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# The People's Edition

## Rizpah and other Poems



The  
Poetical Works  
of  
ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

Rizpah  
and other Poems

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## RIZPAH

17—

### I

WAILING, wailing, wailing, the wind over land and  
sea—

And Willy's voice in the wind, 'O mother, come out  
to me.'

Why should he call me to-night, when he knows that  
I cannot go?

For the downs are as bright as day, and the full moon  
stares at the snow.

### II

We should be seen, my dear; they would spy us out  
of the town.

The loud black nights for us, and the storm rushing  
over the down,

When I cannot see my own hand, but am led by the  
    creek of the chain,  
And grovel and grope for my son till I find myself  
    drenched with the rain.

## III

Anything fallen again? nay—what was there left to  
    fall?  
I have taken them home, I have number'd the bones,  
    I have hidden them all.  
What am I saying? and what are *you*? do you come  
    as a spy?  
Falls? what falls? who knows? As the tree falls so  
    must it lie.

## IV

Who let her in? how long has she been? you—what  
    have you heard?  
Why did you sit so quiet? you never have spoken a  
    word.  
O—to pray with me—yes—a lady—none of their  
    spies—  
But the night has crept into my heart, and begun to  
    darken my eyes.

## V

Ah—you, that have lived so soft, what should *you*  
know of the night,  
The blast and the burning shame and the bitter frost  
and the fright?  
I have done it, while you were asleep—you were only  
made for the day.  
I have gather'd my baby together—and now you may  
go your way.

## VI

Nay—for it's kind of you, Madam, to sit by an old  
dying wife.  
But say nothing hard of my boy, I have only an hour  
of life.  
I kiss'd my boy in the prison, before he went out to  
die.  
'They dared me to do it,' he said, and he never has  
told me a lie.  
I whipt him for robbing an orchard once when he was  
but a child—  
'The farmer dared me to do it,' he said; he was  
always so wild—

And idle—and couldn't be idle—my Willy—he never  
could rest.

The King should have made him a soldier, he would  
have been one of his best.

## VII

But he lived with a lot of wild mates, and they never  
would let him be good ;

They swore that he dare not rob the mail, and he  
swore that he would ;

And he took no life, but he took one purse, and when  
all was done

He flung it among his fellows—I'll none of it, said my  
son.

## VIII

I came into court to the Judge and the lawyers. I told  
them my tale,

God's own truth—but they kill'd him, they kill'd him  
for robbing the mail.

They hang'd him in chains for a show—we had always  
borne a good name—

To be hang'd for a thief—and then put away—isn't  
that enough shame ?

Dust to dust—low down—let us hide ! but they set  
him so high  
That all the ships of the world could stare at him,  
passing by.  
God 'ill pardon the hell-black raven and horrible fowls  
of the air,  
But not the black heart of the lawyer who kill'd him  
and hang'd him there.

## IX

And the jailer forced me away. I had bid him my last  
goodbye ;  
They had fasten'd the door of his cell. 'O mother !'  
I heard him cry.  
I couldn't get back tho' I tried, he had something  
further to say,  
And now I never shall know it. The jailer forced me  
away.

## X

Then since I couldn't but hear that cry of my boy that  
was dead,  
They seized me and shut me up : they fasten'd me  
down on my bed.

'Mother, O mother!'—he call'd in the dark to me  
year after year—  
They beat me for that, they beat me—you know that  
I couldn't but hear;  
And then at the last they found I had grown so stupid  
and still  
They let me abroad again—but the creatures had  
worked their will.

## XI

Flesh of my flesh was gone, but bone of my bone was  
left—  
I stole them all from the lawyers—and you, will you  
call it a theft?—  
My baby, the bones that had suck'd me, the bones  
that had laughed and had cried—  
Theirs? O no! they are mine—not theirs—they had  
moved in my side.

## XII

Do you think I was scared by the bones? I kiss'd 'em,  
I buried 'em all—  
I can't dig deep, I am old—in the night by the church-  
yard wall.

My Willy 'ill rise up whole when the trumpet of judgment 'ill sound,  
But I charge you never to say that I laid him in holy ground.

## XIII

They would scratch him up—they would hang him again on the cursed tree.

Sin? O yes—we are sinners, I know—let all that be,  
And read me a Bible verse of the Lord's good will toward men—

'Full of compassion and mercy, the Lord'—let me hear it again ;

'Full of compassion and mercy—long-suffering.' Yes,  
O yes !

For the lawyer is born but to murder—the Saviour lives but to bless.

*He'll* never put on the black cap except for the worst of the worst,

And the first may be last—I have heard it in church—and the last may be first.

Suffering—O long-suffering—yes, as the Lord must know,

Year after year in the mist and the wind and the shower and the snow.



## XIV

Heard, have you? what? they have told you he never  
repented his sin.

How do they know it? are *they* his mother? are *you*  
of his kin?

Heard! have you ever heard, when the storm on the  
downs began,

The wind that 'ill wail like a child and the sea that 'ill  
moan like a man?

## XV

Election, Election and Reprobation—it's all very well.  
But I go to-night to my boy, and I shall not find him  
in Hell.

For I cared so much for my boy that the Lord has  
look'd into my care,

And He means me I'm sure to be happy with Willy,  
I know not where.

## XVI

And if *he* be lost—but to save *my* soul, that is all your  
desire:

Do you think that I care for *my* soul if my boy be  
gone to the fire?

I have been with God in the dark—go, go, you may  
leave me alone—  
You never have borne a child—you are just as hard as  
a stone.

## XVII

Madam, I beg your pardon ! I think that you mean  
to be kind,  
But I cannot hear what you say for my Willy's voice  
in the wind—  
The snow and the sky so bright—he used but to call  
in the dark,  
And he calls to me now from the church and not from  
the gibbet—for hark !  
Nay—you can hear it yourself—it is coming—shaking  
the walls—  
Willy—the moon's in a cloud——Good-night. I am  
going. He calls.

## THE NORTHERN COBBLER

## I

WAÄIT till our Sally cooms in, fur thou mun a' sights<sup>1</sup>  
to tell.

Eh, but I be maäin glad to seeä tha sa 'arty an' well.

'Cast awaäy on a disolut land wi' a vartical soon<sup>2</sup>!'

Strange fur to goä fur to think what saäilors a' seëan  
an' a' doon ;

'Summat to drink—sa' 'ot?' I 'a nowt but Adam's  
wine :

What's the 'eät o' this little 'ill-side to the 'eät o' the  
line?

## II

'What's i' tha bottle a-stanning theer?' I'll tell tha.  
Gin.

But if thou wants thy grog, tha mun goä fur it down  
to the inn.

<sup>1</sup> The vowels *ai*, pronounced separately though in the closest conjunction, best render the sound of the long *i* and *y* in this dialect. But since such words as *craäin*, *daäin*, *whai*, *ai* (I), etc., look awkward except in a page of express phonetics, I have thought it better to leave the simple *i* and *y*, and to trust that my readers will give them the broader pronunciation.

<sup>2</sup> The *oo* short, as in 'wood.'

Naay—fur I be maäin-glad, but thaw tha was iver sa  
dry,  
Thou gits naw gin fro' the bottle theer, an' I'll tell  
tha why.

III

Meä an' thy sister was married, when wur it? back-end  
o' June,  
Ten year sin', and wa 'greed as well as a fiddle i'  
tune:  
I could fettle and clump owd booöts and shoes wi' the  
best on 'em all,  
As fer as fro' Thursby thurn hup to Harmsby and  
Hutterby Hall.  
We was busy as beeäs i' the bloom an' as 'appy as 'art  
could think,  
An' then the babby wur burn, and then I taäkes to the  
drink.

IV

An' I weänt gaäinsaäy it, my lad, thaw I be hafe  
shaämed on it now,  
We could sing a good song at the Plow, we could sing  
a good song at the Plow;

Thaw once of a frosty night I slither'd an' hurted my  
huck,<sup>1</sup>  
An' I coom'd neck-an-crop soomtimes slaäpe down i'  
the squad an' the muck :  
An' once I fowt wi' the Taäilor—not hafe ov a man,  
my lad—  
Fur he scrawm'd an' scratted my faäce like a cat, an'  
it maäde 'er sa mad  
That Sally she turn'd a tongue-banger,<sup>2</sup> an' raäted ma,  
'Sottin' thy braäins  
Guzzlin' an' soäkin' an' smoäkin' an' hawmin'<sup>3</sup> about  
i' the laänes,  
Soä sow-droonk that tha doesn not touch thy 'at to the  
Squire ;'  
An' I looök'd cock-eyed at my noäse an' I seeäd 'im  
a-gittin' o' fire ;  
But sin' I wur hallus i' liquor an' hallus as droonk as a  
king,  
Foäłks' coostom flitted awaäy like a kite wi' a brokken  
string.

## V

An' Sally she wesh'd foäłks' cloäths to keep the wolf  
fro' the door,

<sup>1</sup> Hip.<sup>2</sup> Scold.<sup>3</sup> Lounging.

Eh but the moor she riled me, she druv me to drink  
the moor,  
Fur I fun', when 'er back wur turn'd, wheer Sally's owd  
stockin' wur 'id,  
An' I grabb'd the munny she maäde, and I weär'd it  
o' liquor, I did.

## VI

An' one night I cooms 'oäm like a bull gotten loose at  
a faäir,  
An' she wur a-waäitin' fo'mma, an' cryin' and teärin' 'er  
'aäir,  
An' I tummled athurt the craädle an' sweär'd as I'd  
breäk ivry stick  
O' furnitur 'ere i' the 'ouse, an' I gied our Sally a kick,  
An' I mash'd the taäbles an' chairs, an' she an' the  
babby beäl'd,<sup>1</sup>  
Fur I knaw'd naw moor what I did nor a mortal beäst  
o' the feäld.

## VII

An' when I waäked i' the murnin' I seeäd that our  
Sally went laämed  
Cos' o' the kick as I gied 'er, an' I wur dreädful  
ashaämed ;

<sup>1</sup> Bellowed, cried out.

