath—
And all is fair for what you there unsheathe—"

"The form e'er passes current for what's beneath."

"Did never words nor more of beauty breathe
Than they could frame, coarse vehicled unto 't?"

A SUMMER IDYL

“The sweets we breathe were never clapt in sound ;
The rhyme to poetry is but the bit
The wild steed champs ; it breaks his native fire.”

“Nay, but the hedge defines savanna’s bounds
Each hoofbeat clangs to print with more of fire,
Confined to limits stricter. If the ears
Offended be by what the eye relates,
They first should master them of what it hates,
That they may worthier sort their judgments fair.”

“Perforce the eye reports but what it sees—”

“And shall it skim the wave but surface deep
To lose the nobler currents ’neath it sleep?
For art is as you take it ; o’ermuch as
You make it in the eye. Where rhyme’s its shape
’Tis no deformity unto the grape.”

“Such sweets had graced a fairer hull for cup.”

“The cast of bronze takes on the features’ mold
Being all that gives authority thereto.
The thought comes habited in its own garb :
Ne’er Roman toga clung to Grecian slave,—
The outer features being what they must
From inner creature their creator is.”

“ ’Tis clapping all too heavy-featured mail
On shoulders speak an entity but frail ;
And we but judged the toadstool by its legs,
We’d say no toadstool is, for want of pegs.”

A SUMMER IDYL

“And I but answered half the wit in eye
’Twould flash the wings to make a toadstool fly;
For all the grace that lines a woman’s eye
There’s more of strength to name her passions by.
But frailly as our subject wears its show
’Twas conjured into being by your blow.”

“ ’Tis a harangue wears sweetness of the rose
Where bitter of the thorn its stings enclose.”

“And ’t please you well to quit this fencing wit,
I needs must vent the tide provoked by it.”

“ ’Tis tiresome rhyme that rings no ending chime.”

“But till we’ve flailed it out where is the grain,
And fruit of this discourse, shall be its gain?
The music balance ever looks to sound
For music’s punctuation is its soul;
’Tis accent of the thought—its emphasis—
Loads a melodic sweetness on the rhyme.
Where puffed and labored to, then rhyme, I wis,
As any other fault, looks gross in this;
The river glides in liquid motion free;
But chain it—’tis an artificial sea.
Where effort is the chiefest way to rhyme
It heads the way to poet’s chiefest crime:
Aught labors into lines, and never flows—
’Tis smell betrays the artificial rose.
And this be fault doth shackle any verse:
The labor to it is its primal curse.
Immortal music on immortal lyre,
Immortal speech born of celestial fire,

A SUMMER IDYL

Shall mortal tune it to his own desire?
True poetry is gendered in the soul,
No art can simulate, no skill control.
Wherever clap the castanets in sound,
Then these are part of it, nor rendered so
By heaving labor to 't: a soft-purred sleep's
More neighbor to 't, that snores in rhyme.
The music line in sweet accentuation ends—
'Tis but the sun a-sparkle on the wave,
Its ornament, and ne'er contortion's slave.
Where motion free as stars all rhythmic flows
To jingle off a rhyme, or sweetly claps
A cymbal in the act—'tis one with it,
And native as the breath that stirs the rose
To sweets, the lily to a separate sweet.
'Tis nature sets the pace shall govern all
In what a nature is, and not its thrall.
But even stars are harnessed by the might
Compels their course, tho' all unseen. A law
Is governor to e'en the atom's prank,
And every streamlet flower that lines its bank:
A law of being plants its nature there,
And all of freedom first its yoke must bear.
'Tis nature's secret while she labors e'er—
So joys in it, it seems a labor ne'er.
Tho' seeming wanton, she is most austere,
And all her brightest sorceries are but
The velvet cloak to iron rule hides all
Its clock-work underneath; her lightest word,
Tho' lilting on the wings of rhyme, is yet
As spark of steel flamed from the anvil's might.

A SUMMER IDYL

“Be subject to her laws in prose, or verse;
There only freedom is, in nature’s court.
The stars themselves. ’Tis music beat in spheres
Owe e’er their sweetest motion to the laws
Of harmony—fixt as eternity.
Soft-footed seraphs tramping o’er the night—
The heaven’s troubadours all angel white;
Such rhythmic tremors shake the fields of light
The heaven’s rafters tremble with their might;
Such music cadence waits upon their flight
As heaven itself doth languish for the night
To drink the sounds with ever new delight!
’Tis but the dial of nature’s face to time
Heaven’s glowing panorama with their chime
Whose symphony’s the organ-roll of worlds.”

The flower-petal’d ears assumed dismay—
“And is it not my thunder loads your say—
In the unhampered line, its easy flow?
Yet pounding sound, ’tis but a heavy go.
Nor even scroll of heaven so blinding is
To smite my vision dark in night’s eclipse:
I still am haunted with some memory’s shaft
Impales its scrannel corse of theme gone dead
For lines so limply wrought they own no life,
Tho’ bulging with the bulk of hollow sound.
For where the master sets a perfect rose,
A thousand faint for what of sweet outflows
Is life-blood drained for wound of pruning-shears;
Strength dies to fatten out a silly space.
’Tis but the cripple e’er with hobbled feet

A SUMMER IDYL

Must mince along, nor taste a freedom's stride.
The vacant thought stalks loudly through the rhymes
And for their failing sense makes much of chimes;
In windy numbers doth such themes compound
The senses ache for what they gorge of sound.
It is the faithless fence that sways and falls,
Save where the propping post its strength recalls—"
And silver-pealed her laugh at thing decried
Rude rushed upon her tongue, its laws defied.

