

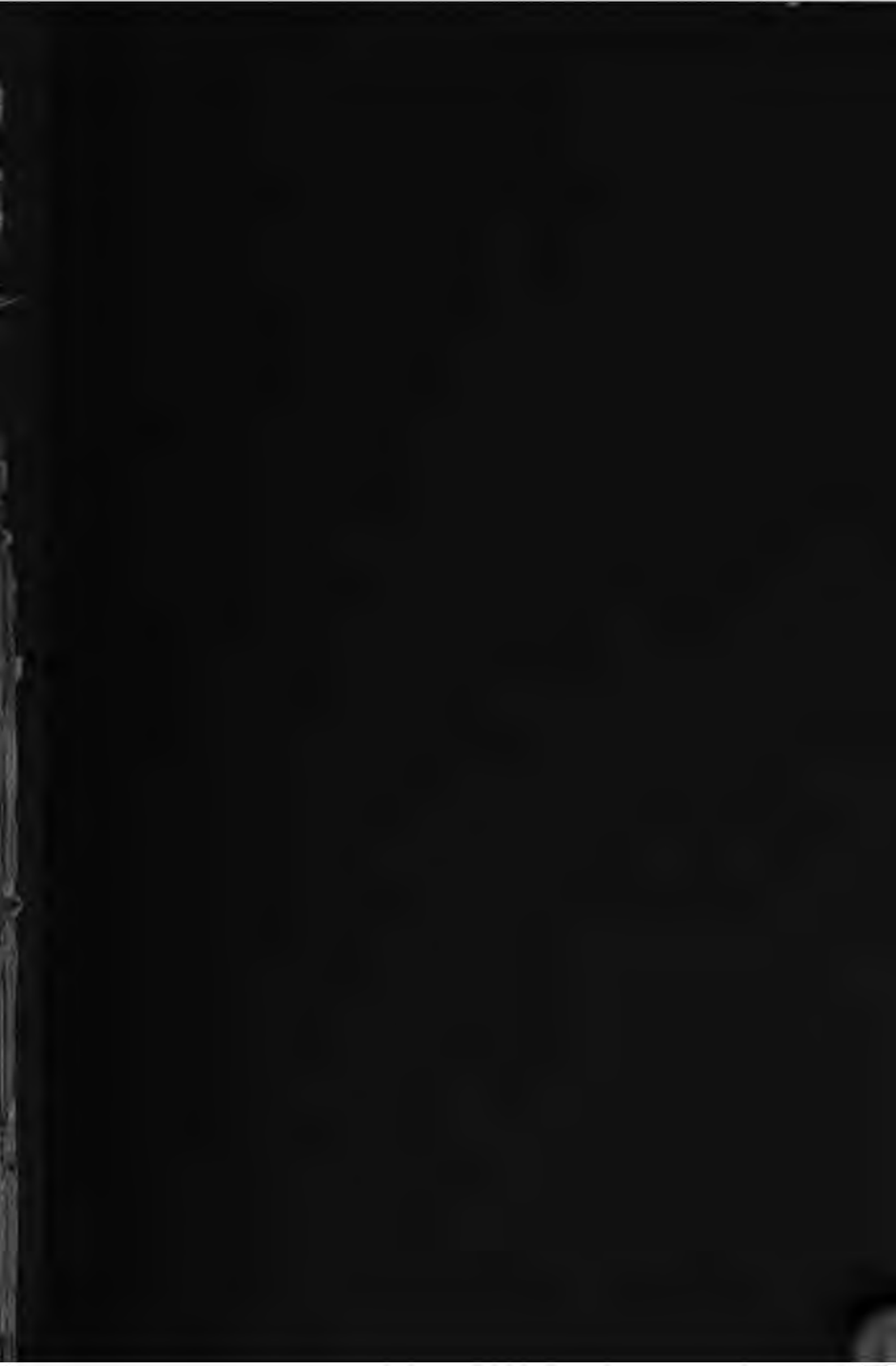


A

SOUL'S

COMEDY





With the

Publisher's Compliments

A SOUL'S COMEDY.

A SOUL'S COMEDY

BY

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PERSONS OF THE COMEDY.

HENRY CARTWRIGHT.

JASPER, *his son.*

HUBERT MORVEN, *Jasper's Guardian.*

FATHER PAUL, *Priest of the Most Holy Roman Church.*

GABRIEL, *an Acolyte.*

JULIA, *a Girl.*

STEPHEN GILP, *a Schoolmaster.*

JOHN JOHNSON, *a Friend of Morven.*

GLANVIL, *a Magician.*

WILLIAM MORVEN, *Brother of Hubert.*

MARY BLAKE.

MATTHEW, BASIL, ERNEST JOHNSON, MILES, *Friends
of Jasper.*

JOHN NORTH, *Jasper's Uncle.*

GERTRUDE, *his Daughter.*

AUSTIN BLAKE, *a Poet.*

OTWAY, WILLIAM ARTHUR, ARNOLD, *Friends of
Austin.*

A tragedy in its ancient and legitimate sense depicts the triumph of destiny over man ; the comedy, or story with a happy ending, represents the triumph of man over destiny. It is in this sense that the spiritual history of Jasper Cartwright is called a Soul's Comedy.

Part the first.

THE SOUL'S DEVELOPMENT.

BOOK THE FIRST.

SCENE—*A darkened room.*—HENRY CARTWRIGHT,
HUBERT MORVEN.

Cartwright. Evening by evening did the burning
West

Its splendid pageantry of fire sublime
Display before us ; and the daily sight
Insensibly impress'd the youthful heart,
High thoughts infused, gave light to faithful eye
That watch'd unfailing. In the waste forlorn
The schoolhouse stood, an old, romantic pile,
Wild grounds and orchards round it. As a dream
With life is blent, to us a part of life
That scene became, no less with dream involved ;
And as the world is rounded with the sky,
Those sunsets rounded all our daily life ;
God's self no farther than the farthest verge,
Where silent fen was merged in silent sky,
Seemed parted from us, whose creative smile
From floating clouds and cold exhaling mist
That glory's wonder kindled, so it seem'd,
For us alone. The Sunset and the school,
God and the boys, across the mournful marsh
Were facing one another. Nature there

No part could play, her aspect scarcely known,
In God's absorb'd, and something felt at night,
Not God, yet dread, the Spirit of the House,
Abiding Presence! Solitary, gaunt,
That mansion, magnified in mist and gloom,
Loom'd through the darkness imminent, immense,
With wide, blank eyes through space a stony stare
Directing. Which into the world went forth
Of all those boys, and did not bear through life
That sunset scene, that mansion's ghostly guise
Impress'd upon him, still to haunt in dreams,
Each long life-poem by their mystic spell
From end to end affected? They became
A Fate to all; I know they ruled in me;
If all were summon'd in the soul or flesh
To stand before us, do you think one boy
Would bring some common, unenchanted tale?
I see thee standing, sadly musing here,
Thy thoughts turn'd inward, thine abstracted gaze
Remarking nought—confess their potent force!
How hast thou fared? When last we parted, thou
And I were young together; now thy hair
Is grizzled, now thy face with lines of thought
And age is furrow'd. Was it well with thee
These years?

Morven. With him who has outlived his hopes,
All things are well because indifferent.

Cartwright. In thy sad face and in thy languid air
I read thy soul's divorce from peace and joy.
We started both with brave and high resolves;

No doubts had we ; bright hopes fulfill'd we thought
To wear as crowns. What bears thy wrinkled brow ?
Grey hairs, like mine. We've lived—for what ? To
gain

Some tale worth telling when the time and mood,
As now, are fitting ? Tell me, Morven, thine !
The contrast, or the parallel, make plain
'Twixt thine and mine.

Morven. There was, my friend, a boy
Seized with the wanderer's fever—that divine
Disease which bares the secret, stored delights
Of this illimitable universe !
But friends too fond, a parent's selfish love
The rover's long'd-for liberty denied.
The boy grew up, the passion with his growth
Matured, and strengthen'd with increasing strength.
To youth attain'd, this potent fever burn'd
In all his veins ; but on that parent now
Had fallen evil fortune—did the boy
Go forth and leave that bent and lonely head
Bad were his heart. So youth to manhood ripen'd,
And, thriving yet, the parent's life prolong'd
Beside it still detain'd the man mature,
Whom duty bound. In him the fire which first
Inform'd, upheld, and strengthen'd, a bright light
Directing, beautiful, did now consume
The life within him. Thus the days pass'd on,
Till when the tale of five and forty years
Was writ in wrinkles on his patient brow
This man was free—free !—but with forces spent,

Joy's springs exhausted, flowers of purpose fair
 Wither'd, and shrivell'd the unripen'd fruit
 Of those high hopes wherein no sunbeam now
 Could stir the stagnant juices, sweets extracting
 From ashes and from gall, or kindle now
 The dead, self-multiplying power. It came,
 The sunshine came, but with averted gaze
 Backward he turn'd—the soul was sick within.
 Yet God forbid that by one hour alone
 His wish should shorten for a selfish end
 The life whence he drew being! . . . I recount
 My story here.

Cartwright. Thy tale in brief reveal'd!
 Didst thou then never, never in all thy days,
 Thy first vocation follow?

Morven. The bright dream
 I cherish'd grew more sacred in my sight
 The longer its achievement was deferr'd;
 I would not desecrate in that late day
 Its beauty by a commonplace and dull
 Fulfilment, for the vision and romance
 Were over.

Cartwright. Thy shy, earnest face and eyes
 In youth come back before me; I have seen
 Their light upon the sea since many times—
 A pale, sun-freckled face that almost seem'd
 A fair one, which an animating glow
 Could kindle into beauty—a broad brow
 And chest which met the wind that blew from sea
 How oft in fancy!—the round head thrown back,

Like some bold swimmer when he takes the waves
With adverse chin. Thy spirit was in thought,
Abroad for ever on the land or sea.

Thy rover's heart—how eager, brave it was!
How blithe thou wert, with keen, unflinching gaze,
Sky's blue, sun's brightness meeting! Here to-day
I see before me one subdued and sad,
Restrain'd in all his actions. How thy day
From summer dawn has deepen'd into cold
And melancholy twilight! Now thy hand
Grasps weakly; that last sunbeam on thy face
Hath dazzled thee, grown old before thy time,
And thy hopes dead within thee.

Morven. In deep thought,
Dark thought, monotony, and weariness,
The years have passed.

Cartwright. That house deserted stands
Where we were school'd together in the past.
Winds blow through broken windows; it is cold
And sad and desolate and dark therein;
It hears no voice, it holds no human heart,
Ghosts haunt it now. The spirit of the place
Sees day by day the sun departing there,
Sees night by night all starry heaven revolve,
Sees moons descending; it is dreadful still,
That silent spirit, and in state supreme
It reigns o'er ruins, o'er its crumbling walls,
Alone it reigns. Recall who taught us there—
The pale, lean man, of melancholy guise,
Who when the class was over, merged in thought,

Stalk'd like a phantom through the house alone,
And would not mark our presence, though he cast
His sad, deep-sunken, introspective eyes
At intervals upon us. We at night,
Who shared one room, would hear his distant step
Pacing some lonely corridor, wherein,
Through casements crusted with the dust of time,
The yellow moonbeams shone. Recall those books
In which with terrified and stealthy glance
We dipped at times, to read with trembling lips
The spells that spirits from the dead compell'd,
Of awful forms by bolder words evoked
In evil vigils. Thou art wiser now ;
Thy scorn's faint smile around thy languid mouth
A moment flickers ! . . . To a room remote
Full oft did Glanvil pass ; upon the walls
Of that deserted chamber there was hung
A magic mirror, in which the gifted mind
Might glimpse the world of spirit. Once by stealth
We half in earnest, half in sport, contrived
To enter there, and long the mystic disc
In vain consulted.

Morven. Then the sense of awe
Departing, left the imps of mischief room
To enter both, and long with scornful jests
The latent ghosts within that dingy frame
In merry mood we taunted, then with ink
The burnish'd surface stain'd, and turn'd its face
Against the wall. . . What boots it now to bring
These trifles back ?

Cartwright. They say that Glanvil's spells
The sainted spirit of his orphan niece
Within that glass compell'd.

Morven. She haunts thee still
To whom thy troth in that thine early youth
Was fondly plighted.

Cartwright. To whose soul assumed
I vow'd a virgin life.

Morven. A foolish pledge !

Cartwright. My face in boyhood from thy mind
perchance

Hath long departed ; but her grey, winsome eyes
Can ne'er have left thee, all her maiden mien,
When clad with simple raiment—white and blue—
She walk'd beside me o'er the meads at eve
When school was over. Out of all she chose me,
And I forsook, my friend, for love of her,
Both mate and play.

Morven. Thy head was turn'd in truth
When in that ancient mansion on the marsh
She came to dwell.

Cartwright. Beyond the strength of youth
I loved her, all my dreams came true in her !

Morven. It is too far from out the past evoked
Now to affect thee, though the tale be sad.
An Autumn storm o'ertook you once at eve,
Two miles or more from home, when both had watch'd
Behind a dark copse over misty fields
Cold evening quench the fire that filled the West,
Whose naked space of weird and baleful flame

With lurid light invested driving clouds
And vapours pale. A rainbow rose and spann'd
The earth and sky ; then deadly mists exhaled,
They folded round you, soon the path was lost,
And both were drench'd and terrified and cold,
And one was fragile as a frost in spring—
Exposure wrought on her ; consumption seized
That gentle girl, the dreadful end drew nigh—
She sent for thee ; I think thy wits awhile
Forsook thee then, for when with gentle voice
She counsell'd thee, thou didst thyself reproach
For tempting her to roam that Autumn eve,
And 'twixt thy tears and sobs, with broken words,
A vow was rashly made through all thy days
To love no maid in flesh, if she would love thee
In spirit still translated to the sky.
She then, who sought with dying strength at first,
And friendly words impress'd at solemn time,
Thine after-weal to compass, whether touch'd
At that thy youthful agony of grief,
Or by thy love constrain'd, or weak herself
Through love, unwittingly did injure thee,
Did with thin hands caress thy curly head
(Lo, thy faint image in this scene recall'd
Has strengthen'd suddenly, how bright it shines !),
Then took thy pledge, and bound herself to be
Thy spirit-bride (perchance to keep thee pure
'Midst youth's temptations, or thy childish heart
To soothe and please, accounting rightly nought
The bond itself), if thou through all thy days

Kept virgin faith inviolate with her.

Cartwright. How long the pledge was kept is
known to thee,

For we were friends throughout our Oxford days,
Though time had somewhat changed us.

Morven.

Ah, my heart

Was far away, abroad on land and sea !

One place alone where soul and flesh were free—
Wide earth—my home.

Cartwright.

It moves thee even now !

Thine eyes have kindled, on thy chair erect

Thou sittest, and the blood warms in thy cheek.

I sought alone for sympathy and love,

Me never did the rover's fever seize ;

I prized my books, to lead a student's life,

By love made sunshine, was the dream I cherish'd.

Perchance my mind was dower'd with wings to dare

Some flight sublime—perchance the call had come—

New lights dawn'd too—why else a hope like that,

So soon achieved, which offer'd in its cause

No toilsome struggle, was for aye denied,

God knows, not I !

Morven.

Does that perplex thee still—

That foolish part in boyhood play'd by thee? . . .

What weeping stripling on the staircase stood

To let me pass? The light, subdued and tinged

By the long painted window facing West,

His rich brown curls a moment glorified ;

The comely visage in a faint, strange way,

Doth shadow forth thy childhood.

Cartwright. I have reach'd
My latest day, before him life expands
For whom I begg'd thy presence, and make known
A shame that else were buried with myself.

Morven. I half divine thy purpose towards the
lad.

Well, if thy vow was broken, he remains.
Who'd chide thee, Cartwright? Does it still perplex
Thy spirit? The wild vow was void as air!

Cartwright. I held it binding, and I broke it,
Morven;

'Tis like a goblet shatter'd in the hand,
The splinters spear my spirit.

Morven. Is that thy weakness?
Or has calamity indeed o'ercome thee?

Cartwright. Those words precipitate and wild were
wrung

By grief from me. Suppose I made in haste
Some vow to thee and then repented it,
Thou would'st not hold me bound through life thereby:
Would she judge harsher who to-day sits crown'd?

Morven. I think thy scruples would from reason's
lance

In flight dispersed have left thy conscience free,
But all hope vanish'd when thy father died—
Thy father, in the city merchant once,
A silent, sad, and disappointed man,
Yet patient, of a charitable heart,
And to thyself indulgent. . . . In the dark
We sit together, we are lads once more,

Thy part I take ; I tell thee how that gray,
Lone recluse, counted widower by all,
Whose lips made never mention of his wife,
Had wife no less, though dead indeed to him.
The man whose life by treason thus became
Embittered and divided from itself,
In his last moments to the youth, his son,
Reveal'd that wrong, and all of shame and grief
The same had wrought him ; then with earnest words,
In failing tones, he begg'd the boy to bear
This tale in mind, and take in time therefrom
A wholesome warning for his weal and peace,
And not to wed, but all his days devote
To kindly deeds, making the orphan's love,
The love of widows in their wants relieved,
Sufficient, and to fix his heart on God. . . .
A moment pause, the method and the aim
To analyse—whether a thought in spleen
Conceived, or whether a paternal wish
The boy by his experience dearly bought
Should cheaply profit.

Cartwright. In the speech he died.
My heart was wrung within me, by that corpse,
Whose face shone ghostlike through the gloom of
 night,
In silence kneeling. How the kindly man
Had, uncomplaining, borne his wrong through life
In secret, till it wore his life away !
And then my spirit, to its virgin vow
Recurring, started with a ghostly thrill ;

I saw the sacred nature of the pledge
 Proclaim'd before me in my father's words,
 And thus two hands of Fate from points distinct
 One path in life directed. . . . O wayward heart,
 Which set alone upon a certain course,
 Whate'er may rise to threaten or dissuade,
 Grows stronger in rebellion! Every voice
 In earth and heaven may plead in vain therewith,
 The soul itself may plead, all sense cry out;
 From each opposing force its purpose gains
 More stubborn strength. O blindness passing all,
 O miserable folly, evermore
 To fate transform'd!

Morven. False conscience stings thee still!

Cartwright. If I had married as a man mature
 From no mean motive of desire or gain,
 But purest love; if where my heart was set
 The Queen of Virtue dwelt with flowers around
 Of gentlest feeling, bloom'd the Rose of love,
 Thou dost not think a grievous weight of woe
 For that would crush me to my life's last day,
 And on my child devolve in burning shame? . . .
 Thy scornful gesture answers—Hear me then!
 My friend, spurred on by misery within,
 A refuge vainly seeking from myself,
 I wander'd wide and far. If I had stay'd
 In college—had I pass'd my life at home,
 And kept to books, by effort of the mind
 Controll'd the restless spirit, not myself,
 Within me enter'd—had I sought relief

From bitterness in hard, in manual toil,
Gone forth to serve my country, all were well
This day with me, to whom the call had come
From knowledge, but I took thy task on me,
And went wayfaring.

Morven. Thine ill-chosen course
Hath wrought thy ruin, and mine own this day
Makes night within my spirit. I, who sought
A refuge from the misery of hope
Deferr'd, turn'd student in my taste's despite ;
Our fates misplaced to each a curse have proved !

Cartwright. Weak hearts are wilful, and I never
yet

Had loved a woman—since that maiden died
In my first youth. It was the curb I chafed at,
The pledge which tortured, drove me on to meet
Misfortune else impossible, and spann'd
A separating gulf of earth and sea.
The ocean cross'd, I reach'd the Western World,
And, roaming long, that place remote and wild
Where over rose my baleful star of life
Eternally ascending. Amid rocks
And wilted meadows, near the lonely sea
(One mile of stubble, then the shore's thin strip,
Of yellow surf-strewn sand), the hamlet lay :
There stood the white-wood cottage, long and low,
With bright green lattices and orchard ground,
Where peaches dropp'd unvalued, there she dwelt.

Morven. What boots it to describe her? Spare
thyself !

Cartwright. The maid indeed was beautiful!—

My friend,

Is that the night descending? Lo, my soul
 Stands like a phantom in the porch alone
 Of that far distant cottage, and can count,
 Each waning leaf on yonder mangrove tree!
 I roam with Mary then—'tis evening, falls
 The twilight round us, on the heath we pause;
 The moonbeams striving with the Autumn clouds
 Cast light on her pale spiritual face,
 On grey eyes shining softly as a ghost's—
 On her tall, graceful figure, by the mist
 Dilated, on the simple robe of white
 Like samite shining, and the grey, wide shawl
 About her shoulders folded. Now the mist
 Clears as we walk, and far before I see
 The shallow tide upon the level shore,
 In little bays shine in the early moonlight. . . .
 The maid indeed was beautiful; it seem'd,
 Despite my vow, a good and lawful thing
 That I should win her, as a man my part
 Fulfilling, of a girl so pure and fair
 Begetting, to our happiness and theirs,
 Pure, beautiful, and healthful boys and girls;
 And so we loved. . . . Bear with me, friend, is that
 The night descending?

Morven.

Be this curtain drawn—

The western clouds in horizontal lines
 Of livid purple, stratified and still,
 Behind the foreground of that line of elms,

Do brood and dream and brood. A moment more—
The evanescent sorcery of light
It's broken spell withdraws ; through one wide mouth,
With livid lips, far-parted, jagg'd, and loose,
The tide of fire flows back—it closes now,
The livid purple into black resolves,
The spent lark drops.

Cartwright. And having loved, my friend,
I set my heart against an inner voice,
And wedded Mary North. A child was born ;
We moved from Lyme to Newport on the sea,
And there we dwelt. I may not say with truth
That I was happy in mine inmost heart,
Where one thorn rankled, yet my end was reach'd,
A student's life, love-brighten'd, leading there.
When on the lonely coast at eve or night
I issued, when I roam'd with Mary there,
When from my study to the lawn I pass'd
(Thou striving sun, before thy bourne be reach'd,
Shoot one long beam of light through broken clouds
Along thy yearning world !), when there I stood,
While sea-winds cool'd my head, while all my thoughts
Like crystals settled, then indeed it seem'd
That God in mercy bless'd my broken vow,
That no light thing should stand 'twixt man and bliss,
And least of all that trifle light as air
Whose phantom haunted still my weaker moods.
Such musing sooth'd me on a morn in March,
When round me sea-birds wheel'd with flashing wings,
When the sea's azure by its starry crests

Was varied ever, and ever the rising tide
 Broke in crisp ripples, above the sea-breeze lifting
 Light voices distant, murmurous, and prolong'd.
 I said :—My spirit with Thy peace, O God,
 Is fill'd this day : Thy comforts smooth my days,
 And not less bright than on this open main
 The spring sun shines, Thy blessing falls on me.
 I trust a life as yet by lust unstain'd,
 Though great in nought, atones my broken vow,
 If aught displeas'd Thee there ; I cast henceforth
 My care away, this weight of false remorse ;
 Thy grace and favour visibly impress'd
 On all things round me hath my choice confirm'd ;
 It shall not trouble me, nor grieve me more,
 I thank Thee, Lord !

Again the house I sought
 (My prayer was utter'd with an earnest heart,
 Pride did not prompt, as tears attested then,
 My soul with gratitude alone o'ercharg'd
 In thanks that morning unto God went up),
 There waited dole and doom !

Morven. Bright evening star,
 Now clouds dissolve, direct one beam of light—
 One silver beam—to cheer this darken'd heart !

Cartwright. When I met Mary first i' the parson's
 house
 She dwelt, companion to the parson's wife ;
 And she spoke little of the past at most,
 Or early friends ; an orphan girl was she,
 And though refined in manners as in mien—

A cultured mind—her youth, I know, was hard.
She spoke with pain thereof—I trusted her—
I loved her well, and all my soul within
Bore witness firmly to her virgin worth.
If she were beautiful, and bright, and pure,
Thou would'st not count it as a grave neglect
I did not sift the miserable past,
The dry dead past to learn her mother's name ;
If *she* had strutted in the London streets,
For that was Mary less the Child of God?
My friend, a name—one name—the meanest thing,
But, as the acorn holds the oak within,
It held a world of ruin.—Hast thou pass'd
In business haste a crowd i' the London streets
About a swooning man, or man run down?
Hast thou not edged thy way to mark his face?
Why shouldst thou do it? Thou art press'd for time,
Ten thousand chances against one combine
That thou shouldst know him; 'tis thy friend no
less—

Thy dearest friend—struck by the hand of death,
And thou hast pass'd, and now through all thy life,
Thou canst not alter that; thy timely aid
Perchance had help'd him—once thy life he saved—
The vacant place he leaves will ne'er be fill'd;
If thou couldst blame the tempest o'er the sea,
But that mean trifle,—thou hast pass'd in haste—
Beware of little things, they are great with Fate! . . .
An elder brother who had gone to sea,
Unheard of long, my Mary mourn'd as lost;

But scarce my prayer upon my lips had died
When he was standing, clasp'd in Mary's arms,
Who, though rejoicing in his safe return,
Still seem'd in secret trouble. For her sake,
And for the hardships of a sailor wrecked,
With honest warmth I welcomed him—a man
Uncouth, yet noble-hearted, stern but true,
A man whose honour, unimpeachable
Itself, no lapse from its high standard brook'd
In others. He was rested and refresh'd ;
The morning pass'd ; he told his strange sea-tale,
Then ask'd of us, and how we came to wed ;
And as the day went by to long past times,
And Mary's youth, reverted ; once or more
To some disgrace or tragedy which both
Recall'd with agony ; the words he used
Assumed my knowledge, till in pure amaze
I ask'd his meaning ; starting then he cast
One glance upon his sister ; she was pale
With agony, and shrank ; he answer'd me
No word, his manner changed to moodiness.
I left them thus together, till I heard
The sounds of weeping ; with a thousand doubts
Distracted I return'd ; all pale and stern
He stood before me ; Mary pass'd me by
With tearful face averted ; then John North,
In his blunt fashion and deep, earnest tone,
Said, fear or love had prompted some deceit
In his poor sister towards me ; had he known
He might have kept the secret for her sake,

But having spoken in unguarded mood,
Both thought it better on his doubtful words
To place a plain construction. Love for me
And fear to lose my love, then lately gain'd,
If she confess'd there was a stain in birth
Upon her, had impell'd her to conceal.
Then, with no further preface, in plain words
He told how one, herself a lawful wife,
Had fled from England with her husband's friend,
And in this distant country borne a girl
And boy to him, how these were Mary North
And he, John North, that till their father died
She shared his fortunes—then with want o'ercome,
One summer evening sent the children out,
And ended life with poison.

Morven. A sad tale,
But these fictitious and imputed stains
At birth contracted—

Cartwright. Dost thou think my love,
Whose force had broken through a vow's restraint,
Could long be troubled at a secret kept
To save me pain, or else insure a heart
By girlish modesty and grace and worth
Insured already, had the maid but known? . . .
Pass all the rapture by her pardon caused,
Pass my confession, pass my vow reveal'd—
My vow kept secret long for Mary's sake ;
Then, later still, to bind us more and more,
My father's tale, my mother's flight from home.
North started then ; I saw his face grow white,

Before me, as he sat in silence there,
With one foot resting on the hearth and one
Set on the ample rug—those shoulders broad
A little bent, bent too the massive head
With its dark hair, the full beard swept his chest.
An awful doubt had seized that moody man,
Making him muse and ponder—starting now
And then, aghast, I doubt not, at the dread,
Half-guess'd calamity those tales just told
Had flash'd upon him in their parallels.
“Cartwright!” he said at length, “Cartwright—that
name!”

And rising suddenly he strode with firm
Step once—it may be, twice—across the room,
And then sat down, and then again was lost
In silent thought, while over Mary's chair,
Speaking, I lean'd, and to the tale just told
Referring, unplann'd questions ask'd anew,
To which in confidence, her heart relieved
Of secret load, with undivided truth
She answered me.

I will not now repeat
The facts (fortuitously glean'd) whereby
There dawn'd on me, as upon North had dawn'd,
A dread suspicion. The blunt seaman fix'd
His deep eyes on me; with convulsive start
He rose at times; I felt my blood grow cold,
My cheeks like ashes on a winter hearth
Turn'd deadly white. Her mother's Christian name
Was that which mine had borne; she left one child—

A boy—behind her, as when mine proved false,
Myself—a child—she left. “What chanced to him?”
I cried. “The father bred him, I suppose ;
She never heard,” said Mary. “And the name—
And the true name—her mother as a bride
Received ?” I shriek’d in tones so wild and hoarse
They startled her. “I know it not !” she said,
“I never heard it ! Do not fix your eyes
So terribly upon me !” wailing cried
The frighten’d woman. “But I know too well,”
Said John North, rising with his arm outstretch’d,
And in his alter’d voice the weird, intense
Precision of his agony subdued ;
“I heard it once—once only—and the name,
Most wretched and unfortunate of men,
Was yours ; while she, the mother of your child,
Your wife—O course incredible of Fate !”—
Groaning he paused.

In that most awful hour,
What power preserved me, not alive alone,
But still retaining reason ? still through all
A hold retaining on my former life,
By retrospection marking how my heart
Was blithe in boyhood—how I play’d, and sang,
And shouted, sleeping soundly all the night,
Some playmate true beside me (him I struck,
Perchance, in passion in a game at noon,
But in my arms he slept at night a sound,
Familiar sleep)—how all the genial months
We rose at early morning and swarm’d down,

Half-dress'd, to bathe—how through the winter nights,
 In the long schoolroom, round the blazing hearth,
 We met to weave romances—how we lean'd
 O'er one another, reading ancient books,
 Of noble knights, of battles hardly fought,
 Of lonely, long-enduring, perilous quests.
 Who singled me in that mine early day
 For boldness, or for beauty, from the rest?
 Did aught foretell the fate for which my life
 Was fashion'd, or the path from all apart?

Morven. I counsell'd thee—perchance my voice
 prevail'd !

If that first quarrel in the fields we had
 Beside the starling's nest had ne'er been heal'd ;
 If when the angry heat of envy died
 I had not hover'd in the twilight round,
 Where with thy head upon the desk bow'd down,
 And " Lancelot " lying with its dog's-ear'd leaves
 Dropp'd on the floor beside thee, thou did'st sit ;
 And when the early moon began to sink
 And look'd in on us, with entwining arms
 We had not sat, the breach of friendship fill'd
 With foolish tears ; perchance this pain were spared.

Cartwright. No voice without, the fierce unrest
 within,

That only wrought on me. My broken vow
 Was punish'd in the breaking. . . . Let me tell
 In simplest words, the best, how Mary died.
 She lay some days in lethargy, and then—

Twilight had fallen, and a fitful, cold,
Uneasy wind moan'd on the main without,
Black clouds across the naked, early moon
Were flying, and the rain in sudden gusts
Drove hard against the window—I say then
She rose, sat up, and with both hands she drew
Her tangled raven tresses from her face ;
Like two grey stars, I saw her awful eyes
In the dead twilight shining, as the flash
Of sudden thought kindled the soul within.
“I die,” she said, “but darkness leaves my mind ;
Thy vow was little, and my secret, yes,
That too was little, but immense the woe
Which comes upon us ; do not count it then
As punishment—calamity alone,
Which must be borne with patience, sent indeed
By God some end beyond our thought to compass.
And, therefore, though it has our strength o'ertax'd,
And with the burden breaks at least one heart,
I hold Him just,” she cried, “and hope in Him !
And I who made thee as I trust a true
And faithful wife, who would have been to thee,
Had God permitted it, I think, a true
And loving sister, do not die devoid
Of hope, not only for myself but thee,
Like me resign'd. A sacred charge I leave thee—
That child whom God for purpose great and high
Hath let me bear thee. Shrink not thou from him,
In whose regard God will Himself fulfil,
And see thou hide through all his shame from him.”

When all was o'er we parted—North and I—
After long thought ; he to his old sea-life
The burden of a bitter and wounded heart
Took back ; I came to England, and in this
My father's house I dwelt a broken man,
Who saw beside me here the boy grow up,
The offspring of a violated vow
And nameless shame, a fair, unnatural flower,
Whose origin no eye that look'd thereon
Could e'er mistake, whose nature none could hide,
Clothed in the scarlet of a tell-tale beauty
Whose blush betray'd. Our life like fever-dreams
At times went by—at times with even pace,
As down some mountain's bare and burning side,
The molten lava flows a silent stream.
I was not mad ; I am nigh this day to death,
But all the complex workings of the mind,
The agonising subtleties of thought,
Lie stripp'd before me as a scalpel bares
The body's nerves and veins to the surgeon's eye—
There is no memory in madness ! Still
Thoughts springs were tainted, and a night there
came—

An Autumn night—some comet in the sky
Had hush'd the winds with terror, and the moon
Shone blurr'd and bloody, not a star but Mars—
When pacing lonely corridors, remote
From Jasper's room, across my mind there flash'd
The dread conviction that Avenging Fate
Had not yet finish'd, that through my broken vow,

The infernal world an avenue had found,
To send some scourging spirit on mankind ;
That out of Nature's violated laws
A life inimical to peace and law
Alone could issue. I did not nurse the thought,
I thrust it from me, but it lived, it grew,
Until my spirit with the dread thereof
In tumult rose, and in my burning breast
For freedom shriek'd. That frenzy did my frame
Exhaust, but, happily, the thought diseased
With life departing leaves me clear and cool ;
His future fills my mind. Why did I yield
To morbid dreams? If from this haunted house
To some far school I had sent him long ago—
Had he been hardly used and grown up rough,
With something even of the vice of boys,
It may be, tainted, better had it been.
He has not sinn'd, he cannot mate with men ;
He lives in dreams, he has no manly strength,
He is too beautiful for girl or boy ;
For years his eyes in every star look'd on me,
I've seen the damask of his tawny cheeks
In every sunset rose, it has fill'd the world
With its strange spiritual redness. What
Will come to him? As the wild hart from woods
Transported suddenly to the roaring waste
Of crowded streets, will he stand lost and dazed,
The strange world surging round him ; like the hart,
His orphan spirit, from thy land, O Dream,
Suddenly dropp'd, into some hole will creep

And die of the bewilderment. 'Twas then
 I thought of thee, and like a ghost evoked,
 Thou standest by me. . . . Wilt thou take the lad
 (It is not charity I seek but love,
 My will provides), and act in his regard
 A kindly part, more natural, more just,
 And not less tender than the man who seeks
 This boon in death, and doth for thine assent
 Expected, bless thee in these tears beforehand?