An' Sally wur sloomy<sup>1</sup> an' draggle taäl'd in an owd  
turn gown,  
An' the babby's faäce wurn't wesh'd an' the 'ole 'ouse  
hupside down.

## VIII

An' then I minded our Sally sa pratty an' neät an'  
sweeät,  
Straät as a pole an' cleän as a flower fro' 'eäd to fecät :  
An' then I minded the fust kiss I gied 'er by Thursby  
thurn;  
Theer wur a lark a-singin' 'is best of a Sunday at  
murn,  
Couldn't see 'im, we 'eärd 'im a-mountin' oop 'igher an'  
'igher,  
An' then 'e turn'd to the sun, an' 'e shined like a sparkle  
o' fire.  
'Doesn't tha see 'im,' she axes, 'fur I can see 'im?' an' I  
Seeäd nobbut the smile o' the sun as danced in 'er  
pratty blue eye;  
An' I says 'I mun gie tha a kiss,' an' Sally says 'Noä,  
thou moänt,'  
But I gied 'er a kiss, an' then anoother, an' Sally says  
'doänt !'

<sup>1</sup> Sluggish, out of spirits.

IX

An' when we coom'd into Meeätin', at fust she wur all  
in a tew,  
But, arter, we sing'd the 'ymn together like birds on a  
beugh ;  
An' Muggins 'e preäch'd o' Hell-fire an' the loov o'  
God fur men,  
An' then upo' coomin' awaäy Sally gied me a kiss ov  
'ersen.

X

Heer wur a fall fro' a kiss to a kick like Saätan as  
fell  
Down out o' heaven i' Hell-fire—thaw theer's naw  
drinkin' i' Hell ;  
Meä fur to kick our Sally as kep the wolf fro' the  
door,  
All along o' the drink, fur I loov'd 'er as well as afoor.

XI

Sa like a greät num-cumpus I blubber'd awaäy o' the  
bed—  
'Weänt niver do it naw moor ;' an' Sally looökt up an'  
she said,



I'll upowd it<sup>1</sup> tha weänt; thou'rt like the rest o' the  
men,  
Thou'll goä sniffin' about the tap till tha does it agëan.  
Theer's thy hennemy, man, an' I knows, as knows tha  
sa well,  
That, if tha seeäs 'im an' smells 'im tha'll foller 'im  
slick into Hell.'

## XII

'Naäy,' says I, 'fur I weänt goä sniffin' about the  
tap.'  
'Weänt tha?' she says, an' mysen I thowt i' mysen  
'mayhap.'  
'Noä:' an' I started awaäy like a shot, an' down to  
the Hinn,  
An' I browt what tha seeäs stannin' theer, yon big  
black bottle o' gin.

## XIII

'That caps owt,'<sup>2</sup> says Sally, an' saw she begins to  
cry,  
But I puts it inter 'er 'ands an' I says to 'er, 'Sally,'  
says I,

<sup>1</sup> I'll uphold it.

<sup>2</sup> That's beyond everything.

‘Stan’ ’im theer i’ the naäme o’ the Lord an’ the power  
ov ’is Graäce,  
Stan’ ’im theer, fur I’ll looök my hennemy straït i’ the  
faäce,  
Stan’ ’im theer i’ the winder, an’ let ma looök at ’im  
then,  
’E seeäms naw moor nor watter, an’ ’e’s the Divil’s oän  
sen.’

XIV

An’ I wur down i’ tha mouth, couldn’t do naw work  
an’ all,  
Nasty an’ snaggy an’ shaäky, an’ poonch’d my ’and wi’  
the hawl,  
But she wur a power o’ coomfut, an’ sattled ’ersen o’  
my knee,  
An’ coäxd an’ coodled me oop till ageän I feel’d  
mysen free.

XV

An’ Sally she tell’d it about, an’ foälk stood a-gawmin’<sup>1</sup>  
in,  
As thaw it wur summat bewitch’d istancead of a quart o’  
gin;

<sup>1</sup> Staring vacantly.

An' some on 'em said it wur watter—an' I wur chousin'  
the wife,  
Fur I couldn't 'owd 'ands off gin, wur it nobbut to  
saäve my life ;  
An' blacksmith 'e strips me the thick ov 'is airm, 'an 'e  
shaws it to me,  
'Feäl thou this ! thou can't grow this upo' watter !'  
says he.  
An' Doctor 'e calls o' Sunday an' just as candles was  
lit,  
'Thou moänt do it,' he says, 'tha mun breäk 'im off  
bit by bit.'  
'Thou'rt but a Methody-man,' says Parson, and laäys  
down 'is 'at,  
An' 'e points to the bottle o' gin, 'but I respecks tha  
fur that ;'  
An' Squire, his oän very sen, walks down fro' the 'All  
to see,  
An' 'e spansk 'is 'and into mine, 'fur I respecks tha,'  
says 'e ;  
An' coostom ageän draw'd in like a wind fro' far an'  
wide,  
And browt me the booöts to be cobbled fro' hafe the  
coontryside.

XVI

An' theer 'e stans an' theer 'e shall stan to my dying  
daäy;  
I 'a gotten to loov 'im ageän in anooother kind of a  
waäy,  
Proud on 'im, like, my lad, an' I keeäps 'im cleän an'  
bright,  
Loovs 'im, an' roobs 'im, an' doosts 'im, an' puts 'im  
back i' the light.

XVII

Wouldn't a pint a' sarved as well as a quart? Naw  
doubt:  
But I liked a bigger feller to fight wi' an' fowt it  
out.  
Fine an' meller 'e mun be by this, if I cared to taäste,  
But I moänt, my lad, and I weänt, fur I'd feäl mysen  
cleän disgraäced.

XVIII

An' once I said to the Missis, ' My lass, when I cooms  
to die,  
Smash the bottle to smithers, the Divil's in 'im,'  
said I.

But arter I chaänged my mind, an' if Sally be left  
aloän,  
I'll hev 'im a-buried wi'mma an' taäke 'im afoor the  
Throän.

## XIX

Coom thou 'eer—yon laädy a-steppin' along the  
streeät,  
Doesn't tha know 'er—sa pratty, an' feät, an' neät, an'  
sweeät?  
Look at the cloäths on 'er back, thebbe ammost spick-  
span-new,  
An' Tommy's faäce be as fresh as a codlin wesh'd i'  
the dew.

## XX

'Ere be our Sally an' Tommy, an' we be a-goin to  
dine,  
Baäcon an' taätes, an' a beslings-puddin'<sup>1</sup> an' Adam's  
wine;  
But if tha wants ony grog tha mun goä fur it down to  
the Hinn,  
Fur I weänt shed a drop on 'is blood, noä, not fur  
Sally's oän kin.

<sup>1</sup> A pudding made with the first milk of the cow after calving.

## THE REVENGE

## A BALLAD OF THE FLEET

## I

AT FLORES in the Azores Sir Richard Grenville lay,  
And a pinnace, like a flutter'd bird, came flying from  
far away :  
'Spanish ships of war at sea ! we have sighted fifty-  
three !'  
Then swore Lord Thomas Howard : 'Fore God I am  
no coward ;  
But I cannot meet them here, for my ships are out of  
gear,  
And the half my men are sick. I must fly, but follow  
quick.  
We are six ships of the line ; can we fight with fifty-  
three ?'

## II

Then spake Sir Richard Grenville : 'I know you are  
no coward ;  
You fly them for a moment to fight with them again.  
But I've ninety men and more that are lying sick  
ashore.

I should count myself the coward if I left them, my  
Lord Howard,  
To these Inquisition dogs and the devildoms of Spain.'

## III

So Lord Howard past away with five ships of war that  
day,  
Till he melted like a cloud in the silent summer  
heaven ;  
But Sir Richard bore in hand all his sick men from the  
land  
Very carefully and slow,  
Men of Bideford in Devon,  
And we laid them on the ballast down below ;  
For we brought them all aboard,  
And they blest him in their pain, that they were not  
left to Spain,  
To the thumbscrew and the stake, for the glory of the  
Lord.

## IV

He had only a hundred seamen to work the ship and  
to fight,  
And he sailed away from Flores till the Spaniard came  
in sight,

With his huge sea-castles heaving upon the weather-bow.

‘Shall we fight or shall we fly?

Good Sir Richard, tell us now,

For to fight is but to die!

There’ll be little of us left by the time this sun be set.’

And Sir Richard said again: ‘We be all good English men.

Let us bang these dogs of Seville, the children of the devil,

For I never turn’d my back upon Don or devil yet.’

## v

Sir Richard spoke and he laugh’d, and we roar’d a hurrah, and so

The little Revenge ran on sheer into the heart of the foe,

With her hundred fighters on deck, and her ninety sick below;

For half of their fleet to the right and half to the left were seen,

And the little Revenge ran on thro’ the long sea-lane between.



## VI

Thousands of their soldiers look'd down from their  
    decks and laugh'd,  
Thousands of their seamen made mock at the mad  
    little craft  
Running on and on, till delay'd  
By their mountain-like San Philip that, of fifteen  
    hundred tons,  
And up-shadowing high above us with her yawning  
    tiers of guns,  
Took the breath from our sails, and we stay'd.

## VII

And while now the great San Philip hung above us  
    like a cloud  
Whence the thunderbolt will fall  
Long and loud,  
Four galleons drew away  
From the Spanish fleet that day,  
And two upon the larboard and two upon the starboard  
    lay,  
And the battle-thunder broke from them all.

## VIII

But anon the great San Philip, she bethought herself  
and went  
Having that within her womb that had left her ill  
content ;  
And the rest they came aboard us, and they fought us  
hand to hand,  
For a dozen times they came with their pikes and  
musqueteers,  
And a dozen times we shook 'em off as a dog that  
shakes his ears  
When he leaps from the water to the land.