"This war all lightly waged with bladed words
Neath skies all sweetened with the smoke of
flowers,—
Such flowers of speech doth brim each weapon's
mouth
And futile all as knifing of the dead,—
But proves at last what utter vacant stuff
May rule to raise the wind; what whimsey bone,
Rude wrangled o'er, may set a world aghast
By ruin red wrought in its dripping jaws:
And that, tho' justice hover either side,
Love sweetlier 'vails to hold its even scales
Out of war's breath. Is't not the verse's fire
We love—its form be what it may?—is all
Of life to it, whatever form, to make
That form seem best is native to 't?" from him.

" 'Tis saying we like a thing, whate'er it be
Being clothed in outer garb fits perfectly."

A SUMMER IDYL

“We can but like a truth abhors disguise
Tho’ what it tell be hateful to our eyes.”

“But truth comes sweetest in that bright array
Dispenses gladness on its every way.
War hath its uses sweet in certain fruits
Bore never sweetness but for bitter roots:
'Tis in the brandished thought the inner mind
Oft clears itself of doubt; its own beliefs
Doth steady with the crutch to others held,
Defining them; most in the war defending them:
Like lightning’s blaze did clip the land of all
Its fœtid sours and damps, to set it pure,—
The rapier’s edge cuts clear our own beliefs
In war for them. Nor ever mind more sure
Of’s self than when outspeaking for its faith—
In threshing out the seeds of it beneath
The open glare of its most enemied eye,”—
From her.

And thus, as word clash’d flinty word
Woke fires between, were lit the day’s sweet hours—
A subtle pleasure brewed spoke not itself
Lumbered with sound, but soft as silver rill
Wakes up the flowers, its essence watered deep
At roots o’ the heart, to bring forth in its season.
Or on the marge of some still stream their gaze
All raptly traced the pastoral’s flowing lines,
Or climb’d the epic tale’s bold flights of song
To knighthood’s valor and the kingly deed,—
Or ’twas a barque chained willing hands to task
Of skimming o’er the wave—Joy at the helm,—

A SUMMER IDYL

Was such admixture of the elements
As spoke for nature's ripening in the breast.
In every water was a syren's call;
And every day death was the vesper fall
Of tend'rer joys; and every twittering bird,
And every languorous note in breeze's hum,
Woke blissful answer in their throbbing breasts—
Nor wot 'twas love that spake! so willing walk'd
Into the open snare whose shining web
Gleam'd all so gossamer-fine it clouded not
The sun of heaven, nor heavier bodings waked
Than did that orb to dim their radiant joy
So tragic blind the innocence of youth!
So infinite fine the net all demon-strong
To crush, with all its cruel tentacles
Behind. Ne'er subtler hung its beauty up
To starve a joy within its shining prison,
Like steely bands should grip a mortal pain.

X

*It was a child at feet of Knowledge, low
All trusting knelt; but 'twas a woman rose,
Brow-pale with pressure of the thorns of woe
Was college seal of graduate heart that knows!—
Initiate to the secret pains—the strife
Iron rules that University—is life!*

And evening's blush was on the sennight's brow;
And evening's smile.

Bright shone the seventh day,
Full near its close, that swung the halving clasp
Should circle in their ended joy. Above,
A tender patch of sky with cloudlets bloomed
Where evening's crimson light with pearl did wed,
As rose, half-blushing, half to lily paled,
Its blossoms wreathed to crown a day so fair,—
Whose fairer ne'er had dawned,—wherein these
walked
The flower-tufted lanes, and drank of joy
Had been their poison's brew in base alloy
But for the flower of innocence, made pure.

And Edmond, stranger yet in all had past
To every nobler tide of love, soul-deep,
Still unawake to tempest threat hung o'er
With such ink-gloom of prophecy as told
The sun in heaven veiled to ever peace;
To ever more of joy;—as guileless laid

A SUMMER IDYL

The trance unto the hour—the glowing scene,
Gilded by sun-dipt brush in nature's hands.
That this child-maid should be the jewel bright
Whose flashes kindled all this radiance—should
Be fairest heart of it, 'mid fairness all—
But leapt into his blood in that grim hour
When Truth unsheathed her shining blade to blaze
Its stinging lightnings o'er his naked soul!

They met a swine-herd laboring up the road
With stolid visage, nor uplifted gaze,
Whereon the scene lay gladdened in his eyes.
His own, brimful of what they saw, he could
But wonder how an eye could be unmoved
When heaven itself did shine up from the grass,
Hung trembling in the leaves, and kiss'd the
flowers—

A heaven shining in each jewel'd grace,
Nor need to look on stars to catch its face!
On winged feet the syren led apace
Where Fate should scissor off the ended race;
Nor e'er cortége to burial of joy
Mistook a sweeter route; more bright decoy.
Nor ever word was spoke but sweet; nor sound
Was loaded on the silence's profound
But left the silence sweeter where it drowned.
Or never word the silence broke, yet had
The silence glowed with that so full, had dwelt
No pause. It was the deep, portentous lull
Wings in the heavy laborings of the storm.
Was love diffused, through all infused so bright,

A SUMMER IDYL

They saw not love—knew not 'twas Love enthroned
The hour. They only knew their souls complete.

Was heaven so near their souls all dizzy stooped
To earth, and steadied them with chaff of words—
Mere commonplaces, yet so tinctured all,
Each lightest as a censer burned with sweets.

A bluebird, like a blossom floating by,
Carried joy upon its wings; a robin near
Fluted a strain caged all a gladness in
Each honeyed bar. So thin a veil is that
'Twixt life and death; 'twixt joy and sorrow's gloom
Whose slightest rent, alas! too often yields
Unto the flood swells only sorrow's tide.