Morven. Learn first, O friend, how with myself it
 fared

Those years of bondage. Refuge sought in books
 From hope deferr'd, a fever in the brain,
 Not long the spells of poem and romance
 Enthral'd this mind, which sought severer task,
 And in the problems of the soul and faith
 I found it. From a tender child, you wot,
 My heart was with the rover; even then
 The hope I cherish'd for eternal life
 Was endless soul-progression through the stars
 (Smile now like me); this fancy held me fast
 In manhood—all my dreams of the beyond
 Were centred there; but when the earthly hope
 Betray'd me I mistrusted the remote,
 And so with patience, for the worst prepared,
 By hope unprompted, nor by fear deterr'd,
 I sought the basis of our human faith
 In things unseen. Through ten long years my soul
 This search pursued, again through ten prolong'd;
 And in the end (remember now that time

When we were boys, and o'er my task unloved
You help'd me—not a boy that cared for books,
Not one, you'd say, to ripen into man—
Of thought mature) I, seeking Truth, lost God,
And go through life, and move from place to place,
With frozen heart. I speak in weaker mood ;
I have not truly lost, the worst I know,
There is no folly in the range of thought
For which my mind finds room i' the name of Faith.
I take my place amidst the course of things,
A portion of the Cosmos ; I am ruled
By its majestic laws ; I stand no more
Apart therefrom through an insane belief
In endless life ; the debt from all things due
I pay and murmur not ; with stars and suns
I stand united in the common bond
That all things die. But I have also dream'd
In Arcady ; if I am wiser now,
I am not happy—it is dead, the heart ;
And, like a wintry mist upon the wide
And mournful sea, my vain and aimless life
Doth age involve. If thou hast faith in dreams,
Wilt thou to such a disillusion'd man
A child confide ?

Cartwright. Did Furies, ere his birth,
Combine against him ? Or did Love Divine,
High doom decreeing for his weal æterne,
In darkness shape its ends, yet wisely and most
well ? . . .

Thou' hast not spared me whom I trust, O God,

Whom she did trust, nor in my death wilt grant
That peace she died in, fail'd this final hope !
Dost thou still try me? Ah, my faith is full !
Take him, O Lord, and multiply for him
Disaster, disadvantage, if Thou wilt !
When evil most combines to work him harm,
And when his soul's destruction most seems sure
And imminent, Thy providence I'll hold
As then most vigilant, his final weal
Most certain. In Thy hands this passing soul
I now commend, as in thine own, O friend,
His will I place ; God raises only thee—
Enough ! Though unbeliever, atheist,
My soul accepts the ruling, and is dumb.

BOOK THE SECOND.

SCENE I.—*A Library in a house at Highgate.*—MORVEN, to whom enter the teacher, STEPHEN GILP, bowing.

Teacher. My name is Gilp, sir—Stephen Gilp ;
my card,
And this prospectus, will, I hope, explain
The reason of my visit and excuse.
You have a boy, sir, in his 'teens, I think,
Of whose intelligence and brilliant parts
Report speaks well ; and, having opened here,
On sterling principles of old approved,
A school, I now solicit with respect
Your patronage. Some families of note
And wealth already have accorded theirs ;
John Johnson too, who is your friend and mine—
I use by leave his name—will send his son ;
Now, should you also favour me, confiding,
As pupil, to my charge your unschool'd lad,
I'll so perform my duty, in regard
To him and you, that credit upon both
Will be reflected, and on the teacher's toil.

Morven. I thank you, sir ; be seated. It is true
An orphan lad into my charge has come,
To whom the loss of parents and of friends

I must supply, and act a father's part,
 Seeking a filial feeling in return
 To brighten and relieve a childless life.

Teacher. Those words are spoken from a parent's
 heart,

And may the kindness which dictated them
 Return in love unmeasur'd to yourself,
 And that respect which childhood owes to age,
 Which all judicious education seeks
 To cultivate, and which the system follow'd
 For many years with much success by me
 Most carefully insists on.

Morven. For your good wishes
 I thank you with sincerity, and not
 Without a due appreciation feel
 The kindness of your offer. You have made
 By thought good profit from experience,
 And with those qualities yourself endow'd
 Which most command respect from old and young,
 Can inculcate the virtues you insure
 Successfully. If, therefore, I decline
 Your offer, it is not without regret—
 I speak sincerely—having made already
 Provisions which preclude—

Teacher. Your pardon, sir!
 You have perhaps another school in view—
 Permit me, therefore, just to mention briefly
 A few particulars concerning mine.
 Its situation in suburban parts
 Combines advantages of open fields

And country air with others, scarcely less,
Resulting from proximity to town.
A stream adjoining to the ample grounds—
Its waters clear and of convenient depth—
Affords facilities for bathing daily.
The diet is unlimited and good ;
The house and all its offices approach
Perfection from a sanitary point.
The terms are moderate—the inclusive fee
Is fix'd at forty guineas, and the boys
May, by arrangement, through the two vacations
Remain at school. The comfort of the lads
And all domestic matters are arranged
By Mistress Gilp. The dormitories—three
In number—are well ventilated, large,
And not too crowded. The curriculum—

Morven. One moment, sir, the points already men-
tion'd

Convince me fully that the rest are good,
And did I have another school in view,
I might be tempted to prefer your own.
A sacred charge I hold this orphan boy,
And I've form'd plans, the fruit of thought mature,
Which, were he fitted by his health and training,
Preclude the thought of school. Sir, from the day
When my friend died, and by his death made over
The lad to me, an aimless life was changed
To one of solemn purpose. Many days
In thought I've pass'd, and now my way behold
More clearly. We are strangers, yet I set

My plans before you. Standing there you seem
A messenger deputed by the world
To question my intention towards the boy,
And I will answer. He was strangely train'd ;
A strong imagination, at the cost
Of reason, has developed and confused
Together dream and fact.—A handsome boy,
And nobly natured, for his tender age,
Tall if too slight, his dark and earnest face,
And those dusk, tender, shining eyes of his
Fix oft the passer ; he is one to tend
With care beyond the common, and for school,
Sir, if you knew him, you would say the first
He is not fitted. On this point no more !
But were the lad like others ; say my care
Should mould his plastic nature to the form
Of common boyhood ; shape him stout and strong,
With self-assertion, fond of manly sports,
And with good, homely, ordinary sense .
Distinguishing the phantoms of the mind,
Dilated in the moonlight of a dream,
From fact's stern outlines, permanently sketch'd,
In the cold daylight of reality ;
Suppose him able in a stand-up fight
To beat that bully whom I picture now
Plaguing your smaller pupils—even then
I have my plans, sir, and my principles.
From the hard story of mine early days
I've learned a bitter lesson. I was kept
Constrain'd and bound, the liberty I sought

Denied me, the ambitions which I nursed
Chidden, the pulses of my boyish blood
Subdued : I was enslaved by those who loved me
(They were not strangers, mark you !). What result ?
A useless life ! The promise of my youth
Was stifled by a pressure from without ;
The stinted growth has made the tree deform'd
And barren. Now there falls into my charge
In these advancing years a boy whose youth
Recalls my own, its promise fair as mine,
I'll nurse the lovely blossom ; and whereas
My nature was constrained shall his find place
For growth uncheck'd : whereas my heart in vain
Sought freedom, his be liberty intact,
To follow his ambition as he will,
To follow impulse where the impulse leads—
My only task ambition to direct
To some high end, the impulse rightly train ;
That out of boyhood into noble youth
A rip'ning nature may emerge in sunshine,
May radiate the light which it receives,
And by its beauty to the beautiful
Draw up the souls of men. If I depute
His training to another, by what means
Shall I this end insure ? which is to make
A happy child into a useful man,
My own deficiencies atone in him,
Whom I must therefore teach and train myself,
Nor trust another though I none distrust,
Nor on myself presume, but on the sure

Ground of my own experience seek to stand,
 From my misfortune weave another's weal,
 Shape from my loss a gain, a true success
 From bitter failure, as it were, begetting
 For mine own littleness a glorious thing.

Teacher. I take it, sir, your plan to rear this boy
 Is first to make him free to choose and act,
 Then by your kindness and your love to lead
 The manumitted nature up the free
 And rugged path of virtue. You forget—
 A boy's place is with boys. At school he finds
 His level; discipline prepares him there,
 And emulation, for the battle of life,
 But isolated from his sex and age,
 Immured at home, you will produce at best
 A scholar, not a boy.

Morven. Nay, he shall mix
 With boys; he shall have friends of his own choice,
 Whose sports shall Jasper share: I will not make
 A girl of him, nor eremite.

Teacher. Then best
 Send him to school and make a man of him!

Morven. After the fashion of the school and world!
 I have a plan, sir, and must follow it—
 You have your own too doubtless.

Teacher. Sir, I have!
 But mine is firmness based upon respect,
 The proper attitude of youthful minds
 Towards age, and learning, and experience.
 My plan insures respect by discipline,

And firmness discipline in turn maintains.
I've sent out many boys into the world
Rear'd on this method ; they are thriving well
In business—some are married, some have turn'd
To politics, but all, or nearly all,
Are on a fair way to success in life.
They are not dreamers, no Quixotic hopes
They cherish ; they are honest but acute,
And few will over-reach them. Some will be
Persons of mark in the commercial world,
And ere they die most will have wealth amass'd.
Some will be city magnates, one will live,
I think, to be a bishop : I myself
Heard his first sermon—there was no nonsense there—
If you would be successful, were his words,
Use discipline. I had taught him as a boy
That useful maxim. But the plan you name
Is not to rear a lad to strive in life,
But to do some high service, Heaven knows what,
For those, who (to make use of metaphor)
Will cut his throat in the mere struggle for bread.
Such is your aim ; the method you pursue
Is in my judgment radically wrong,
And will be of no service to a boy.
Your proffer'd freedom is a dangerous gift,
And kindness ever rules with feeble hand.
Placed in my charge, correcting with due care
The faults of early training, I engage
To fit him for the world, to run the race
On which we all are enter'd from our birth,

And to win in it, I will not say the first
Place, but a good one—not to be despised.
Come, will you try me?

Morven. You mistake me, sir!

I do not mean the boy to walk the dry
Commercial path, for subtlety, deceit,
And politics, nor the Church even. He
Need never on the struggle for mere bread
Be enter'd. Therefore, on this score alone
I seek to set before his youthful mind
Some high ambition which may rule his days,
Lest he grow selfish, lest an easy life
Should down the slope of self-indulgence lead
The lad to sin. I purpose first, so far
As Prudence suffers, to surround him now
With pleasant, bright, and profitable things—
True friends, good books, the scenes of rural life;
Thus nursing love for man and Nature both,
I trust his sympathy and love for one
May greaten still the other as he grows.
The charms of poesy and pure romance,
Of art and music, shall his plastic soul
Form and transform. I look, my friend, to make
His life all sunshine, poetry, and peace;
And when the happy influence of these
On his most gentle, generous mind have work'd
Their full effect, to all things pure and high
Attuning it, I purpose then to set
The suff'ring world before that favour'd soul,
And with the pure, unselfish love thereof

Inflame it ; so the pity of his heart
Shall prompt him ever for its weal to work
(With no reward in view, save that the soul
Must ever find in noble ends achieved),
Because his brothers on the earth toil hard
And suffer much, while all his days are his ;
Because they want while Plenty nurtured him ;
Because they weep, and he is light of heart ;
Because they die, but pleasant life has he ;
Because, in fine, sinking they stretch their hands
In dreadful supplication out to him,
And he is gifted, keen, and clear of sight,
And he can help them.

Teacher. We may not live to see—
Nor you, nor I—the issue of your plan,
But never failure on the face of things
Was written plainer. Trust a thinker versed
In practical philosophy alone,
Who claims no higher wisdom, but therein
Finds all sufficient for the needs of life :
I have known boys spoil'd by kindness but not led—
This for your method : for the end in view,
Your strange Utopian scheming bears the same
Relation to true life and the world's way
As dreams to daylight. On a theme so vague
All reason's lost, yet hear a warning voice !
Unlimited ambition loses all
It grasps at : press into a smaller scope,
If you'd fulfil them, those romantic plans,
Nor seek a nature to restrain by love,

Whose freedom makes it to itself a law,
 Nor by a regimen of roses train
 To grasp at any object, great or small,
 Which thorns encompass.

Morven. I can see, my friend,
 You have my boy's true interest at heart,
 And for your well-intended argument
 I thank you, sir ; it shall not pass unheeded.

Teacher. Good night, sir ! If your scheme be
 immature—

It bears the marks of it—my own is tried,
 And in the course of twenty years has proved
 The claim I make. At any future time
 I shall be happy to receive the youth
 Should your plan fail you, as it must and will.

Morven. (going out into the balcony). The night
 has fallen, yet the genial warmth
 Of this bright day still lingers, like the long
 And lovely lines of light which fade how slowly
 Amid the western clouds ! And, lo, the moon
 Above the mists of London large and red
 Begins to rise, but not till midnight chimes
 From yonder Church her zenith will she reach,
 With all the busy multitudes of men
 Beneath that dim light shining far away
 Hush'd into sleep. . . . Is that the evening wind's
 Low murmur, or the city's distant hum ? . . .
 How awful is the sleep of a great town !
 Methinks the stars o'erwatching keep above
 More solemn vigil. O'er the windy waste,

And the reposing hamlets, the sea's self—
That even—the stars seem dreaming, but above
The solemn sleep of cities an intent
And stedfast watch for ever they maintain.

SCENE II.—*The Garden of the same house.*—MORVEN,
JASPER.

Morven. My dearest boy,
How pass'd my three hours' absence. There's some
tale

In that flush'd face, and in those glist'ning eyes.

Jasper. O, sir, I am so happy! I have heard
The grandest music—the sea spoke through all,
As I first heard it when I stood with thee—
Dost thou remember?—on a day divine,
One month ago.

Morven. Thy tears fell then, my Jasper!

Jasper. It told such solemn secrets, every wave
Speaking great things, but I was brave to-night
Though my heart swell'd—all brightest things on
earth,

That I love best, the sunset and the sky,
The Queen-Moon and the stars, with all my thoughts,
Seem'd in that music to have found a voice.

Morven. Where didst thou hear it?

Jasper. In a church at hand.

Morven. And has thy memory lost its hold so
soon

Of that first visit, when a solemn chant
Charm'd thee to enter: I was with thee then—

The bare walls chill'd thee, the high, unsightly pews
 Repell'd thee, and the preacher's chiding voice.
 But we stay'd standing till he spoke of One
 Most mighty, swift to mark our daily faults,
 One whose offended Majesty prepared
 A place of pain for those poor hearts whom Death,
 As one might think, life's work done, owed full rest to.
 Thou did'st fly then ; the heavy door shut loudly
 At thine outgoing ; the preacher, pausing, heard
 Thy swift steps falling on the gravel without,
 And I who follow'd slowly found it hard,
 To still thy grief and passion for those poor souls,
 Whose woful tale o'ercame thee, yet was false.

Jasper. It was a better and a fairer place
 By far than that ! Such music led me in,
 Of solemn organ-breathings and boys that sang !
 The walls were hung with pictures ; far in front,
 I saw the wonder of a thousand lights
 From long white tapers shining. All around
 Were men, like fairy kings, in robes of gold,
 And boys in white who held long torches up,
 While two were swinging censers full of smoke,
 And flame, and fragrance. One was like a saint,
 His hair all gold. About the Church they came
 In long procession ; there his eyes met mine,
 And since I love him, may I choose him now
 To be my faithful friend ?

Morven. My boy must think !
 I do not doubt the lad deserves your love,
 But then I do not know him ; it does not rest

With me to choose, to say you shall be friends,
Who now are strangers.

Jasper. I have told but half
My story! When the choristers had pass'd,
There came a canopy of gold brocade,
Bells tinkled round it; in the midst there walk'd
It seem'd a sultan, robed in white and gold,
Who in both hands held something like a sun,
With small white centre. All the people bow'd
Before it, but not I, though something said
Within me, Bend thy head! And that boy saw
How I look'd up and watch'd the Thing they bore
And worshipp'd like a god. He fix'd his eyes
In wonder on me. Then their god was placed
High on the altar, throned among the lights.
They knelt below and offer'd as they knelt
Incense and hymns. The smoke in clouds rose up,
The lights grew dim; I fell to thinking then,
And found myself in darkness and alone
When I roused up. A light hand touch'd my arm,
And there the pale face of the censer boy
Gleam'd in the gloom beside me. It is past,
He said, the hour for closing. I have stay'd
Behind the others to give you time to pray,
And if you've ended, as the aisle is dark,
Give me your hand—you will not stumble then;
And so he led me to the porch which look'd
Out on the silent night. And still he held
My hand, and said, You are a stranger here,
Do come again! This is the One True Church,

And all who join it will be happy on earth,
 And go to Heaven as well.—Will you be here?
 I ask'd. O, always, he replied, I serve
 Before the altar! Will you be my friend?
 Said I. He answer'd, I will love you always,
 If you will only come. So then we kiss'd,
 And parted. I came home, and here I am,
 To beg permission to be friends with him,
 And let us both belong to God's True Church.

Morven. So has my Jasper found beside a friend
 The One True Church?

Jasper. Indeed, the censor boy
 Declared it so!

Morven. Convincing proof indeed!
 Amazing logic!

Jasper. But I love this boy,
 There is no logic needed to know that.

Morven. Did no veil'd maiden in the train attract
 Your glances? Did this choir-boy draw them all,
 Quite all the admiration and the love?

Jasper. There were some flower-crown'd maids in
 purest white.

Morven. I cannot promise you my leave to join
 The Romish Church, because you have found a friend
 And are in love with him for his fair aspect;
 But on a welcome for this friend my boy
 May count at least. And now the moon is high,
 Here in this garden will I think awhile;
 But to bed with you! May your dreams be bright
 With visions of this acolyte! Good night!

SCENE III.—*The same.*—MORVEN, JOHNSON.

Morven. We settled here at Highgate. Like a map
The city lies beneath us, and absorbs
His thoughts full oft; then we go down at times
By coach, not train, and with the crowd we mix;
So all goes well and my best hopes are raised.
We take long walks and visit distant towns,
We roam by woods and waters, we buy books
Of strange adventure, by the hearth at night
We sit to read them. The ruddy fire-light glows
On those bright eyes, that forehead by the rich
Brown waving hair, cut crisply, shaded over;
And like the flames will his bright soul leap up
Full oft to animate the face, and eyes
Speaking like lips, for diffident reserve
Dead in the dawn of friendship (whose soft rays
By warmth awake familiar confidence),
Has pass'd like mists at morn from running streams,
And now the sparkling current of the boy's
Precocious mind flows brightly, while my words,
Like winds, wake music in it, and make dance
A thousand playful wavelets of pure wit
And boy-like fancy free.

Johnson. I think your plan to school him will not
work.

You have no faith, and on this score alone
I look for future trouble. You must choose
Between two courses, and from both I know
Your nature shrinks—to wilfully deceive

A youthful heart by teaching what your mind
 Rejects as fable, or with your reason's creed
 That faith dispel without whose saving aid
 Will virtue never in a time of need
 Find motives adequate and truly strong.
 I sent you Gilp that you might shift the choice
 From off your shoulders, yet fulfil your duty.

Morven. I dare not thus my task to stranger's
 hands

Transfer ; the boy is utterly unfit
 For school ; the question of his Christian training
 I've now weigh'd well, and from a mind so young
 Why should I take the pleasant faith in God,
 Though that's all dream ?—There is a use in dreams ;
 They are the nebulous and shining clouds
 From which the stars of noble deeds evolve.
 What other hands have planted—not my own—
 Shall wait the sunshine of some kindly chance.

Johnson. That hope is vague ! A necessary choice,
 And one which late or soon must still be made
 (Mark well my words !), is here evaded only.
 There are two courses open, both have dangers—
 Which will you take ? You hesitate and doubt,
 And then—"Eureka ! I decline the choice
 (To this refusal all your plans are dress'd—
 Don't think you'll blind me with your subtleties !)
 What seed is planted now may thrive or die,
 I'm saved the onus, yet my secret wish
 (I read you still, for here your heart joins issue
 With that cold, calculating brain of yours,

And in your heart you hate your creed as I do !
Its life would favour ; therefore I invoke
Kind chance, blind chance, to rain its dews and
sunshine !”

This is not manly, Morven ; to the boy
Himself scant justice.

Morven. At my weakest point
You strive to strike me. I have dream'd indeed ;
I too have hoped : now hope and dream are over !
But I can never in my life forget,
How it was with me in my boyhood once
Before I took to books ; how all things wore
Without that ghostly school the seal of God ;
What promise bright in every star was set
Dear to the rover's heart.
I had the Great Companion by my side ;
He was above, and round me ; He fill'd the world—
At times He smil'd and there was Heaven reveal'd,
At times He chid, but still His voice was sweet ;
He was a father, yet a friend as well—
A guardian, yet a brother. My good friend,
You have not gauged me with that insight keen !
I would my childhood's dream were truth indeed
Or some good warrant in the world of thought,
Which does not fail us in analysis,
Could countenance and strengthen faith in God,
For Jasper's sake. I would that gentle life
Were not the brief, fortuitous result
Of common elements combined in due
Though mystic measures. Could I lead him forth

And say that all things round may pass away—
 The sun which sets, as fades its western splendours,
 That pale blue sky, like its swift-moving clouds,
 Trees, as the leaves upon them, all will pass,
 The wind that moves among the pines and poplars,
 The earth itself beneath—yet life is his—
 True life—for ever, and the joy thereof
 Increasing in him. But if this be dream,
 I may regret the base is laid in air
 But none can help it. For the rest my plans
 Are plain enough, this point at least resolved—
 To rear a boy with every natural grace
 And virtue, who'll devote his future life
 To serve his kind with no reward in view,
 I do not hold myself in duty bound
 To take from him the pleasant faith in God ;
 I'll keep his motives from his faith apart—
 His motive, man—religion, but his dream,
 Shall bear the same relation to his life
 As poetry may bear and pure romance.
 But since you wish me from your heart to shift
 The burden off, a path has open'd now ;
 Come, let me have your candid views thereon !
 "Kind chance" already has declared herself !
 Look down this garden walk ! What meets your eye ?

Johnson. Why, I see Jasper with a child at play !

Morven. Approach and listen !

Johnson. Will they notice us ?

Jasper. Thou art my saint, and I will pray to thee,
 Kneeling before thee ! Give me thy hands to kiss !

Gabriel. What will you ask for, suppliant? All is yours.

I would I were in Heaven, for your sake !
For J'd come down to you in dreams; and set
Stars in your hair ; and then you'd build a shrine
In some bright, sunlit corner of your room,
And put my image up, and night and day
A little lamp would burn there, and sweet flowers die,
A votive offering. Then my festival
You'd keep each year ; I think in Heaven itself
I'd count the days to that sweet incense-time,
When I should stoop to smell the fragrant clouds,
And see bright tapers circling all my shrine,
Where you would kneel, and I so bright with joy
That all the saints in Heaven would envy me.
I'd work such miracles to show you still
I loved you well ; my throne in Heaven would oft
Be empty, by its side the harp would stand
Unstrung, but I should keep you pure from sin.
That would please God, who else might miss my voice
Out of Heaven's choir ; with what bright face each
time

I should return, and tell Him all my love
Had done to shield you. So, if you love me, come
Again to church, come often ! Father Paul
Will then baptize you ; he will pour on you—
On that white forehead and on those curls of yours—
The holy water, and all your sins will die—
Mine too, because I make you Mary's child !
And you shall wear a purple cassock and white

Cotta, lace-trimm'd as mine is ; we in turns
Will bear the thurible and incense-boat,
And be so happy serving both before
The altar. And because I brought you thus
To the true Church, and am myself from birth
A child of Mary, I will ask of her
That when we die with all our sins wash'd out,
We may to Heaven go up, but not sit there
On silver thrones, and be like kings so high
And solemn, but since in Heaven there is
An altar, we may both be servers there,
And never part, but love through all our days.

Morven. Step back ! They've noticed ; let us walk
this way !

Johnson. What does this mean ? Who is that fair-
hair'd lad

That talks so strangely ?

Morven. A little altar-boy
Who once found Jasper in the Roman Church
Which stands on Highgate Hill, and all his store
Of speech and love spends now to draw his friend
To that true Church, the Shepherd's only fold.

Johnson. A faint sarcastic smile about your mouth,
Is playing—now it fades. What means this farce ?

Morven. It means that Jasper has a most great love
For Gabriel, that Gabriel loves him well,
And, holding precious his benighted soul,
He seeks to cleanse it from the dreadful taint
Of heresy, and in the one true Church
Would house it safely.

Johnson. Will you suffer this?
Some wily Jesuit prompts the foolish boy!

Morven. How now! You'll never in the world
dislike

So brave a plan!

Johnson. I think it base and hateful.

Morven. What! not have Jasper in the Christian
faith

Brought up? Not have me shift the burden off
You call so hard and difficult to bear?
You never mean it?

Johnson. In the Christian faith
I'd have you train him, not in Popery!

Morven. Confess, the pope's a Christian!

Johnson. Rather say
The pope is Antichrist—the Roman Church
The Scarlet Woman—read your Bible, man!

Morven. Come now, shall Jasper join the Roman
Church,
Or shall I train him as an infidel?

Johnson. God judge your wickedness which e'er
you do!

Morven. My friend, delusion has, of course,
degrees

And Rome may cherish more than England loves,
But I contemplate with profound contempt
The petty quarrels which divide each day
The Christ you worship. I was tempting you!
I see the canker of sectarian spite
Has sapp'd your charity. I paused, I own,

When Jasper ask'd to join the Roman Church,
But not because my reason counts as ought
Your senseless strife of creeds (Despise it still,
Thou bold conviction of the mind made free,
Aye, scorn for ever!), but it seem'd unwise
To let my Jasper's gentle soul unstain'd,
Be cribb'd and cabin'd in the formal lines
Of Roman dogma, lest he grow, like you,
A man of narrow mind. I weigh'd it well,
Then that which ruled in Jasper rose at length
A star to light me : a keen insight show'd
'Twas love that prompted. What effect on him
Would the creed have, that merest form of words?
While if I check'd him now, the seed once sown
Might blossom after when I least should wish.
My scruple vanish'd, and the point became
Of all its import stripp'd. (My anxious friend,
If children play at proselyte and priest,
Why should we tear our hair? Keep calm and cool,
They'll change their game anon!) Besides, my plan
To make his life all innocence and joy,
And in so far as liberty therewith
May seem compatible to grant him full
And perfect freedom—I should fail in that,
For only purest motives prompt him now.
And then, my friend, I have my weaker side,
Some tender feeling for his dream of faith,
And why prevent it if he tricks that dream
In silks and satin, not in Quaker's grey?
Then when the lad kneels down, at morn or night,

And prays in words which others taught, not me,
'Tis somehow pleasant, somehow strikes a cord
Deep in the heart where Reason ne'er her reign
Doth quite establish. Let the Roman Church
Decide the language and the form he prays in
(Its teachings often have some claim on truth
By right of beauty), till the course of thought
Shall loose such bands and leave his reason free
To fix its purest hopes on earth, not air.

Johnson. You will not let the boy be placed
beneath

A wholesome rule and kindly-meant constraint,
You will not let an honest Christian man
Bring up the boy in honest Christian paths,
And yet will willingly with open eyes
Permit a mischievous and Pagan faith,
With scheming monks, to set their snares for him!—
'Tis truth, despite that faint smile's lofty scorn!

Morven. The whole vex'd question which disturbs
you thus

So truly trifling to my thought appears,
That all attempts to nourish in the mind
The feeblest flame of interest therein
Completely fail. To please two dreamy children
My plan proposes only: I am pain'd
That I thereby displease you, whom I count
More child than either in your prejudice.

Johnson. Well, Morven, time will shew! I grieve
for Jasper,
Who thus has fallen into hands unwise

And utterly unfit to train a lad.
I've sent my son this day to school at Gilp's—
We'll watch what comes.

Morven. Jasper is good by nature ;
I seek to make him happy, then more good
I know will follow—that is all. Good day !

SCENE IV.—*The Grounds of a Monastery.* FATHER
PAUL, GABRIEL.

Father Paul. High will our Lady count her
Gabriel's zeal,
A bright crown will be thine ! Who e'er converts
A soul to God will save his own from death
And cover up a multitude of sins.

Gabriel. He came again to church, I've passed my
word
To be true friends with Jasper. We shall grow
Like brothers ; he has ask'd me to his house.

Father Paul. But in your friendship and your love,
my child,
Forget not still the solemn aim in view
The boy's immortal soul, and teach him all
I tell thee.

Gabriel. O be sure I will not fail !
And I shall go to him again this day ;
I saw his father, and have spoken with him,
He ask'd me many questions on my faith ;
I did my best to answer well and clearly.
He bade me come as often as I pleased.

Suppose we win them both ! But he looks cold—
There's something scornful in that smile of his,
When I make Jasper kiss the Cross I wear,
Or sign himself. He called it play one night,
And then we argued, but he laughs at me,
And pats my cheek, and says I shall be pope
When I grow big—I do not mind his jests !
I had a dream last night which Mary sent,
As good as vision. I saw Jasper there
With light all round him and a crown of stars,
But he look'd nobler and a man full grown—
What did that mean ?

Father Paul. I hope, my child, it means
That Jasper some day, by a grace from God,
Will reach the measure of the stature high
And perfect fulness of the man of Christ !

SCENE V.—*An evening walk.* MORVEN, JOHNSON.

Johnson. Does all go well with Jasper ?

Morven. Well indeed,
Since he is happy.

Johnson. You are wrong therein—
A ball of poison, if its taste be sweet,
Might make him happy for a time, my friend !

Morven. The boy's outgrown by this the age of
sweets.

Johnson. You are perversely dense !

Morven. And you grow nettled !

Johnson. I simply state that happiness alone
Is no true test that all is well with man.
Nay, had you told me that he wept to-day,
I should have bless'd you in the name of God,
And thought that doubtless all was well with him.

Morven. Are you not happy in the faith of Christ?

Johnson. The case is different.

Morven. By no means so,
Since he is happy in the faith of Rome!

Johnson. And have they snared him by your leave
so soon?

Morven. He is not hurt; I find him sound in limb,
And like Apollo in the face he shines.

Johnson. The clouds have lifted, all the west is
burning!

I would my spirit could the boy take up,
And bear him there to save from Rome and you.

Morven. Two modern "Pilgrims of the Sun"!

My friend,
You grow poetical, 'tis rare in you!
Expect response to all your wrath in rhyme,
Since folly's catching, and 'tis vesper-time!
The herd is lowing, o'er the mead it wends,
The moon is rising, and the dew descends,
The sun sets grandly, and my brief verse ends.

Johnson. I'd cry a curse upon your ill-timed jokes
If I could joke like you!

Morven. Be earnest then!
The wind is washing like a gentle sea
Among the firs, and pines, and poplar-tops

Which clothe that slope below in mist half lost.
Let us look sad, sit down, and weep for Jasper !
I see the devil with a cloven hoof,
And eyes like burning coals in the night assume
Portentous shape !

Johnson. Respect for Nature ends
With faith in God : I think to things divine
She led me up by easy flights of thought.
I am a commonplace and business man,
But I love her (a trait that ne'er grows common),
Though I have no new words to clothe that love in.

Morven. Well, I like Nature, but I love the sea.
(Does that excuse me?) Would we stood there now !
A wake of moonlight on its surface calm
Begins to glisten as the night descends.
I love to pause upon a lonely shore,
To see the solemn tide wash slowly in,
And wish that all the world could stand with me
To watch that goodly sight, bless the blind laws
Which gave it being, be agreed like me,
That after all the life of earth is best
(And best the sailor's life of all on earth),
Be calm like me, because the grisly ghosts
Of nightmares born and necromantic faith,
Are idle tales, to keep the children good,
Created first and long have fail'd in that ;
Because the hungry pit which yawns for souls,
And all the phantoms, fiends, and flames therein,
Are dark inventions of designing priestcraft,
That sins are punish'd by the laws they break,

And if not thus that Nature pardons them,
 That there's no God who visits wrath on men,
 And treasures every action done amiss
 In the storehouse of infinite memory,
 That men may pass in peace, may rest from labour,
 That none there are to take the soul to task,
 And torture it for acts by all forgotten,
 Which Nature often with the dust of Time,
 Has long since cover'd and remembers not.
 Live calmly on, in peace proceed and thrive,
 Enjoy thy conquest of the earth and sea,
 Sow, man, and reap—there is no future life,
 Where one buys pleasure with the pain of ten—
 Pay with no grudge the debt from all demanded,
 Death's not the gate of hell, sweet be thy sleep !

Johnson. Hell is best known in the experience,
 God spare you that ! To all is Satan known ;
 He dwells in every unconverted heart,
 It is the devil in your heart, my friend,
 Which clothes mere doubts in words of certitude,
 Which meets the venerable hope of Faith,
 With bold denial more absurd than Faith.

Morven. I've weigh'd all sects, not ev'n excepting
 yours,
 And in the balance of unbiass'd reason,
 Have found them wanting all. I don't deny
 (I last of all !) they have their fairer side ;
 There's something truly in the chime of bells,
 Which sounds behind us more than melody.

Johnson. It is the pœan of the soul made pure,

And born in Christ anew !

Morven. Faith's best, I grant,
Yes, best for most—it saves the cost of thought !
If you can see your brother die in sin
And thrust the image of eternal hell
From your converted mind ; if you can pass
Through market-places on the week's last night,
And on the traffic and the crowded streets
Cast careless glance, yet know what doom awaits them,
Your faith, your safety may be good for you !

Johnson. You are a weak man, Morven. We are
friends,

But knowing Cartwright from his early youth,
His orphan also has a claim on me—
A word may help ; I bid you search yourself.
Why did you let your father's selfish whim
Your best days darken ?—That was weak in you !
He had no right to keep you bound at home
When all your mind and heart were bent abroad.
You were no hair-brain'd boy mad for the sea ;
A useless, idle, melancholy life
With open eyes—that's what he doom'd you to !
And you submitted to the harm of both.
And now your weakness in the life of thought
Is proved by entrance into ways where none
(Not strongest men) can through the shifting sand
To firm ground reach. And lastly, this mad course
You take with Jasper lays your nature bare,
And proves it weak—weak to the last degree !
(Behold the phantom of the full May moon

Above the orchards eastward loometh palely !
Because you lack the needful strength of mind
One day to see him with a tearful face,
Which Nature ever in a lad like him
Will dry to-morrow, you seek to humour Jasper,
And, vex'd yourself (I read you) all the while
His fancy takes this form, you seek a refuge
In inexpensive scorn of controversy.