## IX

And the sun went down, and the stars came out far  
over the summer sea,  
But never a moment ceased the fight of the one and  
the fifty-three.  
Ship after ship, the whole night long, their high-built  
galleons came,  
Ship after ship, the whole night long, with her battle-  
thunder and flame ;  
Ship after ship, the whole night long, drew back with  
her dead and her shame.

For some were sunk and many were shatter'd, and so  
could fight us no more—  
God of battles, was ever a battle like this in the world  
before?

For he said 'Fight on ! fight on !'  
Tho' his vessel was all but a wreck ;  
And it chanced that, when half of the short summer  
night was gone,  
With a grisly wound to be drest he had left the deck,  
But a bullet struck him that was dressing it suddenly  
dead,  
And himself he was wounded again in the side and the  
head,  
And he said 'Fight on ! fight on !'

## XI

And the night went down, and the sun smiled out far  
over the summer sea,  
And the Spanish fleet with broken sides, lay round us  
all in a ring ;  
But they dared not touch us again, for they fear'd that  
we still could sting,

So they watch'd what the end would be.  
And we had not fought them in vain,  
But in perilous plight were we,  
Seeing forty of our poor hundred were slain,  
And half of the rest of us maim'd for life  
In the crash of the cannonades and the desperate  
    strife ;  
And the sick men down in the hold were most of them  
    stark and cold,  
And the pikes were all broken or bent, and the powder  
    was all of it spent ;  
And the masts and the rigging were lying over the  
    side ;  
But Sir Richard cried in his English pride,  
'We have fought such a fight for a day and a  
    night  
As may never be fought again !  
We have won great glory, my men !  
And a day less or more  
At sea or ashore,  
We die—does it matter when ?  
Sink me the ship, Master Gunner—sink her, split her  
    in twain !  
Fall into the hands of God, not into the hands of  
Spain !'

## XII

And the gunner said 'Ay, ay,' but the seamen made  
reply :

'We have children, we have wives,  
And the Lord hath spared our lives.

We will make the Spaniard promise, if we yield, to let  
us go ;

We shall live to fight again and to strike another blow.'  
And the lion there lay dying, and they yielded to the  
foe.

## XIII

And the stately Spanish men to their flagship bore him  
then,

Where they laid him by the mast, old Sir Richard  
caught at last,

And they praised him to his face with their courtly  
foreign grace ;

But he rose upon their decks, and he cried :

'I have fought for Queen and Faith like a valiant man  
and true ;

I have only done my duty as a man is bound to do :

With a joyful spirit I Sir Richard Grenville die !'

And he fell upon their decks, and he died.

## XIV

And they stared at the dead that had been so valiant  
and true,  
And had holden the power and glory of Spain so  
cheap  
That he dared her with one little ship and his English  
few ;  
Was he devil or man? He was devil for aught they  
knew,  
But they sank his body with honour down into the  
deep,  
And they mann'd the Revenge with a swarthier alien  
crew,  
And away she sail'd with her loss and long'd for her  
own ;  
When a wind from the lands they had ruin'd awoke  
from sleep,  
And the water began to heave and the weather to  
moan,  
And or ever that evening ended a great gale blew,  
And a wave like the wave that is raised by an earth-  
quake grew,  
Till it smote on their hulls and their sails and their  
masts and their flags,

And the whole sea plunged and fell on the shot-  
shatter'd navy of Spain,  
And the little Revenge herself went down by the island  
crag  
To be lost evermore in the main.

## THE SISTERS

THEY have left the doors ajar ; and by their clash,  
And prelude on the keys, I know the song,  
Their favourite—which I call ‘The Tables Turned.’  
Evelyn begins it ‘O diviner Air.’

### EVELYN

O diviner Air,  
Thro' the heat, the drowth, the dust, the glare,  
Far from out the west in shadowing showers,  
Over all the meadow baked and bare,  
Making fresh and fair  
All the bowers and the flowers,  
Fainting flowers, faded bowers,  
Over all this weary world of ours,  
Breathe, diviner Air !

A sweet voice that—you scarce could better that.  
Now follows Edith echoing Evelyn.

## EDITH

O diviner light,  
Thro' the cloud that roofs our noon with night,  
Thro' the blotting mist, the blinding showers,  
Far from out a sky for ever bright,  
Over all the woodland's flooded bowers,  
Over all the meadow's drowning flowers,  
Over all this ruin'd world of ours,  
Break, diviner light !

Marvellously like, their voices—and themselves !  
Tho' one is somewhat deeper than the other,  
As one is somewhat graver than the other—  
Edith than Evelyn. Your good Uncle, whom  
You count the father of your fortune, longs  
For this alliance : let me ask you then,  
Which voice most takes you ? for I do not doubt  
Being a watchful parent, you are taken  
With one or other : tho' sometimes I fear  
You may be flickering, fluttering in a doubt  
Between the two—which must not be—which might



Be death to one : they both are beautiful :  
Evelyn is gayer, wittier, prettier, says  
The common voice, if one may trust it : she ?  
No ! but the paler and the graver, Edith.  
Woo her and gain her then : no wavering, boy !  
The graver is perhaps the one for you  
Who jest and laugh so easily and so well.  
For love will go by contrast, as by likes.

No sisters ever prized each other more.  
Not so : their mother and her sister loved  
More passionately still.

But that my best  
And oldest friend, your Uncle, wishes it,  
And that I know you worthy everyway  
To be my son, I might, perchance, be loath  
To part them, or part from them : and yet one  
Should marry, or all the broad lands in your view  
From this bay window—which our house has held  
Three hundred years—will pass collaterally.

My father with a child on either knee,  
A hand upon the head of either child,  
Smoothing their locks, as golden as his own  
Were silver, 'get them wedded' would he say.

And once my prattling Edith ask'd him 'why?'  
Ay, why? said he, 'for why should I go lame?'  
Then told them of his wars, and of his wound.  
For see—this wine—the grape from whence it flow'd  
Was blackening on the slopes of Portugal,  
When that brave soldier, down the terrible ridge  
Plunged in the last fierce charge at Waterloo,  
And caught the laming bullet. He left me this,  
Which yet retains a memory of its youth,  
As I of mine, and my first passion. Come!  
Here's to your happy union with my child!

Yet must you change your name: no fault of mine!  
You say that you can do it as willingly  
As birds make ready for their bridal-time  
By change of feather: for all that, my boy,  
Some birds are sick and sullen when they moult.  
An old and worthy name! but mine that stirr'd  
Among our civil wars and earlier too  
Among the Roses, the more venerable.  
*I* care not for a name—no fault of mine.  
Once more—a happier marriage than my own!

You see yon Lombard poplar on the plain.  
The highway running by it leaves a breadth  
Of sward to left and right, where, long ago,

One bright May morning in a world of song,  
I lay at leisure, watching overhead  
The aërial poplar wave, an amber spire.

I dozed ; I woke. An open landaulet  
Whirl'd by, which, after it had past me, show'd  
Turning my way, the loveliest face on earth.  
The face of one there sitting opposite,  
On whom I brought a strange unhappiness,  
That time I did not see.

Love at first sight  
May seem—with goodly rhyme and reason for it—  
Possible—at first glimpse, and for a face  
Gone in a moment—strange. Yet once, when first  
I came on lake Llanberris in the dark,  
A moonless night with storm—one lightning-fork  
Flash'd out the lake ; and tho' I loiter'd there  
The full day after, yet in retrospect  
That less than momentary thunder-sketch  
Of lake and mountain conquers all the day.

The Sun himself has limn'd the face for me.  
Not quite so quickly, no, nor half as well.  
For look you here—the shadows are too deep,  
And like the critic's blurring comment make

The veriest beauties of the work appear  
The darkest faults : the sweet eyes frown : the lips  
Seem but a gash. My sole memorial  
Of Edith—no, the other,—both indeed.

So that bright face was flash'd thro' sense and soul  
And by the poplar vanish'd—to be found  
Long after, as it seem'd, beneath the tall  
Tree-bowers, and those long-sweeping beechen boughs  
Of our New Forest. I was there alone :  
The phantom of the whirling landaulet  
For ever past me by : when one quick peal  
Of laughter drew me thro' the glimmering glades  
Down to the snowlike sparkle of a cloth  
On fern and foxglove. Lo, the face again,  
My Rosalind in this Arden—Edith—all  
One bloom of youth, health, beauty, happiness,  
And moved to merriment at a passing jest.

There one of those about her knowing me  
Call'd me to join them ; so with these I spent  
What seem'd my crowning hour, my day of days.

I woo'd her then, nor unsuccessfully,  
The worse for her, for me ! was I content ?

Ay—no, not quite ; for now and then I thought  
Laziness, vague love-longings, the bright May,  
Had made a heated haze to magnify  
The charm of Edith—that a man's ideal  
Is high in Heaven, and lodged with Plato's God,  
Not findable here—content, and not content,  
In some such fashion as a man may be  
That having had the portrait of his friend  
Drawn by an artist, looks at it, and says,  
' Good ! very like ! not altogether he.'

As yet I had not bound myself by words,  
Only, believing I loved Edith, made  
Edith love *me*. Then came the day when I,  
Flattering myself that all my doubts were fools  
Born of the fool this Age that doubts of all—  
Not I that day of Edith's love or mine—  
Had braced my purpose to declare myself :  
I stood upon the stairs of Paradise.  
The golden gates would open at a word.  
I spoke it—told her of my passion, seen  
And lost and found again, had got so far,  
Had caught her hand, her eyelids fell—I heard  
Wheels, and a noise of welcome at the doors—  
On a sudden after two Italian years

Had set the blossom of her health again,  
The younger sister, Evelyn, enter'd—there,  
There was the face, and altogether she.  
The mother fell about the daughter's neck,  
The sisters closed in one another's arms,  
Their people throng'd about them from the hall,  
And in the thick of question and reply  
I fled the house, driven by one angel face,  
And all the Furies.