Such flood of damask filled the western skies
As heaven unlooped her richest tapestries
To veil the sinking gold with rarer dyes;
Earth sings in green-gold bliss of it—and dies
To live again with other glad sunrise.

And Edmond, musing on the day's decline,—
“Come moments are so ripened with their fruits
They bring the season's end; show forth the roots
Of other calendars, bulked with the times
Inherit alien hours and stranger themes.”

And Clarice, tasting never but a joy,—
“And never fruit but drops its seed to grow
A better one, if we would have it so:

A SUMMER IDYL

The rounded hour, the ended joy,
But dies to bring a larger one's employ"—

“But oft the bitter plains must intervene
To space the yawning distance lies atween.
It is a pretty tongue paints ever joy
Tho' blackest night doth breed its ink alloy—
But there be claim sweet sorrow hath a share
In making spirit growth transcendent fair.
And, Clarice, when a thorn nests in the heart,
And blackness woos the world with woful art,
What then?—dost never tremble at the door
Where all of darkness inky looms before?”

“I dare not think of such a face of woe
Without that tender Source of love's o'erflow
Sufficient unto every evil lines the way
With precious paving-stones to brightest day.”

“Yet when the heart is palsied neath a blow,
And reason's sway is but a shattered show,
Then what of refuge in the marshal'd soul
To bide the hour—its awful blind control?”

“A mercy bides within to lock the sense
From contemplation of its impotence.”

“But why the woe that muffles it in night,
And robs the senses of their orb'd sight?”

A SUMMER IDYL

“And never misery’s channel enters there
Where no infraction of the law’s laid bare.”

“But misery stings the infant soul to death—
What law is here deprives it of its breath?”

“The law of Love may rule it for a star
To beacon some lost soul where angels are;
And all of misery’s forefended there
In what the life was saved of carking care—
But heavy thoughts unto the heavy soul;
Be lighter sweets this sweetest hour’s control.
The gadding butterfly, what care hath he?
And we, with life and youth, what more would we?”

“But ere we bid the lighter winds prevail,
Let’s something more of this for future sail.
Where silence set a tender heel on mirth,
Did something of a rarer grace unearth:
There’s something in the ripened evening glow
Makes mention of the loftier things we’d know.
Methinks yon sky with sweet portent brims o’er,
And tells a tend’rer tale than e’er before;
And e’en the earth doth tremble neath our tread
As tho’ its tremblings spoke some sweetest dread.”

“Methinks the eye its painter is in what
Is ordered from within: the troubled soul
Bows not to beauty in its desolate hour;
Nor sees a beauty passioned on the flower,
Where tears have set their mist within the shower.

A SUMMER IDYL

'Tis soul that sees; and only soul that is;
The rest is but the magic painted there
From brushes dipt within. We make all fair
By what we feel, or fill with desert air."

"Then never storm were all a storm, but fair,
And never hung a cloud in heaven's air—
Because the eye that *must*, but sees it fair?"

"Nay, trouble clouds the soul to hang its sign
Where seems the outer world to give it shine.
But why should trouble load our tongues with weight
Of useless care? Choose we a lighter freight."

" 'Tis conjured of the hour bears on us still
To load us with the burthens that it will;
In some far off and beggared hour awaits
The lonely pilgrim at the shrine of Fates,
Comes hunger in the soul for what is not—
Then this shall be its lovedest dwelling spot;
For memory shall so load the eye to bear
Through every loaded ill this prospect fair,
Shall be its sweet resort—its tender meal
When every baser thing refuses heal."

And memory's after-hour did grip with chains
The music loaded on that memory's pains
Tone-deep as undersurge of moaning wind,
And sweet as mercy where a heart has sinned.

A SUMMER IDYL

Low fell the dying embers of the sun
To pale in ashes chill with night; and one
By one a silver torch flung its white tongue
Of flame upon the velvet of the dark.
A spirit moon climbed up the pallid east,
Like some pure lily lifting whitened bloom
Did sift its snow of spirit-petals fine,
Till earth was spirit in the fine white shine,
And steeple, tower, and dome were things divine.

'Twas bliss to live; the heart had craved no more—
Avowing choice. O cruel oft in joy
We're sharpening the dart that turns on us
Its mort'lest thrust.

Be pitiful, O God.

'Twas but a scrap of paper held his doom
Which Edmond, on his dais bright of joy,
Did eager greet as bearing more of joy
On fluttering wings,—so innocently white,
So pure it gleamed within the courier hands!
A simple word recalling him to town:
Some business snarl his presence claimed at once
To work its cure. There was nor that in words
So dire; but, like a poison-venom'd dart
From ambush of the dark, it fed the veins
With slow death!

Shivering slightly as he rose,
As if the air rushed cold, he seemed to feel
A petrification stealing in his bones
As all of youth died in his limbs, stone-cold.

A SUMMER IDYL

That all so light a current bore such weight
To drop in lead upon his soul; at first
His cold, numb'd faculties had little power
To grope for what of meaning lay behind,—
So light essayed to toss its import off
As light, whiles staggering action voiced return;
Tho' what of words was like the wandering wind—
For essence breathed, save borrowed from the tone
Unnatural, steely clear, like lightning, flashed
Athwart ink clouds the heavens hooded o'er
With gloom, gashes its vivid way to set
Unnatural gloom behind. The words froth'd light
Before, to steady joy, must still be vent
For joy turned pain. 'Twas of the dews he spoke
Menaced the bright hair, fallen loose; the path
Some treachery held for careless wanderers; or
The nights unduly bright meant this, or that:
So cruel light his speech; so twang'd his heart—
A wounded lyre, pang-rent with broken chords!