And now, farewell ! We shall not meet for months.
The eyes of Jasper haunt me night and day—
The Scarlet Woman winds her flaming robe
About his body in my dreams at night,
And I wake groaning. I have gain'd myself—
I feel through Jasper's face Thy call, O God,
To preach Thy Word in those unchristian lands
Where Rome now reigns ! So I go forth erelong
To spend what's left me of my mortal life
In earnest work for souls. . . . Think it not strange
A man of commerce, one astute in trade,
Should take this mission ! 'Tis the thought that souls
As bright as Jasper's perish day by day
Has wrought like flame within me. Though I fail
To rescue Jasper, who is doom'd by you,
Still all my spirit with conviction fills
That I'm raised up to save in place of him
A thousand souls. Father in Heaven decree
That since the goodness and the grace of Jasper
Have prompted in me in a certain sense
This zeal divine, that he may work in me

(I need no merit, in Thy hand I lie).
Shed down Thy grace and light, that ere too late
The dreadful error of his early ways
May dawn on him, the gulf beside him shown.
If there be merit in his goodness now,
Which prompted me, the God that made him change
That early virtue into saving faith,
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Morven.

Forgive my jests !

You shock me truly with your earnestness !
I might have paused, but it's too late ere this,
And then you profit ; another lease of life
Your zeal has brought you. I rejoice indeed
That Jasper's presence turns for good to all.
His father gain'd by him, though crazed for long,
I too am better for the boy beside me,
And his young friend, that microcosmic priest,
Has lived more truly since their love began ;
You now confess the happy influence,
My heart accepts the prophecy—be his
This part for ever, on all he meets to shed
His gentle nature's vivifying light,
Till all shall bless that presence. Had there been,
My friend, some blemish upon Jasper's birth,
Had he drawn being from some fraud on Nature,
So that his parents and myself once doubted
Why Nature brought him forth, (forgive the fancy !)
This day the problem would be plain to me !
So you go forth, like Matthew, turned from gold,
You mint on 'Change, to coining gold for God

From out the spiritual dirt and dross
That rots around you by the Stone Divine,
The corner-stone of Christian alchemy !
Speed well, my friend ! Your faith as nought I hold,
But not your zeal, the world wants earnest men !
Whate'er his errors I believe the world
Is always better for an earnest man.

BOOK THE THIRD.

SCENE. I.—*A Garden by the sea, near Deal.* MORVEN, JASPER, JULIA. *Time, one year later.*

Morven. See what a playmate I have brought to you,
For this day only, Jasper ! Prize her much,
That she may soon return, and many days
Abide with us.

Jasper. My playmate, will you walk
Down yonder path ? and I will join you there
When I have whisper'd in my father's ear
One word, one little secret. . . . Do you bring
A girl to me, my father ? and for what ?
What shall we do ? How can we play together,
Or even talk ?

Morven. Why, Jasper, she will be
A little sweetheart for you !

Jasper. A sweet heart !
The sweetest heart in all the world is dead.
O why not bring some boy to be my friend,
That I may talk with him of Gabriel ?

Morven. Tell her, my Jasper.

Jasper. No, I love her not,
And will not speak of one I loved with her.

Morven. I thought to please you ! At least be
kind to her.

This once. She's looking while she stands and
waits

Beside the rhododendrons pouting just
As if she heard you. You'd not pain her surely?

Jasper. No, father!

Morven. Put no slight upon her then!

Jasper. I will be kind to her this one, one day. . . .

Now, little lady, I have come to thee!

What is thy name? So, Julia, a sweet name,
And mine is Jasper. All this garden's round
Is mine, and full of wonders. Shall we walk
Together through it, or shall I make thee fly
At once through the blue air?

Julia. We cannot fly—

What fibs! We've got no wings.

Jasper. Yet shall you sail

In swift, triumphant circles.

Julia. In that swing?

O thank you, no! There's nothing I detest
Like swinging; it makes me giddy, and, besides,
My skirt will crumple in that ugly seat.

Jasper. Ugly! I would have swung you towards
the sky,

High as the tall tree-tops; it never makes

Me giddy; I feel lighter than a star

Sailing for ever. Push it hard for me—

Dear Julia! See, I am a fairy prince;

I close my eyes, the sunbeams burn their lids,

And I see through them palaces and parks,

And fairy meadows bathed in purple light!

Julia. How strange you talk! I've push'd you
twice—it tires me—

Get down!

Jasper. What shall we do then?

Julia.

Let us walk

Along the lawn, and let me take your arm ;
And then go with me through that grove of trees,
Which looks so dark beyond the garden gate,
Like lovers. Let me put my gloves on first—
They're new ones, look ! Three buttons and the best,
From Houbigant's. Have you been in Regent Street?

Jasper. No never—at least once—I am not sure—
For London is so full of roads and streets.

Julia. You'd not forget it if you'd been there once—
Such shops, such carriages, and every one
Dress'd in the fashion. . . . I can't make this glove
Meet round my wrist, button it for me, Jasper ;
There, that is right ! Now, I will take your arm—
You should have offer'd it—we won't go fast—
I'll put my sunshade up, and I shall walk
Like this with a true lover when I'm grown up—
Not you, an earl at least.

Jasper.

And I'm a prince

In Fairyland.

Julia.

O stuff ! What silly tales
You read, just fit for babies ! What do you think?—
Don't tell your father ! I have read that last
New novel on the sly which every one
Calls quite improper. I think it a lovely book !

Jasper. What does it tell of?

Julia. O, it's about love,
 Of course, all love! The heroine has long
 Brown hair, like mine—look at me, Jasper! Yes,
 You have nice eyes, I think I'll let you be
 My sweetheart—I was saying she had long
 Brown hair like mine (he's never praised *me* once!).
 Well, she was married to a rich old man
 Against her will. She loved a handsome youth,
 But he was poor—a painter—and because
 She loved him still her husband shut her up,
 He was so jealous, never let her go
 To balls or parties; yet she met one night
 Her lover in the grounds, where the old man
 Surprised them—what a scene! But it's too long
 To tell you all. The youth was driven away
 And the poor girl imprison'd. O such words pass'd
 Between her and her husband! The next day
 Her lover proved to be a duke and rich;
 He might have married her, but she, you know,
 Was wedded: so, as they could not live apart,
 He ran away with her, and then they lived
 Together. How improper! Was it not?

Jasper. Yes. . . . Why?

Julia. Because—Fie! Jasper, what a thing
 To ask! You'll grow to be as bad I think.

Jasper. Why did she do it then?

Julia. You stupid boy!
 Because she wished to. I'd have done the same,
 But only for a duke, I promise you!

Jasper. I would not do it for a duke or king,

If it were wrong.

Julia. They would not ask a boy.

Jasper. Well, I don't like that story, not a bit!

Julia. What do you read then?

Jasper. O the bravest tales,
Like dreams for wonders! My dead father wrote
them;

I'll shew them to you.

Julia. I remember now,
You are an orphan, and your guardian is
This Mr Morven. What a slow old chap
He seems! Half muddled by those books of his.
I could not read such things to save my life;
There's not a novel in all his library.
Why do you call him father? Never mind!
I see you're cross because I spoke of him
Like that: he is a nice, kind gentleman,
I like him greatly. . . . I'm an orphan too,
But I don't mind, for now I live with aunt—
An aunt, just fancy, and only seventeen!
She says she'd rather die than be a dry
Old maid or ugly. She's engaged—I think
She'll soon be married, in a month, perhaps.
How happy she must feel! And she has more
Than twenty dresses! How I wish I was her!

Jasper. Were I a girl, I should not care about
So many dresses—what's the use of them?
She can't wear all at once.

Julia. But she can have
One for the morning, in the afternoon

Another, and a third for walking out ;
 And the next day three different ones, and so
 She's never dress'd alike three days together.

Jasper. There's not much good in that !

Julia. I think there is—
 I'd like to have a new dress every day.

Jasper. Well, let me get that book.

Julia. No, don't go yet,
 I hate most books ; I want to ask you first
 If you have ever ridden in the Park.

Jasper. Yes . . . No . . . What Park ?

Julia. Hyde Park, of course, the Row.

Jasper. O yes—a hateful place ! we went there
 once ;

I had a pony, but in all the crowds
 Of carriages and horses, I could not ride
 A bit, I had to walk it half the way.

Julia. I think it lovely ! When we go to town,
 I know some girls, the Slades, their father keeps
 A brougham and saddle horses, and they call
 For me to ride out with them every day.
 I've got a riding habit, and a high
 Silk hat, and long black trousers like a boy.
 I almost wish I was a boy sometimes,
 They have such liberty ; yet I don't know,
 I think a girl's much better after all ;
 Girls get more notice—when they're pretty, I mean.

Jasper. I never wish I was a girl.

Julia. Well, go
 And get your book ; there's nothing else to do—

The country is so dull.

Jasper. I would not live
In London to be king there.

Julia. I love London—
These country places are my pet aversion.
You are a slow boy, Jasper.

Jasper. See me run.

Julia. No, not in that way, in your mind I mean.

Jasper. Do you learn Greek and Latin?

Julia. No, do you?

Jasper. Yes—many more things too. My father
says

My mind is quick, and I remember well—
You call it slow.

Julia. I do not mean in lessons;
You may be clever, I mean something else—
But, there, I can't explain it!

Jasper. Well, I'll go
And bring my book out. . . . Here it is!

Julia. How large!
And what a handsome binding!

Jasper. It is red
Morocco, a brave colour.

Julia. Is the print
Large? I hate fine print. Why, it's written in ink!
What little writing!

Jasper. But as clear as pure
Spring water.

Julia. It must have taken a long time
To write that book full. What a pretty ink,

Just fit for lovers' letters !

Jasper. Shall I read
A story for you? Let us sit down here
On this green bank.

Julia. Wait, let me spread my dress—
I think I'll sit upon my handkerchief.

Jasper. Girls can't be happy, Julia.

Julia. Why?

Jasper. I think
Their dresses must prevent them.

Julia. Well, I'm sure !
You are a rude boy!

Jasper. I don't mean to be—
I thought such handsome clothes must trouble
you,

But my things don't, and Gabriel's did not either,
And so I thought we must be happier.

Julia. Was Gabriel a girl?

Jasper. Indeed he was not !
He was my faithful friend—an acolyte—
My dear, dear Gabriel ! His soft grey eyes—

Julia. What rubbish, Jasper, all about a boy !
You've never once praised my eyes, though I said
That yours were handsome. Never mind ! go on !

Jasper. O Julia, if you were only Gabriel,
How I should love you !

Julia. That is kind, I'm sure !
O Jasper, if you were not such a strange
And backward boy, perhaps I'd love you too,
And let you kiss me.—Are you going to read

Your story?

Jasper. Yes.

Julia. (Just fancy! What a hint,
And he can't see it!)

Jasper (reading). I have a story here of a certain Dream-Tower, and this I must tell you, for it is a true tale and worth remembering. It was given me for Jasper by the Queen of the Fairies on a May day, at the top of a green lane which goes down into Fairyland. If you had been there, you would know that it is beautiful.

At one time all the kings of the earth were old, and as they must soon die, the thrones of the earth would be empty. So the wise men, the fairies and the sylphs, the undines and the salamanders, put up a petition to the stars, saying:—"O mighty and transcendent intelligences, give us a great king to be king over the whole world and rule it well and wisely!"

The stars heard their prayers, and upon a mountain which overlooked the land and sea, and from which a crystal staircase wound upward into Star-Land, they placed a very bright gem-set throne, upon which was a sea-green mantle, a sceptre of green malachite, and an emerald crown. These are the insignia of universal royalty; but at the foot of the throne there was a vast serpent, with a green-speckled skin and fiery eyes, who guarded the throne and the symbols against all comers. This was the monster to be conquered by the man who

would be king of the whole world, and once overcome, he will reign with his foot upon its head, and the serpent will assure his dominion.

Now, there was a Boy born upon the earth, who was made beautiful by the benediction of the stars. When he grew up he had a book of Legends written for him by a planetary spirit. The title of this book was "Silver Bells and Fairy Spells." It was better far than is the great book of romances given to Jasper, but it was lost long ago.

When all the Kings of the earth were dead, a white bird came down from the Stars' House, and it sent the Boy forth on a long journey. He travelled on and on, but there seemed no end to the way he was going. He came at length to a Garden with a Fountain; about this Fountain there hovered always a wonderful wandering Voice, singing sweet songs whose meaning no traveller understood. So it was called the Haunted Garden. When the Boy sat down by the Fountain, he could tell the meaning of the songs, because he wore upon his breast a magic Lily, and on his head a wreath of Roses. Here is a Great Secret. You will never understand the Voice in the Haunted Garden, if you wear a Rose upon your heart and not a Lily. If you wear a wreath of Lilies on your head, and a Rose on your heart, however resplendent be the wreath, and however fragrant be the Rose, you will not understand those songs. If you wear a Lily on your heart, but no Roses on your head, you may understand them, yet only im-

perfectly. When therefore Jasper comes in his turn to the Haunted Garden, let him take care to have a living Lily, and a wreath of Roses, and he will learn all its secrets.

When he had heard the songs and stories which the Voice had to tell, and when he had walked through the Garden, and examined its flowers and emblems, the Boy received an inspiration, and then said:— Sweet spirit of the Haunted Garden, what must I do to be King of the whole world ?”

“You must go to the Dream-Tower,” said the spirit, “but first find a faithful page to wait on you, and to hold your train at the coronation.”

Now the Dream-Tower is at the foot of the mountain on which stands the throne for the King of the whole world ; through this tower the King must pass on his way to reach his throne ; but this is a secret which can be learned only in the Haunted Garden, and it is this which makes the sovereignty of the world a prize so difficult to reach.

So the Boy went out of the Garden, and travelled into a far country where there was a Fairy Prince, who lived in a wonderful palace, set in a wonderful park, the most beautiful in all the earth. But the Prince, the King's son, had no companions. So when the Boy, who wished to be King of the whole world, came to the palace, Fairy Prince said to him:—“For thy love's sake, I will follow thee wherever thou goest.”

“Fairy Prince!” replied the Boy, “I mean to be

King of the whole world, but I must have a page to hold my train at the coronation."

"I will be thy page," said Fairy Prince.

The boy kissed him on his white forehead. "We will go," he said, "in search of the Dream-Tower."

Julia. Whoever heard of boys

Kissing each other?

Jasper. I kiss'd Gabriel!

Julia. Why did you do so, Jasper?

Jasper. Just for love!

Julia. And would you kiss me if I ask'd you?

Jasper. Yes!

Julia. But not unless? . . . You stupid, foolish boy?

Jasper. What makes you call me stupid?

Julia. Can't you see,

I wanted you to kiss me?

Jasper. No, indeed

I did not think so!

Julia. O you stupid boy!

Jasper. You should have ask'd me, Julia!

Julia. Not at all!

You should have offer'd, Jasper!

Jasper. Well, I do—

Please let me kiss you, Julia.

Julia. Then I shan't,

So just sit still!

Jasper. Why did you ask me then?

Julia. I did not ask you. . . .

Jasper. Then I'll read again.

Julia. Do anything you like.

Jasper.

The tale goes on:—

It was on a late autumn afternoon that they left the palace, and climbed a hill in the neighbourhood. At the top the Boy paused, and, taking fine gravel in his hand, cast it into the air. The wind took it southward down a broad white road, which they followed. Fairy Prince glanced once behind at the towers of his father's palace, which were of white marble, with sharp outlines, and very beautiful. The road wound over hill and dale, till at twilight they came to a weird, wooded tract. No breath of wind stirred the bare trees scattered sparsely on either side of the road. Only a slight rustling sound was heard at times in the underwood. A clouded sunset was dying solemnly in the West, across the lonely stretch of waste land. The twitter of a belated bird was the one sign of life round them. They passed again into the open country, and the road descending suddenly brought them, as the night deepened, to a large village, where the lights shone already through the drawn blinds in the cottages, and an old one-horse coach stood at the door of the village inn; there was a green in front and a low bridge beyond it.

"I have no silver," said the Boy, "or we might ride to the Dream-Tower." . . . "I have a pearl beyond price in this ring," said Fairy Prince, "and it is a stone of many virtues; if I gave it to the coachman, he would take both thee and me." . . . "Keep thy ring," said the Boy. "The night

is cool, but dry and clear. Let us walk on, we can rest when we will by the way." . . . "Put the ring upon thy finger," said Fairy Prince. "If we go far, I may lose it;" but he said this, knowing that the gem preserved the wearer from fatigue and cold, the fear of darkness and the fever of impatience. "I may suffer," thought Fairy Prince, "but if I am page to the King of the whole world, for his sake I may well put up with hardship."

So the Boy took the ring as they crossed the bridge, and at once he felt brave and strong. Looking back on the stream, he said—"There is a virtue in that water which must make it good to dwell thereby. Dost thou not feel its happy influence?" . . . The page who was prince smiled, and there was a light in his eyes like the stars' images on the stream, as he answered softly—"It is well with me as with thee!" . . . When the village lights were behind them the road seemed dark by contrast, and they could scarcely see their way. "Give me thy hand," said the Boy, "my page stumbles." . . . "How strong and tall art thou!" cried Fairy Prince, and he saw with joy the great power and charm of the ring.

The road was heavy with recent rains and had been newly stoned, for it was the winter season. The Boy felt neither fatigue nor fear, but all the averted weariness and dread of the whole life of Fairy Prince had now overtaken him; yet whispering often to himself, "Faith is strong! Love is strong!" he

kept up with his companion, who advanced with rapid strides. . . . "This cold air is delightful," said the Boy, "and how pleasant is the darkness which makes those prophet stars so brilliant!" . . . But the page shivered with the cold, and his soul was adread of the darkness. They met presently tall men bearing burdens on their shoulders, who saluted them, and the Boy answered with a cheery "Good night." . . . "What are those frightful apparitions?" cried Fairy Prince. "Thou foolish page!" replied the Boy, "they are field-labourers bearing faggots to the village." They came at length to a cross-road, where a finger-post pointed the way to the Dream-Tower, and on the further side of the next hill there was another village, where a small oil-lamp burned in a little window which was filled with old books, mostly tales of chivalry, of Arthur and Perceforest.

They went in and said to the Master of the place:—"Master, have you any true tales of the Dream-Tower?" . . . "I have none," said the man, who was of tall and majestic aspect, "but a *Stranger* passing through the village has sold me, to buy bread with the money, a folio on the Interpretation of Dreams, by Cardan the Kabbalist; a quarto on Magic by Albertus Magnus, in Latin with Gothic letters, date 1490; a book on the Pre-existence of Souls by one Glanvil, a parson; and an old vellum manuscript, 'The Damnation of Anti-Christ.' If you will buy these, they are cheap and worth having."

. . . "We cannot carry them," answered the Boy, "we are going to the Dream-Tower." . . . "In that case," said the Master, "step into my parlour and drink, each of you, a cup of wine. I offer this to every traveller who calls here on his way to the Dream-Tower."

So they went into the parlour, and when he had served them, they saw a viol lying on the table, and the Master of the House asked them if they would play on it, but they did not understand the instrument. Then he himself took it up, and tightening the strings, he played to them, sitting in an old high-backed chair by the fire, while they stood leaning against a wooden table on which the empty cups were standing. The music as they stood there was like a sweet voice telling tales without end, and one tale was of the knight Launfal, and one was of Avalon. To the Boy born to be King of the whole world, the voice seemed that which he had heard by the Haunted Fountain; but to the page that was prince it seemed the voice of a King of the whole world; and to the Boy born to be King, the Master of the House seemed that planetary spirit who had written for him the true tales in his great book of romances, but to the page that was prince he seemed Merlin, the magician of old.

When the music was ended, the Master of the House opened a little door, and, behold, they entered a vast circular chamber, where on silver thrones sat the high kings of thought from the days of Zoroaster! The boys followed Merlin, the planet-

ary spirit, across that chamber, and they entered a vestibule of white marble. The Angel of the Stars took Fairy Prince, and opening a door pushed him out into the wind and the rain. "That is the way to thy father's palace," said Merlin. But the boy answered weeping:—"Let me return! I am page to the King of the whole world; I will die for him, but I will not leave him." . . . Then said Merlin:—"Do all things that I tell thee without fear, and I will make thee worthy to hold the King's train at his coronation."

They went back into the vestibule, to wit, Merlin and the page. Then Merlin opened another door, and pushing the page into a dark closet, he said:—"Strip thyself even to the skin! Then go forward, and open the door before thee." The boy did so, and behold a vast furnace roaring within! The intense light fell redly on the boy's flesh, and the intense heat scorched his skin, so that he shrank back quickly. But the voice of Merlin cried to him:—"Enter into the furnace, and shutting the door behind thee, lie down therein till I call thee!"

. . . The boy hesitated, fearing the flames. Then a door was blown open beside him, the wind and the rain drove in, and he saw the road to his father's palace; so with great trepidation, and crying bitterly, he entered the furnace, shutting the door behind him, and lay down therein. Now, that which was beneath him was like a bed of scarlet wool. The flames purified his flesh without burning it, till the voice

of Merlin bade him stand up, so he stood up in the furnace and was cleansed. Again, the voice of Merlin called to him, saying:—"Come out!" . . . So the page opened the door and stood alone in the dark closet which the glow from his body lighted on every side. There lay white linen folded before him, but his former clothes were gone. And first he put on a vestment of fine white wool, and over that a white linen shirt, then an apron before and behind joined with a band about the middle, and fastened round the thighs with clasps of pearl and silver. Over all was a robe of white satin reaching to the ankles and confined with a long girdle. Upon his feet he fastened white sandals and a deep collar of crystals about his neck. And being vested he went out of the closet, where with the Boy born to be King stood Merlin the magician, holding in his hand a vestment of purple velvet pointed before and behind, and embroidered with a cross, which he fastened about the page's neck.

Now there was a deep well or bath of water in the centre of the vestibule, and while the page was in the furnace, the mighty Angel of the Planets took the Boy born to be King, and stripping him, plunged him into the bath. The Boy stood upon his feet at the bottom of the well, and that which was round him was like the freezing polar air; it searched his whole being and strengthened it. The latent energies of his nature were put forth, and with the invigorated power of sight, he beheld pictures on the

walls of the well which realised the stories he had been told as a child by the planetary spirit in his great book of romances. And he beheld the world's soul. But Merlin putting in his hand drew up the Boy, and wiped the water from his limbs and body. Then calling the page, he placed in his hand a basin containing chrism, and, according to the direction of Merlin, the page anointed the Boy—first the head and breast, then the eyelids and the mouth, afterwards the hands and the feet, and a divine nimbus appeared round the head of the predestined child, and the page could not look into his eyes, but each wondered at the great beauty of the other since the baptism of fire and water. Now the eyes of the page were soft and blue, while the other's had a light in them which none could support, but the flesh of the page was glorified so that bright rays shone through his garments, while that of the Boy born to be King was white and hard, and it contained the spiritual flame as in an opaque vase.

Then Merlin took the Boy in his arms, and at the further end of the vestibule a door opened before them into moonlit fields. They followed a narrow stone path going over a hill, and by reason of the ring on his hand, the Boy, though naked, was not cold. At the hill-top they saw, far in front, the lights of a long promontory going out into the sea. In the wind and the moonlight they went down the hill, and they came to the Dream-Tower.

Now, this is the story of the Dream-Tower. In a

certain forest there is a tower in which there is a large and lofty chamber richly dight, and having in particular a silken couch, the work of enchantment so cunningly wrought that whoever sleeps therein has wonderful dreams and visions.

They entered the Dream-Tower. A pan with charcoal was heating over a burning tripod of gold, a large censer of gold stood on the ground, and a golden vessel of incense. Then said Merlin to the page:—"Keep thine eyes on this charcoal, and when it is well heated, empty it into the censer." . . . So the page busied himself after this manner, while Merlin stood the Boy on the floor and clothed him in white and purple after the manner of the page with garments which lay folded on the couch in the Dream-Tower. When the charcoal was in the censer he was clothed. Then said Merlin to the page:—"This is thy work. While the King sleeps thou shalt watch, walking round the bedside, swinging thy censer, and putting incense therein; and see thou keepest charcoal burning on the tripod to replenish the censer." . . . Then to the Boy he said:—"Take off that ring from thy finger, thou wilt need it no more, it has kept thee from fear and fatigue which thy companion bore for thy sake when he gave thee the ring. Let him take it now lest he tire." . . . Much more then did the heart of the Boy go out towards the page for this business of the ring. And Merlin left them.

When they were alone, the Boy sat down, and drawing the page towards him, he said:—"Ah! page,

how I love thee ; and he put the page's head upon his bosom, and his own cheek he laid on the page's head, and they were thus as it seemed to them for a brief space ; but when they rose up, the tripod had gone out, it was dark night, and nine thousand million years had passed away. The wise men and the fairies, the sylphs, undines, and salamanders had wearied of waiting—in ten years did they weary—and the kings of the earth being dead, there was misrule, and there were many battles, and Merlin went starward, till Arthur returned out of Avalon to rule the world, being immortal. Then the horse of the knight Launfal found his master. And all stories that ended sadly of old had a happy sequel added, while all new stories had a happy ending. And the Star Lucifer kindled a new light in heaven ; he was the first Son of the Morning. And Antichrist was dead, yea, Antichrist and Iscariot slept, and their sins and troubles were forgotten. And the end of all things was known.

So they went out into the night, to wit, the page that was prince and the Boy born to be King. The stars shone above them—who shall emulate the patience of the stars?—and when they went out they knew all that had happened since Merlin left them. The page said :—“ I have lost thee thy crown !” . . . But the Boy answered :—“ The stars have not failed me. Thy love is the whole world to me. Behold I am King of the whole world !”

They went up into the mountain where the throne

had been placed by the stars, and which is over the Dream-Tower (the kings of the whole world must pass through this tower on their way to that mountain). What the page that was prince and the Boy born to be King dreamed in the Dream-Tower caused Arthur to come out of Avalon. This is a great mystery. The throne was still standing, but the insignia had been taken for the crowning of Arthur. And the serpent, the most subtle of the beasts of the field, was the servant and the slave of man. . . . They sat down together on the throne and looked forth over land and sea. Then said the Boy :—"Thy love is better than all this ; I possess this all in thy love." So he was King of the whole world. . . This is the story of the Dream-Tower, and this story has a meaning.

Julia. Is that all, Jasper? We'll go in doors, I think. I need not take your arm—it's warm—you've got That book besides. I do not like such tales ; They're not my style—we are quite different !

Jasper. I told you once I was a fairy prince ; I was not born, but made by magic art.

Julia. What nonsense ! You are trying to frighten me.

Jasper. I tell you true—my father was a great Magician, and he made me by his spells ; The midnight moon was witness, and the whole Romance is written in this book ; the stars Help'd him, the summer sea winds and the sea ; He stole bright fire from heaven to give me life.

Julia. I will not stay with you ; my blood runs cold

To hear your horrid talk! You're not indeed
Like flesh and blood! I'll never come to you
Again, and if I meet you in the streets
I will not speak to you! Your guardian's there—
I'll tell him of you!

Jasper. If you stay with me,
I have a fairy crown to bind your hair,
All flowers and leaves, much better than that hat
Which has no true flowers in it, but all pretence!

Julia. Let me go, Jasper, let me go, good-bye!

Jasper. Good bye then, Julia! . . . I am happy
again!

I would not be a girl for a true crown
Of shining stars. O bright saint Gabriel,
My faithful friend, behold me thine once more!
My daily prayers I come to pay to thee
In thine own garden chapel. I put on
The purple cassock that I wore with thee
And the white cotta; at thine altar-steps
Now do I kneel before thee. Hear my prayer!
Saint Gabriel, thy sanctuary lamp
Burns ever by thy picture, and thy soul
Burns ever bright before the throne of God;
I rise and kiss thy picture's holy smile,
Send down some dream of thee to haunt my sleep.
Thou fragrant incense to my Gabriel rise,
Bear up my spirit on thy wings to him!
Incense for Gabriel's altar, and sweet praise
With psalm and hymn for Gabriel evermore.

Amen.

SCENE II.—*By the Sea.* MORVEN, JOHNSON.

Morven. We parted last in London ; it is well
That here we meet. Rejoice, my friend, with me
To stand once more and watch the sea wash in,
All in the glare of evening ! Smooth it lies,
Blue, green, and yellow, with the sky's pale light
O'er all its waste suffused ; but here in shore
Breaks every wave with grand majestic roll
Into a cloud of foam. . . And so your plans
Succeed like magic, I am glad for you !
Good luck goes mostly with an earnest man. . .
How well you look, brown'd by the summer sun,
And hale, and stout ! . . . May fortune favour still,
May you continue still converting men
From death to life by changing creeds outworn
For one your energy and faith contrive
To dower with life renew'd, as Jasper's face
This hope awaking unto you gave life !
I prize your work just for the life it gives ;
A saving virtue dwells indeed therein,
Whatever crotchets in your creed take form.
Wake man to industry and virtue still ;
And since clean bodies oft clean hearts beget,
And healthy minds require a frame in health,
I hope among your Spanish proselytes
You'll inculcate the sanitary laws
With scarce less vigour than the laws of faith—
A needful change you'll work indeed thereby ! . . .

And so you pray for Jasper night and day—
Believe me, Johnson, I have faith in prayer !
I think the energies of earnest minds
Produce effects, though miles may stretch between,
On whomsoe'er they fix the force of will
For good or ill. I thank you—pray with strength !
Be sure, the boy will benefit thereby.

Johnson. Has he grown strong? Is he brave, and
bright, and tall?

Is he pure, tell me? To the world-school'd heart
Of manhood, the most precious and perfect crown
Set on the brows of boyhood is the fair
And fragrant wreath of chastity, too oft
The soonest lost, regretted therefore most.

Morven. There is no wind ; what secret force uplifts
The vast green billows, rising, curling thus,
A moment poised, then crumbling arches cast
With measured, concentrated, awful strength
On the beach vibrating under. . . All is well,
Like young Apollo has the boy grown up ;
The little acolyte he loved is dead,
And what remains of Jasper's early faith
But dreams as I predicted? To his mind
No shred of doctrine or of dogma clings :
He thrones his friend in majesty and light
'Midst saints and angels and the Queen of these,
And offers incense to his memory.

What groundless fears were yours—you own it now !

Johnson. If faith were poetry I'd say—all's well !
You train the lad for Nature, Art, and Man,

But not for God. O let me take him, Morven !
 Let him come with me to the hills of Spain,
 Where I've my work cut out ; in five years hence
 We'll both come back, he shall be all you wish for,
 Plus faith in Christ and God. Don't shake your head—
 I'll teach him honestly that love to man
 Is his first duty after love to God !
 He'll find good friends among the bright-eyed boys
 We have in training at our Baptist school,
 And work as well ; we teach them all a trade.

Morven. It is impossible and cannot be ;
 I have convictions not less strong than yours,
 Though I cry No with an emphatic voice
 To your most earnest Ayes. I've made my plans
 For Jasper's training, and by those I'll hold—
 Don't sigh like that !

Johnson. I bow to God's decree,
 His will be done !

Morven. Let us return, my friend !
 We'll talk with Jasper. You will like him well—
 He is so frank, and such fine lights pass over
 His face in speaking ; he reads Homer too,
 And you like Greek.

Johnson. Yes, let me hear him read.

Morven. Cast one more glance upon the gentle sea !
 Perchance we never in the world shall stand
 Like this together in the eve's dim light,
 And gaze thereon. Renew your youth with work,
 But I feel old ! Ambition's dream for me,
 Sank like a wounded bird into the marsh.

I have soar'd high and fallen ; hope has fail'd me ;
Youth passes swiftly like a pleasant morning,
And, lo, the evening of one's life is near
Without the evening's splendour ! . . . Once again
To feel the innocence of boyhood mine,
To see the first companions of my youth
Come in their boyish beauty. . . . They embrace me !
We wander by the ocean as of old,
The sea-winds breathe around us. No one comes
Intruding in these sanctified domains
But those we love, the brothers of our hearts.
We roam together in thyme-scented dells,
The sunlight is upon us, we shout in glee ;
The nuts, and flowers we gather as we go,
And through the woodland, up the winding ways
Which never end, and out through rustic gates,
Which on green uplands open, prospects fair,
We travel hand in hand. . . . Come in, my friend !
How goes your boy ?

Johnson. I think his progress fair,
And he seems strong, though somewhat short and thin.
He has a fund of manly confidence,
And plain, good sense, an eye to business too ;
He has not skill, but enterprise and tact ;
He'll fill the place my partner fills for me
When he grows up. I don't repent my trust
In Gilp ; he acts up fully to his lights,
And is not worldly though he seems to be so ;
ask'd him plainly when I call'd there last,
And feel convinced he's a converted man.

SCENE III.—*The Garden.* MORVEN, JASPER.

Morven. What ails you, child, that you stand weeping there ?

Jasper. O, I shall weep for ever, in all my life
I shall not end with crying !

Morven. What grief is this ?

Jasper. There is no God ! Alas, there is no God !

Morven. Who said that dreadful thing.

Jasper. You, only you !

Morven. No, Jasper, never in my days to you !

Jasper. I heard you speaking in this garden lately
With your friend Johnson.

Morven. Indeed I now recall
That cry behind me, the retreating footsteps,
The stifled sobs.

Jasper. And is there then no God ?

Morven. Nay, ask me not, but put the thought
away.

Jasper. I pray you tell me all, for you've read
much

And studied. What you told him must be true,
But if not true, why did you speak it, father ?

Morven. I think there is no God—perchance I err,
But if not, Jasper, 'tis a dreadful thing,
And therefore have I kept it back so long ;
Now that you know, be brave, my child, and bear it.

Jasper. I think I never shall be brave again !
If there be no God, there can be no Heaven ;

Where then is Gabriel ?

Morven. He is dead, my boy.

Jasper. If he live not in Heaven, he is dead indeed,
And if there be no Heaven he cannot live,
I shall not see him more. Is this not true ?

Morven. I cannot tell you ; my heart bleeds for
you.

Jasper. O my dead Gabriel, if I sing to thee,
Thou wilt not hear me ; if I call thee, thou
Can'st never answer ; thou and thy bright angels
Live in my thoughts alone, and not in truth !