I was bound to her ;  
I could not free myself in honour—bound  
Not by the sounded letter of the word,  
But counterpressures of the yielded hand  
That timorously and faintly echoed mine,  
Quick blushes, the sweet dwelling of her eyes  
Upon me when she thought I did not see—  
Were these not bonds? nay, nay, but could I wed her  
Loving the other? do her that great wrong?  
Had I not dream'd I loved her yesternorn?  
Had I not known where Love, at first a fear,  
Grew after marriage to full height and form?  
Yet after marriage, that mock-sister there—  
Brother-in-law—the fiery nearness of it—  
Unlawful and disloyal brotherhood

What end but darkness could ensue from this  
For all the three ? So Love and Honour jarr'd  
Tho' Love and Honour join'd to raise the full  
High-tide of doubt that sway'd me up and down  
Advancing nor retreating.

Edith wrote :

'My mother bids me ask' (I did not tell you—  
A widow with less guile than many a child.  
God help the wrinkled children that are Christ's  
As well as the plump cheek—she wrought us harm,  
Poor soul, not knowing) 'are you ill ?' (so ran  
The letter) 'you have not been here of late.  
You will not find me here. At last I go  
On that long-promised visit to the North.  
I told your wayside story to my mother  
And Evelyn. She remembers you. Farewell.  
Pray come and see my mother. Almost blind  
With ever-growing cataract, yet she thinks  
She sees you when she hears. Again farewell.'

Cold words from one I had hoped to warm so far  
That I could stamp my image on her heart !  
'Pray come and see my mother, and farewell.'  
Cold, but as welcome as free airs of heaven  
After a dungeon's closeness. Selfish, strange !

What dwarfs are men ! my strangled vanity  
Utter'd a stifled cry—to have vext myself  
And all in vain for her—cold heart or none—  
No bride for me. Yet so my path was clear  
To win the sister.

Whom I woo'd and won.

For Evelyn knew not of my former suit,  
Because the simple mother work'd upon  
By Edith pray'd me not to whisper of it.  
And Edith would be bridesmaid on the day.

But on that day, not being all at ease,  
I from the altar glancing back upon her,  
Before the first ' I will ' was utter'd, saw  
The bridesmaid 'pale, statuelike, passionless—  
'No harm, no harm' I turn'd again, and placed  
My ring upon the finger of my bride.

So, when we parted, Edith spoke no word,  
She wept no tear, but round my Evelyn clung  
In utter silence for so long, I thought  
'What, will she never set her sister free?'

We left her, happy each in each, and then,  
As tho' the happiness of each in each  
Were not enough, must fain have torrents, lakes,  
Hills, the great things of Nature and the fair,



To lift us as it were from commonplace,  
And help us to our joy. Better have sent  
Our Edith thro' the glories of the earth,  
To change with her horizon, if true Love  
Were not his own imperial all-in-all.

Far off we went. My God, I would not live  
Save that I think this gross hard-seeming world  
Is our misshaping vision of the Powers  
Behind the world, that make our griefs our gains.

For on the dark night of our marriage-day  
The great Tragedian, that had quench'd herself  
In that assumption of the bridesmaid—she  
That loved me—our true Edith—her brain broke  
With over-acting, till she rose and fled  
Beneath a pitiless rush of Autumn rain  
To the deaf church—to be let in—to pray  
Before *that* altar—so I think; and there  
They found her beating the hard Protestant doors.  
She died and she was buried ere we knew.

I learnt it first. I had to speak. At once  
The bright quick smile of Evelyn, that had sunn'd  
The morning of our marriage, past away :  
And on our home-return the daily want

Of Edith in the house, the garden, still  
Haunted us like her ghost ; and by and by,  
Either from that necessity for talk  
Which lives with blindness, or plain innocence  
Of nature, or desire that her lost child  
Should earn from both the praise of heroism,  
The mother broke her promise to the dead,  
And told the living daughter with what love  
Edith had welcomed my brief wooing of her,  
And all her sweet self-sacrifice and death.

Henceforth that mystic bond betwixt the twins—  
Did I not tell you they were twins?—prevail'd  
So far that no caress could win my wife  
Back to that passionate answer of full heart  
I had from her at first. Not that her love,  
Tho' scarce as great as Edith's power of love,  
Had lessen'd, but the mother's garrulous wail  
For ever woke the unhappy Past again,  
Till that dead bridesmaid, meant to be my bride,  
Put forth cold hands between us, and I fear'd  
The very fountains of her life were chill'd ;  
So took her thence, and brought her here, and here  
She bore a child, whom reverently we call'd  
Edith ; and in the second year was born

A second—this I named from her own self,  
Evelyn ; then two weeks—no more—she joined,  
In and beyond the grave, that one she loved.

Now in this quiet of declining life,  
Thro' dreams by night and trances of the day,  
The sisters glide about me hand in hand,  
Both beautiful alike, nor can I tell  
One from the other, no, nor care to tell  
One from the other, only know they come,  
They smile upon me, till, remembering all  
The love they both have borne me, and the love  
I bore them both—divided as I am  
From either by the stillness of the grave—  
I know not which of these I love the best.

But *you* love Edith ; and her own true eyes  
Are traitors to her ; our quick Evelyn—  
The merrier, prettier, wittier, as they talk,  
And not without good reason, my good son—  
Is yet untouch'd : and I that hold them both  
Dearest of all things—well, I am not sure—  
But if there lie a preference eitherway,  
And in the rich vocabulary of Love  
'Most dearest' be a true superlative—  
I think *I* likewise love your Edith most.

THE VILLAGE WIFE; OR, THE ENTAIL<sup>1</sup>

## I

'OUSE-KEEPER sent tha my lass, fur New Squire coom'd  
last night.

Butter an' heggs—yis—yis. I'll goä wi' tha back : all  
right ;

Butter I warrants be prime, an' I warrants the heggs  
be as well,

Hafe a pint o' milk runs out when ya breäks the shell.

## II

Sit thysen down fur a bit: hev a glass o' cowslip wine !  
I liked the owd Squire an' 'is gells as thaw they was  
gells o' mine,

Fur then we was all es one, the Squire an' 'is darters  
an' me,

Hall but Miss Annie, the heldest, I niver not took to  
she :

But Nelly, the last of the cletch,<sup>2</sup> I liked 'er the fust  
on 'em all,

Fur hoffens we talkt o' my darter es died o' the fever  
at fall :

<sup>1</sup> See note to ' Northern Cobbler.'    <sup>2</sup> A brood of chickens.

50      *The Village Wife ; or, The Entail*

An' I thowt 'twur the will o' the Lord, but Miss Annie  
she said it wur draäins,  
Fur she hedn't naw coomfut in 'er, an' arn'd naw thanks  
fur 'er paäins.  
Eh ! thebbe all wi' the Lord my childer, I han't gotten  
none !  
Sa new Squire's coom'd wi' 'is taäil in 'is 'and, an' owd  
Squire's gone.

III

Fur 'staäte be i' taäil, my lass : tha dosn' know what  
that be ?  
But I knaws the law, I does, for the lawyer ha tow'd it  
me.  
'When theer's naw 'cäd to a 'Ouse by the fault o' that  
ere maäle—  
The gells they counts fur nowt, and the next un he  
taäkes the taäil.'

IV

What be the next un like ? can tha tell ony harm on  
'im lass ?—  
Naay sit down—naw 'urry—sa cowl !—hev another  
glass !

Straänge an' coud fur the time ! we may happen a fall  
o' snaw—

Not es I cares fur to hear ony harm, but I likes to know.  
An' I 'oäps es 'e beänt boooklarn'd : but 'e dosn' not  
coom fro' the shere ;

We'd anew o' that wi' the Squire, an' we haätes boook-  
larnin' ere.

v

Fur Squire wur a Varsity scholard, an' niver lookt arter  
the land—

Whoäts or tonups or taätes—'e 'ed hallus a booök i' 'is  
'and,

Hallus aloän wi' 'is booöks, thaw nigh upo' seventy year.  
An' booöks, what's booöks? thou knows thebbe naither  
'ere nor theer.

vi

An' the gells, they hedn't naw taäils, an' the lawyer he  
towd it me

That 'is taäil were soä tied up es he couldn't cut down  
a tree !

' Drat the trees,' says I, to be sewer I haätes 'em, my lass,  
Fur we puts the muck o' the land an' they sucks the  
muck fro' the grass.

## VII

An' Squire wur hallus a-smilin', an' gied to the tramps  
goin' by—  
An' all o' the wust i' the parish—wi' hoffens a drop in  
'is eye.  
An' ivry darter o' Squire's hed her awn ridin-erse to  
'ersen,  
An' they rampaged about wi' their grooms, an' was  
'untin' arter the men,  
An' hallus a-dallackt <sup>1</sup> an' dizen'd out, an' a-buyin' new  
cloäthes,  
While 'e sit like a greät glimmer-gowk <sup>2</sup> wi' 'is glasses  
athurt 'is noäse,  
An' 'is noäse sa grufted wi' snuff es it couldn't be  
scroob'd awaäy,  
Fur atween 'is reädin' an' writin' 'e snifft up a box in  
a daäy,  
An' 'e niver runn'd arter the fox, nor arter the birds wi'  
'is gun,  
An' 'e niver not shot one 'are, but 'e leäved it to Charlie  
'is son,  
An' 'e niver not fish'd 'is awn ponds, but Charlie 'e  
cotch'd the pike,

<sup>1</sup> Overdrest in gay colours.<sup>2</sup> Owl.

For 'e warn't not burn to the land, an' 'e didn't take  
kind to it like ;  
But I eärs es 'e'd gie fur a howry<sup>1</sup> owd book thutty  
pound an' moor,  
An' 'e'd wrote an owd book, his awn sen, sa I knaw'd  
es 'e'd coom to be poor ;  
An' 'e gied—I be fear'd fur to tell tha 'ow much—fur  
an owd scratted stoän,  
An' 'e digg'd up a loomp i' the land an' 'e got a brown  
pot an' a boän,  
An' 'e bowt owd money, es wouldn't goä, wi' good  
gowd o' the Queen,  
An' 'e bowt little statutes all-naäkt an' which was a  
shaame to be seen ;  
But 'e niver loökt ower a bill, nor 'e niver not seed  
to owt,  
An' 'e niver knawd nowt but booöks, an' booöks, as  
thou knaws, beänt nowt.