The road lay cruel hard and flint before,
With all its flower-shine turned dullest ore,—
That jewel-spangled path shone heaven in—
What was it but dull sign where joy had been!
For that, what was the day or night, or all
Of heaven above, held never Clarice more!

The stately towers gleamed ghostly white, and all
The spectral casements wore their usual face,
The elms their generous shadows threw; and yet
What was this thing had happened to the world

A SUMMER IDYL

To still the pulse within his breast, and all
The senses chilled with what its horrors spoke?

Arrived, he sat him down as one fatigued;
His senses, slow recovering from their stun,
He wakes to face the bitter truth! to leave
It all; to stupid yield to lesser call
Than e'en his heart's demand—here deathless wed.
Why, gracious heaven, hangs some mistake; 'tis but
Too serious reading of but idle lines,
O'erclaim their power to clap on chains so vile.
Was't not for him stood nature's vials uncorked?
His urgent need? Why, 'twas but robbery rank
To snatch a sick man from his medicine.
To his now summered nature gleamed the town
All chilly cold; the warmth was what he craved.
And yet a deeper hunger preyed within
For what was life itself—this Clarice child.
Down the long lane of bitter days to come
Who was to guide her rambles more? Nay, who
Should guard her tender head but him alone?

He clutched the silly scrap so charged with pain;
He'd smooth it out, and read again—to find
His over-haste misled, and all was jest.
Ah, God! Was that a thorn his heart did nurse,
So keen it pricked? All purblind as he gazed,
From churn'd-up wave of trouble in his eye,
The words did dance and mock his glimmering sight,
But something of their meaning stood out clear—
Portentous as the cryptic words dealt doom

A SUMMER IDYL

To Babylon's king, in what beyond them lay,
As they themselves turned fire to eat their way
Into his brain, with forty adder'd tongues
To sting and cauterize the wound. 'Twas truth
Gashing its way into the quivering soul!
It was the lightning bolt struck sharp within
To plow a crimson furrow, stained with guilt
Each vivid line zigzagg'd his soul. It was
The rankling dart should sleep within its wound—
The living fountain of a bleeding woe,
Till every feature bleached with pain of it,
And nature swooned with staunchless drain of it.
It was the conscience stung unto the quick,
The heart-pangs of a love set up their prick:
Young love, all tender sprung, must starve itself,
E'en sicken unto death—and be no more.

'Twas love's sunrise to show an awful guilt
Black-hooded o'er the soul's horizon, quenched
The sweet-sprung fountains in their bed of joy,
And hope—a starveling reft of every buoy.

And O the curse of it! And O the pain!
Why, God in heaven, what had he done! Ye earth
Give way beneath his feet! Deny him breath,
Refuse him life, but fortified his guilt!

Ay, was illumination backward streamed
O'er all the charmed road stript bare the truth.
Was revelation writ on every stone;
In every tuft of grass her foot had press'd

A SUMMER IDYL

To print its daintiness on; in every shade
That spoke the brightness of her eye withdrawn;
In every star that flash'd its lovelight true;
In every sun that coursed the brilliant blue.
The heart and soul o' his soul, this slender maid
It was gript him as e'en with "hooks of steel"
T' the heaven of her—the all of heaven for him!

And now the picture of another one—
That other one claimed all of honor's due,
And love's, swung its dark frame between to blot
The dear blue eyes forever from his path.
Ah, had it but the power for that 'twere well.
But Memory! who yet hath bridled it?
Who putteth it in stall to hush its cries
Till breeds no more the pangs more cruel than
death?

Was it not perfidy with hydra head
Whose thousand tongues were hissing him to scorn?
And he had claimed an honor's robe—poor fool!
And held himself a little 'loft where men
Went wrong; e'en eyed the culprit o'er from top
To toe with such cool eye as scanned a fish,
Or something of a species wide diverged
From human kindredship, or human love;
Walked high in air with such a virtuous nose
As sneezed at slightest scent of garbage caste
Of men, whose doings were a thing apart.
Yet here he stood—a human monster grown,
All free to pasture in a woman's breast
And rifle it of its most precious jewel—

A SUMMER IDYL

The heart, and walk off free, nor shot to death!
Ye gods! and such an angel-devil face
Should bear the cage of pestilence; be shut
Behind the muzzle for such rabid beasts:
Who wear the face of crime loud advertise
Their danger's circuit all, but these dare-dogs
Do mask them with sweet-scented virtue—kill
Suspicion with so clean a face, a maid
Her bosom's finest sacrifice pours out
For them, herself an offering to these gods,
These bestial creatures better crawled the dust.
And here were two his viper bosom held
Their sweetest confidence; unclouded trust.
He saw himself a monster reptile cloud
Disgorged its evil drench where love alone
Should bear the wound; the tender breast of love—
Whose only fault was just in loving him.
As if he singled out these twain alone
From all the world for that no blacker hate
Had ever yet devised: to wanton coil
His serpent folds about a wounded love
And crush with mortal pangs the breast that bore!

XI

*The moon kept to her angel course in heaven,
And every star clang'd down its silver groove;
Tho' mortal oak by dreadful storm be riven,
Serene above the eternal pageant's move.*

Thou God alone canst be our certain stay,
Our poor earth blisses run aground in pain,
And man is but a plant that dies for rain
Without thy living dew. We fill our day
With wild excesses all too sweet to slay—
And then descends the night. 'Tis all in vain
The untam'd spirit rules; within's the bane—
The worm i' the bud to breed its own decay.