Morven. Where would you take me ?

Jasper. Do you see this grotto,
And that fair altar in it ?

Morven. Yes, alas !

Jasper. Let us approach it ; this is Gabriel's altar ;
His face smiles on us out of that bright frame,
He wears the white dress of an acolyte.
Before the picture of my saint this lamp
Has burn'd by night and day—a pale, small lamp,
Ring'd with red glass, as in the Sanctuary.
It must not burn there more, since there is now
No Gabriel—see I have extinguish'd it ! . . .
Behold this censer with its silver chains !
Three times a day I offer'd to my saint
Sweet incense in it ; nevermore I'll do so—
This is a picture only ! . . . Holy water
Stands in this stoup, drawn from the deep blue sea,
Which God made like the eyes of Gabriel :
This altar (as at the *Aspergès*) daily

I sprinkled with it—let earth drink it now,
 See, I have pour'd it out!—My saint is dead.
 Now, lastly, from their vases will I take
 These fragrant roses, these late violets,
 These blue-veined speedwells, St Joseph's lovely lilies,
 And the first poppies in the corn-field gather'd.
 All these I scatter at the altar's foot,
 And with this veil I veil the face of Gabriel.
 Dost thou weep now like me? . . . Is God dead,
 father?

Shall I pick up these bruised and broken flowers?
 Shall I relight this lamp? Shall I unveil
 The face of Gabriel? Shall I cross myself,
 And pray once more, and offer incense here?
 And will you kneel beside me? Like a priest
 I'll sprinkle you, if you can say God lives.
 Is there no God? . . . You will not answer me! . . .
 God's dead!

Morven. The uproar of a broken spell
 Rings in mine ears away!

Jasper. Let us return!
 Night falls, the birds are still, a busy wind
 Steals whisp'ring through the grasses, the green ferns
 And tree-tops. I suppose a God lived once
 Who made these things, but He is dead like Gabriel.
 Who will renew the Spring and make trees grow?
 The night is cold without, and in the house
 I see no lights: stretch forth your hand to me,
 My limbs are trembling, father, lead me home!

BOOK THE FOURTH.

SCENE I.—*A Library in Mr Morven's House.* FATHER
PAUL, MORVEN. *Time, one year later.*

Father Paul. Bright in the sunlight shines the
greenwood glade,
Tall trees encircling touch with trembling tops
The violet sky, when, lo, the evening mist
Descending suddenly of half its charm
That sweet spot robs ! . . . The joy that lighted once
Young Jasper's face did not create indeed
Its beauty but transfigured ; vanish'd now
The bright revelation, sadness, like a cold
And wintry mist, has veil'd it ! They who once
Turn'd in the streets astonish'd at a face
So fair, will now nobility of mien
Mark more than beauty. Slender, straight is he,
But then the lad's strange eyes have something mine
Can scarcely meet unmoisten'd. What is this
Your speech reveals ?

Morven. Good fortune once his steps
Did to your church direct, and served him well,
But now has turn'd against him. It is vain
To blame myself, and vainer still the chance
Which brought him thus within the narrow range
My cautious speech in secret to itself

For once allow'd, or Fate which led through paths
Unsought to truths unwelcome at the end,
Or love misplaced which shaped my days to sorrow.
If I blame anything ('tis weak), I blame
My grand mistake, the choice of single life
To nurse my disappointment and my spleen.
If I had wedded in my early youth,
Sought wealth, gat children, striven to found a name
And family, done anything but turn
My mind to books, I had not then lost God,
I had not then been doom'd to die deprived
Of faith and hope, to stand from all the world
With truth apart, a disillusion'd man,
And, well supported by the common bond
Of one divine deception, fair and false,
I had not known the horror which the heart
Feels when the end approaches, when it sinks
Down to the gulf of nothingness, when all,
All, all is over, life and thought and love ;
I had not then in this so early day
Of hopes so bright deprived the child I cherish.

Father Paul. But months have pass'd since that
most fatal day,

And all the while over the words he heard
The boy goes brooding—it is there you err'd ;
Your course of subtle thought and search perverse
I will not blame, nor ask what evil mood
Down paths so wrong directed. You, I see,
Have suffer'd much in agony of mind,
And God, not man, can read your inmost soul,

And God alone can weigh that soul's intent —
To Him I leave it ; but here, my friend, I stand,
A humble man, the servant of my God,
And in His service at the call of all,
And I have taught boys in my time, and know
Their hearts, and oft have managed them when all
Have fail'd before me. Why not send for me ?
The remedy you needed in my hands
Was held unused. I would have taken him
To serve before the altar, would have placed
The cassock and the cotta of his friend
Upon him, would have put into his hands
The boat and censer held by Gabriel,
And in the benediction and the Mass
At our new Church he should by night and day
Have offered incense ; so by slow degrees
I would have built his faith up fair and strong
Which now seems ruin'd. He is cold and strange
And silent, walking, as we once have done,
Along the coast together. He will not speak
Of Gabriel ; he said my well-meant words
Were torture to him, and a faint, pale smile
Pass'd o'er his mouth, when at the end of this
Our only walk, he said, " I have found at last
Another friend, and he is dear to me
And faithful, but he is not Gabriel !
If you believe that Gabriel lives indeed,
An angel bright, since you are kind and good,
Pray that mine eyes may look but once on him,
To know he lives." . . . Did not your mind foresee

Your words' effect on Jasper's after days?
 My hair is grizzl'd ; I descend life's slope,
 I would not counsel sin, but in no God
 Believing, I'd have thought a falsehood good
 To save the boy. I would have said :—"Sweet child,
 God lives most truly ; I have lied to him
 I spoke with, to revenge me on a man
 I hate in secret ; I persuaded him
 There is no God, and he has left me now
 Believing this which will his soul undo.
 But I am sorry for my falsehood, Jasper,
 I'll seek him out, and will my hate confess,
 Which led me to the malice of a lie
 So base." What think you? I'm a priest of God,
 But I reproach you that rejecting Him,
 You chose your chiding conscience to obey,
 When one bold lie perchance had saved the boy.

Morven. Does something prompt your soul to faith
 in God?

Does something witness to the faith in Him
 Your lips profess? Can't say with earnest voice,
 Convinc'd in spirit,—I believe in God! . . .
 And, lo, your eyes grow dim, your voice has fail'd
 you!

Father Paul. It is the fulness of my faith and trust
 Which moves me thus. Upon my knees alone
 I'll make the high profession. . . . Let me lift
 Mine eyes to thee, from thee to Heaven above,
 And cry—God witness to my faith in God!
 Nay more, to recompense a faith as old

As reason's life, I gain from Heaven itself
The strength to say, infallibly convinced,—
God is—I thank thee, Lord!

Morven. Your last reproach
I now can answer. . . . You have faith thus strong,
Let that support you! If a God rule all,
Will he not shape to Jasper's lasting weal
This chance that you're deploring? Had I faith
I would not grieve for Jasper, well content,
Whate'er might come, within the faithful, sure,
Unfailing hands of Heaven's Almighty King
To leave him. Friend, the end is clear for you—
O eagle eyes of Faith through mist and cloud
Darting a calm and penetrating glance,
O for your strength!

Father Paul. My words indeed are answer'd!
Kneel down and pray.

Morven. I cannot pray with you,
But to the silence of my soul's intent,
As to your psalm, will God, if God there be,
I doubt not, listen. . . . Let us walk awhile.
Glimmers the early sinking sun behind
A vast expanding circle of thin mist,
While eastward o'er the flat and sandy shore,
Beach-fringed, a desert solitude, the tide
Receding fast takes far and farther still
Its deep and solemn multitudes of sound.
I stood twelve years ago beside the sea ;
My soul was wrought by twilight and the wind,
It rose within me, strong with thoughts sublime,

To build, I said, upon a basis firm,
 To reach some solid stratum, stedfast, true,
 Beneath the shifting sand of human hope,
 Which every passing wind of daily life
 Transforms and fashions new, which known to all,
 And commonly enjoy'd by small and great,
 Is soil'd by all—to sweep this dust aside
 (Though here and there among the windy heaps
 True gold may sparkle and again be lost),
 And having tried by every mental test
 The base substantial thus laid bare beneath,
 To build thereon a nobler House of Life,
 Fit home for highest purposes. . . 'Tis done !
 The shifting sand is swept indeed aside,
 But what remains? An adamant rock,
 Black, barren, who thereon shall build or sow?
 O faith sublime, O privilege supreme,
 O priceless heritage from sire to son,
 From son grown sire to son, a perfect trust
 Transmitted, I have lost thee, I have sold
 My birthright, and received for a return
 Less even than Esau's pottage. I have stripp'd
 Life's tree of blossom and of fruit alike ;
 Now all its green has wither'd, now the trunk
 Remains alone ; the soul departed leaves
 The world a corpse, dead even if infinite.

Father Paul. Your tortured soul is striving back
 to God,

It starves and cries for Faith. My friend, suppose
 A man by chemical analysis

Should find some element of poison lurking
In every food, and so should choose to starve
For fear of death—that man is mad, my friend,
How'er profound his methods. You have sought
The base of faith, you've traced it back to dreams,
And you reject it as delusion simply,
Nor will your soul sustain with food so light ;
But your soul starves, you feel its pangs within you !
Suppose your search was thorough and well plann'd
To find out truth, upon the face thereof
It must be failure still, from this one fact—
That it deprives your mind's imperious need
From all supply. Your search has wanted some-
thing,

Your method somewhere has a secret fault ;
We may not hit precisely where it lies,
But there it is, by its results 'tis proved,
For what belies our nature there stands judg'd.

Morven. Mistake me not, this is my childish mood !
The country lad believes that London streets
Are paved with gold, till on some rainy day
He enters there amidst the smoke and mud :
His dream, my friend, through many a dismal week
Perchance he'll mourn in moods as dark as mine,
But it is mad, it is impossible
I' the face of fact to build that dream again,
And in the midst of mean and crowded lanes
To still believe the city paved with gold.
That's just my case ! I've probed the source of faith,
And it's impossible and mad for me

To cherish its delusions, yet their want,
At certain times, I needs must feel acutely.
What grieves me therefore most in Jasper's case
Is not the loss of faith, but that so keenly
He takes this loss to heart. I most lament
That I've allowed him to indulge in dreams
Till dreams became a part of life to him.
If when I took him at the first, my friend,
Before he met with you or Gabriel,
I'd spoken plainly the whole truth to him,
I then had gently, with no bad effect,
Detach'd faith's slender tendrils from his mind,
But now they've grasp'd him fairly, built him up,
They're suddenly torn upward by the roots,
And, like a net, the wither'd parasite
Clings round him still, no more his soul's support,
His chains, his tortures. It is now, perforce,
I wish those dreams were true, those falsehoods facts,
Yes, I wish anything on earth or sea
(Such is my weakness, sir !) should come to pass
Which would make Jasper happy. That's my mood
This day, perceiving your effect on him ;
But when you reason, then my strength returns,
And it seems better, as a fact, than not
That he should suffer, for he lives the more ;
And still my plans will work—I've talk'd with him
And find him ready in the cause of man
To spend his life, with no reward in view ;
He will live down, I feel, this " child's first grief,"
And will be bolder in the strife for it.

He does not mope nor e'er repine in speech,
He mixes much with boys ; they like him well
Through all the village ; he is brave and kind,
He shares their sports, he grows and learns apace ;
You would not think he nursed a secret grief,
Unless you saw him by a chance alone,
And then—but there, my friend, he hides it well.

Father Paul. You speak of plans—recall your words
to me

When once on Highgate Hill we walk'd awhile :
He should be happy, and in all things free ;
Now is he wretched in his inmost heart ;
He is not free, he is the slave of grief !
You've drawn the circle of the things of sense
About a spirit which is made for God,
And it is cramp'd and agonized therein !
'Tis vain again to preach the cause of men,
For when the pulses of the blood begin
To stir within him, when the joys of sense
Unfold like roses full of scent and sweetness,
There will be nothing in the world to hold
That nature in, and sense will claim it wholly.
You've cast the reins away !

Morven. They've broken, sir,
And in the hands of priests and men like you ;
I claim the test of facts ! Look forth ! Where'er
Your sect is dominant, does justice there,
Does honour flourish ? Do your boys keep pure ?
My friend, the strings by which you led the world
Are worn and torn and burst on every side,

And you, the leaders once, alone refuse
To see it !

Father Paul. We have somewhat lost our hold,
But now the loosen'd hand is lifted up
To grasp once more, and that with strength renew'd.

Morven. The final spasm of a force nigh spent—
But I forbear ! . . . I have not known you long,
And now indeed a long, most long farewell
Must bid you. When you visit here again
To ask for me, the servant's face will fall,
A voice constrain'd, it may be sad, will say—
Our master's dead ! And I have school'd my heart
To meet with due serenity of mind
My lapse into nonentity. I have
A certain faith, moreover, knowing well
The many errors of the human mind.
I may have look'd upon the world and life
Through lens perverted, and believe, if so,
That God will not reject an earnest seeker
Who fail'd to find but still has loved the truth,
And more of sorrow to himself has wrought
Than harm to man by failure. So, farewell !
I would that I could speak with you again ;
I would my life could be prolong'd beyond
The space allotted ; I have no wish to die,
And much remains of brave and noble things
To be accomplish'd, but regrets are vain
And childish. In the evening mist I stand
And wait with folded arms. Beyond me now,
Down in the valley, over the still stream,

And slowly, slowly creeping up the slope
There comes a sombre shadow shrouding all,
From whose dark folds I hear no answering voice,
No dim and muffled echo murmuring past
And wasting into silence, as I stand
And shout uncertain on the lonely road ;
The stillness of nonentity is there,
The darkness of the old, unruffled night,
Or if beyond it there are plains and hills,
And dreamland, and green pastures of the soul,
And voices calling from the border-land,
And white arms waving from behind the gloom
I do not know,
And if there be the stars I cannot see them.

Father Paul. What do you mean? You are not
ill nor old ;

You look pale truly, and now I think of it
A trifle wasted, but your frame seems strong
And firmly knit ; why, you'll survive us all !

Morven. Here in this heart, 'tis agony at times !

Father Paul. What then will come to Jasper if
you die ?

Morven. I have a brother in the house, the last
Whom I should wish to guard him, but no choice
Is left me. He returns a ruin'd man,
(In distant lands from youth adventuring),
And, worse, a cripple. I had held him dead,
So left the boy my money, and this house ;
Now am I forced to change my cherish'd plans,
And on his solemn pledge to guard him well,

And not by malice or dislike in aught
 Be tempted to neglect him or to harm,
 I've left the boy to him, and hope the best.

Father Paul. If Jasper died?

Morven. The money would revert
 To William Morven.

Father Paul. If an evil heart
 Possess your brother, he may hurt the lad,
 At least neglect him, and, neglected long,
 You take my meaning, *he perchance might die.*

Morven. My brother is a hard and grasping man,
 But not so evil as another's death
 To compass; he is old too and unwed.
 Watch over Jasper if you will, my friend,
 But I must trust my brother!

Father Paul. Do not turn;
 For God's sake give me equal right with him
 To guard this orphan boy!

Morven. John Johnson, sir,
 Whom once you met and thought a worthy man,
 Though much too blunt of speech, is named with him,
 He'll see that all goes well.

Father Paul. Leave in your will
 Some plain command that they shall train the lad
 In that true faith to which I brought him first!

Morven. I will not rule his conscience, *he shall*
 choose!

Father Paul. It is your brother who will choose
 for him!

Morven. The asp already in his Eden walks,

While he goes forth, and in the world without
He weeps like Adam, though no sin be his.
You do not see that Fate on all your plans
Has written Failure, it is branded there !
There is no sceptic in the land this day
Than he more utterly of God forlorn ;
How can I force him back, how twice connive
At his deception? Could you lead him, friend,
I would not take his hand to hold him back,
But none shall drive him. In my will already
I have set down most plainly, that himself
Shall choose what faith he'll follow ; in his choice
I wish him happiness and bliss complete,
And faith's most perfect crown, a soul at ease.

Father Paul. To leave a boy like that the choice
in faith

Proves your indifference and scorn thereof.

Morven. I will not weakly with my latest breath
Belie the calm decisions of the mind :
I hold all creeds but changing pictures wrought
In Faith's kaleidoscope—the reason sees
No choice between them ; it is taste rules there.
I do not argue which is brightest, best,
Of many combinations—that dispute
I leave to children. I've unscrew'd the toy,
And that which forms the elements of all
Have weigh'd and tested ; it is glass, my friend—
A few small fragments of most brittle glass
Which broke in testing, and is dust this day
Beneath my feet.

SCENE II.—*A School Playground.* GLANVIL, JASPER.

Glanvil. What ails you, Jasper Cartwright, standing here,

When all your mates have left, beside this dial?
Your arms thereon, your visage by your hands
Conceal'd, and sobbing. What is this? The blood
Runs through your fingers. Who has hurt you, boy?
Some stone has gash'd your forehead, and all its curls
Are matted. . . . You will not answer, nor betray
The hand that struck you. Let me cleanse the
wound ;

That maid will bring some water. . . . All is well,
'Tis wide, not deep, the skin will heal anon !
Your mates have gone into the woods without
The village ; in a troop they pass'd just now
With shouts and laughter. Pausing 'twixt the leaves
Of this old book, I heard their voices long
Ring faintly far away. Will you go forth
And catch them up, or stay to talk awhile
With me, your teacher? . . . You have been how
long

At school among us ?

Jasper. Three months this very day.

Glanvil. And do you like it, Jasper ?

Jasper. No, in truth,

I do not like it, save for three dear boys,
And those I will love deeply all my days.

Glanvil. You will be faithful !

Jasper. If the sea were here

I think I could be happy, since the house
Is quaint and old, and on these crumbling walls
The new year's growth of ivy now unfolds
Its glossy leaves. O, sir, to stand again
Beside the sea, to feel the fresh breeze blowing
And breathe its fragrance, while the joyful eye !
Takes in that waste, that wide and fair expanse.
The sea-bird wings its flight ; I see the clouds
Pass slowly over and awhile make dim
The shining surface, as the tears just now
Dimm'd the blue eyes of Willie, whom they teased
Till I fought for him—sir, I fought two boys
Together, all for Willie, but in the end
Was beaten as you see, while he made off,
And never thank'd me ; it was that, not pain,
I cried at.

Glanvil. Boy, you have a tender heart,
And school is bitter as the world to such !

Jasper. I had one friend, his name was Gabriel.

Glanvil. And where is he ?

Jasper. And he, alas, is dead !
He is long dead, so never, nevermore
Shall I behold him. Is it true indeed
There is no life hereafter ?

Glanvil. It is false,
Most false ! What bred so dark and bad a thought
Within you ?

Jasper. Sir, they say there is no God !

Glanvil. A monstrous speech !

Jasper. But it indeed is true.

Glanvil. Who taught you this?

Jasper. I learn'd it just by chance.
My father, speaking with his friends at eve,
Said this, and I by accident was by,
And heard those dreadful words. I told him of them,
Then he said sadly, he believed indeed
There was no God, but he should grieve through life
That I had overheard him.

Glanvil. He is wrong,
He is wrong, Jasper, truly.

Jasper. He is wise ;
Dost thou know God?

Glanvil. Behold, the sun begins
To droop, the shadow lengthens on the plate
Of yonder dial. Let us pass awhile
Into green lanes—the burn is near at hand—
And there speak freely. . . . Through the gates
we go ;

There'll be a royal splendour when the sun
Sets towards those clouds, whose leaden will his light
To lurid gold transmute. A humble man
And poor am I, the usher in a small
North-country school, and I am old, you see,
And none there are to whom my secret life,
My only true, my inner life, is known.
But I can stand against the world itself,
And in the face of wealth and learning both,
As one convinced (as one that lifts his voice
Endowed with that authority which makes
All doubt keep silence,) I proclaim God is,

And doth in manifold and wondrous ways
Himself reveal, by noble thoughts infused,
By dreams and high imaginings, by hopes
The crowd transcending, and at times, though rarely
(My voice sinks lost among the moving leaves,
The shallow stream's low laughter), by the gift
Of lucid vision! . . . Lo, my marvel, late
Predicted! Lo, the alchemy of light!
O gold of sunset, by the dreamer's heart
Prized o'er king's treasures, light the world trans-
forming,

Mine eyes unflinching meet thy blaze intense!
I bare my head, the image of a god
Before me. . . . Jasper, as that sunset light
This world transfigures, so a light divine
Shot through the portals of a world beyond,
My spirit hath illumined, form'd, transform'd!
I have seen visions, I have dream'd high dreams,
And such intensity of mental strength
Fix'd on their objects that the same have lived
In earnest truth. By prayer and fast and watching,
By concentrated thinking and by long
Self-isolation, hath my soul enlarged
Her faculties, made clear the inner sight,
And I look forth from mine own tower of thought
Through crystal windows o'er the timeless deep.
Thine awe-fill'd eyes dilated stare at me;
My words surpass thine age, but our two hearts
Have sympathies between them which should late
Or soon interpret to thy mind mine own.

Hast thou loved, Jasper? and has love made deep
As man's, that's ocean's, that is infinite,
The soul of boyhood? In my early youth
One did I love, whose mild and dreaming eyes
Were like the western heaven between the hours
Of sunset and of midnight, a deep green,
Deep as the sea, twin founts with light inform'd,
All soul and sweetness. Of those eyes I made
A deity, whose essence there divided
In two identical and equal ways,
Was manifest. With all my heart I paid
My homage there, nor yet repent this day
The fair idolatry which nurtured love
Of Light and Stars, and in that love my soul
With things invisible held commune high,
Transcendent spirits. Let it pass! Those eyes
Withdrawn burn now before the throne of God,
Beside God's altar. . . . Has grief with love combined
Within thy nature to enlarge its scope?
And has thy soul into the world beyond
Gone forth in thought and over seas immense
In darkness voyaged? Boy, thine own half-words
Reveal it! If I pour a blinding light
To drench that darkness, if my hand lift up
The secret veil to tell thee what thy love
Most longs for, if I shew thee Gabriel?
Diviner far, if I those lips instruct
To call on him with words of power to draw
That spirit down which dwells in light aeterna,
In glory inaccessible, will joy

In tears, as now, run down? Wilt thou keep well
The secret, Jasper, and have faith in me,
True faith? Thou weapest! Suddenly thy face
Lit up, then paled; lo, all its light withdrawn!
Thy cheeks are ashen as the western clouds—
The sun has set. . . . A shiver through thy frame
Passes! The wind has risen. . . . To the house!
In mine own chamber's solitude, we twain
Will by the moon's light on these secret things
Continue speaking. Thou shalt tell thy tale,
And if thy soul be pure, thy love be deep
For that high seraph, to my mind reveal'd,
Which forms a clearest image, thou shalt know
Not all indeed, but that which still will make
Thy spirit glad, as mine with gladness strange
Is fill'd, a deep, calm, sacred ecstasy!

Jasper. I know thee now! My father spoke of
thee,

And in the lonely mansion on the marsh
Was school'd by thee: thou hast a magic glass—
If thou can'st call the soul of Gabriel,
Sir, I will die for thee!

SCENE III.—*The Library at Morven House.*

WILLIAM MORVEN, JASPER.

William Morven. Is that you, Jasper? you have
grown apace,
And look quite well, though somewhat pale and slight.
You'll not go back to that north-country school

Against your will, for I'll engage instead
A tutor here to teach you.

Jasper. From my heart
I thank you, sir! I will indeed remain
And live here always, for I love the sea.

William Morven. But not me, Jasper?

Jasper. Sir, a month alone
I knew you ere you sent me to the north.

William Morven. And thought me doubtless some-
what hard and cold ;

Boy, so I was! displeas'd, I own, to find
A stranger here, and from my youth till now
I never cared for children, least for lads,
And I had hop'd to end my days in peace
With James, my brother, but he died, and then
His will displeas'd me, so my heart each day
Grew harder towards you, till I pack'd you off
Far out of sight. Mayhap, the school was rough,
The season cold, and bleak at best the place ;
But as the buds unfolded, and the sun
'Gan warm the earth, I felt, I know not why,
My old heart soften towards you, and the more
That I grew worse, for in my bones the pains
More often vex'd me, till I scarcely now
Can leave this chair, but wheel'd from room to room
Follow the sun to warm me. Then, I say,
It seem'd to me a good and cheerful thing
To hear a boy's blithe voice about the house
The whole day ringing, and a boy's light feet
About the stairs, and in the room at times

A boy's bright face.

Jasper. And so you sent for me.

William Morven. Not, Jasper, then, though long
the thought I nursed,

Till there came one to see you whom I now
Must speak of.

Jasper. Was it Miles, sir?

William Morven. Who is he?

Jasper. A boy from Deal, a boy with big grey eyes,
Who loves me well.

William Morven. No, Jasper.

Jasper. Was it Jack,

The coastguard's son, for I was friends with him?
His voyage should be over.

William Morven. No, not Jack.

Jasper. Perhaps it was the ghost of Gabriel.

William Morven. Nor boy, nor ghost! It was a
man from sea—

A tall dark man and stalwart—with black hair,
And thick black beard. He had a full, broad face,
Burnt by the sun, dusk eyes that look'd you through,
As night itself looks through with starry eyes
The human soul and thrills it, and his voice
Was fitted for a Cæsar or a Saul;
On his strong limbs erect and tall he stood
As on steel pillars, and the breadth of chest
Had shamed a Trojan hero—a true son
Of the salt, open ocean, in his clothes
Its fragrance bearing. . . . Does the sketch recall
A presence of your childhood?

Jasper. In my brain
Floats a faint image.

William Morven. Through that window look . . .
What meets your eye beyond it?

Jasper. The blue sky,
The fair, flat fields, the sandhills, and the sea.

William Morven. Did you not cross it once—that
gleaming main?

Jasper. Three weeks its magic circle spell'd us
round.

William Morven. Recall, if possible, a man who
cross'd
The threshold of your transatlantic home,
And evil fell thereon.

Jasper. Sir, I was young ;
But I remember one dear lady well
Who died—my mother ; and the man, I think,
Him also I remember, but not well.

William Morven. It was your uncle, Jasper. Now,
I see
You do not mark me, for your eyes have roved,
And through that window fix a far-off look.

Jasper. It is the sea which takes my thoughts away.

William Morven. Attend me, sir, the length of all
the day
Is yours hereafter.

Jasper. To the beach I'll go,
And call for Alfred as I pass to bathe.

William Morven. A ship was anchor'd in the
Downs last week,

Which held your uncle. . . . I attract you. . . . He
(The stalwart man I speak of)—North by name,
Call'd here to see you. O it grieved me then
You were so distant, Jasper!

Jasper. And me too,
It grieves me greatly, for to speak with him
Would please me much. Perhaps he would have
made

A sailor of me, who commands himself,
I doubt not, that fine ship which anchor'd there,
And I can picture how it pass'd with wide
White sails all spread and bellied by the breeze
Swan-graceful up the channel.

William Morven. How they shine,
The boy's black eyes, and all his face has flush'd!
I think the bold blood of your uncle North
Burns in your veins.

Jasper. Will he come here again?

William Morven. Perhaps in years to come.

Jasper. I should have loved
To sail with him. He is my uncle, sir,
I do not doubt he would have taken me;
Perhaps he came for that.

William Morven. To learn how fared
The world with Jasper—was he tall and strong,
A bright, good boy, and happy in his heart?
And then to leave a gift in charge with me
Against your manhood, to be kept till then
A precious secret, since your tender years
Would fail to recognise the worth of it.

It will become to you a star of fate,
 And it were well if all your dreams at night
 Should make you tales about it. Not for this
 Alone I call'd you from your northern school,
 But I must shape myself your heart and mind
 That on the boy grown man the prize in store
 May have completely the result I wish.

Jasper. I see my uncle is a fairy prince,
 And very often of his gift to come
 Shall I think, sir, and many tales most fair
 In fancy make about it, and perhaps
 Compare them with the truth when I'm a man. . . .
 They've taught me a hard lesson in the north,
 And I am glad indeed to come back home ;
 And I have brought with me a noble book,
 Which tells me how to call and to command
 Bright spirits, so I hope to be in time
 A great magician.

William Morven. Are your dreams so wild?

Jasper. My dream is true though wonderful, some
 day
 I'll prove it for you.

William Morven. Here you will be free
 To follow all your fancies.

Jasper. What a day
 Of joy is this that I am free once more,
 And I can bathe with Alfred and with Jack,
 And all the summer sail upon the sea !
 Dear sir, farewell till evening ! Alfred, ho !
 Yes, I see Alfred passing in the road

And there's Jack with him, Jack's returned from sea—
How tall he's grown, a strong and handsome lad. . . .
I've hailed them both, they see me! Alfred, ho!
Ho! for the beach, the fresh sea-wind blows past,
The wind and sea for ever, shout it lads!

BOOK THE FIFTH.

SCENE I.—*The Garden.* FATHER PAUL, JASPER.

Father Paul. Vicissitude has tinged with strange
romance

Your tender years—seventeen, in truth no more,
A mere boy still, yet how your feet have stray'd
In paths forbidden ! It is well indeed
My summer holidays are spent again
Here on this Kentish coast—I shall have time
I hope to save you—Magic ! If there be
Truth in this art exploded, by the Church,
And equally the Scriptures, as a thing
Satanic, a delusion of the world
Infernal, in its branches one and all
Of witchcraft, calling spirits, and strange spells
Pronouncing, by the stars or cards divining,
And by the entrails of slain animals,
It is forbidden and an evil thing.

Jasper. There are two magics, father, black and
white ;

There is a sacred magic, as you say
There is true faith and heresy. The one
Whose mysteries I study aims at God,
If mortal eyes may look on Deity.
Pure is my hope—not miserable gain

From hidden treasures, not the vulgar itch
For knowledge of the future—with my dead,
My dearest friends, I would establish here
On earth communication. They are now
Bright spirits throned, and can you call it sin
To commune with them?

Father Paul. The true Church forbids
All magic art, whatever the intent.
Will spirits throned the mutter of a spell
Obey? You mock your reason!

Jasper. To the call
Of earnest love they will make answer.

Father Paul. No!
This is a deep delusion. Well it were,
I think, to let you from mere dreams proceed
To practice, total failure more than words
Would then convince you; but you've stray'd too far
From Nature; unto friends your heart alone
Surrender'd, the gentle influence of woman
You have not known. This remedy I'll try!
I think thereby to reach a heart which now
My medicines cannot
Diseased and morbid. . . . Jasper, follow me!
A new, a gentle, and a generous friend
This day is to be given you.

SCENE II.—*A drawing room.* FATHER PAUL,
MARY, JASPER.

Father Paul. I bring you, Mary, for your kindly
charge

This young apostate. As a child I made
 A Christian of him, and the Holy Church
 Received him in her fold, but now the rust
 Of heresy obscures the shining cross
 Which mark'd his soul in baptism. I seek
 Your help to scour it bright, who are yourself
 A faithful daughter of the Church of God,
 Dear to that glorious mother. Be a friend
 To him, I ask it from you for his sake,
 Not mine, although I have his weal at heart.
 He has a bright soul led by dreams, alas,
 In strange forbidden ways! I do not doubt
 That you will learn to love it, and to prize
 The worth of one so gentle. . . . Jasper, come!
 This is the friend I promised you, this young,
 Kind-hearted lady, whose pleased smile already
 Marks approbation at first sight of you.
 Are you content with such a friend, if she
 Will act that kindly part?

Jasper. If I should win
 Such favour, lady, I will be thy page,
 And faithfully will serve through all my life
 My starbright mistress.

Mary. Rise, my courtly page
 I choose thee for my service. Let me know
 By what bright name the angels in their prayers
 Remember thee!

Jasper. If ever in their thoughts
 I dwell, if ever in their prayers be space
 For any name but thine, their sacred lips

For Jasper ask a blessing.

Mary. May that name
Thy soul's crown jewel through eternity !

Jasper. Thy thoughts are kind and lovely ! Let
me kiss

Thy hand, sweet lady !

Mary. Sit thou here awhile ;
We'll talk anon ! . . .

Good priest, your *protégé*
Has a strange face, yet handsome, and his speech
Is like a youthful Amadis ! Your will,
So please you, father, in the boy's regard ?
Father Paul. He leads a lonely, isolated life ;
His parents both are dead, his guardian,
A strange forbidding man, with evil heart,
Plans still, I fear, some malice towards his ward ;
The charm of woman's company till now
He never knew. He first was brought to me
When twelve years old, a little altar-boy
Found him in Church after the evening service,
In darkness kneeling alone and wonderstruck.
He made friends with him, and by force of love
Caused him to join the Church, and then, as though
His earthly mission were fulfill'd, the boy
Died suddenly ; and Jasper took to heart
That loss so much he too seem'd nigh to death,
Which danger over, to the coast his friends
Removed him—here he dwells, and here has lost
The faith I taught him, he will tell you how.
Be friend to him ; let him walk out with you

And see you daily, and do your best to lead
The lost sheep back into the fold of Christ !

Mary. I thank you, father ! You have set me
here

A task I feel will please me. The boy's face,
And this brief glimpse you give me of his life,
Are full of interest. I shall like him well.
It is a solemn office you require,
But I will strive to do my duty in it.
If friendship brought him to our common faith,
I hope to lead him with the same soft chains
Back to the Church's arms, and my poor sins
I think to cover with the shining shield
Of his ensured conversion.

Father Paul. That is good,
My daughter, a bright thought ; the very same
I told to Gabriel. I remember well—
We stood together when the wind of evening
Was creeping round St Joseph's sloping grounds,
The vesper service over. He had hung
His surplice in the sacristy, but still
The long black cassock wore ; his earnest face
Shone in the twilight, by its gentle eyes
Of golden hazel lighted. . . . Well, my task
Is done, our Jasper in your charge I leave,
And let him lunch this morning with your aunt
And you : to-morrow I will call again
And learn how much you like him, and what love
Your kindness wins.

SCENE III.—*Mead and Woodland.* MARY BLAKE,
 JASPER.