VIII

But owd Squire's läädy es long es she lived she kep  
'em all clear,  
Thaw es long es she lived I niver hed none of 'er  
darters 'ere ;

<sup>1</sup> Filthy.



54      *The Village Wife ; or, The Entail*

But arter she died we was all es one, the childer an' me,  
An' sarvints runn'd in an' out, an' offens we hed 'em to  
tea.

Lawk ! 'ow I laugh'd when the lasses 'ud talk o' their  
Missis's waäys,  
An' the Missis talk'd o' the lasses.—I'll tell tha some  
o' these daäys.

Hoänly Miss Annie were saw stuck oop, like 'er mother  
afoor—

'Er an' 'er blessed darter—they niver derken'd my  
door.

IX

An' Squire 'e smiled an' 'e smiled till 'e'd gotten a  
fright at last,

An' 'e calls fur 'is son, fur the 'turney's letters they  
foller'd sa fast :

But Squire wur afear'd o' 'is son, an' 'e says to 'im,  
meek as a mouse,

'Lad, thou mun cut off thy taäil, or the gells 'ull goä  
to the 'Ouse,

Fur I finds es I be that i' debt, es I 'oäps es thou'll  
'elp me a bit,

An' if thou'll 'gree to cut off thy taäil I may saäve  
mysen yit.'

X

But Charlie 'e sets back 'is ears, an' 'e sweärs, an' 'e  
says to 'im ' Noa.  
I've gotten the 'staäte by the taäil an' be dang'd if I  
iver let goa !  
Coom ! coom ! feyther,' 'e says, ' why shouldn't thy  
booöks be sowd ?  
I hears es soom o' thy booöks mebbe worth their  
weight i' gowd.'

XI

Heäps an' heäps o' booöks, I ha' see'd 'em, belong'd  
to the Squire,  
But the lasses 'ed teärd out leäves i' the middle to  
kindle the fire ;  
Sa moäst on 'is owd big booöks fetch'd nigh to nowt  
at the saäle,  
And Squire were at Charlie ageän to git 'im to cut off  
'is taäil.

XII

Ya wouldn't find Charlie's likes—'e were that outdacious  
at 'oäm,  
Not thaw ya went fur to raäke out Hell wi' a small-  
tooth coämb—

56      *The Village Wife ; or, The Entail*

Droonk wi' the Quoloty's wine, an' droonk wi' the  
farmer's aäle,  
Mad wi' the lasses an' all—an' 'e wouldn't cut off the  
taäil.

XIII

Thou's coom'd oop by the beck ; and a thurn be a-  
grawin' theer,  
I niver ha seed it sa white wi' the Maäy es I see'd it  
to-year—  
Theerabouts Charlie joompt—and it gied me a scare  
tother night,  
Fur I thowt it wur Charlie's ghoäst i' the derk, fur it  
looökt sa white.  
' Billy,' says 'e, 'hev a joomp !'—thaw the banks o' the  
beck be sa high,  
Fur he ca'd 'is 'erse Billy-rough-un, thaw niver a hair  
wur awry ;  
But Billy fell bakkuds o' Charlie, an' Charlie 'e brok 'is  
neck,  
Sa theer wur a hend o' the taäil, fur 'e lost 'is taäil i'  
the beck.

XIV

Sa 'is taäil wur lost an' 'is booöks wur gone an' 'is boy  
wur deäd,

An' Squire 'e smiled an' 'e smiled, but 'e niver not lift  
oop 'is 'eäd :  
Hallus a soft un Squire ! an' 'e smiled, fur 'e hedn't  
naw friend,  
Sa feyther an' son was buried together, an' this wur the  
hend.

XV

An' Parson as hesn't the call, nor the mooney, but hes  
the pride,  
'E reäds of a sewer an' sartan 'oäp o' the tother side ;  
But I beänt that sewer es the Lord, howsiver they  
praäy'd an' praäy'd,  
Lets them inter 'eaven eäsy es leäves their debts to be  
paäid.  
Siver the mou'ds rattled down upo' poor owd Squire i'  
the wood,  
An' I cried along wi' the gells, fur they weänt niver  
coom to naw good.

XVI

Fur Molly the long un she walkt awaäy wi' a hofficer  
lad,  
An' nawbody 'eärd on 'er sin, sa o' coorse she be gone  
to the bad !

58      *The Village Wife ; or, The Entail*

An' Lucy wur laäme o' one leg, sweet'arts she niver 'ed  
 none—  
 Straänge an' unheppen<sup>1</sup> Miss Lucy ! we naämed her  
 'Dot an' gaw one !'  
 An' Hetty wur weak i' the hattics, wi'out ony harm i'  
 the legs,  
 An' the fever 'ed baäked Jinny's 'eäd as bald as one  
 o' them heggs,  
 An' Nelly wur up fro' the craädle as big i' the mouth  
 as a cow,  
 An' saw she mun hammergrate,<sup>2</sup> lass, or she weänt git  
 a maäte onyhow !  
 An' es for Miss Annie es call'd me afoor my awn foäłks  
 to my faäce  
 'A hignorant village wife as 'ud hev to be larn'd her  
 awn plaäce,'  
 Hes fur Miss Hannie the heldest hes now be a-grawin'  
 sa howd,  
 I knows that mooch o' sheä, es it beänt not fit to be  
 towd !

XVII

Sa I didn't not taäke it kindly ov owd Miss Annie to  
 saäy

<sup>1</sup> Ungainly, awkward.

<sup>2</sup> Emigrate.

Es I should be talkin ageän 'em, es soon es they went  
awaäy,  
Fur, lawks ! 'ow I cried when they went, an' our Nelly  
she gied me 'er 'and,  
Fur I'd ha done owt for the Squire an' 'is gells es  
belong'd to the land ;  
Booöks, es I said afoor, thebbe neyther 'ere nor  
theer !  
But I sarved 'em wi' butter an' heggs fur huppuds o'  
twenty year.

XVIII

An' they hallus paäid what I hax'd, sa I hallus deal'd  
wi' the Hall,  
An' they knaw'd what butter wur, an' they knaw'd  
what a hegg wur an' all ;  
Hugger-mugger they lived, but they wasn't that eäsy  
to pleäse,  
Till I gied 'em Hinjian curn, an' they laäid big heggs  
es tha sees ;  
An' I niver puts saäme<sup>1</sup> i' *my* butter, they does it at  
Willis's farm,  
Taäste another drop o' the wine—tweänt do tha naw  
harm.

<sup>1</sup> Lard.

## XIX

Sa new Squire's coom'd wi' 'is taäil in 'is 'and, an' owd  
Squire's gone ;  
I heard 'im a roomlin' by, but arter my nightcap  
wur on ;  
Sa I han't clapt eyes on 'im yit, fur he coom'd last  
night sa laäte—  
Pluksh !!!<sup>1</sup> the hens i' the peas ! why didn't tha  
hesp the gaäte ?

## IN THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

## EMMIE

## I

OUR doctor had call'd in another, I never had seen  
him before,  
But he sent a chill to my heart when I saw him come  
in at the door,

<sup>1</sup> A cry accompanied by a clapping of hands to scare trespassing fowl.

Fresh from the surgery-schools of France and of other  
lands—  
Harsh red hair, big voice, big chest, big merciless hands !  
Wonderful cures he had done, O yes, but they said  
too of him  
He was happier using the knife than in trying to save  
the limb,  
And that I can well believe, for he look'd so coarse  
and so red,  
I could think he was one of those who would break  
their jests on the dead,  
And mangle the living dog that had loved him and  
fawn'd at his knee—  
Drench'd with the hellish oorali—that ever such things  
should be !

## II

Here was a boy—I am sure that some of our children  
would die  
But for the voice of Love, and the smile, and the  
comforting eye—  
Here was a boy in the ward, every bone seem'd out of  
its place—  
Caught in a mill and crush'd—it was all but a hopeless  
case :



And he handled him gently enough ; but his voice and  
his face were not kind,  
And it was but a hopeless case, he had seen it and  
made up his mind,  
And he said to me roughly 'The lad will need little  
more of your care.'  
'All the more need,' I told him, 'to seek the Lord  
Jesus in prayer ;  
They are all his children here, and I pray for them all  
as my own :'  
But he turn'd to me, 'Ay, good woman, can prayer set  
a broken bone ?'  
Then he mutter'd half to himself, but I know that I  
heard him say  
'All very well—but the good Lord Jesus has had his  
day.'

## III

Had? has it come? It has only dawn'd. It will  
come by and by.  
O how could I serve in the wards if the hope of the  
world were a lie?  
How could I bear with the sights and the loathsome  
smells of disease  
But that He said 'Ye do it to me, when ye do it to these'?

IV

So he went. And we past to this ward where the  
younger children are laid :  
Here is the cot of our orphan, our darling, our meek  
little maid ;  
Empty you see just now ! We have lost her who loved  
her so much—  
Patient of pain tho' as quick as a sensitive plant to the  
touch ;  
Hers was the prettiest prattle, it often moved me to tears,  
Hers was the gratefulest heart I have found in a child  
of her years—  
Nay you remember our Emmie ; you used to send her  
the flowers ;  
How she would smile at 'em, play with 'em, talk to 'em  
hours after hours !  
They that can wander at will where the works of the  
Lord are reveal'd  
Little guess what joy can be got from a cowslip out of  
the field ;  
Flowers to these 'spirits in prison' are all they can  
know of the spring,  
They freshen and sweeten the wards like the waft of  
an Angel's wing ;

And she lay with a flower in one hand and her thin  
hands crost on her breast—  
Wan, but as pretty as heart can desire, and we thought  
her at rest,  
Quietly sleeping—so quiet, our doctor said ‘Poor little  
dear,  
Nurse, I must do it to-morrow ; she’ll never live thro’  
it, I fear.’