Earth joy is like the gorgeous rose where e'en
A breath may sway its pulse to blush or pale
Its life. O'er freely drawn's, the rising gale
Of its own passions fretted through so keen
It breaks the tenement all frail doth lean
On its support. Is Joy's sweet self so frail!

God rides upon the storm in every sky,
Through every calm shines out his loving eye.
Tho' shut be heaven's doors, and anguish'd eyes
See naught but tempest's fury, and thick night
Of woe doth make its habitation in
The soul—its every room a cabin'd gloom:

A SUMMER IDYL

For storms blow over, and the dear sun shines,
And heaven is true. And ever a new grace
Shines outward from the soul with spirit face
All angel pure e'en as the fresh-wash'd stars
That shed their tapers o'er the sepulture
Of woes the tempest drowned. E'en so, God works.

Tho' man be very iron,—steel-sinew'd all
Where valor is the word, or Caesar show
Of manly parts,—but let a stray shaft strike
The secret heart of love, he's mortal still
To own the mortal wound pricks to the quick
To drain the inmost caverns of the soul
Of every fountain'd strength; sets ghastly dews
Upon the helpless features' pallid pain
Cold-glimmered as the moon on desert plain
Where every phantom wears a ghostly white
To take on spectral horrors; or that swath
Through pathless woods, denuded of their green,
All naked shows the storm-king's awful route
With ruin's sign in every horrid space.—
But e'er the weaker vessel in that strife
That rends with mortal pangs the breath of life.
Where woman's eyes hoard ever mist of rain
Soft drowns the agony's edge of grinding pain;
And, like a flower, her soul bends neath the woe
To clasp the sun again when showers go:
A man stores all the glitter of his pain
In adamant ice no fountains drain;
Refuses him to every genial flow
Of friendly circumstance would bury woe;

A SUMMER IDYL

Would challenge God, and every heaven's face,
Hold fierce demeanor 'gainst the tides of grace,
Would battle out the pain in conflict sharp,
Nor list the finer wooings of the harp
Of soul sees nothing in the universe
But folds a blessing in its every curse;
Would settle all eternity with one
Swift blow, time dealt—nor measure up his loss
But gain that should be settled thus all quick.
There's nothing in his composition for
The finer strain where sweet endurance bides
Its time, and, womanlike, yields all to God
Till, womanlike, finds every solace there
Where every solace is to mortal prayer.

Love writhed in mortal pain. No less the freight
Of guilt lay on his soul—a mountain weight.
In sight of men he was a branded thing;
Unholy, leprous in the sight of God.
But O ye kindly heavens! what star is this
New risen with the holy balm of peace?
Tho' idiocy be despised thing
Shall not a virtue here all lowly spring?
His weakness 'twas, and ne'er his willing crime
Did desecrate that purest earthly fane—
A woman's heart. Playing fool, tho' blindly e'er,
Had brought its curse, but cleared him of the part
A knave had played. Thank God, his honor dear,
That precious jewel of his manhood's soul,
Was left.

A SUMMER IDYL

And some of this essayed his tongue,
But dry and rasping stuck within his throat
The words; poor things at best, how helpless now
On lips they froze upon to frame a cure.

For long he sat there quivering in his woe.
He'd not defile her while his memory scourged
By touching e'en her tender palm, thereby
To make her hate the memory of his love.
But inward railed: why was the light let in
That drove a guilt with cruel spikes. Why not
A-mercy-smit with blindness ere he saw
A heaven forbid? With hot rebellion all
His fiery nature rose in arms against
Injustice keen did dangle bait so sweet
To mock his soul. Of all things pure, of all
Things consecrate to spur him on to good,
To feed his manhood's might,—here lay the root.

The other life had grown afar; so far
Distasteful grew the sick'ning memory of 't.
But heaven ruled: an honor surged his breast,
Tho' memory's self must ever live to taunt
With cruel thrusts its seeming breach. Kind heaven—
Must ever live? Then this should be his staff
To lean upon when duty swerved. The sight
Of this pure one in memory's eye should be
The Model to whose shaping evermore
The other should conform, in what his hands
Could shape it so—e'en angel fair as she.

A SUMMER IDYL

But bitter thought. Wherever was a throne
Such miracle of majesty should own?

Tho' heaven lay all behind, unconscious-sprung,
His conscious sowing lay before; e'en what
His hands assured from seed of this was hope
Of heaven more: or this but failed, 'twas not
Nor learnt the bitter lesson well; nor failed
The heaven's sun of that dear past to show
Him how. Nay, rather that its sun withdrawn—
His strength but wilted in the sickly air
Whose waterings richened but a bitter crop.
But, God! If pain his cordial was, the sear
Of iron his curse, what of the child so crushed?—
The heart of woman burst with such sweet might,
Such force ecstatic e'en her being threats?—
This tender blossom child all fever-forced
To bloom before its time; where all the strength
Of it its beauty fed—or rude wind struck,
Its blight were sure; this tender lamb, O God!
To slaughter led by sharp decree of fate:
Grant all thy bosom's love to shield her now
From her own heart's deep wound—the quick of
 pain
Live-coiled within her breast. This fluttering dove,
Warm from the parent nest, untutored e'en
To hint of hurt in all the life's sweet past—
To tremble in the storm, he loosed himself
Upon her childish brow. 'Twas agony
New-flamed to scorch his very soul.

A SUMMER IDYL

At last
His nerveless tongue essays its custom'd use;
Makes feint to speak the stiffen'd words *must* out
An honor built. Tho' with despair's death grip,
He stayed the torrent of his love, the tone
All helpless gave his agony's secret up.