Jasper. Thou art my queen and I will give my soul
Into thy keeping ! I will tell thee all
My starry dreams. It will be thus with thee
And me, thou dear one ! I shall build erelong
A mighty turret by the sea, the earth
And waters wide commanding. I shall bear
My queen thereto ; a jasper throne will be
Prepared against her coming, such a crown
As in thy God's great treasure-house is stored,
With a white samite mantle, for thy soul's
Eternal crowning. Me my magic art
Will then make worthy to be peer of thine,
And so sit throned beside thee, who am now
Thy faithful page that pines with love for thee. . . .
And when thy page into a man has grown,
All fill'd with chivalry and lofty hopes,
My sailor uncle, that most bold Sea-king,
Who knows the spells which all the winds command,
While all the treasures of the deep are his,
Has sent some gift surpassing mortal skill,
Fit for a king, to crown me. It is kept
Against the day thy page becomes of age,
Lest he should lose it or misuse it now.
Mine uncle sits on a high turquoise throne,
And stills all storms. Bethink thee, what a gift
That great magician must have wrought for me

With such sea-winds to help him ! It is thine,
That crown henceforth, to deck thee queen of earth,
Star-queen, moon-lady, maid of all the land,
My gentle mistress ! I shall ask no leave
To kiss thee then, to take thy hand as now,
Nor lean on thee ; but I shall put my arms
Like this, thou lady, round thee, and this head,
Love-heavy, then shall rest upon thy warm
And gentle breast, to hear the flutt'ring wings
Of thy dove-heart beneath it ; and thou too
Will softly kiss with kind and lingering lips
This hair thy white hand smooths, most blessed hair,
Which holds the fragrant coolness all the night
Of thine oft-passing fingers—such a scent
The gather'd lily with the dell's green moss
Doth leave in parting. O, what page of old
Was ever half so favour'd ! Lift me up !
How like a heap of roses in thy lap
Do I lie helpless ! Lift me, stoop to me !
One kiss, one kiss, to soothe this yearning mouth !
Ah ! head, if I should roughen with this hand
Curls beyond price so precious, pardon me,
Pardon it, shapely head ! How pale and wan
Thy features grow with passion for thy page,
Dead-white himself, and with unearthly light
Thine eyes shine resting on me ! Is thy heart
Fill'd up with love for Jasper chalice-like ?
Ah ! warm and maiden lips, ah ! love, thine eyes,
Thy most fond arms, thy heart surpassing all,
I am lost in love for thee ! . . . But now thy face

Turns from me, thine arms loosen, thou indeed
Art angry !

Mary. Nay, not angry but afraid,
O most consumed, my page, with fear for thee,
Lest this unconscious innocence should draw
My page to his destruction !

Jasper. Thou destroy !
Whose love wakes swiftly to luxuriant life
The humblest plant admitted to the reach
Of its all-fertilising influence. . . .
Blue eyes and gentle mouth, crisp auburn hair
My lips are tired with praising, warm white hands
Whose wandering caresses never fail !
Ah, faith beyond all faith, ah, love which lives
For ever, from its own beauty life's increase
Assuring it ! Thy kisses fall on me,
As the stripp'd petals of the rose o'erblown
Unheard upon the grass, and thy soft arms
In the warm summer air encircle me ;
The benediction of thy voice falls on me,
A golden sunbeam circling all my head,
And like a gleaming ripple on the sea
Thine eyes' smile lightens round me. Thy sweet
 glance
Has enter'd into all things, and gives all
Surpassing beauty, while the dreams which bless
Thy faithful page have trick'd thee in return
With bright selected beauties of the sky
New-swept by wind and rain, all charms which earth
Wins from the lingering sunset's amber light,

The presence and the beauty and the joy
 Of the free open ocean in that mood
 Which summer moons make mildest. Thou art
 life

And poetry and beauty—thou destroy !

Mary. Love blinds thee !

Jasper. Love has quicken'd !

Mary. Love betrays !

Jasper. Yes, all its treasures of unfailing bliss.

Mary. My Jasper, thou wast given me for thy
 soul's

Reclaiming, and I steal thy heart away,
 And lose mine o'er thee, while our love each day
 Goes hurrying onward towards the gulf of sin.

Jasper. Can love turn sin ? Impossible ! I miss
 Thy meaning, Mary.

Mary. May it still be thus !

O ever thus with thee, the pure of heart,
 Till God shall take thee for completer guard,
 A vestal, to His bosom !

Jasper. Now thine eyes
 Grow dim !

Mary. Indeed I cannot see thee well,
 For my tears hide thee.

Jasper. Does thy love unseal,
 Or hidden sorrow, those so crystal streams ?

Mary. O, ne'er was sorrow from deep love divorced !

Jasper. Ah ! Morning Star, who married them
 that ne'er
 Should mingle, that meet only in the night

Which falls on love forgotten, or betray'd,
Or love neglected? How thy tears fall swiftly,
A burning stream, my mouth is moist indeed
With kissing off their traces! What awakes
These evil thoughts, whose bitterness has found
An entrance all too soon into my heart?
If thou would'st save my tears, make haste and press
Thy kisses on mine eyelids.

Mary. Evermore
To kiss thee, Jasper! If it thus could be,
If it might be!

Jasper. We are not maid nor boy,
O maiden bright, we are two dreams that love!
Live dreams in love for ever!

Mary. The one change
In life alone to pass these lips from off
Thine eyelids to thy mouth.

Jasper. And this, to raise
My lips up to thine eyelids and thy mouth!
So all is well between us once again.

Mary. Ah, never well between us while we love
So wildly, while I take thy heart from God!

Jasper. Thou wilt return it by thy love made
brighter.

Mary. We should part, Jasper, we should part
indeed;
I am too old for thee to love me thus,
And all too few thy summers!

Jasper. Thou indeed
Art older, and the knowledge of the world

Is thine, but, ah, thou sayest a hard thing !
 Why should we part in life ? What evil deed
 Or thought has pass'd between us ? Loving words
 And kisses ! Are these sins in the world's eyes ?
 Does God forbid us kisses and kind words ?
 Thou smilest !

Mary. At thine innocence alone !

Jasper. And wilt thou leave thine innocent, thy
 fond

And faithful page ? What lavish praise of old
 Thou gavest me ! There was no truth therein—
 If I were lovely, thou could'st leave me not !

Mary. Well dost thou know beyond desire and
 dream

Thy face is lovely, Jasper.

Jasper. I am glad—

In all my veins the pleasure of thy praise
 Is tingling, the blood mounts into thy face.

Mary. Ah, linger light of sunset, flush that world
 For ever ! . . . How the mantling blush too brief
 Did beautify thy being, till my heart,
 My heart died in me at thy loveliness !

Jasper. Now do I know that thou can'st leave me
 not !

Mary. If I should leave thee, would the gentle
 heart

Break in that bosom ?

Jasper. Hast thou seen, dear saint,
 Beyond the melancholy marshes sink
 The autumn sun, a starless night succeed,

And a cold subtle wind through all the place
Wake mournful sounds? What shadows haunt the
marsh!

What desolation dwells in all its waste,
Exhaling ghostly mists beneath the sky,
As if the spirit which informs the world
Went out with day therefrom! . . . It would be thus
With thine unhappy and forsaken page.

Mary. If I should love thee ever!

Jasper. Only keep
Thine arms around me lest I die with joy,
Now speak those words, thou loved one!

Mary. Put thy face
Against my cheek! How beautiful thou art!
Could I do anything but love thee?

Jasper. Feel
Thy page's heart, feel how it throbs for thee;
Now kiss my life away!

Mary. 'Tis late, 'tis late!
The brief day wanes, we both are far from home.

Jasper. Why dost thou start so quickly? How
thy steps

Outstrip my own which hasten in thy track!
Wait for me, Mary, let me take thy hand!

Mary. It is late, Jasper, I am cold.

Jasper. Thine arm
Is warm and trembling. On the outskirts now
We stand, the wood behind us; wide fields slope
To Kingsdown village; in the autumn sun
Its red tiles glow.

Mary. Thou wilt not speak of this,
Nor tell to any that I love thee—none
Must know, it must be secret as the grave.

Jasper. Whom should I tell? Thine aunt is cold
and old!

SCENE IV.—*The Sandhills and the Sea.* MARY,

JASPER.

Jasper. What thoughts are in me, all my dreams
eclipsing,
As I stand with thee at this salt pool's side,
By all these sandhills shelter'd, in the fresh,
Cool autumn morning air, while ocean murmurs
Unseen yet nigh! Upon the marge we'll sit . . .
And now mine arms are round thee: thus it was
Last night—when did we ever think to find
Such bliss? How could we ever have lived apart?
How could there ever have been life in us,
Love's joy unknown? We never lived till now,
And now if life might be one endless night,
If the stars ever might watch the world, the sun
Sleep ever, the moon only come and go,
To leave a space of darkness when our eyes
Dared not sweet meeting, we'd ask no more of earth
But that sea's song. . . . What am I but a boy?
Yet am I more than brothers, parents, friends
To thee. Whoever granted such a boon
To living boy?

Mary. My dark-eyed handsome page

(Seventeen, and yet so young in the world's ways),
How is love's passion strangely blent in thee
With childlike innocence ! I repent indeed
This evil thing.

Jasper. Ah, do not sigh like this !
I am not sighing, I am glad, look at me ;
In truth I smile ! If we have sinn'd, sweet lady,
I am not sorry. I have lost, I know,
The power to call bright spirits with the spells
Of ancient books, and that thought sadden'd me,
Till I remember'd my delight with thee,
And thine so great with thy poor love-sick page,
And thrust it back from me ; of all sweet things
The truly sweetest is my choice henceforth,
And that is thou !

Mary. Thy words are like sharp knives !
Name not those dreams which shew me more and
 more
How bright a soul is blacken'd by the love
Which thus undoes thee. Let me go from thee !

Jasper. Thou shalt not go ! Thou can'st not mean
 it ! I
Can never live without thee ! I shall lie
Cold through the night, and evil dreams will haunt
 me !

Let me weep with thee ; my heart fails me quite !
All my protecting spirits abandon me !
Is that the sea's low murmur, or the rush
Of angel wings departing ?

Mary. They named me Mary well,

The bitterness and saltness of the sea
Have drench'd thy heart !

Jasper. What shall we do? The storm
Gathers.

Mary. The sun is darken'd.

Jasper. A cold wind
Has risen.

Mary. The vex'd sea chafes.

Jasper. And the bleak hills
And all the land look grey.

Mary. God's face is turn'd !
It was my sin, not thine.

Jasper. O kneel and pray !

Mary. Where were thine angels when I saw thy
face,

Why did their wings not veil it ?

Jasper. Gabriel—

He too has left me in that lightning's flash.
But thou wilt stay ; thou wilt not leave me ; we
Shall sit for ever by the sea like this,
And if the angels turn their kindly eyes
No more on us, we still may gaze as now,
And thine eyes ever will be more to me
Than saints or seraphs. If our thoughts are sad
The sea will soothe us, as beside it we
Roam hand in hand.

Mary. Ah, we shall meet no more !
Not on the high cliffs, when the morning sun
Burns the dry grass ; not in the pleasant shade
Of broad old trees ; not in the cool dark caves ;

Not in the room at twilight, when the page
Grows dim before us ; ne'er at night together,
When our lips blunder, mouth seeking mouth in
vain—

We shall be parted far, and nevermore
Will one house hold us ; a most weary space
Will our familiar lips make strangers utterly !

Jasper. What high prophetic spirit speaks in thee ?
Ah, that was not thy voice, too like the wind
Wailing in lone sea-caverns ! Aye, so deep,
So sad, so hopeless ! What hath power on thee ?
My tears fall o'er thee, and thy lips, which shriek
This dirge of love, seem love's indeed no more !
Mine eyes are blinded, my trembling hands pass o'er
Thy visage, and are damp with tears or blood ;
What thorns have torn thy brow that blood should
fall ?

Nay, thou art weeping ! . . . What hath changed
thee now ?

Thy grasp is tight'ning on me, a strange look
Dawns in thine eyes, while me a sudden cold
Hath seized, . . . a dark and ragged cloud o'erspreads
The sky, . . . the wind hath veer'd a point or two. . . .
There is an ominous murmur in the waves,
As they fall seething and the stones suck down !

Mary. God save us, Jasper ! Who approaches here,
Whose mild and venerable form has scared
No sheep in passing ?

Jasper. It is Father Paul !
His face is turn'd—his lips are moving—he

Recites his daily office—sit by me !

He will not see us—he will pass anon !

Mary. Thou can'st not face him now, alas, poor child !

Jasper. Don't move or whisper ! If he found us thus,

What would he see ? That I'm a paper boat

With skilful fingers o'er this pool to sail

Contriving ! Mary, help thy faithful page

To launch this ship upon the stormy sea !

Fair winds compel it, and with gold bring back,

That I may forge thy brows a gem-set crown,

When I wed thee !

Father Paul (to Jasper). Thy face is flush'd and strange,

Why dost thou loiter here ?

Jasper. My ship sets forth,

My Argo sails to seek the Golden Fleece,

To deck my lady's shoulders when we wed.

I think the merry peal of marriage-bells

Is sounding now ; I soon shall see thee put

Thy long white surplice on to marry us.

Thou dost not see my lady's face is pale,

And she is crying with averted head,

Because she tried through all this morning's length

To win my spirit to the Virgin's shrine,

To worship there. But I will now forget

My father's words and all my guardian's scoffs,

If we may kneel before thee hand in hand,

And thou this day wilt wed us.

Father Paul. Mary Blake,
Thou art pale truly ; though thy face is turn'd,
I read it rightly, to thy home go back
And weep therein, with penitential tears,
Weep, if thou canst, thy sins, thy life away !

Jasper. She has gone forth with drooping, listless
hands,

O Mary, Mary, stay ! She will not turn,
She does not take the road that leads to home,
Along the reeking sands with trembling steps,
With head bent down, and all her hair unbound,
She passes now ! Ah, do not hold me thus,
'Tis thou wilt kill her, if she drown this day !
The storm is nigh, with angry crests blown back
In spume behind the tide's wild waves roll in ;
For Jesu's sake, in whom through all my life,
By all God's saints, I swear to hold henceforth
A perfect faith, have mercy, pardon her !

Father Paul. Rise, wretched boy ! Alas, I know
too well

What snare hath trapp'd thee !

Jasper. I can never more
Look in thy face, two fierce, eternal flames
Burn in my cheeks, my shamed eyes shrink from
thee !

Father Paul. Wreck'd is the Temple of the grace
of God,
Defiled His holy place ! Touch me not, boy !

Jasper. My limbs have lost their vigour, like my
heart ;

My heart to tears has melted like mine eyes,
And in my head a swift and searching pain
Goes circling round and round.

Father Paul.

Poor child, indeed

I will not shrink from thee, I pity thee ;
Give me thy hand, lean on me ; thou hast sinn'd,
But not with wilful malice in thy heart.
God knows I held her pure and faithful child
Of Holy Church, and thought by one so pure
To lead thee to that mother, and to wake
New hopes and healthy feelings in thy heart.
But thus it proves ; thy friend, thy temptress turn ;
I've wrought thee an irreparable harm,
(God will'd perchance to let His servant act
This part towards thee to chasten and subdue him.)
Can'st thou forgive me, Jasper ?

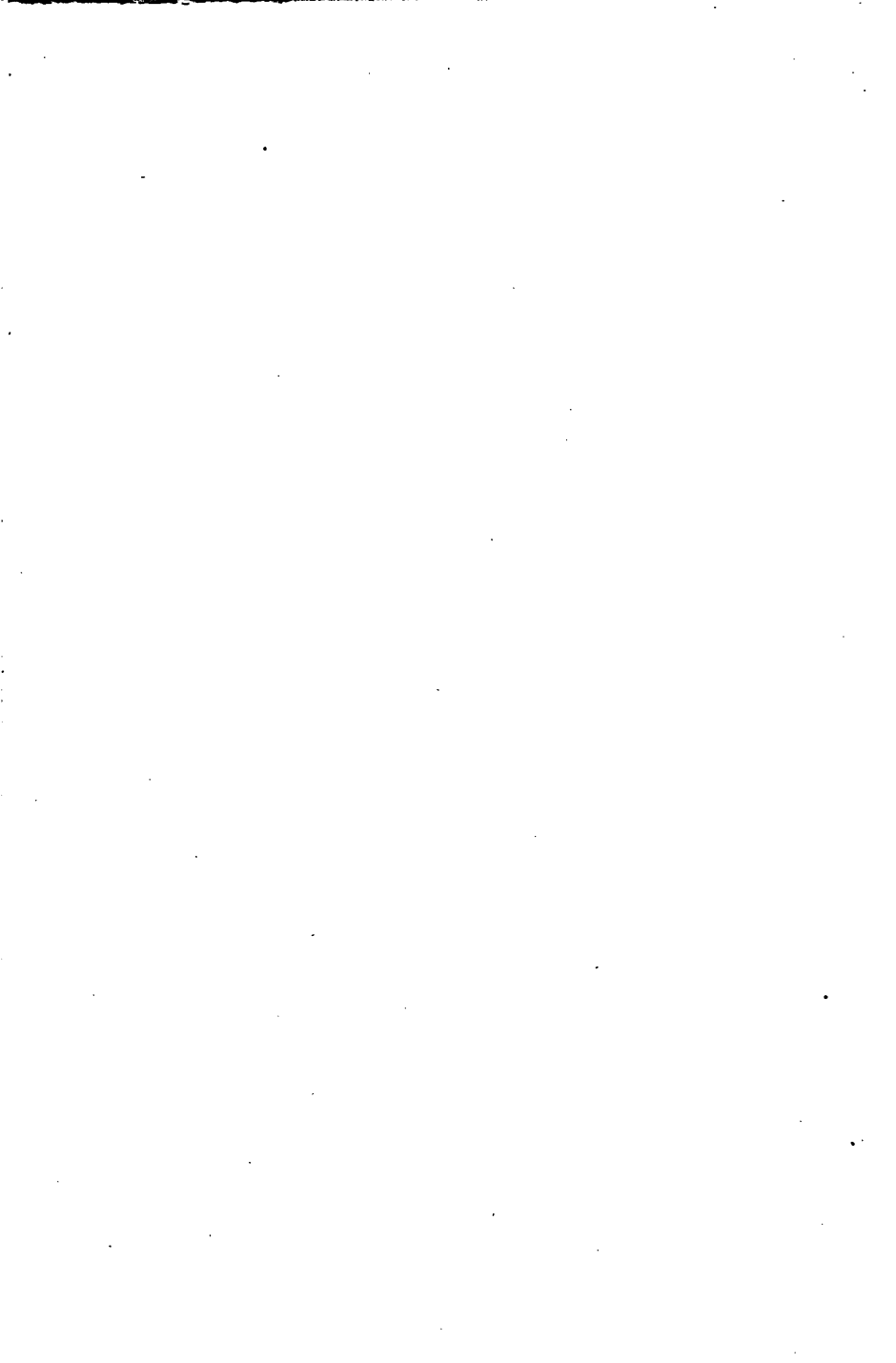
Jasper.

Let me hide

Thus in thine arm this flush'd and finching face ;
It was my sin, not hers. Bright, beaming Sun,
Thy clouds have scatter'd for a moment ! Light
The yielding sand impress'd by Mary's feet.
O Mary, Mary, stay ! We fly to thee—
Our father comes to pray with, pardon both.

Part the Second.

THE SOUL'S RENUNCIATION.



BOOK THE FIRST.

SCENE I.—*The Cliffs, with Rye Bay beyond them.*

JASPER CARTWRIGHT, GLANVIL. *Time, four years later.*

Glanvil. Behold, the night has fallen, and the wind
Blows cold and strong, at once from shore and sea,
While fast the storm approaches! Shall we seek
In this rude arbour shelter, and here speak?

Jasper. How didst thou know me? It is long—
full long—

Since I was taught (just enter'd in my 'teens),
A tender lad, by thee.

Glanvil. By thy most deep
And memorable eyes I knew thee well!

Jasper. How has it fared with thee through all this
time?

Much hast thou alter'd, Glanvil!

Glanvil. Yea, look on me—
Look in my face—can'st in these features read
A strange revealment?

Jasper. Hollow is thy cheek,
Wild are thine eyes, thy brow by pain or thought
Contracted, and thy tangled hair is grey,
Thy lean hand's grasp convulsive!

Glanvil. Face me still!

Dost thou recall how once we spoke apart
 Of secret, memorable, mighty things
 In fields at evening ; then with curtains drawn,
 In my lone study, with the lamp turned down,
 Of secret, memorable, mighty things
 We spake together? . . . See, the kindly moon
 Her face has clear'd, and casts awhile on thine
 Light welcome, lately wish'd for, opportune !
 Let me come close and scrutinise awhile
 Thine eyes, thy features. . . . On thy mouth the
 down

Begins to show ; thy lips since last we met
 Have alter'd, Jasper ; passion since that time
 Has pastured on them Jasper, art thou pure ?
 Can'st thou call spirits ? Now, alas, I see
 Thou turnest from me !

Jasper. Friend, the night is cold ;
 Thy words have touch'd me, and the comely ghosts
 Of dreams long dead have risen in my soul
 To haunt its shadows.

Glanvil. Let me take thine arm.
 Come forth ! The rain seems over. Far in front,
 Behold the lanterns of the boats at sea ! . . .
 Thou art well-grown, and straight, and beautiful ;
 I think my mind has kept through all these years
 Unconscious hold on thee ; this night, I know
 Our meeting thrills through all its heights and depths
 The vastness of thy nature, and mine own
 Beyond its wonted self is magnified.
 God save thee, Jasper ! . . . Hast thou gazed at length

On Gabriel? Thou turnest quite from me ;
Alas, thou canst not answer yea nor nay !
But thy heart dies in thee, to tears it melts.

Jasper. I say, Look round ! I say, We stand
alone,

And in the stars, this earth, in yon great sea,
The veils and vestures of Almighty God
Are visibly before us ; and my soul
Can still through these in gifted moments reach
That secret God. The soul which sees like this,
And unto which the spirit of the world
Is thus reveal'd, may once indeed have lapsed,
But is not lost, and be with that content.

Glanvil. I swear mine eyes have seen in dream
and truth

That burning seraph by his God's bright throne !
He bids me draw to light and love for him
Thy lapsed long-wand'ring mind. Above the deep
My fancy poises him, a picture fair ;
Thou dost not see him, yet he calls on thee !

Jasper. O silvery voice across the starless void !
O blessed vision, wonderful, divine !
I see thee standing, and thy radiant face
Smiles down on me through all the gathering gloom :
I cannot look at thee, I yearn and stretch
Mine eager hands to reach thine own in vain—
Gulfs are between us, the eternal sea,
The aching void, the infinite abyss,
Which none may cross ! Gentle and kind and true,
Son of the Morning, star of light and joy,

How fares it with thee in thy Home of Rest?
 I see thee in the sunset, and thine eyes
 In every star, and in the rosy morn
 Thy maiden blushes; where thou art is beauty,
 And wheresoe'er is beauty there art thou!
 When my soul cleansed shall shine with noble deeds,
 As thou with thy virginity unstain'd,
 I shall be with thee in thy glory bright;
 Till then be thou beside me in my dreams,
 Till then when dream and waking shall be one,
 Thou always, day and night!

Glanvil.

The night is cold,
 And fallen long. Shall we go forward still?
 Or take this steep descent to the sea-beach?
 Or shall we hasten to the town and find
 Some lonely inn whose windows on the deep
 Look forth?

Jasper.

Turn back, and we shall reach in time
 The town, wherein my lodging is at hand,
 And one friend with me there will welcome both,
 And a bright hearth will cheer us.

Glanvil.

Who is this
 That walks beside me? Do not start and turn
 Towards my right hand, some gaunt and homeless ghost
 Expecting! Who is this, whose arm I hold,
 Whose eyes the line of light in yonder town
 Has fix'd, whose body for a moment shields
 My own from salt sea-wind? I ask it, speak!
 Is it thou, Jasper?

Jasper.

Dost thou doubt it?

Glanvil.

Nay !

But this I seek—whether the house of flesh,
Familiar once, each moment now revealing
Old outlines half-forgotten, holds the same
Blithe spirit, the same nature bright and high,
The same most fearless, fond, and faithful heart ?
Stay, face me ; stand a little ; swear this night
Thy faithful promise pledged to friend or foe
Was broken never !

Jasper.

In the eyes of God,
As in thine eyes, I think my soul would dare
To gaze unflinching, as I swear it, No !

Glanvil. Look on me well ! The spirit which
abides

And burns within me, since we parted, oft
Went questing forth into the world unseen,
And has in time, and has in earthly life,
Achieved Eternity. . . . Believest thou ?
I stand here with thee in the night and wind,
With all my faculties by wind and night
Made clear and cool ; as thou art true thyself
And faithful, Jasper, thou believest this ?

Jasper. Suffice it I believe in thy belief.

Glanvil. And dost not count me a distracted
man ?

Jasper. I think thy studies have o'erwrought thy
mind.

Glanvil. There is no fever in my blood ; my
brain

Is clear as thine ; upon the past I keep

A perfect grasp.

Jasper. Thy frame is gaunt and thin,
There is strange lustre in thine eyes, thy limbs
Are trembling even now.

Glanvil. On this cliff's edge
I pause unflinching, on the depths below
Look down with stedfast eyes ; the sea beneath me
Doth in the fitful moonlight chafe, and churn
The sand and chalk ; no impulse prompts to fall,
No dreadful magnet draws this frame erect :
The well-developed, the immortal will
Keeps o'er the body a most sure control.

Jasper. No less thine evocations late or soon
The even balance of a nervous mind
Will, **MUST**, destroy. My friend, in time forbear !
When from the contemplation of the world,
And from that natural order in the midst
Of which we live, and are a part thereof,
We turn to wander in the weary ways
Of speculation over things unseen,
And to communion with the world unknown,
We bid farewell too often, oft for aye,
To all those influences kind and sweet
Which the blue sky, the sun's congenial warmth,
All gentle things and beautiful of earth,
Exert unfailingly on every mind
Which has preserved from childhood's favour'd day
The spring-time freshness and the fire divine.
Humanity is heir of earth alone
While in this present and inferior state ;

O seek not then to grasp the Great Beyond
 Before the time for its revelation come,
 Lest danger lurk in that forbidden search ;
 Lest striving to o'ercome the laws which bind
 And limit thy humanity awhile,
 Thou should'st renounce the greatest boon of life,
 By severance of all the natural ties,
 And dissipate thine else immortal strength,
 Degrading the capacious soul of man
 To lower levels of intelligence !

Glanvil. I have seen visions, I evoke no more—
 Supernal visions, and the distant high
 Translations, by no deed or word of mine
 O'ertake me night and day.

Jasper. What hast thou seen ?

Glanvil. The veil which guards the Throne.

Jasper. And dead souls live ?

Glanvil. I walk'd among immortals as with men,
 And words familiar as we speak this night
 Did pass between us ; as even now the moon
 From yon torn cloud emerges, and reveals
 The world about us, has supernal light
 Made visible to me the world unknown.

Jasper. It has not brought thee happiness, nor health ;
 It has not brought thee of new life or strength
 Accession ! Has it served thee any way ?
 I ask thee, Glanvil, in the name of God,
 In God's own Presence, and this mighty sea's,
 And all the awful majesty of night,
 I ask thee, art thou happy in thy heart,

At peace with man, with thine own soul at rest?

Glanvil. The clouds clear off, the wind has swept
the sky,

And every star comes forth my words this night
To hear ; the waters of the deep itself
Are hush'd, thy heart dies in thee, and the trees
Bow down their heads to listen while I speak. . . .
I say that I am lifted to a height
Which passes man, that on the mountain tops
Of mine own soul, as kings or angels, I
Sit throned, my spirit drench'd with light divine.
Is this no gain? My friend, I started once
In life, like thee, with a heart full of hopes ;
But one put forth a bloom which dwarf'd the rest,
Suck'd in their nourishment, their strength, their life,
And while they died expanded more and more,
Till as the worn field-worker sits at noon
Beneath the ample shelter and cool shade
Of some vast oak, my spirit underneath
This hope sat down, and dwelt and joy'd therein.
What hope? To *live*, for ever in My Soul
To Be, the heir of an immortal, full,
Supreme existence ! The mad world drove by,
And sometimes spatter'd from its steeds' wild hoofs
The dirt they tore through, which I shook from me,
Moved till they pass'd, and in that ample, cool,
And sacred shade, from storm and sunshine shielded,
I dwelt, duration's endless vistas viewing ;
Till one that pass'd me, how I sat remarking,
In front stood shortly, stretch'd his hand, and cried—

“That root is rotten!” My soul suddenly
Was darken'd in me, till a voice said—“Search!”
I rose—forget the Image!—and from that
Time forth, I pledged my spirit to attain
Some proof of Immortality. What creeds
I strove with, through what maze of words and
thoughts

I labour'd, in a twilight state of doubt
Phantasmal still, till dawn'd one light on me,—
Thine, Magic! by whose secrets, once laid bare,
The penetrating spirit enters in
Behind the veil. I now have proved and know,
By faith no longer, by the soul's sure sight,
That the soul is, persists through time and change,
Remaining to eternity, that death
Does not its life extinguish, that the men
We call dead live, that the eternal, high,
Compassionate God, with beauty and the joy
Of full true life fills all things. And if now
You find me truly somewhat pale and worn,
And ageing fast, as if this frame of flesh
Were like my garments ready to lay by,
It is because my spirit I have sought
To cleanse from earth, to cleanse from life in time,
A kingly state in timeless life aeternae
By pain in time attaining. Soon my soul
With solemn steps along the mystic path
Which leads through night will pass to light intense,
And, lo, she enters immortality!
Thee also, Jasper, comes the call to thee—

Achieve, ascend ! thy native height seek out,
And reign from that triumphant !

Jasper.

As a lad

Religion in idolatry by me
Was strangely merged ; then lost I faith in God—
The soul awakened out of golden dreams
Too briefly nursed, emerging into night,
Stood stripp'd and starving in the waste, wide world
God's smile no longer lighten'd. Then, by thee
Directed, did my spirit its weak wings
Beat at heaven's gate, my trembling hands attempted
From spheres beyond the dividing veil to lift,
And like a shaft of sunshine bring once more
Revelments down in glory. The mind's eye
Turn'd inward saw resources strange and new—
A prospect vast—unfolding, from the heights
Of strong imagination sought to win
Supernal secrets, and from dread domains
Of magic lore—with angels as with men
To converse—my dead friends to charm by words
And visibly commune with, a bright hope
Beyond my boyhood, work'd and waited for ;
And as the mind expanded, more and more
The dream evolved—those heights half-seen sought
out

Where flesh turns spirit, life is long romance,
Dissolve impediments of space, and star
To star shews knowledge, the material bars
Are broken, the beyond to searching souls
Opens, intelligence supreme with man

Holds converse, and the failing age of faith
Gives place to vision and apocalypse.
But in the middle of my course a hand
Drew down the body, sank my soul's high dream.
I had not found it vain, nor proved, if true,
The high reward. Behold me, therefore, come
To take for granted what I first believed in,
Then doubted, then sought eagerly and long,
To know, like thee! Henceforth, a certain vague
And doubtful quality of faith is mine,
While less for truth than something noble, high,
To shape in active life I seek as aim.
Full on the threshold of a great event
I feel I stand; a secret kept from me
Till man's estate will open three days hence
Before me. I was taught to look thereto
From early boyhood, as to yon bright star
The rover turns, who toss'd on stormy seas
Sails hardly. Yes, it is my Star of Fate,
It rules my fortunes, rules my future course;
I'll order life thereby—high Heaven approve!
I raise mine eyes to its unclouded vault,
And straightway now the common sense of sight
Seems melted in me; with the soul I see,
And it is vision, it is ecstasy!

Glanvil. The pictures of a painful prophecy
Are dimly limn'd before me, and I know
That grief awaits thee.

Jasper. Whether grief or joy
That star will rule. It lit my boyhood's dreams,

And oft in day my fancy brooded o'er it.
I stand thereby.

Glanvil. Light fateful star of bane !
Shew the steep paths, and onward, upward draw
The soul that thou hast charge of !

Jasper. Mighty sea,
Dark night, loud wind still rising, with severe
But healthful force draw back to Nature's arms
This stolen soul !

Glanvil. Expanding god within,
Exalt thyself for ever, and attract
By mystic spells to thine own height sublime
This being, that, like double stars, the twain
May act on one another, shining both,
And by the balanced influence of each
Poise both for ever !

Jasper. Lo, the town beneath !

SCENE II. — *A Garden.* JASPER CARTWRIGHT,
MATTHEW, BASIL, MILES, ERNEST. *During
the scene the moon rises over the sea.*

Jasper. We part, my friends, to-morrow by the
sea ;
Our paths divide ; ye go your plans in life
Each one to compass : I have led you long,
Ye stand henceforth alone, to lead in turn,
I do not doubt, some band of younger minds
On our old lines. I pray you, let this night,
When on the threshold of an ampler life

I pause expectant, in the minds of all,
 By something noble, plann'd, or thought, or said,
 Be grav'd indelibly. Speak each in turn !
 The wind has freshen'd, through this garden-ground,
 With twilight falling, wafts from lanes without
 Wild rose's and wild honeysuckle's scent
 To mix with rarer fragrance. . . . Lo, one star !

Ernest. High thoughts are hopeless till the ladies
 join us !

How shall we pass the time ?

Basil. Let us make a Dreamland
 Each for his heart, then put the dream in words
 And tell it. Some will sing us songs between,
 And like a distant chorus will the deep
 Sea blend its mystic voices with our own ;
 So doth the raptured longing of a boy
 Keep time for ever to the wild romance
 His eyes peruse.

Jasper. For that sweet word Romance
 Sweet thanks be yours ! It kindles in the heart
 A fervid bliss, a longing impulse leaps
 Within us, sending fire through every vein ;
 We would be up and doing we know not what ;
 The eyes gleam, the desire outpaces thought,
 And thought in tumult follows trampling thought,
 While the mind makes bright pictures, and dreams
 dreams

Too lovely for deception and too deep !

Matthew. We stand upon the threshold of our
 lives,

We all, our thoughts are all of the to-come ;
Poor in the heart which has not made already
Its dream of life ! Tell that then, which alone
Has vital import, not from Fancy-Land,
But what in highest moments and in best
The soul has shaped for its fulfilment. See
How your eyes brighten, and mine own, I know !
A fire leaps up within us to fulfil
Each one of us the story he has made,
And from imagination into life
Bids magian time evolve ! Who will speak first ?

Jasper. Well did he speak who bade us keep
within

Some secrets told to few, some thoughts too deep
For common utterance ! The divine and high
Emotions of the soul, transcending sense,
The sudden flashes of revealing light,
Free-breathing moments, with inspiring, fresh
Winds blowing over from eternal plains,
And scented, infinite seas, could these in words
Find meet expression, would the world them heed
More than the voices of the rain and wind,
Which too have meanings ? Hide them, dreamer,
then !