## V

I walk’d with our kindly old doctor as far as the head  
of the stair,  
Then I return’d to the ward ; the child didn’t see I was  
there.

## VI

Never since I was nurse, had I been so grieved and  
so vext !  
Emmie had heard him. Softly she call’d from her cot  
to the next,  
‘He says I shall never live thro’ it, O Annie, what  
shall I do?’  
Annie consider’d. ‘If I,’ said the wise little Annie,  
‘was you,

I should cry to the dear Lord Jesus to help me, for,  
Emmie, you see,  
It's all in the picture there: "Little children should  
come to me."

(Meaning the print that you gave us, I find that it  
always can please

Our children, the dear Lord Jesus with children about  
his knees.)

'Yes, and I will,' said Emmie, 'but then if I call to the  
Lord,

How should he know that it's me? such a lot of beds  
in the ward!'

That was a puzzle for Annie. Again she consider'd  
and said:

'Emmie, you put out your arms, and you leave 'em  
outside on the bed—

The Lord has so *much* to see to! but, Emmie, you tell  
it him plain,

It's the little girl with her arms lying out on the  
counterpane.'

VII

I had sat three nights by the child—I could not watch  
her for four—

My brain had begun to reel—I felt I could do it no more.

That was my sleeping-night, but I thought that it  
never would pass.  
There was a thunderclap once, and a clatter of hail on  
the glass,  
And there was a phantom cry that I heard as I tost about,  
The motherless bleat of a lamb in the storm and the  
darkness without ;  
My sleep was broken besides with dreams of the  
dreadful knife  
And fears for our delicate Emmie who scarce would  
escape with her life ;  
Then in the gray of the morning it seem'd she stood  
by me and smiled,  
And the doctor came at his hour, and we went to see  
to the child.

## VIII

He had brought his ghastly tools : we believed her  
asleep again—  
Her dear, long, lean, little arms lying out on the  
counterpane ;  
Say that His day is done ! Ah why should we care  
what they say ?  
The Lord of the children had heard her, and Emmie  
had past away.

## DEDICATORY POEM TO THE PRINCESS ALICE

DEAD PRINCESS, living Power, if that, which lived  
True life, live on—and if the fatal kiss,  
Born of true life and love, divorce thee not  
From earthly love and life—if what we call  
The spirit flash not all at once from out  
This shadow into Substance—then perhaps  
The mellow'd murmur of the people's praise  
From thine own State, and all our breadth of realm,  
Where Love and Longing dress thy deeds in light,  
Ascends to thee ; and this March morn that sees  
Thy Soldier-brother's bridal orange-bloom  
Break thro' the yews and cypress of thy grave,  
And thine Imperial mother smile again,  
May send one ray to thee ! and who can tell—  
Thou—England's England-loving daughter—thou  
Dying so English thou wouldst have her flag  
Borne on thy coffin—where is he can swear  
But that some broken gleam from our poor earth  
May touch thee, while remembering thee, I lay  
At thy pale feet this ballad of the deeds  
Of England, and her banner in the East ?

## THE DEFENCE OF LUCKNOW

## I

BANNER of England, not for a season, O banner of  
Britain, hast thou  
Floated in conquering battle or flapt to the battle-cry !  
Never with mightier glory than when we had rear'd thee  
on high  
Flying at top of the roofs in the ghastly siege of Luck-  
now—  
Shot thro' the staff or the halyard, but ever we raised  
thee anew,  
And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England  
blew.

## II

Frail were the works that defended the hold that we  
held with our lives—  
Women and children among us, God help them, our  
children and wives !  
Hold it we might—and for fifteen days or for twenty at  
most.  
'Never surrender, I charge you, but every man die at  
his post !'

Voice of the dead whom we loved, our Lawrence the  
best of the brave :  
Cold were his brows when we kiss'd him—we laid him  
that night in his grave.  
'Every man die at his post !' and there hail'd on our  
houses and halls  
Death from their rifle-bullets, and death from their  
cannon-balls,  
Death in our innermost chamber, and death at our  
slight barricade,  
Death while we stood with the musket, and death while  
we stoop to the spade,  
Death to the dying, and wounds to the wounded, for  
often there fell,  
Striking the hospital wall, crashing thro' it, their shot  
and their shell,  
Death—for their spies were among us, their marksmen  
were told of our best,  
So that the brute bullet broke thro' the brain that could  
think for the rest ;  
Bullets would sing by our foreheads, and bullets would  
rain at our feet—  
Fire from ten thousand at once of the rebels that girdled  
us round—  
Death at the glimpse of a finger from over the breadth  
of a street,



Death from the heights of the mosque and the palace,  
and death in the ground !  
Mine? yes, a mine ! Countermine ! down, down ! and  
creep thro' the hole !  
Keep the revolver in hand ! you can hear him—the  
murderous mole !  
Quiet, ah ! quiet—wait till the point of the pickaxe be  
thro' !  
Click with the pick, coming nearer and nearer again  
than before—  
Now let it speak, and you fire, and the dark pioneer is  
no more ;  
And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England  
blew !

## III

Ay, but the foe sprung his mine many times, and it  
chanced on a day  
Soon as the blast of that underground thunderclap  
echo'd away,  
Dark thro' the smoke and the sulphur like so many  
fiends in their hell—  
Cannon-shot, musket-shot, volley on volley, and yell  
upon yell—  
Fiercely on all the defences our myriad enemy fell.

What have they done? where is it? Out yonder.  
Guard the Redan!  
Storm at the Water-gate! storm at the Bailey-gate!  
storm, and it ran  
Surging and swaying all round us, as ocean on every  
side  
Plunges and heaves at a bank that is daily devour'd by  
the tide—  
So many thousands that if they be bold enough, who  
shall escape?  
Kill or be kill'd, live or die, they shall know we are  
soldiers and men!  
Ready! take aim at their leaders—their masses are  
gapp'd with our grape—  
Backward they reel like the wave, like the wave fling-  
ing forward again,  
Flying and foil'd at the last by the handful they could  
not subdue;  
And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England  
blew.

## IV

Handful of men as we were, we were English in heart  
and in limb,  
Strong with the strength of the race to command, to  
obey, to endure,

Each of us fought as if hope for the garrison hung but  
on him ;

Still—could we watch at all points ? we were every day  
fewer and fewer.

There was a whisper among us, but only a whisper  
that past :

‘ Children and wives—if the tigers leap into the fold  
unawares—

Every man die at his post—and the foe may outlive us  
at last—

Better to fall by the hands that they love, than to fall  
into theirs ! ’

Roar upon roar in a moment two mines by the enemy  
sprung

Clove into perilous chasms our walls and our poor  
palisades.

Rifleman, true is your heart, but be sure that your  
hand be as true !

Sharp is the fire of assault, better aimed are your flank  
fusillades—

‘ Twice do we hurl them to earth from the ladders to  
which they had clung,

Twice from the ditch where they shelter we drive them  
with hand-grenades ;

And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England  
blew.

v

Then on another wild morning another wild earthquake  
out-tore  
Clean from our lines of defence ten or twelve good  
paces or more.  
Rifleman, high on the roof, hidden there from the light  
of the sun —  
One has leapt up on the breach, crying out : ‘ Follow  
me, follow me ! ’—  
Mark him—he falls ! then another, and *him* too, and  
down goes he.  
Had they been bold enough then, who can tell but the  
traitors had won ?  
Boardings and rafters and doors—an embrasure ! make  
way for the gun !  
Now double-charge it with grape ! It is charged and  
we fire, and they run.  
Praise to our Indian brothers, and let the dark face  
have his due !  
Thanks to the kindly dark faces who fought with us,  
faithful and few,  
Fought with the bravest among us, and drove them,  
and smote them, and slew,  
That ever upon the topmost roof our banner in India  
blew.

## VI

Men will forget what we suffer and not what we do.  
We can fight !  
But to be soldier all day and be sentinel all thro' the  
night—  
Ever the mine and assault, our sallies, their lying  
alarms,  
Bugles and drums in the darkness, and shoutings and  
soundings to arms, .  
Ever the labour of fifty that had to be done by five,  
Ever the marvel among us that one should be left  
alive,  
Ever the day with its traitorous death from the loop-  
holes around,  
Ever the night with its coffinless corpse to be laid in  
the ground,  
Heat like the mouth of a hell, or a deluge of cataract  
skies,  
Stench of old offal decaying, and infinite torment of  
flies,  
Thoughts of the breezes of May blowing over an Eng-  
lish field,  
Cholera, scurvy, and fever, the wound that *would* not  
be heal'd,  
Lopping away of the limb by the pitiful-pitiless knife,—

Torture and trouble in vain,—for it never could save us  
a life.  
Valour of delicate women who tended the hospital  
bed,  
Horror of women in travail among the dying and  
dead,  
Grief for our perishing children, and never a moment  
for grief,  
Toil and ineffable weariness, faltering hopes of relief,  
Havelock baffled, or beaten, or butcher'd for all that  
we knew—  
Then day and night, day and night, coming down on  
the still-shatter'd walls  
Millions of musket-bullets, and thousands of cannon-  
balls—  
But ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England  
blew.

## VIII

Hark cannonade, fusillade ! is it true what was told by  
the scout,  
Outram and Havelock breaking their way through the  
fell mutineers ?  
Surely the pibroch of Europe is ringing again in our  
ears !  
All on a sudden the garrison utter a jubilant shout,

Havelock's glorious Highlanders answer with conquering cheers,

Sick from the hospital echo them, women and children come out,

Blessing the wholesome white faces of Havelock's good fusileers,

Kissing the war-harden'd hand of the Highlander wet with their tears !

Dance to the pibroch !—saved ! we are saved !—is it you ? is it you ?

Saved by the valour of Havelock, saved by the blessing of Heaven !

'Hold it for fifteen days !' we have held it for eighty-seven !

And ever aloft on the palace roof the old banner of England blew.