With keenest stroke his quivering passion struck—
Cut heaven loose, and left them twain by all
The heaven's laws were one; the past stript bare
To name that other one in town; nor spared
Himself—as from a noble habit, still
Essayed the noble part.

A manly tone
Grew on his speech—put all of misery by.
That honor snatched from precipice of guilt
Her pure seal set upon his lips—no word
Disloyal should sully them with chains he bore—
Turned chains in light of these all sweeter days.
E'en gathered of his courage a new tone,
With sprightliness infused—thereby to cure
The pain within her breast. Tho' ever ice
Lay at his heart, no bow of his should brush
Her quivering heart-strings o'er with more of pain
By that he brought. By that fine sense within
His own bruise woke, he knew—less finger'd o'er—
The quicker healed. The anguished heart but bleeds
The freelier for the surgeon's knife, tho' kind.

At last he rose—nor claimed an answering word;
Himself had set the final seal of doom;

A SUMMER IDYL

What was there left of words but paltry terms
All idly lengthened out a misery's chain?

But in that hour had all of summer died
In icy grip of anguish at their hearts,
With every hope laid out in rattling shroud.
It was as if the heavy chain of years
Had dragg'd them down to stranger gates, and set
Them wide apart, with memory stalking 'tween
To goad with all the sweet remembered things.
It was the heart of pain entomb'd alive—
Air-lock'd, whose only cure was but to die.
But love—is its immortal part—what death,
What time, or all eternity, may stay?

Tho' he had come through fire with awful scath
He yet was finer for the crucible:
For love he could not quench—he could endure.

Yet, God forgive! his palm closed over hers
As it cemented e'en their very souls
In th' act. What tho' his parting words intoned
No deeper hint, his eyes, like untam'd suns
Acknowledging no higher laws, sang out
"Tho' law of all the heaven and earth be broke—
Heart of my heart, my love—for evermore!"

And forth into the pallid night he reeled,
With brow to heaven bared—if so the pure,
Cold stars might cool the fever of his brain,
And train his pulses to their measured calm.

A SUMMER IDYL

At heart I'm all gone wrong; I hate the life
Seals her not mine. Take it, avenging God!
To fling it where thou wilt. Worthless to me,
What is 't to thee, thou shouldst prolong it here?
Sink rather to their native hell these bones
But breed corruption with their use of life.
Nay, what have I with thee—a spotted thing,
All leprous foul—with high Divinity,—
This churning, seething, madden'd strife within.
Or what, with these eye-balls stung blind to all
Of joy, to ever more of happy light,
Could sight invoke of thee—just recompense!

“Come, thick night, closet me in darkness vile!
Let not my soul range out its caged bars,
Lest fouler matter do pervade these acts.
Undone! Unclean! O monster wretch! O time!
Embowel me in seasons foul! Let ne'er
My sense accursed know freedom's light again—
A thing distraught, for fortune's malice mark'd.
Chained! Chained! to foul misfortune chained!

Lock-step

With blackest fate, condemned to dungeon-hold!
No more for me the sweet and wooing light
Of day, the rosy-spangled dews of morn!
But darkness, night, and caves, are fit abode.
Be't far apart from man, this flesh attaint
Shall evermore its deep pollution drink!

“Nor ever had I guessed the heart was all,—
To hold a thousand aches within its thrall,

A SUMMER IDYL

To drag the soul all quivering in its fall!
All blindly ruled this puny flesh had claim
To some of agony, being hurt; henceforth
Flesh-qualms be toothsome to the soul's despair
Makes common pain seem but a revelry.
'Tis what the mind yields to, all helpless quite,
Will smit from under—there is all of hell!
Come Death! thou'rt sweeter than this thrall of life.
Physician Death! with but a scratch lets out
The blood of pain, draws out the fever-sting,—
A gurgle, and a gasp—then kindly sleep.
How sweet! all pulseless swathed in dreamless
 sleep—
And joy its death-watch ne'er again shall keep!
God spare me subtler draught of misery,
With daily wastings trickles out the life—
The long lean lane all dusty crawls to death.
Give me the hemlock my own hand denies,
Dissembling virtue e'en in this poor hour!
That kindly juice bids memory die, kind God,
But to *forget!*—had made its chalice sweet."

All blind he stumbled on to death in life,
Sith life itself should be one long despair
Whose prison portals oped on death's demesne;
And all the night re-echoed with his wail
Loud-sounding down its hollow-vaulted pale.

Yet 'twas a sorrow's ever mortal'st dart
Remembering still another's aching heart:
That one, and sorrow, in the moonlight pale
Slow wrestling with the moments as they fail!

XII

CLARICE

May pitying angels tend thy heart whiles tense
Pang-cords strain at its very roots; the deep
Soul-anguish leaves each faculty asleep
Save only inborne, rushing blinding sense
Of desert desolation;—impotence
Of spirit, as sinking, yielding sands did creep
To offer suffocation!

They that weep
But happy are; their tears a recompense.

But that pain-blast that shrivels up the soul,
And dries the fountain'd tears; with cap of woe
Seals up the inner source of joy's o'erflow,
To shut the heart within its vaults, and roll
The stone of silence at the door!—Death's dole
Were sweeter—gave to thee an ended foe.

O I would see thy cheek more pale than e'er
The ebbing founts of joy could paint it so,
Than surg'd-up bloom to taste but death's cold dews,
All blighted by a broken heart,—with fuse
Ne'ermore to light its hope; thy portion woe,
And only night to shrine its misery there.