And with the solemn music of the soul
Still let them mingle, thee to soothe in need,
To strengthen ever, and around thee build
A lasting rampart of harmonious sound,
To isolate from disenchanting things,
And leave thee lonely, as it well may leave thee,

But in that loneliness which spheres the stars,
And late or soon the intelligence prepares
For inspirations from the world beyond.
Well did he speak who bade us keep within
Some secrets told to few ! our life-dream one,
Whose true fulfilment justifies alone
Revelment. Should we empty rashly thus
Our hearts out, we should leave a void within
The dream itself perchance might fill no more ;
For once express'd in cold and formal words,
Though clear'd thereby, it does not lose the less
The rosy halo of romance which now
Surrounds it. Let us rather tell some tale
Which shall to apprehending minds shew forth
Our own, reveal the spirit and the hope
Wherewith we are imbued, and yet not draw
The sacred veil of secrecy aside
Which covers from rude touches and uncouth
The tenderest flowers of feeling and of thought

Matthew. A song were best ! Yes, fittingly re-
proved

I stand ; my life acknowledges the right
In those your words, who wear of all men most
An outer mask, expressionless and cold,
To hide the strife within.

How oft we wander up and down
Performing alien parts,
And bear about from town to town
The same unresting hearts ;

To shew our real self we shun,
Rehearse life's daily task,
Then gladly when the day is done
We doff the actor's mask.

Such is the sad, unvarying round
As on our course we go,
We ne'er another's heart can sound,
And none our own can know ;

Whose weight increases day by day,
Which throbs and gives no peace,
Till from ourselves we hide away
To purchase thus release.

At length our own true self is lost,
We seek it now in vain,
Though sometimes still the mind is cross'd
By a deep inward pain,

Which shews it lives retired apart
Where no false-seeming is,
In some deep cavern of the heart
Or unplumb'd soul-abyss.

The kraken at the end of time
Out of the sea shall rise—
Will our true selves in some far clime
Salute our aching eyes?

Or will some novel part we play
Our nature's strength expend?
Will new disguise our skill display,
And to the bitter end

Must we still nurse a baseless dream
That we shall soon be free
To be no more what now we seem,
But what we seem to be?—

Ah! may the dream, fulfill'd in each,
Reveal immortal youth,
The nature's reach, free spirits' speech,
And rest from quest in truth.

Jasper. Matthew, the soul sufficiently profound
To feel that doubt should have the power within
To answer it; and yet mine own responds
To your sad verse: the reticence but now
I counsell'd, which amended, not reprov'd,
Your late proposal, to a length too great
Is often carried. Did the armour forged
For strife become the hero's daily dress,
His limbs would stiffen, and the weight undue
Would wear the frame within. Veil then the soul!
Bind it not round with bonds of ice or steel,
Lest, cramp'd thereby, we grow false seeming's
slaves.

And let the veil itself be light and thin,
That gentle winds may in fair moments waft it,

Kind hands remove it, soul with soul to join
 In mystic marriage of ecstatic lips,
 Whence noble thoughts shall spring, the sons of love.
 Aye, let the veil be light and bright and thin,
 That if a new light kindle in thy soul,
 It may shine through it, that at will thy hand
 May cast it up, and all thy self be free !

Matthew. There are some moments when one
 heart will touch
 Another's, a divine sensation thrills
 Both in that union brief ; but thou beware !
 Nor seek in common moments to renew
 The subtile union, for a globe of glass
 By too profound and sudden music thrill'd,
 Is shatter'd.

Jasper. One did I know who, tired of acting
 more
 A part unsuited on the social stage,
 Went out afar into the wide green world,
 And sought to be himself. No longer he
 Conceal'd his thoughts or feelings. Speaking out
 I' the fulness of his heart, he did not pay
 Deference to men's opinions, but exchanged
 That thankless task, fulfill'd of meanest slaves,
 For faithful service to his nobler self,
 High service, basis of exalted life.
 The bonds which bound his soul being lifted off,
 It now breathed freely, finding room for growth,
 And fair expansion of new-budding powers.

Ernest. A vague ambition in a vague veil'd way

Finds fittingly expression. For myself
I take my stand, and in the daylight boldly
Of good sound sense and reason speak unflinching
My aims to all, precision in my thoughts,
And my speech clear; and none will dare reproach me
With sentiment, and poetry, and stuff!

Basil. What is your aim?

Ernest. My plans from boyhood nursed,
But now matured, I look to shape in life,
And make the start already. One of these
Is to grow rich by hard and honest toil
In commerce; and the girl that I love best
To wed; to have a country seat and house
In town; then having struggled and won well,
Against some odds, the wealth I seek, God willing,
To lawfully enjoy it, to live well
And in some style, to keep an open house
For friends, shew bounty, and myself enrich
Still more by charitable actions done
With kindly heart . . . If I have answer'd you,
Tell yours then!

Basil. Much embolden'd by your free
And frank avowal, I will own my aims
Of equal worth with yours, whose idol, sir,
Is Mammon, worshipp'd since the world began,
While mine is Venus, who divides with him
The heart of man. I pleasure seek, you gold—
Which search is better? Which pursuit more noble?

Jasper. Your sad verse touch'd me! We should
meet more often;

Where are your evenings pass'd—at home, or
where?—

With books?

Matthew. Yes, mostly, but I make few friends ;
I live alone ; thus only can a man
Himself fulfil—the ocean and the stars
Are uncompanion'd, and, if not bless'd, are great.

Jasper. Basil's half-right ! Though passion wears
the boy,

There is no misery so sweet as love.
Such passion, true, seeks self, yet gives delight
To others ; Ernest's aim is wholly self,
Though most would praise it.

Ernest. I respect your mind's
High gifts, nor envy those, but I defend
My plans. Denounce me—you are wrong no less,
And I disclaim your judgment ! Judge in dreams,
But leave to me the facts of waking life !
Soar up, bright spirit, and invest thyself
With rainbow treasures, but the solid gifts
Of life attempt not in thy fairy scales
To weigh ! Weigh gold of faërie—that is dead
Leaves in the daytime—in my hands I hold
The magic purse which multiplies the more
'Tis drain'd ; that's commerce back'd with enterprise,
That's prudent speculation which luck backs,
Because the calculating mind controls
The vagrant dance of Fortune. Am I wrong ?
One man am I, beginning in the world,
Not rich, not strong, no genius, but I grasp

And ne'er let go, and what I grasp is good
And solid. Give me space for my two arms
To move in, time for struggle, and, behold,
I'll top you all in practical success !
You count me little in your thoughts, I know—
Ten years, friends, then compare yourselves with
me !

I look to dower the daughters of you all,
To start your sons, your fallen fortunes raise,
While if success bring peace, and peace good health,
And health long life, I'll build your monuments.
[*To Jasper.*] They should have sent you to that
school of Gilp's

Where I was train'd ; he turns no dreamers out.
When was home training anything for boys
But failure ? They have marr'd your life for you,
Friend Jasper, to my thought.

Jasper. I never owed
To my adopted father a more deep
And heartfelt gratitude than for sparing me
The doleful discipline of Stephen Gilp.

Ernest. He would have made you !

Jasper. Marr'd me !

Ernest. Morven spoil'd you !

Jasper. And in that spoiling saved my soul alive !

Ernest. You are beyond all hope.

Jasper. And lost to fear
In this regard.

Ernest. Come up to town with me
And hear the bishop—that's the boy Gilp train'd, sir—

We've back'd him for the Primacy against
 All England—a fine, sterling character,
 Prompt, practical, good sense from head to heel,
 And sound in doctrine—that's a man for me !

Matthew. If gold be silence, you are wealthy,
 Miles !

Miles. Where all are speaking, it is well to think ;
 He learns who listens. May a hearer speak ?
 All honest aims are good ones, all good aims
 Lead on the soul ; sufficient to the man
 His lights, sufficient to the nature's scope
 The hopes it holds. Who judges and condemns,
 Who sifts and weighs, tasks nature, not the man.

Matthew. Who e'er, like Ernest, seeks to rise in
 life,
 Who longs like me for light, good aim and true
 one
 Follows—God help him, lead him, sometime crown
 him !

But after selfish, sensual delight
 To seek alone ! . . . I know the soul within
 That dusky, earnest face, whose every line
 Has force and meaning, to a noble height
 Could reach—why thus degrade it? Why waste
 thus

Life's golden chances? Could I shame you deeply,
 I'd risk your hatred, Basil—you who wear
 Your follies and your vices with no blush
 On that brow broad enough to throne a thought
 Sublime, whose lustre lighting all your life

Might lead you to achievement.

Basil.

You have said

You live alone to emulate the stars
And sea—that thought befits you! Like the stars,
You will move always in a formal line,
And lead like those a bonded, formal life,
And your life ever some cold and distant hope
Will follow as the ocean does the moon
But still your pompous emulation fails :
The bright stars burn, their hearts with flames are
fill'd,

But yours is ice ; and if the sea be cold,
It is a passionate thing with stormy life
Instinct ! You may become perhaps a dark
Star, or a stagnant lake, or a dead sea—
Not more ! So cover up thy soul with calm,
O great Unmoved, and be that breast of thine
Cold as the snows are, barren as the sea,
And like the stars from human feelings soft
Remote ; to live, to feel, to prove the scope
Of human bliss, give leave in grace to me ;
From out thy mental pride, thy thin disdain,
No great thing, and no good thing, and no kind
Can issue ; love's excesses work at times
Their own redemption, nature's strength attesting.

Miles. Will no one sing to end this vain dispute ?

You muse, my Jasper ! Use your wondrous gift—
Some ode or lyric from the heart breathed forth
Let your ecstatic spirit improvise ;
My harp shall fill the pauses of the verse

With wand'ring chords of melody. . . . Be still !
The inspiration fills our leader's soul.

Jasper.

On the cliffs three hours to-day,
Where the burnet roses blow,
Did I watch the sunbeams play
On the gleeful waves below ;
Roving voices faint and sweet
Whisper'd through the noon-tide heat,
Whisper'd from across the sea
As I sat and thought of thee.

Into thine eternal home
Do the old-world echoes come ?
Or does silence mystic, deep,
All thy sense in languor steep ?
Is it always noon-tide high,
Never doth the day go by ?
Or is it sunset there with thee—
Sunset over the crystal sea,
God's soft wind for evermore
Wafted from the heavenly shore ?
Does the red light flush thy brow,
Weaving round thee many a spell ?
Whisper to me, tell me how
Is it with thee, Gabriel ?

On thy throne's exalted height
Thou art seated day and night ;
Thy most bright soul's bright array
Never waneth night nor day.

Thy raised eyes grow soft or glisten
As the splendours pale or brighten,
And thy whole face seems to listen
And to lighten
When the shrill, sweet voices heighten,
And the very life within thee dies away like a breeze
In the pause of the silver silences.

The stars and the sea have met together
And mingled in thine eyes,
With the azure of far skies
In autumn weather.
Ah ! what have the angels done
To make thee look so fair ?
As if thy bliss but yesternight begun,
And it seem'd still so strange to breathe in heaven's air.
About thy golden hair
The clouds of incense make a dim
And ever moving aureole ;
Smooth is thy broad white brow,
And in thy samite chaste art thou,
Through thine eyes look the spirit of thy soul.
Thy lips move sometimes, joining in the hymn,
But silent oft and statue-seeming
While thy white hands on thy lap lie straight,
Dost thou sit dreaming
In unearthly state.

God looks on thee from above thee,
The white robed martyrs love thee ;

The confessors one and all
See the sunlight on thee fall,
Sunbeams kiss thy vesture's hem
And thy starry diadem.
Thee the holy Mary blesses,
Oft a kindly word will speak ;
Once she smooth'd thy gleaming tresses,
Once she kiss'd thy virgin cheek.

Is thy heavenly bliss complete ?
Hast thou now no more desire
For the love we thought so sweet
Ere thy soul ascended higher ?
Thy blue eyes are deep, and deep
Their expression lies therein ;
They their inward counsel keep,
All their secrets shut within.

Thou sittest in light alone ;
Is there space anywhere by thy throne—
Space upon either hand
For another to kneel or stand ?
Since none thy throne may share,
Is there space by thy feet anywhere ?

Who sprinkles the lilies that bind thy brow
With the dews that keep them cool and bright ?
Who folds thy garments white ?
What hand caresses and tends thy tresses,
And clasps thy golden girdle now ?

Who washes thy feet that are white and fair,
And dries them with his hair ?

All earthly needs for thee are o'er,
And thou dost live and live no more
As on this sad sublunar shore.

My erring fancy only sought
With types from mundane glory brought
Thy state to picture passing thought.

Thy spirit pure is crown'd alone
With its own beauty, thy high throne
Is thought, thy vesture is thine own

Immortal nature's sanctity ;
Thy home is neither earth nor sky,
Thou dwellest in eternity.

For ever are thy thoughts intense
From change of feeling thy defence,
And therefore o'er the void immense

A silver voice is audible,
Which softly whispers all is well
With the high soul of Gabriel.

Basil. Did you love Gabriel for her lips or eyes?
And were the eyes that charm'd you brown or blue,
Or golden-hazel, or that mild grey-green

More sweet than all, or that red-brown intense
 Which makes you sigh to look on? Did your lips
 Meet oft with hers and kiss them o'er and o'er?
 Did you love much and for that love lose much,
 Loss counting lightly which could purchase love,
 Whom gain ne'er bought? Tell me the whole sweet
 tale

Of all ye dream'd of, long'd for, sought and found,
 When lost in love's delirium, like to die!

Jasper. Ah, speak not lightly, 'tis a holy thing!
 Let no adulterous and evil thought
 Possess the sacred temple of that heart
 Where love hath enter'd and its glory reigns,
 Where love abides and lights from day to day,
 Or where the mem'ry of its former presence
 Doth consecrate a shrine deserted now,
 But still a singular and haunted place!

Ernest. What is the end for which you labour,
 Miles?

Matthew. He keeps his counsel like an alchemist,
 And in his secrecy is wise as he.

Jasper. 'Tis many moons since last I met you,
 Miles—

How fare your Oxford studies? You have grown,
 Tall are you now, though somewhat slight withal;
 Your eyes, once bright, are dim with midnight studies,
 Your cheeks, once blooming, pallid. Does it seem
 So long ago since we were boys, and bathed
 At early morn together?

Miles. Since you brought

Brave tales and flowers to please me when I lay
Sick of a fever, since in gratitude,
When I was quite recovered, and could strip
Under heaven's eye, in the cool, morning wind,
With safety, did I teach you in return
The art of swimming. That is all, yes, all
I ever did to serve and help you, Jasper ;
You train'd my backward mind, and all your own
Had grasp'd of knowledge to my humbler sense
In simple terms translated ; till I grew
More worthy of my teacher, to be known
And loved by him, and in the town be call'd
His friend—the butcher's son, who all day long
Wore the blue frock, the shop floor scrubb'd, the
meat

Took round, or call'd for orders in the cart.
Can'st trace to-day some likeness to that coarse
And thoughtless boy when first he bathed beside you ?
I owe you all the difference 'twixt then
And now, for though hard study since has won
This Oxford scholarship, your hand it was
Which help'd me first to reach the path whereby
I hope to reach distinction ; that removed
The first and greatest hindrance to my free
Progression.

Jasper. Let us put the past aside !
We stand together, do you mark me, friends ?
We all are young, our spirits by our hopes
Are buoy'd within us, as the dancing boat
In mellow moonlight anchor'd far away

Is buoy'd on shining waters, by one rope
Restrain'd alone. What binds us? Look abroad!
Suppose we all this night should vow to start
On some high quest, a gallant band, together?
To all high thoughts, to all supernal aims
There comes, as prelude first, an exodus—
A going outward of the heart and mind
From self, and from the meaner forms of life,
Soul with the world-soul mingling. Unto this
Well if we add that lesser, yet most fair,
Outgoing, the rover's, when with fever'd feet,
Flush'd face, and kindling eyes, he seeks in strange
And distant lands to satisfy the deep,
Mysterious longing which still draws him on,
Which brooks no rest, but "Onward, Onward!" cries—
Where'er he goes is still a further field,
And wonders still unseen. . . . Who has not known
The heart's vague craving, when perchance the eye
On level sunlit meadows looks, and low
Long-stretching pasture, to be far away—
O soul, how far!—and free through all the world
To wander ever, to rove and roam and rove,
Among strange folk to sojourn, to become
Familiar with them, with their ways and thoughts,
And leave one friend behind in every place
To think on us.

Matthew. It is the sea which calls your fancy
forth,

Its beauty's silence, and its voices, both
Call loud on you! On me the mighty Past

Hath laid her spells—wide as the sea this night
It spreads ; the magic of the moon most bright
Is woven here in spells of faërie sheen,
And thus romance invests with dreamy charm
The elder world. What pictures there I see !
What vanish'd crowds at my command come forth
And play their parts ! The peopled vistas stretch,
Till lost in legend as the main in mist
Doth life dilated into symbols turn,
Fact into myth, and man himself to god
Is magnified.

Jasper. I have not prized the past
Beyond its worth, nor eyes of vain regret
Have cast thereon, nor wish'd that past return'd,
But rather strive to keep my mind abreast
Of mine own age, and with the foremost there
I seek to stand. The gods are gone and dead,
But Faith lives on, and in a thousand ways
Her aim fulfils to raise and perfect man.
I stand in spirit on the foremost point
Of life, the future like a formless sea
Spreads out before me, and my soul therein
Forecasts with joy the destinies of men.

Basil. There is no need to search the sleepy
past,
Nor from the future to evoke with pain
The pre-existent souls of days unborn,
To gratify the senses or the heart.
Within the shining, sultry courts of Love,
In Love's own House, my soul elects to dwell ;

Delight is there, but shouldst thou tire awhile,
 Cast up the painted windows, look abroad—
 Behold, before thee o'er the fair expanse
 The loaded vines of Bacchus !

Miles.

Speak to him !

Sing, Jasper ! Ever is he pure with you ;
 Some nobler mood evoke, some lofty end
 Proclaim, then dare him to its utmost height,
 He'll reach it then, and strongly spurr'd transcend it.

Jasper.

When will thy revel be done?
 When will thy brain at length
 Clear of the fumes of wine,
 Thine eyes made dim no more
 By the foes of sleep,
 Thine aching heart no more
 By turbulent passions and fires
 Of fever and frenzy consumed,
 Rise as a sleeper awaken'd,
 Seeing things as they are,
 The path of thy life before thee,
 The lost, the forgotten, the true,
 The upward leading path ?

The inward, warning voice
 Responds to the words I speak,
 To the vital questions ask'd
 Fain would an answer give,
 Which shall thy soul uplift—
 When wilt thou listen thereto ?

Think of the prospects bright,
 Which to the soul made free
 Open a vista prolong'd !
 Heir of immortal life,
 Heir of the ages past,
 Son of the Timeless, rise !
 Thine are the earth and sea,
 Thine are the moon and sun,
 The starry depths and heights
 Are thine ; the vastness, the immensity,
 These are thy fields to work in, to achieve,
 To gain and reign !
Matthew. To the sea, ye neophytes !

SCENE. III.—*A Bedroom.* WILLIAM MORVEN,
 JASPER.

William Morven. I hear a step upon the stairs
 without
 Which sounds familiar, on the door a hand
 Is laid, the latch is lifted ; who is there ?
 Is that you, Jasper Cartwright ?
Jasper. It is I.
William Morven. And have you read the packet ?
Jasper. I have read,
 And thought thereon.
William Morven. Well, what has brought you
 here ?
Jasper. I have return'd to mine own house and
 home,

To gaze once more upon the sea my soul
 Hath loved from childhood, and on thee to look,
 Thou man of malice !

William Morven. To the light come round,
 Where I can face thee fairly. Thou art pale,
 Thy face has alter'd.

Jasper. How thine own has shrunk !
 Thy cheeks are livid, to a shade thy frame
 Reduced, and dost thou evil to the end ?

William Morven. The twilight deepens ; it is dense,
 the stars

And that late crescent of the waning moon
 Will o'er my corpse to-night keep silent watch,
 But 'tis not fear that on my faded cheeks
 The drawn skin whitens, and such cold intense
 Draws round my body ; 'tis life's failing springs
 This sudden trembling causes. Look at me !
 My still bright eyes with fix'd unflinching glance
 Can fasten thine ; a strange, complete content
 Pervades my spirit as it thus surveys
 The wreck of all within thee—pride and joy.
 Thy nature train'd to keenest sense of shame
 Unfolded by me in the forcing-house
 Of sensibility and self-consciousness.
 I gave thee delicate and dainty tastes,
 I strung thy spirit with the tender chords
 Of finest feeling—spun thy fancy's threads
 To airy webs of gossamer—for what ?
 To crush thy fairy fabrics built in dream,
 To set thee out of tune, with thy best self,

To strike one dreadful note of dissonance
Shall vibrate through thy being evermore.
Thy form is straight, thy looks are proud and high,
Thou dost not shake in all thy limbs as I,
Here on this couch, am shaken like a reed,
But in thy spirit is the light of life,
I know, put out ; thy soul, I feel, is dark ;
I know thy nature from itself henceforth
In hatred shrinks. I leave thee loathing life,
While I depart devoid of fear of death
Into the endless blank. I take with me
My hatred's secret to molest thee more ;
Thou shalt not know what roused and prompted it—
Because my brother in a will preferr'd
An orphan brat before him, count it that ;
Or seek with subtlety a deeper cause,
And find it malice out of madness sprung,
And still be wrong ; no madness sifted thus
The proofs which torture now thy burning brain.

Jasper. Most wretched man !

William Morven. Nay, fool, I die content
And happy !

Jasper. Thou hast fail'd at least in me,
Hast wrought me highest service. True it is
Thy secret fill'd my spirit for a space
With shame intense, but now thy dreadful tale
Has multiplied my nature's wonted strength
An hundred-fold, has open'd out a path
To spiritual eminence supreme
Before unknown. Henceforth my soul rejects—

That better and immortal part which no
 Birth-stain can blemish doth reject—the mean,
 The lesser self, the part which shame alone
 Like this can tarnish, and for evermore
 On its own true and individual height
 Doth stand self-poised, to contemplate below
 The house of flesh, and feel with pride and joy
 Their interests divided evermore.

Old man, I owe thee this ! . . . Thou sinkest back,
 And in thine eyes the light fades suddenly.
 O die not thus with malice in thy heart !
 Stretch forth thy hand, be thankful thou hast work'd
 My weal and glory, and perchance to man
 At large some good, since I will serve the world,
 But self no more, and let me aid thee now
 In thy last moments.

William Morven. Thou art great of heart,
 Could I be equal in nobility—
 But that's too late ; I will not prove in death
 My meanness, weeping and repenting me—
 My soul persisting to the end departs
 Great as thine own, though great in hate and scorn ;
 I conquer there ! Now wilt thou still that hand
 Extend in pardon ?

Jasper. I extend it still.

William Morven. And still I conquer by refusing it.

Jasper. I bid thee mark that lovely line of light
 Which dimly lingers in the West remote ;
 I pray that God may kindle in thy mind
 Some thought as bright and beautiful in these

Thy latest moments, and the same prolong
To light thee through eternity ! In truth,
I vanquish thee—oh, do not turn thy face
To that blank wall !

William Morven. I will not own in life
That thou art master, but thy strength of heart
I recognise. Some purpose known to none
Takes up the tangled threads of thy strange life,
And deftly weaves. . . . Did furies ere thy birth
Combine against thee, or fore-casting Fate,
High doom decreeing for a nature high,
In darkness shape with care its prudent ends ?

Jasper. The solemn problem solves at length itself
Triumphantly, that wisdom high reveal'd
Whose will permitted for an end sublime
Sweet Nature's clean and sanctifying laws
Should thus be trampled. Unto regal heights
My shame exalts me ! I the meaner life
Reject ; by prudent sacrifice of self
Behold me vow'd to prove my lineage high !
Lead on mankind, strong spirit, as the moon
Draws seething on the billowy sea behind,
Which stagnant else, and prone 'twixt shore and shore
Would lifeless lie !

BOOK II.

SCENE I.—*A Library, with long windows looking out on the distant sea.* JASPER, JOHN NORTH.

John North. Is your name Jasper Cartwright?

Jasper. Sir, it is ;

Command his service !

John North. It is dark about you,
Though in the cold mist sadly the full white moon
Shines o'er the sea, and as it rises dwindles.
Come nearer, Jasper, let me gaze on you !
What dims my eyes? How tall and brave you are !
God love you, nephew ! Is it well with you ?
I am John Blake, your uncle.

Jasper. That I know.

John North. When last we parted what a child you
were !

Now your straight figure with its firm, erect,
And stately head my sea-dried form o'ertops.

Jasper. Your voice is deep and searching like the
sea ;

In your bluff presence doth the soul thereof
Take visible expression, yet these words,
O tann'd sea-toiler, seem no sailor's speech !

John North. My soul is soften'd at the sight of you !

Jasper. And mine enlarged doth swell within my
breast,

As if your words its noblest mood evoked.

John North. It is so beautiful and bright a thing
To see you, Jasper, bright and beautiful!

Jasper. Your eyes are full of fire and prophecy,
As if your soul, like Enoch's, walk'd with God.
May God be with you! My heart yearns towards
you;

I swear your spirit, like a star, has ruled
In all my life, though you were far removed.

John North. My ship is waiting in the Downs a
wind

To bear her up the Channel, so I seized
This chance, the first, to see you. Where is he,
That lame, eccentric man, who guarded you?

Jasper. I trust his spirit at the Source of Life
Renews its strength for ever—he is dead.

John North. If I have wrong'd you, Jasper!

Jasper. That were strange!

I know your heart is set towards faith in God
And love to all men.

John North. Let us walk awhile. . .
Behold the sea before us!

Jasper. How the sun,
An undistinguishable sphere, involved
In burning mist, whose purple nimbus most
Did o'er it concentrate, i' the West this eve
Went down! Between that vision and the spot
Where I stood watching, with the sea behind me,
Rose dark a lonely mill, whose circling arms
Before that flaming orb a frequent sweep

Made, passing. O'er the wintry sea the sharp
 East wind was blowing, the insidious tide
 Grey waves advanced, low waves with snow-white crests
 Slow crumbling into ruin. . . . It is now
 Night, and a vast, amazing moon above
 The deep has risen, circling towards the south,
 Towards Walmer's cliffs, St Margaret's fairy bay,
 And Dover's looming heights.

John North. I come this day
 To know if you are happy—is that so ?

Jasper. Look in mine eyes ! What do you see
 therein ?

John North. I see the fathomless and timeless sea.

Jasper. Hold well the question answer'd !

John North. Your face is pale.

Jasper. The moonbeams fall thereon.

John North. Your lips are white.

Jasper. The wind is in the north and cold withal.

John North. Your eyes are sad, though steady as a
 god's.

Jasper. The wilderness of waters fixes them.

John North. What is it sets you from your age
 apart ?

What makes me conscious, as I stand beside you,
 Of some strange presence more of ghost's than man's,
 As if some spirit, melancholy, cold,
 And high, to earth a stranger, dwelt in you ?
 Speak, Jasper, I adjure you !

Jasper. I repeat
 That you unconsciously and far away

Have ruled my life ; now you are near indeed ;
As star to star approaching, so your soul
Perturbs me with its presence—all things move
More swiftly in me, life and thought and love.

John North. These words distress me with their
doubtful meaning !

Jasper. Your hand has led me to the heights of life ;
If from those summits I behold a fair
And ample prospect, if I see below
My meaner nature, if I live this day
To lofty, generous, and noble aims,
If having sacrificed myself, I find
More life, more strength, in sacrifice—I own
I owe you this.

John North. The bold and healthy mind
Can conquer pain, and make of shame itself
The substance of a triumph.

Jasper. Wise are you !

John North. Is that your case ?

Jasper. The pain of sense is light ;
If shame fell on me, would you know thereof ?

John North. I came one day to see you, years ago —
Did you hear that ?

Jasper. Yes, I was told thereof.

John North. I did not find you ; you were far away,
But, Jasper, in the man who guarded you
I met an old acquaintance, one indeed
Whose life I saved at sea by risking mine.
He bade me welcome warmly, told me how
The charge his brother had accepted first

Devolved on him. I stay'd the night at Deal ;
 We suppd together ; he declared his wish
 To act in your regard a father's part,
 Till warming somewhat towards a man so long
 Forgotten, full of pity for his lame,
 Disabled body, longing to increase
 His kindness towards you, spurr'd by more than these,
 I told him somewhat which concerned a *friend*
 Most secret ; I adjure you, Jasper, say
 If that religious confidence, reposed
 Not wisely, may be, yet with pure intent,
 Was e'er betray'd.

Jasper. . . . I cannot answer, No—
 I cannot hide from you the unhappy truth—
 I do know all ; the man your faith reposed in
 His pledge betray'd because he hated me.
 Your tale was cherish'd in his inmost heart,
 He gloated on it, he brought me back from school,
 He train'd me softly, all my whims he humour'd,
 And I grew up beside him delicate
 In tastes and aspect, train'd to shrink from pain,
 From all things gross revolting. Why was this ?
 That on the nature thus with care refined
 Shame's blow might fall more heavily. I reach'd
 To man's estate, and taught through all thy gift
 To look for as my chiefest hope in life,
 He sent my uncle's story. . . . Do not turn !
 The tide before us rolls and thunders in ;
 I am thy master, I am more than thou,
 Strong sea, great sea ! Above thy wildest storm

The mind can rise ; thou can'st not rule it, nor
Its height attain. Mankind is more than thou,
Strong sea, great sea, the restless soul of earth !

John North. Ah, Jasper !

Jasper. Do not grieve, nor deeply now
Reproach yourself ; I do not now reproach you,
I do not grieve. My spirit in its calm
Is poised for ever as the moon in air,
And doth with measured motions like the moon
The awful altitudes of life ascend,
Ambitious of its zenith. While it soars,
It strips the mists of passion, as the moon
Her veil of vapour. O, I swear that tale
Awoke to life soul-strength which long lay latent !
A refuge seeking from the scourge of shame,
Mine own immortal nature's depths and heights,
With rich resources, round about me widen'd.

John North. Your nature out of agony may thus
New strength evoke ; the keen, observant mind
Is not by this deceived. I could not face you—
No, roughly school'd and rugged though I be,
I could not come with empty hands before you,
And find you thus divorced by word of mine
From boyhood's natural and healthy joy,
And forced by effort of the mind within
To conjure up a strange, unnatural bliss,
Akin to madness, and your soul distress'd
To soothe and comfort so. I grieve indeed ;
My spirit in its agony grows faint
As death within me, though the night is cool,

My burning brain is whirling like a wheel ;
But still one thought supports me.

Jasper. Let my strength
Sustain you rather ; do not fear to tax me.
I have not grieved—I see the ruddy light
Revolving slowly by the Goodwin sands,
Mine eyes are clear (count up the stars with me
Which fill that space betwixt two looming clouds,
There in the stormy east !), my brain is cool,
And if my heart beat fast, with hope it throbs.

John North. O stalwart heart, declare what moved
in Morven

The hate which thus an unoffending lad
Pursued !

Jasper. His brother in a will preferr'd
The orphan boy before him.

John North. That was all ?

Jasper. It was not all ; he kept some reason back
To torture me, but that in part incited.

John North. Before your father met with Mary
North,

Before my wreck and rescue, Morven came,
Then in the prime of life—a striving man,
Pushing his way—to Boston. There he settled,
And, what with tact and what with enterprise,
Contrived to flourish. Soon he sought a wife,
And Mary's face entranced him ; her he woo'd—
Some love, more passion, in his stormy heart
Engraved her image. When the girl refused him—
I know not why—and I return'd to sea,

He still pursued her, with her coldness striving,
Till partly seeking change of scene for health,
And more escape from him, to Lyme she went,
And there he lost her. Not till years elapsed
Did I again meet Morven; much meanwhile
Had pass'd—I wreck'd, she wedded, then her death,
And all you know—I saved his life at sea,
And found with sorrow how that cross in love
Had, like strong acid upon steel, destroy'd
The man's best nature. Years once more went by,
Then lastly, Jasper, in this town of Deal,
And in that house whose windows shine afar,
I met with Morven, found him charged to guard
That child whom Mary North had borne the man
She chose in place of him. Was Morven changed?
A lame, old man, his star of fortune set,
Perhaps his heart had alter'd. Did he trace
Some pleasing likeness in the face of Jasper
Which charm'd his fancy back to Mary maid,
When first he woo'd her? Well, I question'd Morven—
He did not answer till I press'd him, then
Look'd up quite frankly, said the boy was good
And like his mother, but he'd pack'd him off,
Since boys at best were troublesome, to school.
Then I adjured him by the living God
To tell me whether unrequited love,
Though dead no doubt, had left some spleen behind
By which the lad might suffer. So at first
He storm'd, then soften'd, said I'd saved his life,
And he'd bear with me, swore he meant you well,

Till I took heart ; but when the night wore on,
And we grew friendly, he address'd me, Jasper,
A searching question—only God knows how
The rumour spread, but it had reach'd to him,
And he suspected there was something wrong
With Mary's marriage. It was then, my lad,
Not in loquacious mood but moved for you,
That I might utterly disarm his wrath
Against your mother, I reveal'd to him
How bitterly the girl he loved had suffer'd
For her sad choice. I thought him touch'd thereby,
And so I begg'd him to be kind to you,
And keep the secret, since the course of things
Had well avenged him. Was this weak in me?
O ever after on the stormy sea
I cursed my folly, often long'd to see you,
And learn in private how it fared with you !
But when my heart was changed—I'll speak of that—
Much more this fill'd my mind ; my plans I made,
And sail'd at length for England ; here I find
My fears fulfill'd. O you are kind of heart !
You will not harbour an ungentle thought
Against a man who wrong'd you, but at times
Such thoughts force entrance, at the door of mind
In lonely moments, in desponding moods,
In wakeful midnights, knocking. So I bear
A gift to bless you which shall silence these,
Shall wring confession from their backward voice
That I've atoned ; I've watch'd its beauty wax—
O, Jasper, Jasper, to redeem my wrong

I bring you a most fair and gentle maiden,
Mine only daughter ; if your heart be free,
Will this not please you ? Will it raise your hopes ?
Can you forgive me now ? . . . My toil is done ;
I look to end my days on English soil ;
A week will take my ship to London docks,
And end my business there. That time elapsed,
I'll bring my daughter down to Deal with me ;
Till I can purchase land and build thereon,
I look to tarry, if I may, with you.
But now farewell ! I see your soul is moved ;
Her name is Gertrude ; she is fair and tall ;
Her heart is clean, her lips, since early youth,
I've taught in prayer to name you day by day.
In one brief week expect us Pray till then !
I trust your soul hath found—as mine at length—
The pearl beyond all price in Christ possess'd.
O may the bride elect I bring to you
In earthly life become, my lad, the sign
And human symbol of that pearl unseen,
Which with the mystic counter and the name,
And most of all the bright and morning star,
Are in the paradise of Christ and God
Before all time, I trust, prepared for you !