## SIR JOHN OLDCASTLE, LORD COBHAM

(IN WALES)

MY friend should meet me somewhere hereabout  
To take me to that hiding in the hills.

I have broke their cage, no gilded one, I trow—  
I read no more the prisoner's mute wail  
Scribbled or carved upon the pitiless stone ;  
I find hard rocks, hard life, hard cheer, or none,  
For I am emptier than a friar's brains ;  
But God is with me in this wilderness,  
These wet black passes and foam-churning chasms—  
And God's free air, and hope of better things.

I would I knew their speech ; not now to glean,  
Not now—I hope to do it—some scatter'd ears,  
Some ears for Christ in this wild field of Wales—  
But, bread, merely for bread. This tongue that  
wagg'd

They said with such heretical arrogance  
Against the proud archbishop Arundel—  
So much God's cause was fluent in it—is here  
But as a Latin Bible to the crowd ;



78      *Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham*

‘Bara!’—what use? The Shepherd, when I speak,  
Vailing a sudden eyelid with his hand  
‘Dim Sæsneg’ passes, wroth at things of old—  
No fault of mine. Had he God’s word in Welsh  
He might be kindlier: happily come the day!

Not least art thou, thou little Bethlehem  
In Judah, for in thee the Lord was born;  
Nor thou in Britain, little Lutterworth,  
Least, for in thee the word was born again.

Heaven-sweet Evangel, ever-living word,  
Who whilome spakest to the South in Greek  
About the soft Mediterranean shores,  
And then in Latin to the Latin crowd,  
As good need was—thou hast come to talk our isle.  
Hereafter thou, fulfilling Pentecost,  
Must learn to use the tongues of all the world.  
Yet art thou thine own witness that thou bringest  
Not peace, a sword, a fire.

What did he say,  
My frightened Wiclif-preacher whom I crost  
In flying hither? that one night a crowd  
Throng’d the waste field about the city gates:  
The king was on them suddenly with a host.  
Why there? they came to hear their preacher. Then

Some cried on Cobham, on the good Lord Cobham ;  
Ay, for they love me ! but the king—nor voice  
Nor finger raised against him—took and hang'd,  
Took, hang'd and burnt—how many—thirty-nine—  
Call'd it rebellion—hang'd, poor friends, as rebels  
And burn'd alive as heretics ! for your Priest  
Labels—to take the king along with him—  
All heresy, treason : but to call men traitors  
May make men traitors.

Rose of Lancaster,  
Red in thy birth, redder with household war,  
Now reddest with the blood of holy men,  
Redder to be, red rose of Lancaster—  
If somewhere in the North, as Rumour sang  
Fluttering the hawks of this crown-lusting line—  
By firth and loch thy silver sister grow,<sup>1</sup>  
That were my rose, there my allegiance due.  
Self-starved, they say—nay, murder'd, doubtless dead.  
So to this king I cleaved : my friend was he,  
Once my fast friend : I would have given my life  
To help his own from scathe, a thousand lives  
To save his soul. He might have come to learn  
Our Wiclif's learning : but the worldly Priests  
Who fear the king's hard common-sense should find

<sup>1</sup> Richard II.

What rotten piles uphold their mason-work,  
Urge him to foreign war. O had he will'd  
I might have stricken a lusty stroke for him,  
But he would not ; far liever led my friend  
Back to the pure and universal church,  
But he would not : whether that heirless flaw  
In his throne's title make him feel so frail,  
He leans on Antichrist ; or that his mind,  
So quick, so capable in soldiership,  
In matters of the faith, alas the while !  
More worth than all the kingdoms of this world,  
Runs in the rut, a coward to the Priest.

Burnt—good Sir Roger Acton, my dear friend !  
Burnt too, my faithful preacher, Beverley !  
Lord give thou power to thy two witnesses !  
Lest the false faith make merry over them !  
Two—nay but thirty-nine have risen and stand,  
Dark with the smoke of human sacrifice,  
Before thy light, and cry continually—  
Cry—against whom ?

Him, who should bear the sword  
Of Justice—what ! the kingly, kindly boy ;  
Who took the world so easily heretofore,  
My boon companion, tavern-fellow—him

Who gibed and japed—in many a merry tale  
That shook our sides—at Pardoners, Summoners,  
Friars, absolution-sellers, monkeries  
And nunneries, when the wild hour and the wine  
Had set the wits aflame.

Harry of Monmouth,  
Or Amurath of the East?

Better to sink  
Thy fleurs-de-lys in slime again, and fling  
Thy royalty back into the riotous fits  
Of wine and harlotry—thy shame, and mine,  
Thy comrade—than to persecute the Lord,  
And play the Saul that never will be Paul.

Burnt, burnt ! and while this mitred Arundel  
Dooms our unlicensed preacher to the flame,  
The mitre-sanction'd harlot draws his clerks  
Into the suburb—their hard celibacy,  
Sworn to be veriest ice of pureness, molten  
Into adulterous living, or such crimes  
As holy Paul—a shame to speak of them—  
Among the heathen—

Sanctuary granted  
To bandit, thief, assassin—yea to him  
Who hacks his mother's throat—denied to him,

Who finds the Saviour in his mother tongue.  
The Gospel, the Priest's pearl, flung down to swine—  
The swine, lay-men, lay-women, who will come,  
God willing, to outlearn the filthy friar.  
Ah rather, Lord, than that thy Gospel, meant  
To course and range thro' all the world, should be  
Tether'd to these dead pillars of the Church—  
Rather than so, if thou wilt have it so,  
Burst vein, snap sinew, and crack heart, and life  
Pass in the fire of Babylon ! but how long,  
O Lord, how long !

My friend should meet me here.  
Here is the copse, the fountain and—a Cross !  
To thee, dead wood, I bow not head nor knees.  
Rather to thee, green boscage, work of God,  
Black holly, and white-flower'd wayfaring-tree !  
Rather to thee, thou living water, drawn  
By this good Wiclif mountain down from heaven,  
And speaking clearly in thy native tongue—  
No Latin—He that thirsteth, come and drink !

Eh ! how I anger'd Arundel asking me  
To worship Holy Cross ! I spread mine arms,  
God's work, I said, a cross of flesh and blood  
And holier. That was heresy. (My good friend

By this time should be with me.) 'Images ?'  
'Bury them as God's truer images  
Are daily buried.' 'Heresy.—Penance ?' 'Fast,  
Hairshirt and scourge—nay, let a man repent,  
Do penance in his heart, God hears him.' 'Heresy—  
Not shriven, not saved ?' 'What profits an ill Priest  
Between me and my God ? I would not spurn  
Good counsel of good friends, but shrive myself  
No, not to an Apostle.' 'Heresy.'  
(My friend is long in coming.) 'Pilgrimages ?'  
'Drink, bagpipes, revelling, devil's-dances, vice.  
The poor man's money gone to fat the friar.  
Who reads of begging saints in Scripture ?'—  
    'Heresy'—  
(Hath he been here—not found me—gone again ?  
Have I mislearnt our place of meeting ?) 'Bread—  
Bread left after the blessing ?' how they stared,  
That was their main test-question—glared at me !  
'He veil'd Himself in flesh, and now He veils  
His flesh in bread, body and bread together.'  
Then rose the howl of all the cassock'd wolves,  
'No bread, no bread. God's body !' Archbishop,  
    Bishop,  
Priors, Canons, Friars, bellringers, Parish-clerks—  
'No bread, no bread !'—'Authority of the Church,

84      *Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham*

Power of the keys !'—Then I, God help me, I  
 So mock'd, so spurn'd, so baited two whole days—  
 I lost myself and fell from evenness,  
 And rail'd at all the Popes, that ever since  
 Sylvester shed the venom of world-wealth  
 Into the church, had only prov'n themselves  
 Poisoners, murderers. Well—God pardon all—  
 Me, them, and all the world—yea, that proud Priest,  
 That mock-meek mouth of utter Antichrist,  
 That traitor to King Richard and the truth,  
 Who rose and doom'd me to the fire.

Amen !

Nay, I can burn, so that the Lord of life  
 Be by me in my death.

Those three ! the fourth  
 Was like the Son of God ! Not burnt were they.  
 On *them* the smell of burning had not past.  
 That was a miracle to convert the king.  
 These Pharisees, this Caiaphas-Arundel  
 What miracle could turn ? *He* here again,  
*He* thwarting their traditions of Himself,  
*He* would be found a heretic to Himself,  
 And doom'd to burn alive.

So, caught, I burn.  
 Burn ? heathen men have borne as much as this,

For freedom, or the sake of those they loved,  
Or some less cause, some cause far less than mine;  
For every other cause is less than mine.  
The moth will singe her wings, and singed return,  
Her love of light quenching her fear of pain—  
How now, my soul, we do not heed the fire?  
Faint-hearted? tut!—faint-stomach'd! faint as I am,  
God willing, I will burn for Him.

Who comes?

A thousand marks are set upon my head.  
Friend?—foe perhaps—a tussle for it then!  
Nay, but my friend. Thou art so well disguised,  
I knew thee not. Hast thou brought bread with  
thee?

I have not broken bread for fifty hours.  
None? I am damn'd already by the Priest  
For holding there was bread where bread was none—  
No bread. My friends await me yonder? Yes.  
Lead on then. Up the mountain? Is it far?  
Not far. Climb first and reach me down thy hand.  
I am not like to die for lack of bread,  
For I must live to testify by fire.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> He was burnt on Christmas Day, 1417.



## COLUMBUS

CHAINS, my good lord : in your raised brows I read  
Some wonder at our chamber ornaments.  
We brought this iron from our isles of gold.

Does the king know you deign to visit him  
Whom once he rose from off his throne to greet  
Before his people, like his brother king ?  
I saw your face that morning in the crowd.