.

O poet heart, how shall thy task be done,
Doth bitter pain alone thy heart o'errun!

A SUMMER IDYL

And Clarice liv'd on, even as the heart
So stricken must—not dead; nor Clarice more,
But that all empty thing of soul bereft.
As lonely towers the moonlit peak's cold shaft
All ghostly crowns the mountain's brow, ice-keen
Shiv'ring the light into a million gems—
So brilliant-hard, so lifeless cold its face,—
So hers when Edmond pass'd out of her life.
Out of her life! Did warp and woof e'er part
Whiles th' texture liv'd—the fabric of the life?
Inwoven with the fiber of her being,—
A very vital part of her,—no more
Could severed be than organ of the heart
Disunioned from the body still left life.

It was despair transmuted into stone;
A soul in sculpture bore as much of warmth.
A pure snowdrop in crannied rock of fate
All beaten by the gale—thy mercy, God!

An all a mercy had a fever raced
The throbbing veins, where was a worsen cased,
To drain the heart of its all poison'd grief,
And through oblivion course a sweet relief.
But 'twas not thus to be—pain burnt out so—
With every conscious pang a muffled woe,
But daily gratings of the tender soul
'Gainst iron bars that prison'd in her dole.

The tempest had assailed her childhood's soul,
Uprooted it of every childhood's goal,

A SUMMER IDYL

To plant in's stead a woman's face drained dry
Of all that life or hope is watered by;
Implanted in the fountained wells of light
The glitter of the steel, unduly bright,
Betrayed the furnace lay behind; the woe
Found never mercy's tearful overflow.
The sweet red mouth, the vermeil of the cheeks,
Pump'd of their ruby by the heart that speaks
Of deadly ills, did languish pale; and e'er
The plaintive smile bore signal of despair.
Ay, something in the pure face bore the print
Where sternest years had hoarded up their flint
Within her brow to set it marble cold—
A frozen grief sculpt out in human mold.

All isolate as the moonlit peak, ice-cold,
Since none could touch her grief to break its hold,
She walk'd like one e'en dead of all desire—
With every hope laid on its funeral pyre.
Nor ever dews of heaven bore down to break
The cold despair held sweet for love's sweet sake.
'Twas pain turned granite grimly yielded not—
The shaft gleamed o'er the heart's low burial plot.

And day succeeded day with weary pace;
And night o'erlapt the bitter nights of woe.
Nor ever was a peace enthroned within—
It was as if a lily droopt its snow
And wilted on the stem where life had been.

A SUMMER IDYL

So on a twilight on the great stone steps
'Twas just a little heap of misery wan,
All crumpled down like some small wounded thing.
Her faithful spaniel fawned the lily hand—
“King Charlsey, feed me not such rueful looks—
The heart but breaks such melancholy brooks!
Your dumb eyes plead such anguish and such woe
As never mortal could a bitterer know!
Go choose another for your frolic hours;
Show off your pretty graces and your dowers
To woo a mistress with a lighter heart,
Whose merry humors form your counterpart.

For me— O Dukesey, can't you see, I'd rest,
Just rest! out somewhere on the earth's wide breast
To fling me down, and nevermore take up
The chain of things—the bitter, bitter cup!
But I would have you wander there and see
The little ridge of earth that shelters me—
And nestle in the grass, and guard her there—
You've ever faithful guarded elsewhere.
Now, Dukesey, down! fret not for Clarice more,
But skip and bound all gayly as of yore,—
For what's a mistress more or less? Where I
So cherished am, another in your eye
May prove a glad exchanging by and by.
O that will do! I know what you would say!
Nay, do not swear such ardent vows, they may
Be sooner broke: thus higher creatures do,
And swearing most, do what they swear undo.”

XIII

*And in the passing cloud the sun was blot;
And hope took wings of utter night;*

*But see, the glory of the morn upshot
'Mid golden-missil'd showers of light!*

Two months had lengthened out their weary chain,
Whose every weary hour had ebb'd in vain,
Nor ever hung the shining pendant there—
The holy cross absolved a soul's despair.

And e'er the wan face, like a blossom lone,
Had seen the last of all its fellows die,
Itself caught in a sheath of icy mail,
Was like a sorrow lash'd to a cold despair,—
A frozen grief on the dead stem of hope.
At last her aimless footsteps led once more
The old familiar ways, and ended there
Where Clarice droopt within the fragrant bower—
The same had brought that other day and hour
Throned Edmond chief of every day and hour;
And there as memory pined beneath its woe
Her eyes were lifted up to God's high throne—
And heavenly dews suffused their violet depths;
And all the weary drought, like perish'd earth,
Drank in refreshment from their sacred founts;
And as they freely rang'd o'er leaf and vine,—
With light of them kiss'd all with tender shine,—

A SUMMER IDYL

Saw never but the face of Edmond there:
The brow with honor's signet blazon'd fair,
All cluster'd o'er with lifted locks, wind-breathed,—
So like a god's, with fadeless blossoms wreathed;
The eyes shrined twin-set sloes within their night—
And what they said! with eloquence alight;
The smile, sun-gleaming, sweet as angel's kiss—
Search all the wide world over—was but his;
And O the voice! more silvery-toned than flute's;
More coaxing sweet than ever night-born lute's
Woke in a maiden's ear neath tranced moon;
The manly breast had been such anchor firm
To couch a weary little head: so rush'd
The memory flood, the heart made bitter moan.

No word had come; no rumor of his life.