SCENE III.—*An Evening Walk.*—JASPER,
GERTRUDE.

Jasper. All our homeward way
Will scarlet sunset fringed with stormy south
Make splendid, and with images sublime
Invest the mind, while heaven's translucent vault
Is thinly sown o'erhead with gleaming stars.

Gertrude. Thy gaze abstracted draws thee far
away.

Jasper. The sunset's scarlet heart hath fix'd
mine eyes.

Gertrude. Thou art so cold, so strange, thy
soul so high

Uplifted ; I can never reach to thee !
We stand together, my hand slips in thine,
But thou art distant still, and thy clear voice,
With freezing winds from mountains far away,
Falls like cold snow. One terrible abyss—
My soul's disparity and scope confined—
Divides me ever from thy grandeur, thy
High dreams, thy prospects which are blank to me.
There seems a nimbus round thee. Let me kneel !
Thou hast the face of Christ ; I worship thee,
But love thee only as an unknown God,
With veneration of a mind devout,
Quite abjectly, with unimpassioned love,
Mind-sprung, for noble things not realised,
Not seen ; thine exaltation chills the heart.

My father pledged me as a child to thee,
He stood the sponsor for my future love
To God, then thee. How shall I pay the debt
With both so far above me, man and God. . . .
To die for thee—ah, that were worth the dying!

Jasper. Nay, live to love me! That is worth the
living.

My soul is ravish'd in a dream of thee
In these abstracted moods. With constant love,
Pure, clear, profound, and purged from things of
time,

I merge myself in thee. . . Fair, vast, and fresh,
Behold the sea, dear love, the open sea! . . .

I merge my life in thine for evermore,
Soul gazing in soul-eyes of my beloved,
While with a gentle pressure of mouth to mouth
Sweet thoughts unspeakable pass and repass
In faint electric currents.

Gertrude. When I pray'd
Thy picture fill'd my mind; I painted thee,
But thou wast human, thou wast near me then;
I truly kiss'd thee in my dreams at night,
But now my spirit cannot feel thy lips,
As if we kiss'd through some thin plate of glass.

Jasper. Sweet beyond sweetness, earth's foretaste of
Heaven

And spiritual intercourse of souls,
The doom divine which shapes my life to come
Hath blest its labours by thy ministry,
The service of thy company and love.

The aspirations of my nobler self,
God-given, shall transfigure and inflame
Thy gentle being, growing one therewith
Till all my hopes converge and centre there,
And I shall work for man in thee, for thee
Through man, thy beauty beautify the world,
World's strength enlarge thee, all the world in thee
And thou in all, loved, work'd for, glorified.

Gertrude. Shall God's strong sons with mortal
daughters mate?

I will not tempt thee, Jasper, from thy heights,
But eagles' nests sky-built on lofty crags
Are dizzy for the dove. In the green glades,
In simple life of earth, I'll love thee well ;
I cannot love thee on the mountain tops,
I tremble there.

Jasper. My strength shall bear thee up !

Gertrude. Why was I made so small? Why stinted
thus?

If I could follow thee, dare all thy flights,
Poise with still wings in breathless zones of thought,
High contemplation's spaces ! I've no dream
To mate with thine, no aspirations, no
Great plans for man ; I can only wait and pray,
Love too—thou dost not dream how I can love !
Turn thine eyes on me for mine own are dim,
And overcharged with tears I fain would keep
From falling ; put thine arms about me thus !
If I could win thee down to dwell with me
In simple life of thought, in homely paths

Where all men travel, would'st thou be crazed
therein ?

Give up thy mission—I am tempting thee !—
Cleave close to Nature, cleave to natural love ;
The sweet amenities of sylvan life
Will soothe and satisfy two hearts attach'd.,
When harvest breathes its soul of fragrance round,
We'll mark the contrast of the dark green trees
Against the vivid and illumined sky
When night one hour hath fallen.

Jasper. Thou first star,
Whose lamp is kindled in the south so high, .
To mark it and adore !

Gertrude. Or in the evening silence strange,
intense,
To pause on sloping road, 'neath elms or oaks,
And hearken momentarily the slow, clear lapse
Of recent rain from boughs and leaves o'ercharged,
While up from hollows and from open dells,
From meads and pastures, comes the eve's white
mist,
From midst whereof the silent, dreaming kine,
Across the hedges and the trees betwixt,
Look sadly towards us—

Jasper. Seeking lone sea-coasts,
And the sea's music, mother of thoughts sublime
And deepest feeling.

SCENE III.—*A Room at Twilight.* JASPER, MILES.

Jasper. Shall I stand with thee, Miles—dear friend
—as now,

By some wide open window, when thy hair
And mine are grey, when all thy youth and mine
Have vanish'd, when the dark and lonely night
Descends on meadows where the mists exhale,
And the dim, shrouded, solitary moon
Drops down unnoticed—with the night and mist
Striving, drops down—into the deep abyss?
With cold, unconscious, melancholy gaze,
Sad, old, not speaking, shall we loiter thus?

Miles. Thy silence chill'd me ; now these mournful
words

Breed darker thoughts within me. Age is distant ;
Life's vistas offer us a noble space
To work and reign in—may our stars ascend !

Jasper. If something call'd me from my home and
thee !

Miles. Thou can'st not dream it !

Jasper. Now the sinking moon
Directs one roaming beam to tint thy hair
With phantom gold. Thy face will change with time
Its past will aye be with me, which is now
The present of thy beauty, but I see
The future like a plain where our two paths
Diverge for ever. Still my soul is strong ;
I know that all towards some transcendent end
Strives blindly.

Miles. Jasper, wilt thou go from home?
Thy friends are round thee, and thy future bride
Dwells with her father here; here hast thou found
A scope for kindly actions. Where is more?
What calls thee forth?

Jasper. A voice for many moons
Which bids me seek abroad, removed from all,
An ampler field of action.

Miles. God forbid
That I should check thee, Jasper! I believe
Some noble mission in the future waits
Thy noble nature. Though I love thee well,
Though all that in me dwells of impulse high,
Of high resolve, ambition to achieve,
To thee I owe, though from thy fountain-mind
I daily draw, and with that spring withdrawn,
My spirit panting like a thirsty stag
May vainly seek refreshment, thy bright angels
Shall ne'er reproach me that my need or love
Such wing should clog, should check such bold
ascent;

I bid thee still remember her to whom
Thy faith is plighted, wilt thou leave her, Jasper?

Jasper. Come forth abroad, the wind is cool and
strong,
The clouds have gather'd; to the sea come down,
Where oft as boys we bathed—recall it now!—
By Sandown Castle's shelt'ring wall of white
And crumbling stone. The crested wave which
broke

About thy body in the sea's rough sport
 O'erwhelm'd mine own ; now we are boys no more,
 Nor evermore shall we at morn stand stripp'd
 And shivering side by side, nor walk at noon
 On winter mornings miles along the beach,
 Among the sand hills. . . . How it was years past,
 Remember, with us—what long walks we took !
 We watch'd the larks rise from the grass in turn,
 Buoyant with song, the white tide rolling in
 To Pegwell Bay ; together did our eyes
 Withstand the blaze of sunlight on the sea
 Southward. I taught thee Latin as we stray'd
 Among the windless hollows where in swarms
 The rabbits burrow ; the white sea-gull's wings
 Flash'd far o'er head—we shall do thus no more.

Miles. Nor when the sun descends shall watch
 the sea

From blue to green, from green to silver grey
 His breast transform, nor see the crimson lights
 Of evening kindle, fail, and fade away,
 And then the sad, the still, the wintry night
 Involve the world of waters, for awhile
 Drawn into the invisible, until
 Yon slender sickle, the December moon,
 Her face unveil and cast through mists a thin
 And melancholy light upon the dim,
 Long-heaving sea.

Jasper. Perchance in worlds beyond
 We shall be boys once more ; by moonlit marge
 Of some far country we shall bathe in eves

Of summer, and our childish limbs will bear
Our bodies through the level and windless deep ;
And some sea-change the kindred of that vast
And visible soul of Nature make of them,
For ever fresh, invigorated, free
Will keep them and sustain with youth æterne.

Miles. Heaven clears ! there is a promise in the
stars,

Whose manifold, mild eyes gleam over us ;
Star watchers number them but none can count
The years before us, wherein our souls will live.
What do the stars foretell me ? Life together,
Life ever—life for thee and me together !
My soul outstretches from the sphere of time—
What sees it ? Thy dark eyes whose beauty fills
Eternity—there is no parting possible !

Jasper. If I were gone from mine accustom'd place,
Miles, lives there anyone on earth this day
Who in my place would love, with love like mine,
One maid forsaken ? Who would comfort her ? . . .
Thou dost not answer ; all thy face, I see,
Turns white and ghostly ; is the wind so cold ?
What makes the breath within thee come and go ?
What strong emotion dost thou seek in vain
To conquer ? . . . Is it grief because of me ?
Because we never in our lives may stand
Like this together in the night and wind ?
Because thou knowest that I love thee well,
And it is agony and grief acute
To know thy beautiful and gentle face

When next I see it may be worn and old?
Thou dost not answer! Have I loved thee, Miles?
And is there anything my hands this day
Can do to crown that blamelèss life of thine?
I claim the privilege of love most true
To sacrifice myself for love of thee.
Thou art mine own creation; in my hands
Thine early boyhood's raw material
Was placed by Providence to shape and cleanse;
And I feel triumph in mine inmost heart
When I consider thee, and find how bright
And pure thou art, while in thine ample mind
Sit noble purposes like kings most high
With burning gems about the brows of them.
I think this night before the throne of God
My soul could lead thine own in holy pride,
And beg the blessing of the all-Father's lips
On thy complete creation. . . . It is done—
One thing remains, to find a star as bright
To mate thy spirit in the heaven of mind:
That star is Gertrude! Do not shrink from me,
Remember how I love thee; turn thy face.
Why should the blood mount thus to either cheek?
Long didst thou strive, with agony of mind,
To root that honourable, worthy love
From thy poor heart. Why should'st thou weep like
this?
I know that Gertrude also loves thee well,
And though the sense of duty binds her now,
Her spirit little to mine own responds.

I will not hide when this was first reveal'd
That anguish fill'd me ; now my stronger self
Asserts again supremacy, and thou
Can'st take her freely ; the last gift may well
Be worthy its receiver, gentle friend !

Miles. My life is ever from all its joy divorced !
On my soul's faith and perfect love for thee,
I never spoke with Gertrude ! Did our eyes
Meet ever ? Did those speak, and show to thee
What both have striven from themselves to hide ?
How could'st thou learn it ? Ah, thy soul, I know,
Divined it by the magic of its keen
And subtle penetration ! Thou hast brought
To burning lips with kind and friendly hand
The sacred wine of life ; I dare not drink,
But evermore with deep desire thereof
My heart will thirst.

Jasper. Within thy hands, dear Miles,
I leave it—would it were the wine of life !
The Graal itself should feed and strengthen thee
If I possess'd it ; take this smaller gift,
Thine own already by the right of love,
Nor magnify the sacrifice I make.
I see the future like a shining sea
Spread out before me ; I have work therein,
And that conviction would through greater pain
Than this support me. Is it pain in truth ?
Can that be call'd a sacrifice the free
Mind chooses for itself, no outward force
Compelling ? with the dream-power fed thereby

And all the mental nature amplified,
Till the unfoldment of a glorious thought
Begins, and helps the spirit to discern
New powers within it. Nay, the pain by joy
Is swallow'd, as the choral chant of priests
O'erwhelms the immolated victim's cries.

A voice for many days has call'd me forth
Across the world of waters. Lo, the land
Where first my spirit through the eyes of flesh
Look'd forth, is stirr'd in all its length and breadth
With noise of coming conflict—draws the North
In freedom's cause her just and dreadful sword !
I am not call'd the less because mine own
I will not bare. Sweet Mercy's lambent star,
Above the fields of carnage rising brightly,
I come—thy messenger—to serve I come !
To men, my brothers, in the tent and field,
To stricken soldiers—minister at need
On either side—the hand of help extending. . .

Full well my heart has proved the sweets of Love,
Well fared therein. A satisfaction full,
Delight complete, were both vouchsafed to me.
Whene'er my soul was search'd with fervent flame,
I found a bountiful and deep response
Beyond desire and reason—yea, so far
As hearts insatiable can rest at all,
Therein I rested and was satisfied.

The sweetest faces seen on earth, I think,
 Have shone for me with passion ; and of eyes
 The sweetest lighting life their stars have dimm'd
 With tears of too much love for love of me.
 And having proved so well this joy supreme,
 All joys surpassing, it behoves me now,
 For whom Love early gave himself away,
 That I for man—that's Love—myself renounce.

Therefore, take all, thou spirit, divine and high,
 My favourer, work in me thy will supreme,
 Try me, this vessel which thy wine has held
 Is sacred to thy service ever more !

Miles. May sacred angels guard thy kingly soul
 Ascending thus ! My thoughts shall fix on thee
 Their earnest strength, and thou shalt rise through all,
 And they through all shall like a rampart high
 From harm enclose thee ! Yea, my prayers and
 blessings

Shall not in vigilance and might be less
 Than thy high angels to defend thy soul
 Call'd to its native stars.

Jasper. Thy valiant eyes
 Have brighten'd suddenly as a clouded sea
 Whereon the moonbeams rifting heaven's grey veil
 One moment dream and gleam.

Miles. In thine I read—
 Ah, yet a little while and all is well
 With thee, my Jasper !

SCENE IV.—*The Sea-shore.*—FATHER PAUL, JASPER.

Jasper. And the grey night, the night of gloom and
mist,

On the drench'd sands and shallow, windless sea,
On that one boat which lies with one bare mast
At anchor, on a hundred naked groynes,
And on the old, deserted, open house,
Whose lofty turret o'er the main looks forth,
Descends like silence on Time's mournful close.

Father Paul. You should have wealth.

Jasper. My uncle squander'd it.

Father Paul. Where is the money that your father
left you ?

Jasper. Its bulk is small ; invested here and there,
One hundred guineas in the year it yields.
But I go forth, and have no fear for me ;
I feel the strong hand of Almighty God
About me tighten ; my appointed part
I shall fulfil.

Father Paul. For this most brave resolve
God bless you lad ! My soul above itself
Seems lifted now ; I yet shall live to crown
Your life with gladness. Take these words to heart !
In toil and pain recall them. Fix that strong,
Emancipated spirit with intent,
Achieving force upon them. They shall grow
True by the power of will.

SCENE V.—*A Glen.* MATTHEW, BASIL, MILES,
ERNEST.

Miles. Fair and vast and fresh,
It is the sea, my friends, the open sea,
And the fair altitude of lilac sky
With evening red suffused, where opens wide
The glen's great rift! Can we stand here unmoved
And mark the amber light of sunset dwell
On that rude boulder of the bulging cliff,
The slope's dark grass, and bracken's golden brown?
Behold, behind us all the West is red! . . .
Light clouds pass over, while the main and sky
One moment both are turquoise, while the waves
Take golden flakes upon their transient crests,
And in yon thicket chirps a single bird.

Matthew. The darkness falls round Jasper's speed-
ing ship,
Grey waves, now winds have freshen'd, break in
foam
On its strong sides; the passing shower of rain,
On decks and canvas, low, fast driving clouds
Precipitate. Illimitable, cold,
Forlorn, the desolating ocean lifts
A pain'd, inquiring voice, which fills the wind,
Till stars take shape upon the phosphor vault,
And like a phantom, pale and grandiose,
Through mists dispersed breaks forth the silent
moon.

Miles. God guard him there, encompass all his path !

Our prayers that follow on his forward flight
Be stars about him in his hours of gloom,
A thousand lights enkindling. . . . Is there one
He has not served ? Let him stand forth and speak
O'er whom the regal spirit of the man
Diffused no happy influence ! Speak him
Who is not better for his gracious sight,
Who is not better for his hand's strong grasp,
Clear, searching voice, eyes' light, mind's altitude ;
Who is not better for the words he spoke,
Who is not kindled by his burning zeal,
Who does not emulate his purpose high,
Who will not prove to man and angels both,
By noble course, how Jasper works in us,
How his bright light informs and glorifies—
His kingly nature's vivifying light
Beatifies all life along his path,
And turns to good for all ; the sailor lad
He saved from drowning in a winter storm,
The youth he nursed in fever, the blind girl
He read to, the two brothers whom he taught,
And from a vicious and a vagrant life
Reclaiming, into noble, stalwart, brave,
Unflinching lads with honest English eyes
Transfigured ; the deserted wife his purse
Supported, her five children whom he fed,
The honest tradesman whom an evil chance
Had threaten'd, but his help in time restored. . . .

One fine, dark face lights suddenly, the blood
To cheek and brow comes flushing.

Basil.

For his sake,

The world and pleasures of the world will I
Renounce completely, pray through all my days,
A priest, for Jasper, unto God most High
The clean oblation offer all my life.
I had some hopes and plans—on these I trample ;
I had strong passions, and I'll all uproot them ;
From early boyhood with an eager thirst
I craved for pleasure ; in a month or less,
I thought to wed the woman that I love,
Whose face will ever in my fasts and watches
With fair, reproachful eyes haunt and pursue me.
But I leave all, and for his sake renounce them,
That God may crown him, Mary smile on him,
Bright angel-bands watch over him, high saints
For him make intercession. May each prayer
Be one new angel for his faithful keeping !

Miles. I'll not forsake the world for Jasper's sake,
But take it more completely to my heart,
Spend life, die for it, unto all do good,
Love all, serve all. Be his the recompense !

Matthew. He loved the light ; to this my days are
vow'd.

For Jasper's sake with more devoted faith
I'll follow where it leads—for truth's pure light
Live I ! I swear it, I will love the light !

Ernest. Because my reason, though respecting
Jasper,

Must deprecate impracticable schemes,
And sees with sorrow how a noble mind
For worthless men would pour its strength away,
I will be twice as faithful to myself,
And never put another's whims or wishes
Before my own advancement and success—
I will be true to self; I swear it, friends!

Part the Third.

THE SOUL'S RECOMPENSE.

GOD's dealings in regard to Austin Blake,
Divinely led to light, and vow'd henceforth
To sacred services ; to whom hath come
A call most high ; whom blindly God led on
By ways undream'd, though oft did flesh rebel,
Till now the secrets of the world beyond
Unfold themselves before him. A true tale.

PROLOGUE.

A Poet's walk. AUSTIN BLAKE, *solus.*

The frost is white upon the winding road,
And on the bare thorn hangs the melting rime,
A thousand gems which in the sunlight gleam
And shiver. Already in the roadside ditch
Doth Nature raise at times a tender shoot
Prophetic of the future, and, lo, this day—
This morning early in the year's first month—
There is no cloud—there is not one white cloud—
In yon blue zenith, soft with light suffused !
So I return to thee from my wild dreams—
From lofty, fever'd dreams to thee return—
Soul of the world, thou Nature thrice divine !
(A sparrow flits across my path and now
His chirp sounds in the thicket.) Thou once more
Dost hold thy glass before these eyes of mine—
Thy magic glass, thine Eye—which, as a dream
Reflects the waking world, to me reveals
Thine own efficient and eternal Cause.
And, lo, the dreams I left to look for thee
(Is that the wren upon the paling perch'd ?
God bless thee, Jenny, on a winter day,
Among the barren flats that fringe the sea,

By Worth, I saw thee last) again return
And multiply within me! (Thou hast come
To greet me, Robin, of the bold, black eye
And breast that makes thee beautiful, all hail!
An early spring thine ample joys increase.)
Thy cause is mine, and by that bond I claim
A common origin, a kindred soul,
A heart in energies as great as thine.

I see the kindly hand of God draw back
The everlasting gateways of the West;
The storm-clouds gather as the sun descends,
But there, suffused and sanctified with light,
There shines the eternal blue. Through senses dim,
Through veils of space and time, through this dark
world

Of "gross purgations," have some chosen eyes
The world of light, the spiritual realms,
Angelic spheres impinging on our own,
The soul's bright home, beheld, and so found rest.
I gaze in wonder only, and can find
No counterpart of that most perfect peace
In my tired soul, which thirsts—alas! in vain—
Thirsts for that calm and trustful faith of yore,
Whose mental pleasantness, whose tranquil thoughts,
With vernal freshness fill'd the smiling world.
I gaze in wonder, standing awed and still,
The distant voices of the choir divine,
The starry harmonies of heaven afar,
Seem floating towards me o'er the gulf of time,

Till all the music of the earth grows faint,
And all the beauty of the natural world
Seems pale and cold, and all the joys of sense
Are ghosts alone which haunt a fever'd dream.

O world unknown, beyond the reach of man,
O heritage of happiness supreme,
The purer moments of the human heart
Are golden glimpses of thy life and light
Whose frequency expands and lifts the soul
Into communion with divinest things !
But doubt and fear come darkling o'er my mind,
The surging tides of passion flood the soul,
And drain the source of spiritual strength.
The pure ambitions of an earlier time,
The innocence of heart which clothed the trees,
Green country lanes, wide prospects seen from hills,
Illimitable heaven, and open sea,
With light and beauty borrow'd from the mind,
Are now no more, beyond all hope are lost ;
Mine unresponsive heart no answer gives
To gentle calls which came so oft of yore
The sweet attractions of the nobler life,
The inner joy, the spiritual faith,
All these have fail'd me, round me wind and cling
The bonds of flesh, world-darkness dense and deep,
And sense-delights the dregs of holier bliss.

The sun sinks down beneath the verge ; the night
With all her silent majesty of stars

Resumes her reign, serenity prevails
O'er all the face of Nature ; as of old
The rising moon diffuses tranquil light.
The vision fades, the voices sink and die,
The tumult only in my soul remains—
My soul which strives among the rocks and gulfs
To find a way through Life's mysterious maze,
Or sunk in day-dreams dreads to wake and find
All lights gone out, all sacred shrines left bare,
Phantasmal Edens desolate and waste,
And overtaken by eternal night.

SCENE I.—*A Lodging in London.* AUSTIN BLAKE,
OTWAY, WILLIAM, ARNOLD.

Austin Blake. For the last time betwixt your
kindly hearts,

My friends, I stand. I waited you awhile
Here, in my lonely lodging which commands
This noble spectacle of wharf and rail ;
And waiting thus, pacing the floor, this book
Held in my hand, two fingers 'twixt the leaves
The place retaining, through my musing mind
Came crowding sundry honourable themes
For friendly converse with congenial minds
On this wild evening. Now my thoughts confused
Quite fail me. . . I go from you to the coast ;
God knows, my friends, when next we'll meet—too
well

The future holds her secrets ! . . . Help me out !
What shall we talk of? Not of parting yet —
Postpone that pain ! . . . Day wanes ; three hours
or more

Pale sunshine striving with the smoke and mist
Made dingy nimbus round the roaring town ;
Now clouds blown onward by the icy blast,
O'ercrowd the fair, faint blue. Comes tempest. . . .

Hark !

That shrill, fierce wind. Lost Spirit, wailing voice,

Defiant still, my spirit to thy tones
Makes answer! Is there nothing in the wind,
Brave friends, which drives to power's sublimest
heights

Your princely souls? I see the lonely shore,
The bleak, long scourged, most solitary shore,
With barren arms ring the mad, striving sea;
I see the desert's driving sand, whirl'd upward,
Move like the column'd cloud which went by day
Before the hordes of Israel. And when
Mine eyes turn inward, in my soul I see
Wide wastes and waters by the wind's wild voice
Torn into shreds of tempest. . . . Arnold, speak,
And William Arthur! In God's name I ask you
What great ambition have your thoughts struck out
With mighty anvil from the cold, grey stone
Of common purpose? Ye are weak, and I,
O I am weak indeed! save when my soul
Is lifted into frenzy, but I stand
This night before you—see, the night descends,
And the sky darkens more with storm than night,
And all the while the rising wind about
The narrow street is driving, seeking space,
Space like the sea, space like the Libyan waste,
Space like the world of chaos, only space
To strive and storm in; as my soul, true friends,
As this confined, long cabin'd, long repress'd,
Illimitable nature, its frail frame
Would rend, through bounds of narrow channels
bursting;

The earth, the universe of stars and space
Would fill with self, would be in all a part,
And make the infinite a part thereof,
Itself alone including, bounding all—
Insensate thought, the moment form'd disclaim'd ! . . .
I stand this night before you, and my hopes
Dilate my being, till my breast seems broader ;
On limbs more stalwart, frame more firmly poised,
Less than myself you seem ; with outstretch'd hands
I cry to you, adjuring—Do not go
Down to the grave wearing your lives away
With the mean, trivial, miserable cares
Which furrow half the faces of mankind !
Make for yourselves some care, some hope, some
 high
Ambition that your souls may groan beneath,
And groaning greaten ; be no worm which writhes
Beneath the fallen twig. I swear to you
Your nature's scope beneath ambition's weight
Shall stand like Atlas, Earth's titanic star
Supporting. O to stand and see the world,
One howling crowd, hunting the gilded straws
Blown by the wind of fortune ! How they pass
And pass before the windows of my soul ;
Doubtful am I whether to laugh or weep,
Tears start, the weak mouth quivers, but the lip
Curls soon in scorn—the laughter rings and then
Dies in a wail ! My God, Who day by day
Dost widen nature's scope within thy son,
Some mighty trumpet deign, which I may sound,

And draw the scatter'd parties, long gone forth
 On this wild quest, together, to proclaim
 Some splendid object, difficult, remote,
 And bold, worth seeking by immortal souls !

Forgive me, friends, I do not count indeed
 Your hearts among the common ! When we met,
 Like kindred atoms, suddenly we join'd
 Our souls together—one bright, crystal star
 Shining celestially. I infuse in you
 My own heart's ardour. Is it well, fair friends,
 That we met thus, thus join'd, and standing then,
 As now, between you, my individual life
 Affected yours ? Your burning eyes respond
 In silence. Therefore unto each and all
 This night I cry—Ye souls, by light within
 Raised up above the common, what bright hope
 Is this which makes your shining ? . . . William,
 speak !

What is thy first ambition ?

William. To compose

Some book that will live after me.

Austin Blake. What book ?

William. I know not yet ; at least my plans are
 secret—

If I succeed, you all will hear thereof ;
 Should failure come, I'll meet it as I may,
 And none shall know.

Austin Blake. Declare the scope and aim !

William. 'Tis prose, not verse—thou art our bard
 confess'd,

I would not snatch thy laurels ; all my aim
To raise mankind.

Austin Blake. Thou, Otway, from a son
Of song divine descended (may the priest
Of Bacchus speak in thee !), thou standest there,
And on thy ruddy, bearded face the eve's
Last light rests redly ! Thou hast massive head,
Broad brow, and many questions do thy brain
Perplex, on many subjects of the time
Bold are thy thoughts ; thou hast a light within thee,
And in thy time the Muse's sacred skirt
Hath brush'd thee passing. God save thee, Otway,
speak !

What is thy first ambition ?

Otway. One with Scott's !
To found a noble family, and thus
In mine own native land my name and fame
Perpetuate in brave and princely men.
Speak honestly, my comrades ! To beget
A line of heroes is a broader hope
Than making books.

Austin Blake. Awhile, my friends, defer
The answer. William, let the burning flash
Of sudden anger in thine earnest, dark,
Deep sunken eyes as quickly as it leap'd
To life die out ! Thou, Arnold, musing there,
Thy figure in the crimson curtain's folds
And twilight gloom involved—as much thy mind
In dream is lost, thine eyelids o'er thine eyes
Drooping so far—return, return amongst us !

God's smile thine upright soul make beautiful !
 What is thy first ambition ?

Arnold. To help thee—

That is my hope and aim ; and, William Arthur,
 To help thee also is my aim and hope.

Austin Blake. God save thee, Arnold, thou hast
 shamed us all !

Arnold. I have my private views as thou dost
 know,

Austin, full well ; and I may also write
 A book some day, some essays in the style
 Of Greg's *Enigmas*, which in form at least
 Have charm'd me. I have also in my time
 Made high resolves that wait, through feeble health,
 Fulfilment still, but in my love for you
 Sickness or health are nothing. You command
 Heart, strength, and purse when e'er my small
 resource

Can meet your wants.

Austin Blake. My friends, three aims distinct—
 Postponing Arnold's—three young hearts inform.
 Mine's long declared ! But, think, who dares to hold
 These hopes sublime ? Before cool reason's face
 The dream is mad, so far our narrow scope
 Surpassing, in whose favour youth alone
 Declares herself ? Look at me ! What am I ?
 A thriftless student, worn with thought intense,
 Consumed by mine ambition ? What art thou ?
 Speak, Otway, opulent in dreams ! Thy bread—
 A city clerk—quill-driving, day by day,

The bitter bread we die from, dost thou earn
Coarse fare, coarse clothes, a lodging in a mean
And dingy street, and thou (my God!) therein,
Beside thy lonely rushlight burning dimly,
Of stately halls, of acres wide and fair,
Where the wheat ripens and rich orchards yield
Their mellow harvest, and of a long, long line
Of heirs whose glory greatens with its length,
Art dreaming in a wealthy reverie.
I say thine aim, my friend, is mad like mine ;
I do not chide thee—God forbid the thought !
I glory in the frenzy of our high,
Insensate hopes. I have the power within—
Consult thy heart in turn, here for my self
I speak alone—I feel that power within me
Which out of hopes impossible, from dreams
That fire the heart, can shape in time such fair
Achievement as will petrify the age,
I only knowing of my primal aim
It far falls short.

To William turn awhile ;
His plans are vague—that's why he wraps them round
With mystery—his spirit at the curb
Of uncongenial labour, in a sense
Of servitude, begetting in his heart
Deep hatred of our social order's false
Distinctions, of the standards base whereby
Men judge the worth of natures o'er themselves
By inward light exalted, chafes, you'll own,
Most rightly. Anything on earth to make

This world which does not recognise him yet
Stand still before him, into silence awed,
As the shamed earth was silent in the sight
Of one great Greek, he'd try ; with princely heart
The hush'd, expectant multitude some way—
He knows not what—he's then resolved to help,
And raise into nobility. To him
I cry—Return into thyself, O youth !
Make clear thy thoughts, then forth and strive with
Fate,
And in despite of Fate and Fortune wring
The end thou seekest from the averted, closed,
Reluctant hands of opportunity !

Now, Arnold, what best words in thy regard
To use ? Our aspirations from ourselves
Divided, of thy kindness we deserve
But little, having served thee in no way.
To some more worthy end than that thy love
Prompts in respect of Austin, and his small
Eccentric circle of high-fever'd hearts,
Thy days devote. Thou bearest in thy hand
The book call'd Greg's *Enigmas* ; I have read
And like that book. Remember what it says
Of judgment and philanthropy—how rare
The union of a charitable heart
And cool, far-reaching intellect. Thou hast
That heart I know ; thy mind, I think, is calm ;
And in thy soul's serenity apart
Thou dost inhabit a more healthful clime

Than we, perturbèd spirits, ever yet
Did enter. The world waits thee and much needs.
Be that thy field, in its regard, not ours,
Make plans! I say to thee, conceive, mature
Some new departure in philanthropy.
And, lo, before me spreads thy life in fair,
Unfailing sequence of immortal deeds,
Not days alone! Unselfish purpose, high
And gentle heart, man waits thee and much needs! . . .

Fair words I give you, bold and ardent hearts,
To help your plans; but I go forth at length
With none to follow, and ye pause, our speech
Drops suddenly to silence, while the wild,
Wild wind without grows louder, while the rain
Is swept against the panes, and more and more
The sad, dark, dreadful night, the night of storm,
The starless, frightful night, deepens without,
And in this room it deepens, where I see
Your faces only shining white and still,
Like spectres in the darkness; and as much
Within my soul the spirit of the night
Makes woful gloom. . . . Ye are not ghosts indeed,
Your warm hands clasp me, but a space so brief,
And in the future will my mind evoke
Your ghosts alone—phantasmal, silent, fair
Creations of the memory. Speak then—
Speak now—while still your voices in my heart
Make living music, give me also help!

William. Who can? Thy spirit by a thousand hopes

Is rent within thee, by a thousand plans
 Thy mind's absorb'd, a thousand strong desires
 Make tempest in thy bosom. We pursue—
 Some possible ambitions, give our time
 To some few ends, and, keeping these in view,
 Can concentrate our energies thereon.
 Thy mind's resources—grant them freely large,
 Than ours far larger—are diffused through all
 The plane of life, of action, purpose, thought ;
 And not by time, and not by life itself—
 This human life—are limited, but pass
 Audacious through eternity, and there
 The restless working of thy soul conceives
 And follows through the infinite its quests.
 Thy scatter'd forces in a single point
 Collect, then, like the sunbeams by the glass
 Drawn in one burning focus, they shall work
 With tenfold force ! Thou canst not with two wings
 Cover the breadth of heaven ; thy two arms
 Outstretch'd will never the great ocean waste
 Encompass ! Be immortal in one thing ;
 Thou in the limit of a single life
 A hundred immortalities, be sure,
 Canst ne'er achieve.

Austin Blake. I thank thee, gentle friend ;
 And thus my spirit in its doubtful moods,
 In times of hesitating weakness oft,
 Has chided self. There's wisdom in thy words,
 But when my hopes have pass'd before my mind
 In fair procession, O I swear the least

Did blind me with its beauty! Can I then
Bid one stand forth rejected from the rest? . . .
Your plans this night I've heard; now hearken
mine!