At Barcelona—tho' you were not then  
So bearded. Yes. The city deck'd herself  
To meet me, roar'd my name ; the king, the queen  
Bad me be seated, speak, and tell them all  
The story of my voyage, and while I spoke  
The crowd's roar fell as at the ' Peace, be still !'  
And when I ceased to speak, the king, the queen,  
Sank from their thrones, and melted into tears,  
And knelt, and lifted hand and heart and voice  
In praise to God who led me thro' the waste.  
And then the great ' Laudamus ' rose to heaven.

Chains for the Admiral of the Ocean ! chains  
For him who gave a new heaven, a new earth,  
As holy John had prophesied of me,  
Gave glory and more empire to the kings  
Of Spain than all their battles ! chains for him  
Who push'd his prows into the setting sun,  
And made West East, and sail'd the Dragon's mouth,  
And came upon the Mountain of the World,  
And saw the rivers roll from Paradise !

Chains ! we are Admirals of the Ocean, we,  
We and our sons for ever. Ferdinand  
Hath sign'd it and our Holy Catholic queen—  
Of the Ocean—of the Indies—Admirals we—  
Our title, which we never mean to yield,  
Our guerdon not alone for what we did,  
But our amends for all we might have done—  
The vast occasion of our stronger life—  
Eighteen long years of waste, seven in your Spain,  
Lost, showing courts and kings a truth the babe  
Will suck in with his milk hereafter—earth  
A sphere.

Were *you* at Salamanca ? No.  
We fronted there the learning of all Spain,

All their cosmogonies, their astronomies :  
Guess-work *they* guess'd it, but the golden guess  
Is morning-star to the full round of truth.  
No guess-work ! I was certain of my goal ;  
Some thought it heresy, but that would not hold.  
King David call'd the heavens a hide, a tent  
Spread over earth, and so this earth was flat :  
Some cited old Lactantius : could it be  
That trees grew downward, rain fell upward, men  
Walk'd like the fly on ceilings ? and besides,  
The great Augustine wrote that none could breathe  
Within the zone of heat ; so might there be  
Two Adams, two mankinds, and that was clean  
Against God's word : thus was I beaten back,  
And chiefly to my sorrow by the Church,  
And thought to turn my face from Spain, appeal  
Once more to France or England ; but our Queen  
Recall'd me, for at last their Highnesses  
Were half-assured this earth might be a sphere.

All glory to the all-blessed Trinity,  
All glory to the mother of our Lord,  
And Holy Church, from whom I never swerved  
Not even by one hair's-breadth of heresy,  
I have accomplish'd what I came to do.

Not yet—not all—last night a dream—I sail'd  
On my first voyage, harass'd by the frights  
Of my first crew, their curses and their groans.  
The great flame-banner borne by Teneriffe,  
The compass, like an old friend false at last  
In our most need, appall'd them, and the wind  
Still westward, and the weedy seas—at length  
The landbird, and the branch with berries on it,  
The carven staff—and last the light, the light  
On Guanahani ! but I changed the name ;  
San Salvador I call'd it ; and the light  
Grew as I gazed, and brought out a broad sky  
Of dawning over—not those alien palms,  
The marvel of that fair new nature—not  
That Indian isle, but our most ancient East  
Moriah with Jerusalem ; and I saw  
The glory of the Lord flash up, and beat  
Thro' all the homely town from jasper, sapphire,  
Chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius,  
Chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprase,  
Jacynth, and amethyst—and those twelve gates,  
Pearl—and I woke, and thought—death—I shall die—  
I am written in the Lamb's own Book of Life  
To walk within the glory of the Lord  
Sunless and moonless, utter light—but no !

The Lord had sent this bright, strange dream to me  
To mind me of the secret vow I made  
When Spain was waging war against the Moor—  
I strove myself with Spain against the Moor.  
There came two voices from the Sepulchre,  
Two friars crying that if Spain should oust  
The Moslem from her limit, he, the fierce  
Soldan of Egypt, would break down and raze  
The blessed tomb of Christ ; whereon I vow'd  
That, if our Princes harken'd to my prayer,  
Whatever wealth I brought from that new world  
Should, in this old, be consecrate to lead  
A new crusade against the Saracen,  
And free the Holy Sepulchre from thrall.

Gold? I had brought your Princes gold enough  
If left alone ! Being but a Genovese,  
I am handled worse than had I been a Moor,  
And breach'd the belting wall of Cambalu,  
And given the Great Khan's palaces to the Moor,  
Or clutch'd the sacred crown of Prester John,  
And cast it to the Moor : but *had* I brought  
From Solomon's now-recover'd Ophir all  
The gold that Solomon's navies carried home,  
Would that have gilded *me* ? Blue blood of Spain,

Tho' quartering your own royal arms of Spain,  
I have not : blue blood and black blood of Spain,  
The noble and the convict of Castile,  
Howl'd me from Hispaniola ; for you know  
The flies at home, that ever swarm about  
And cloud the highest heads, and murmur down  
Truth in the distance—these outbuzz'd me so  
That even our prudent king, our righteous queen—  
I pray'd them being so calumniated  
They would commission one of weight and worth  
To judge between my slander'd self and me—  
Fonseca my main enemy at their court,  
They sent me out *his* tool, Bovadilla, one  
As ignorant and impolitic as a beast—  
Blockish irreverence, brainless greed—who sack'd  
My dwelling, seized upon my papers, loosed  
My captives, feed the rebels of the crown,  
Sold the crown-farms for all but nothing, gave  
All but free leave for all to work the mines,  
Drove me and my good brothers home in chains,  
And gathering ruthless gold—a single piece  
Weigh'd nigh four thousand Castillanos—so  
They tell me—weigh'd him down into the abysm—  
The hurricane of the latitude on him fell,  
The seas of our discovering over-roll

Him and his gold ; the frailer caravel,  
With what was mine, came happily to the shore.  
*There* was a glimmering of God's hand.

And God

Hath more than glimmer'd on me. O my lord,  
I swear to you I heard his voice between  
The thunders in the black Veragua nights,  
'O soul of little faith, slow to believe !  
Have I not been about thee from thy birth ?  
Given thee the keys of the great Ocean-sea ?  
Set thee in light till time shall be no more ?  
Is it I who have deceived thee or the world ?  
Endure ! thou hast done so well for men, that men  
Cry out against thee : was it otherwise  
With mine own Son ?'

And more than once in days  
Of doubt and cloud and storm, when drowning hope  
Sank all but out of sight, I heard his voice,  
'Be not cast down. I lead thee by the hand,  
Fear not.' And I shall hear his voice again—  
I know that he has led me all my life,  
I am not yet too old to work his will—  
His voice again.

## *Columbus*

Still for all that, my lord,  
I lying here bedridden and alone,  
Cast off, put by, scouted by court and king—  
The first discoverer starves—his followers, all  
Flower into fortune—our world's way—and I,  
Without a roof that I can call mine own,  
With scarce a coin to buy a meal withal,  
And seeing what a door for scoundrel scum  
I open'd to the West, thro' which the lust,  
Villany, violence, avarice, of your Spain  
Pour'd in on all those happy naked isles—  
Their kindly native princes slain or slaved,  
Their wives and children Spanish concubines,  
Their innocent hospitalities quench'd in blood,  
Some dead of hunger, some beneath the scourge,  
Some over-labour'd, some by their own hands,—  
Yea, the dear mothers, crazing Nature, kill  
Their babies at the breast for hate of Spain—  
Ah God, the harmless people whom we found  
In Hispaniola's island-Paradise !  
Who took us for the very Gods from Heaven,  
And we have sent them very fiends from Hell ;  
And I myself, myself not blameless, I  
Could sometimes wish I had never led the way.



Only the ghost of our great Catholic Queen  
Smiles on me, saying, ' Be thou comforted !  
This creedless people will be brought to Christ  
And own the holy governance of Rome.'

But who could dream that we, who bore the Cross  
Thither, were excommunicated there,  
For curbing crimes that scandalised the Cross,  
By him, the Catalonian Minorite,  
Rome's Vicar in our Indies? who believe  
These hard memorials of our truth to Spain  
Clung closer to us for a longer term  
Than any friend of ours at Court? and yet  
Pardon—too harsh, unjust. I am rack'd with pains.

You see that I have hung them by my bed,  
And I will have them buried in my grave.

Sir, in that flight of ages which are God's  
Own voice to justify the dead—perchance  
Spain once the most chivalric race on earth,  
Spain then the mightiest, wealthiest realm on earth,  
So made by me, may seek to unbury me,  
To lay me in some shrine of this old Spain,  
Or in that vaster Spain I leave to Spain.

Then some one standing by my grave will say,  
'Behold the bones of Christopher Colòn'—  
'Ay, but the chains, what do *they* mean—the chains?'—  
I sorrow for that kindly child of Spain  
Who then will have to answer, 'These same chains  
Bound these same bones back thro' the Atlantic sea,  
Which he unchain'd for all the world to come.'

O Queen of Heaven who seest the souls in Hell  
And purgatory, I suffer all as much  
As they do—for the moment. Stay, my son  
Is here anon : my son will speak for me  
Ablier than I can in these spasms that grind  
Bone against bone. You will not. One last word.

You move about the Court, I pray you tell  
King Ferdinand who plays with me, that one,  
Whose life has been no play with him and his  
Hidalgos—shipwrecks, famines, fevers, fights,  
Mutinies, treacheries—wink'd at, and condoned—  
That I am loyal to him till the death,  
And ready—tho' our Holy Catholic Queen,  
Who fain had pledged her jewels on my first voyage,  
Whose hope was mine to spread the Catholic faith,  
Who wept with me when I return'd in chains,

Who sits beside the blessed Virgin now,  
To whom I send my prayer by night and day—  
She is gone—but you will tell the King, that I,  
Rack'd as I am with gout, and wrench'd with pains  
Gain'd in the service of His Highness, yet  
Am ready to sail forth on one last voyage,  
And readier, if the King would hear, to lead  
One last crusade against the Saracen,  
And save the Holy Sepulchre from thrall.

Going? I am old and slighted : you have dared  
Somewhat perhaps in coming? my poor thanks !  
I am but an alien and a Genovese.

THE END