A slight noise near,—the snapping of a twig,—
She heeded not, intent on other days,
But idly turned, as one that held a book,
The finger guarding where the eye forsook—
The outer gaze still holding inward look,
And giving ever but a listless ear,
But half attends the words he scarce doth hear,—
So turned as one would flick a teasing fly
Assaults the ear with buzzing minstrelsy—
To catch twin bolts from out those love-brimm'd
 eyes
Globed all of heaven within their sweet surprise.

A SUMMER IDYL

Dear God! had she but lived through white-hot pain
To down at last 'fore gleaming shaft of joy!

She pales like death; had fallen like a leaf
A breath kiss'd from its stem, when Edmond's self
Her refuge was, crush'd close within his arms
As death itself should part them nevermore,
As slow the blue dazed eyes drank in the truth,
And all the bosom filled with sense of heaven.
As some pale lily in the vaulted dark,
Transplanted to the open, lifts its head
Against the breast of earth to God's sweet sun,
And drinking joy and warmth—runs all to bloom,
With all its breath poured out in incense sweet,—
So was his breast the earth, his heart the sun,
The tender petals opened one by one.
And all the little drooping flower of love
Was nourished back to life and hope and heaven—
So magic is a breath to change the world!

Then, as the sweets of words in silence steeped
Brewed sweeter ale, came memory's rushing tide—
“But Edmond, wherefore come, and what of *her*?”

His eyes, run o'er with love till now, recoiled
As there some hated sight his loathing roused.
“My angel-pure, her name would foul the heavens;
Let't not be mentioned here to soot our joy!
Yet 'tis a theme doth most concern the time,
Whose bitter adds the sweetest flavoring to't—
Since 'twas the open sea to ready sails

A SUMMER IDYL

Lands here my barque and all it bears of hope.
The heaven vouchsafed her beauty's form and face,
But left a heart out of that organ's place;
The bauble of a title shone so bright
Her all of honor perished in its light:
Came one all tinsel'd from a foreign court
And looked her over, with a bargain eye
All lecherous trained upon her coffered gold,
And coolly bid upon the shining heap
The princely person and the pauper state.
She to the terms her willing sanction lent—
With plighted hand confirmed the sacrament;
And now they ride upon the briny seas
In bridal revelry,—to drink the lees
Of foul dishonor from the poison'd cup
Whose rankling grows upon the lips that sup.
So bartering both, are mated over well,
And only God can bound their future hell!
My little flower, 'tis God gives you to me—
'Fore Him and men I claim my legacy."

So entered in his heaven, but made pause
Upon the threshold as he'd set his soul
In some more pure array—all humbly strick'n
With deep unworthiness; and as he stood
A sudden gold lay circled on his brow,
As spirit hands had placed a halo there,
Wrought of the flame leapt from the dying sun,—
Like that last flared-up torch of dying fires
Lights up the glazing sight of mortal eyes
At Heaven's unfolding splendors; in that last,

A SUMMER IDYL

Supremest moment, as a mortal spasm
Shakes free the soul to ascend on wings of light
To an immortal glory,—some such light
As this in saintly radiance tipp'd his brow—
As words of living flame this seal did set:
Be here the carnal dies; let spirit ascend.

He who had drained the bitter dregs of woe,
Moiled in rebellion's mire, held God his foe,—
All glory-smit in that spirit white of light
As one transfigured stood—his strong white palm
In air:

“Offended Majesty of Heaven!
In my deep woe I wandered far from Thee,
Despised thy ways, shook off thy hand of love
For demon rule—to know the tortues of the damned!
Lord God! unsearchable are all thy ways,
Thy love and mercy past all finding out:
Thou reachedst down thy hand to midmost hell,
Smote Satan dumb, redeemed me from his power,—
Yea, freed me for the rapture of this hour—
The promised bliss beyond the tongue to tell,
In Love's own paradise henceforth to dwell;
So all unworthy of her heart's pure dower,—
O give me grace to tremble at the Power,
The unfathom'd Breast where love doth endless
well.

Be to us twain our ever constant stay,
Let memory never sleep, nor chains of sense
Bind us to slumber while an ease contents—
Lest we forget! At feet of Love I pray,

A SUMMER IDYL

O keep us ever in thy beauteous way
To find in Thee life's utmost competence.

“An awful blackness gulphed my sinking soul,
I floundered helpless in a tossing sea
While frenzied tides ran all the frame of me.
Yea, courted death, made it my feverish goal;
Loud shrieked for maddest elements' control
That from a horrified world should shake me free.
The blue sky what—or song-birds more to me
Whose wide, wide earth stretched but a sea of dole?
And now sweet peace thy gracious love confers,
And all the tender dawn of happy days.
How shall my bitter tongue be taught its praise,
My soul be purified to mate with hers
So pure the very thought of it upstirs
The inward tremblings of a deep amaze!

“And Thou hast stoop'd to chain the brute in me,
Thou Emperor of Heaven! hast set me free,
And dowered me with this angel heart so pure
I can but sully with my human greed
Of it! O drug me not with syren pleasure,
Lest I but damn me in unholy joy!
Cure my proud lusts in thy absolving love;
Lay not my past upon my soul above
Thy pardoning grace. On th' altar of my love
Burn out my sins with thy forgiving eyes,
To blur no more the record books of Heaven.
By all this lily soul untaint with sin
Draw thou me up to her on her white throne.

A SUMMER IDYL

Seal us twain thine to work thy will—all pure
As singly ruled the virgin breast of snow.
E'en as by pain thou'st taught her worth to me—
By hallowed joy of her I'd still be taught
Through contact with a breast so pure to lift
A soul pure as the lily's—constant breathes
A golden incense at thy feet, O God!"



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