I'll speak, as calmly as a burning heart
Makes possible, those hopes which once achieved
Fill ev'ry moment of existence full
With deepest meaning, and frustrated leave
All life a blank. . . . Fame, pleasure, wisdom,
wealth,
World-roaming, wild adventure, joy of love,
Supernal light,—should these my soul attain,
Whereon with plenitude of strongest will,
Persistent and creative, it is set,
I still might fail the peace that passes thought
And pure, abiding happiness to gain.
But none such royal harvest reap'd from life
Can e'er appraise; the spirit in the same
Is gifted for eternity with gifts
Tremendous; such a heritage expands
Its god-like faculties with wealthy, wide
Experience. It struggles and attains,
Exhausts the springs of pleasure, but no less
From wisdom's fount drinks deeply, doth its strength
And noble nature prove in varied paths,
Sins too and suffers, makes of earth and all
Her wonders an inheritance, lifts up
The veil, resolves the secrets, and confronts
The dangers of the future, then seeks out
Untrembling, keen, triumphant, the next stage

Of its eternal pilgrimage, convinced
 And certain, that but little in the last
 Was left untried, that to the whole extent
 Of high capacities and chance therein
 It truly lived.

William. What dost thou seek of Wealth?

Austin Blake. Sufficient to pursue my high designs.

William. What is the Fame thou covetest?

Austin Blake. The bard's,

The hero's, and the traveller's—even more,

In every path I enter to achieve.

William. What would'st thou ask of Pleasure?

Austin Blake. I would tax

Her whole resources and exhaust them all.

William. What dost thou hope from Wisdom?

Austin Blake. To know all ;

My strong desire demands eternal truth,

To solve all problems and all doubts disperse.

William. What is thy dream of love?

Austin Blake. Love's self I ask !

O in this heart a hungry gulf hath long

Tormented me ! I'd fill it to the brim

With love. Not men nor angels shall forbid me

All love's delights permitted or denied ;

I claim them all to satisfy my soul's

Illimitable craving ; that deep want

Doth justify, allow me, and commend

Me all !

Arnold. I thrust myself before thee now

Eternally protesting ; thine own soul,

Austin, protests within thee !

Austin Blake. Thou art right,
A single word unnerves me, torn within
And miserably buffeted about
By two conflicting natures. One is nursed
On royal aspirations, and at times
By Light Divine is brighten'd ; one is low—
Strong passion's fever and the lust for things
Forbidden revel in that region dark.
These interact, the mind, o'er both presiding,
From both receives complexion. While the low
Degrades the lofty nature, in a sense
The noble lifts the mean one towards itself.
Ah, strange and terrible, the lofty hope,
The thought exalted, and the hero dreams
Of love most pure, the sacrifice of self,
The bold ambitions, with their glory tinge
The lust, the hopes unholy. . . . For a word
In heat of fancy spoken, count, my friends,
This free confession an atonement fair ;
The time will come—nor distant seems in thought
When I must rise and o'er myself assert
Supreme dominion, the immortal mind
Henceforth alone, as monarch of the man,
Its ends achieving, whose transcendent light
From burning points unnumber'd, over life
Diffused, and every point a noble deed,
Shall purge, I trust, the spirit and the heart
From a thousand stains.

Arnold. The only shrine of love

Where man may worship, and be faithful still
To God and to himself, is chastity.

Austin Blake. For those high words at thine own
shrine of thought

I worship, Arnold.

William. In the name of God,
How should we help thee, O thou stormy, strange,
And wayward heart! Beware (thy hopes themselves
Are passions), lest thy passion and thy hopes
Make shipwreck of thy nature!

Austin Blake. There is none
Indeed to help me—on the world abroad
I look, not one comes forward. Shall I turn
In scorn from man and struggle to achieve
My own creation? Shall the steadfast mind,
From earth's gross pleasures, from its fleeting cares,
From all pursuits and interests of life
Detach'd, attempt to raise itself alone?
While if the stir and tumult of the time
Should bring some great catastrophe to pass,
So far apart from all my soul would dwell
That, by the wreck and ruin uninvolved,
I should remain, though all things round me perish'd.
Or, shall I rather with an equal scorn
Seek to help men? or pity from my heart
Myself and them, and strive for all some end
Transcendent to accomplish?

How in truth
Will fare these visionary hopes whereon
I build mine airy castles, on whose fair

Fulfilment I depend for fortune, fame—
My friends, the stormy wonder and great joy
Of the wild life I long for? Are not all
Most wild? Confess it—I affirm at once
Their failure; but deny it—I belie
My nature! The true country of my soul
Was aye the visionary, strange, remote;
While both from nature and necessity,
I've staked from boyhood on the desperate.

Without the misty circle of the town
Down wintry lanes I rambled; shower and cloud
Gave place full oft to azure sky suffused
As with God's glory, to sweet intervals
Of aromatic air enchanting sense;
I saw the west transfigured; it glow'd, it burn'd;
Against the magic, incandescent light
The black trees stood with lines of downs behind.
Such days are fruitful; the receptive soul
Fills with high feelings, till the same leaps forth,
And with wide arms the spirit of the world
Embraces. But for me the fires within
Destroy the dewy and the cool effect
Of sylvan things. Remains alone the keen
Conviction of their beauty—that, I know,
Can never die within me. . . . Hope expand,
Thrill spirit, thrill throughout me! Shape me forth
The glory and the wonder of my life
Its dreams fulfill'd!

Otway.

A poet from the first

Wast thou, don't linger, seeking in the way
To catch vague voices, one hath spoken clearly.

Austin Blake. Recal me thus for ever when I stray,
Yet all is flux within me. I have claim'd
That high vocation, and in perfect trust
Ye credit me, though unto none the gift
Is manifest as yet: no more I'll ask
Your faith—time comes to prove it well reposed.
I now go forth that I may write for you
The poem I have plann'd beside the sea,
My chief inspirer; when we meet again—
If we meet ever—I hope to have achieved
Immortal fame. My spirit in my breast
Is greaten'd, and this frame itself, I think,
Is visibly expanded, while my thoughts
Are with the noble poem I've conceived
Fill'd daily; as the moon, which o'er the town
Ascending brightens, doth the streets and parks,
The narrow gardens 'twixt the looming lines
Of silent houses, and the shining, still,
Serpent-like stream, flood with bright light, nor less
With beauty vest, this poem like a star
Above my soul sheds lustre searching all
Its secret depths, and like a town the haunts
Of lesser thoughts—a populous domain—
Transfigur'd lie beneath it.

It is late.

Come forth—the storm is over! With the rain
The streets still shine, though now the wind is lull'd,
Peeps out one star above us, and behind

The fitful January lightnings play.
Heaven brightens o'er us, but the wrecks of storm
Are round us scatter'd, slates and tiles blown down
Lie strewn about the pavement. . . . Did we mark
One star? Look up! Through that rent cloud
 you'll count

A score. Yon clouded patch of phantom light
Shews where the moonbeams battle with the mist.
My friends, walk with me; William, take my arm,
And on the left be Arnold. It is well
To feel you thus support and prop me up,
Who soon depart and stand henceforth alone.
This is the week's last day; you see that street
Which crosses this—'tis in a crowded part,
And on this night they hold a market there.
Hark! How the costers shout; their trucks line all
The street—no passage but at walking pace
For horse this night. Come down with me and see
The busy hive—one swarm—turn'd out to haunt
 for forage.

Do you love mankind like me,
Though seldom mingling with them? Do you merge
The lonely student, who, in dreams absorb'd,
Surveys from lofty pinnacles of mind
The strife and life of sense, i' the social man,
And, leaving quite the higher range of thought,
Take pleasure in the littleness below,
And mix with vice, losing the dreamer's itch
To reconstruct society and make
The world anew upon a private plan

Eclipsing all creation? I have sold
My golden hopes to rectify the age
For leave to study it in scenes like this—
Yet have I not indulged such dreams in vain
Which elevate and beautify the soul,
Above the mutability of earth,
Unto the loftier, sublimer things
Immutable, eternal, lift it up
On eagle wings. . . . You thought me jesting then—
Don't heed my moods, which vary night and day!
Have I no mission? Am I false to that?
God judge me so! I'll die in the world's cause
Or win, by God! It needs us each and all;
Should one of you put out to any use
Save man's his talents, with a poet's curse
I'll visit him! Does the world need us not?
Are these not evil times? The face of heaven,
Blotted with clouds, broods always darkly o'er us;
At intervals her starry eyes look down,
Above the tumult infinitely high;
At times some orbitless and roaming star
Ascends—an evil prophet—in the sky;
At times again—more terrible than storm—
A breathless, fever'd stillness fills the air,
Low clouds are rent and through the dim beyond,
And lurid haze, long pent up lightnings play;
Where e'er the soul that seeks for peace may turn
There is no vestige found; on every side
Are haunting fear and imminence of ill. . . .
I take my images from natural things,

Interpret me with sympathetic mind,
Then change the theme. . . . A boy, this street I
 paced ;

O of one eve in summer, when the air
Was close and sultry—swifter then than now
The lightnings play'd—I think, who plunged in
 dream

Stray'd down this street ! Of friendship, glory, love,
I dream'd that day, of friendship great as love,
Of glory won to magnify myself
In one friend's eyes. I know not when or why
I came to love him ; on his shapely head
The crisp, dark hair (a younger lad than I)
Curl'd ; the grey eyes were beautiful, deep grey
Which veil'd deep blue—I know not when or why
I came to love him, he to like me well,
Fast friends both vow'd henceforward. Oft we
 walk'd

This street together, whiling half the night
With lightest talk, and each a score of times
Would half-way home his comrade safely see.

Proclaim the victory of " holy light " !
It breaks, it struggles, it prevails, the moon,
Dispersing clouds, has clear'd an azure space
To shine and sail in. Ave, Heaven's bright queen !
In thy blue zenith, on thy height sublime,
How cool, how calm, art thou ! Thy one white star
Doth ever follow thee with even steps,
And thou thyself art stately, sure of foot,

And movest on for ever. Of thy light
 The earth is fain, the sea desires it too,
 The strong sea follows on thy path for aye
 With eager, moaning heart ; man looks for thee,
 The poet's nature, than the sea more vast,
 Ascends in thought to thee. And thy light falls ;
 Thou dost not pause, thy light alone is shed ;
 Thy light makes answer unto earth and sea,
 The fever'd heart of man is still'd thereby,
 And in the spirit of the bard it sows
 The deathless seed of song, as thy soft dews,
 Which fall to earth in silence, sprout ere morn
 Into a thousand flowers !

Otway. The poet speaks !

William. And now we mix among the motley
 throng ;

Our thoughts are lost in all the sights we see,
 As in the crowd our forms.

SCENE II.—*The sea-shore.* AUSTIN BLAKE.

Austin Blake. Strong sea, most bright, most blue,
 most beautiful !

The soul itself expanding ; speed the day
 When I shall cross thee, make thy wonders mine
 Through moons of wild adventure ! How thy waves
 Beckon like hands, how all thy voices call
 My spirit, knowing it has faith in thee,
 Faith never failing, knowing how it loves
 Each of thy changeful aspects—never one

Did yet repel it! Soul on soul is calling,
Vastness to vastness; and thy mighty voice
Finds in my heart an answer as prolong'd,
As infinite. Great spirit, search in mine,
Search through, the same immensity is there—
Unplumb'd abysses, caverns where the light
Will never reach, a hunger like thine own
Unsatisfied, a craving never still'd,
A vast and homeless nature like thyself!

SCENE III.—*A darkened room.* FATHER PAUL,
MARY BLAKE.

Mary. Grey hair that once was raven, wither'd
face

He loved for being lovely, eyes made dim
With weeping and again beyond themselves
Grown bright with fast and watching, thou art right
To doubt it thus—how shouldst thou know me,
father?

Father Paul. His rich voice haunts for ever; the
boy's form

Among the sandhills in the morning light
By the sea's marge. A wind had swept the Downs,
Clouds from the west roll'd upward, on the shore
The high tide beat, the pulses of their blood
Ran wildly, and the woman and the boy
Stood there together.

Mary. Because I die this day,
Because the barren bosom of the beach

Lies stripp'd and dry, because the shining sea
 Recedes, like life, because my hair is grey,
 And I have fasted long, watch'd and pray'd long,
 And wept alone, one question—where is he?

Father Paul. Old wrongs are now forgotten, and
 old sins

Hath God long pardon'd. O, if far away
 That soul the mission of true life achieving
 Fulfil the promise of his early youth,
 And God's most holy will, if noble deeds
 Have wash'd all stains away, if grace be Jasper's,
 Mary, will this content thee?

Mary. Once again

To hear that name, (ascend, O gentle soul!
 Ascend, O spirit, up the height of life,
 My prayers thy shield!) and mine by thee pro-
 nounced,

The bitterness and saltness of the sea!

Father Paul. My penitent and spiritual child,
 Time's bitter turns to God's supernal sweetness.

Mary. I know not, father, how from one so young
 The thing was compass'd—the shamed blood mounts
 swiftly

And the shamed eyes from thy keen glance averted
 To Mary's image turn unconsciously—

I know not, father, how from one so young
 The thing was compass'd, but a boy was born;
 He lived, he grew, a youth beside the sea
 He dwells this day; most noble hopes he nurses,
 And in the future Fame with proudest tones

May celebrate his genius, and this land
The poems of the minstrel, Austin Blake,
May count as precious and as pearls preserve.
But not this life-long secret to reveal
Nor learn how Jasper fares—from what far height
His soul ascended shines o'er earth and sea—
Thine early penitent to death drawn nigh
Has sent for thee ; more solemn cause impell'd—
In thy kind, venerable hands I leave
The holy trust reposed before in me,
The self-same trust, to bring my orphan back,
Who makes a wilful shipwreck of his faith.
Within thy charge I leave his priceless soul
As I shall shortly into God's commend
Mine own. Have mercy on myself in him !
If on that soul the light of faith should close
For ever, I am lost indeed in him,
And I shall see with agony of heart
That nature crush'd beneath my trust betray'd
Through all eternity. . . . Thy face has light'en'd,
And thy benevolent eyes shine down on me ;
The dim lamp also on thy features casts
Wan light, not years have changed thee, Father Paul,
Nor those white hairs, the same familiar face
Beneath them, as the mountain heights by sun
Made green through all the summer, in the long
Mid-winter frosts snow-cover'd still present
Their former outlines. . . . Friend, thou bearest there
The holy oils, thou bearest in thy breast
The Christ we worship. Kneel and pray with me !

But pray not yet for my departing soul,
 Nor Jasper's weal, for whom my midnight prayers
 In life ascended! First for Austin pray—
 May the true shepherd of the souls of men
 To his one fold lead back that roving sheep!

SCENE IV.—*A Presbytery.* JASPER CARTWRIGHT,
 FATHER PAUL.

Father Paul. Sit with me in the sacristy; the
 night

Has fallen fast, and lately in the church
 We chanted Compline; still upon the hearth
 The cinders of the sacred charcoal glow,
 And all about this ceiling low and dark
 The fume of incense lingers. None will now
 Disturb us, Jasper, for the church is closed,
 And in its loneliness and silence more
 Fills with God's presence. I will leave ajar
 This door, which opens on the Sanctuary,
 And in the deep'ning twilight thou and I
 Can see the altar-lamp through dim red glass
 Shine humbly, like a mild and saintly soul
 Before her God. . . . Thou hast return'd at length;
 Thou art pale, Jasper, thou art grey, my child!
 Sit by me, I am sorry from my heart
 To see thee thus. That we should meet again
 After these years, and thou but late return'd
 From thy long travels! Are now thy rovings o'er?
 Or will the fever seize thee, and thou go forth

Again, none warning, all thy friends in vain
Wait tidings from thee, till some years gone by,
And expectation over, memory even
Relaxing hold upon the image of thee,
Thou fallest from the stars—or whence?—thy voice
Haunting the mind with a familiar tone,
And then we look into thine eyes, and know thee?
Tell me whence art thou?

Jasper. From the seas come over.

Father Paul. And thou art lean and pale and
poorly clad!

We sit here talking, while the wind and rain
Are wild without, cold is it, and most dark,
And it is long since we in any place
Have talk'd together, but thy face wears scant
Joy at this meeting. If the past no more,
Nor thy first friends, can move thee, changed art
thou!

Jasper. I am not changed, but thy familiar form
Affects me, and thy venerable head!
It is so long since I have seen thee—now
We sit together, and the whole space seems
A dream's length only. . . . Is it years in truth?

Father Paul. When thou didst leave me, Jasper,
strong wert thou,
Bold was thine eye, a stalwart, noble lad!
And thou wast gifted in thy face and mien
As God gifts few, while in thy mind dwelt fair
And generous hopes beyond the wont of man.
Now art thou gaunt and wasted, thy strange eyes

Will haunt me in my dreams for many moons.
 What has come o'er thee? In God's name, I ask
 thee

To justify this lamentable change
 Before me. It is agony not age
 Has wrought this in thee, still thy years are few ;
 What is thine age, my Jasper ?

Jasper. Who shall fix
 The spirit's date and origin? The past
 Rolls back before me, in my mind I hold
 The compass of eternity—this soul
 The stars predates. If then my hair be grey,
 If I am weaken'd in my mortal frame,
 I count that little ; in an endless tale
 What if one act be tragical, if grief
 Should rule therein, shame's baleful star be there
 The sign ascending ?

Father Paul. Is it thus with thee !

Jasper. When last I left thee in the past remote
 I purposed in the service of mankind
 My days to spend. I hold that end achieved ;
 I trust the world by this poor life of mine
 Has profited.

Father Paul. Recount thy work abroad !

Jasper. Hast thou stood ever on a field of war,
 And seen the midnight moon her spectral light
 On cold, distorted faces pale in death
 Pour sadly down? In suffering's cause, in man's,
 I've witness'd that. And hast thou paced at noon,
 When from the zenith did the sun drive down

His burning shafts, a city struck with pest,
And loiter'd there at corners and in squares,
Till one should drop beside thee, seized in turn,
To bear him off and minister to him?
From morn to eve I've roam'd and linger'd thus.
I do not boast, the naked truth I state,
And how my soul a refuge found from self,
In works like these enlarging nature's scope,
Till on the summit of the mind I stand,
And that which others can but dimly glimpse
Do I see clearly, gazing far abroad,
And what to others is in gloom involved
And lost, I dimly and with straining eyes
Can mark afar, and it is well with me!

Father Paul. Thou dost deceive alike thyself and
me!

Thou art not happy, thou art worn and wan,
Thou art most wretched, thou art weeping, Jasper!
Strange tidings reach'd us from beyond the sea;
Thou didst establish in the distant West
A little colony of orphan lads,
Who, after some new fashion of thine own,
To honest labour both of brain and hands,
Were rear'd in simple innocence and joy.
Where now are these? How did thy scheme succeed?
Have they gone forth—to manhood grown at length—
Equipp'd for human services? What since
Have thy thoughts turn'd to? Ah, confide in me!

Jasper. The oil has fail'd, the light in the altar
lamp

Goes down, strange roaming shadows deepen round
us!

What is that voice without? It is the wind's,
The wild, world-wand'ring, homeless wind of night.

Father Paul. Thou art mad, Jasper, thou art mad
with grief!

Jasper. The pest came on us, and a single week
Destroy'd them all; I saw them dropping round me:
The fair white bodies in the poison'd house
With pangs drawn up were stiffen'd as they fell.
I saw the beauty which supported me
Through pain and labour turn a ghastly blue.
The mist and rain were round us all the week
(The heat had pass'd, the autumn fall was nigh,
But o'er the town in dark and mournful folds
Still droop'd the ominous and dreadful flag),
But when the last had left me, when I sat
With grievous darkness in the empty house,
And madness on me, then that mist dispersed,
Then the high moon, the full, the white, bright
moon,
Paused o'er the place, and through the windows cast
Enquiring light. I did not move nor weep,
I heard the clock behind me all the night
Tick in the silence, like a beating heart;
I heard the infrequent passenger without
Fly past with bated breath the infected house;
And then the grey sky lighten'd, then the pale
And livid lips of morning slowly open'd,
With serpent motion open'd silently,

While from the saffron cavity within
Pour'd sickly light, and then at length I shriek'd—
The hungry spirit of the plague itself
Seem'd visible before me ; swooning there
The pest reign'd in me. . . . It is cold and dark !
What is that bell, my father—the passing bell ?
What soul hath fled ?

Father Paul. It rings for evening prayer.

Jasper. I woke to find my bruised and burning
face,

And all mine aching body lying flat
On the cold stone. The room was dark, the door
Stood open, it was night, the wind drove through
The open window, and a tempest raved
Without. I rose astonish'd, and distraught
With pain and weakness ; as a lantern then
Which, flash'd in darkness, suddenly reveals
The ghostly visage of a murder'd man,
Returning thought diffused a dreadful light.
Through night and storm I fled ; the early, cold
Autumnal morning cast on my drench'd form
Its first white beam ; that soul of dread within
Renew'd my strength to fly with fleeter foot.
And it was thus with me through many days,
But of mine evil lodging, of my thirst,
Of my long fasts, my hardships, my fatigue,
Long swoons and fits of sickness and great cold,
While more than all my dreadful grief of soul,
Sad were the tale. O I was mad for long,
And then long senseless ; after that for days

And weeks lay ever at the point of death,
 In hospital by charitable hands
 With kindness tended ! Yet I live this day ;
 I stand beside thee, I am strong once more,
 I stretch my right hand towards thee, and, behold,
 It does not tremble ! I am raised by grief,
 And by the consequence of suffering,
 Above the sphere of man ; yes, from my life
 And its hard teachings have deduced a new
 Philosophy.

Father Paul. Thy face with sudden heat
 Flushes, then pales, and now thy lips are white,
 While thine unearthly eyes with dreadful light
 Are glittering—some fever preys on thee !

Jasper. It is new life's accession ; vanish'd strength
 Invigorates, inspires this wasted frame,
 When I look forth and see the future spread
 With all its wealth of opportunities.

Father Paul. O Jasper Cartwright ! Shall I crown
 thy life—
 Most truly crown it ? Does thy mind still hold
 My parting words ? Has it been fix'd thereon ?
 Didst thou believe them with that faith complete
 Which doth create its object ? Then go down
 To thine old home, my son, beside the sea,
 And wait me there.

Jasper. I will indeed go down
 And rest a little. There is one therein
 To welcome me.

Father Paul. O nevermore on earth !

Direct thy thoughts above where he sits crown'd !
The house is empty, it has pass'd to strangers ;
Thine old friend Miles was drown'd a month ago ;
His wife, thy cousin, has the world renounced,
And in a distant convent prays for him.
Ah, do not grieve ! My heart is filled with joy
When I think on him, what a noble life
He led, his charity, his kindly heart,
His holy zeal for that new faith whereto
At length I led him. His pure, blameless course
Was closed in glory, like a mild May-day
Which sets with autumn splendour. (How thy face
Hath lighted suddenly !) One stormy night
A vessel grounded on the Goodwin sands ;
The life-boat straight put forth with Miles therein ;
They reach'd the sinking ship (the sea ran high),
The crew were saved, but in the act of helping
The last marr down, our friend himself was lost ;
Some high wave swept him past the reach of all :
A week went by before his corpse was found.

Jasper. He died for others as he lived. Thy tale
Has soften'd night itself. One star comes forth,
And, lo, the moon among the racing clouds
In witness shows her solemn face serene !

SCENE V.—*A Churchyard by the Sea. The Grave
of Miles.*

Jasper (solus). A hero now
Thou hast gone forth, thy glory robes thee round,

And in this relegate, material world
My soul enslaved at best can dimly dream,
Conceiving not, the heights thou hast attain'd.
O end divine, o'er all things small and mean
The victory, what splendour passing thought
Has broken on thee, how thy nature's scope
Hath widen'd, and what vistas spread beyond
Of vaster deeds successively eclipsing
All glory won before ! O thou supreme
And lofty light which kindlest heaven and earth,
And with its rays dost search the depths and heights
Of spheres invisible, hear thou my voice
Ascending ! With no envious thought, believe,
I think on thee, nor of thy glory claim
The smallest share, as one that prompted thee,
Before thy soul did her dread power assert,
To high achievement ! The ordain'd, the good,
The glorious time of thy salvation came ;
I had no part therein, I did not help
That moment on ; the golden chance was given,
And, like a furnace by a potent wind
Stirr'd suddenly, thy spirit in bright flame
Leap'd upward, making thine that golden chance,
When in another thou didst save thyself,
And thy praise pealing forth from star to star
Makes a world-kindling music. I in vain
My life have offer'd in the cause of man ;
The gift returns, I hold it in my hand
To keep or lose. I would have died for thee ;
God gave me leave to live and to endure !

Could I do more than die or live for thee,
This nature had not spared itself. May He
Who mocks no aspiration nursed by man,
Endow one day the soul with further scope
For sacrifice than that which life and death
Afford in their alternatives !

The day

Wanes fast : white waves along the level shore,
An ever moving multitude, for miles
Come seething in, break gently, and are lost
In spume upon the shingle : a grey mist
Joins earth and sky, through which those crests
remote

Are lifted, dimly shining as they move.
A waste which has no solitude, a waste
Peopled with sounds and voices, voice and sound—
Life—motion—yet as desolate as death ! [Later.

I shall not see my larger plans fulfill'd ;
May one more worthy preach the faith I hold !
The lengthen'd fast of life is done for me,
The lonely vigil in the night is o'er ;
Behold, the sackcloth falls from wasted limbs
And aching shoulders, drops the burden back !
Stars, and thou, Deity, to this soul set free
Place in your courts afford, then labour fresh !
The wind comes freshening not from shore or sea,
But northward as from neither or from both.
From One beyond eternity and time
I wait the influx of renew'd and new
Life, for the breathing of the Wind Divine,

Breath of immortal being, food of soul,
Which lives no more by manner or by bread
But by the quickening and supporting Word
Forth issuing from the mouth of Deity.
Night multiplies above me stars and stars !
For ever to the world—all worlds—all life—
No end ; the providence of fate fulfils
Its aims for ever, shaping life and death. . . .
My soul seems taken from myself in strange
But thrilling ecstasy ; it soars on wings
Of aspiration's pure delirium !
Sea fades, sky fades, stars into void abyss
Withdraw ; now dawns diffused, unearthly light—
Life, like a steep, whose infinite ascent
Is lost in the eternal, a dim front
Opposes vast and imminent ; to that
No end I see, to Fate, to labour none ;
Election lasts for ever, and the call
Once follow'd is a destiny the soul
Pursuing through Eternity.

SCENE VI.—*By the Sea.* JASPER, ERNEST, JOHNSON.

Jasper. The blue, curved waves uplifted catch the
light
And shine beyond endurance ; the sea lies
Beneath the sunshine in a swoon of joy,
Its surface spread that grateful, warm embrace
To feel in full completeness. Who hath said
The sea sleeps ever ? When calmest most it wakes,

When sooth'd as now by sunlight, then the sense
Of life's intensest. The green fields at noon
Lie dreaming, and the forests by the night
Are hush'd into a stillness more than sleep,
Enchantment ; but through all the sea retains
A conscious life, of motion, music made.

Ernest. Dost thou remember how we spake
together

One summer twilight when thy friends and mine
Were with us? At the outset of our lives
We stood, and to the future all our thoughts
Directed ; you reproach'd me with low aims,
Fit only for a mean and selfish heart,
Till, somewhat stung with the implied contempt,
I cried—Defer the question ! I demand
The test of time ; let ten years pass, and then
Compare your visionary schemes with my
More humble aims, and what has gain'd us most
Hold both in value. . . . In less scornful mood
Thou didst accept the challenge.

Jasper. I repent
That foolish compact.

Ernest. Dost thou fear the test?

Jasper. It has a base assumption which my heart
Revolts from, making gross, material gain
A standard to compute the worth of life.
But have thy wish, compare, if so thou wilt,
Thy ways with mine ; are all thine ends achieved ?

Ernest. Look on me and compare thyself with me !
Or, first, contrast thy present with that prime

Of youth when we debated, years ago,
On all our cherish'd plans and purposes.
Thou wast in health, the hope of high success
Inform'd thy heart with strength to dare and do,
And thou wast beautiful ; thy mind full oft
Was visited by subtle and lofty thoughts,
While thine estate was ample for thyself,
Though much embarrass'd by thy guardian's debts.
I stood beside thee as a meaner thing ;
Thy mind o'ertopp'd me and thy mien eclipsed
My humble insignificance of form.
Thou didst not know the limit of thy soul's
Resource, so vast it seem'd, but mine was gauged
By all, and therefore by myself as well—
Mark it, I knew my powers (all things to thee
Did then seem possible). Keeping well within
My limits, I work'd hard at common things—
(Thy soul soar'd up to Dreamland and brought
thence—

What truly?—some bright light about thy brow,
And some deep, far-off meaning in thine eyes—
Not more !) I rose by little to success,
Achieving all I purpos'd ; I became
A wealthy merchant, married to the girl
On whom my heart was set from early youth ;
I have a country seat and good town house,
Am of a happy home contented head,
Seven sons sprung from me. But I see thee thin
And pale and poor, and grief has fallen on thee—
O Jasper, Jasper, it were well with thee

Had thy large soul been narrow'd to mine own,
For I have won from thee the palm of life,
And, though thou hide it from thyself and ne,
I know that thou art desolate, I know
Thy lofty spirit is defeated, crush'd,
Thy star hath set.

Jasper. A bright surpassing morn
Has dawn'd upon the summits of my soul,
And up life's sky the star-outshining sun
In glory soars. The altitude is fair ;
Hands clasp'd, eyes raised thereto, the truth I speak ;
My soul hath sought this solitary shore
For lonely thought, to shape my future course ;
Peace fills it, the deep sea my noblest mood
Evokes, the high dream power returns to me ;
I have not lost it, of my nature's broad
Resources none, of all my noble hopes
Not one ; the range of vision in my mind
Is lengthen'd daily, but in all its depths
And heights, my being by a saving truth,
From mine own life deduced, is brighten'd now.
A fairy prince, from mine own house and home,
With none to guide me, for the crown of life—
Fair quest—I search'd. Behold, that crown I wear !
I swear to thee the gems upon my face
Cast burning rays ; the nimbus of its light
Is round me ever, and the world I see
Transform'd, transfigured, through its rosy veil,
While in my hand I hold the palm of life ;
Thou hast not won it, of the realms it rules—

That magic sceptre—in thy life's whole length
Not even dream'd! Thou standest in the sun
Before me, and thy manhood is alone
Thy youth grown riper; the same thoughts are thine,
And the same habits; there is nothing new
Nor great come in to thee. Thy purse is lengthen'd,
Thou art well clothed, and by thy frame I see
Thou hast fared well; thou too art patient still
And kindly-hearted, with the world well-pleas'd,
And canst afford full gently and full long
To bear plain speaking from a man like me,
And with a bountiful and easy smile,
Thy face turn'd somewhat, hear me calmly out.
I thank thee, Ernest Johnson! In few ways
Have we changed places. If a gulf lay once
Between us, who hath bridged it, thou or I?
Can thy bright gold or perfect self-content
The separating space of mind and mind
Span, think you? If my soul be heighten'd in me,
As heaven itself upon an April day,
When clouds pass off, is heighten'd, can thy purse,
Thy house, thy merchant enterprise, thy brisk,
Increasing trade, thy goodly, well-grown sons—
Those even—who follow in their father's path
With safe and cautious steps, in any way
Hold out against it? When thy days are done,
Will these avail thee? But the dower of mind,
The treasures that the spirit for itself
Amasses, are eternal. What thy heart
Proposed for object in its life is gain'd,

But something nobler and supreamer far
Than mine first shaped enriches me with wealth
Untold. . . . For twenty years thou hast dined well
And lived in comfort ; all has prosper'd with thee.
If pain o'ertook thee, couldst thou bear it, Ernest ?
If failure came upon thee, and want after,
Could'st thou bear those ? If death should call for
thee,

Would'st thou go willingly, with no keen pang ?
That which thou hast created for thyself
Is dear, of course ; thou dost not wish to leave it ;
Thy life is crown'd with comfort and success,
And thy few cares are better to thy thought
Than things unknown, so, therefore, life than death.
But I have learn'd to suffer, to abstain,
And die. My spirit in its pain and want,
My frame in toil, has lived, I think, more truly
Than thine hath done, though all hath prosper'd
with thee.

Forgive me, Ernest !

Ernest. Ah, how pale art thou !
How thy hand trembles, in the morning light
Uplifted, how thou leanest on thy staff !
Thy words exhaust thee. At such dear expense
What hast thou purchased from the careful hands
Of truth ?

Jasper. The secret of eternal youth,
Of strength immortal, of abiding peace,
Not lightly, nor in haste, to be reveal'd.

Ernest. Thy friends are dead, alone of all I stay !

Miles last we buried, who in death was true
To thy great teachings. Would I win from thee
Thy crown's least jewel? May I add thereto!
I claim my methods have in mundane things
Borne fruit tenfold—for earthly life I plann'd;
If thine have brought thee to the brink of want
They've fail'd, though only from my point, perhaps.
I do not doubt that thine's the nobler part,
And nobler thou; on all who knew thee, Jasper,
Thou hast exerted happy influence,
And man is better for thy birth in time.
Do I not know how oft thy face has haunted,
How it has prompted kindly deeds and thoughts?
And was not Miles himself a stone inert
Before thy master hand had fashion'd him,
And life infused? who sits enthron'd this day
A burning seraph (in his earthly life
All fire and light). Then Matthew also, Jasper—
Spurr'd on by thee into an earnest life
He vow'd to follow with unselfish toil
His search for Truth, and gain'd at least from that
Patience in doubt and pain. I seal'd his eyes;
He said that ever, like a star in night,
Thine image led him and abode with him. . . .
Remember Basil, in extremes of course!
When he turn'd Trappist he was saint thenceforth,
To his community a shining light:
He vow'd his life to God, my friend, for thee,
And died in odour of all sanctity.
Thou meltest now.

Jasper. (I thank thee, gracious Lord!
Thou dost thy servant bid depart in peace.)
If it should be that I thy soul could win
To love that light which I have glimpsed from far
By no desert of mine (to lift the veil
Elected, not indeed by God directly,
But by experience from Him vouchsafed,
And so from God).

Ernest. No prophet is believed,
By friends or kindred ; ere his mission began
They knew through frequent intercourse too well
His likeness to our frail humanity.
I have a prophet in my house already,
For though with common sense alone endow'd,
Not in the central city of the earth,
Nor in this country solitude, I dwell
Remote from the mind-world ; I claim indeed
Some friends therein, who visit me at times
And leave their memory like a shining light
Behind them. Some indeed of less account
Are with me now, but visit me at Deal
And see them. There's a prophet, as I say—
A Second Advent minister, well known
In certain circles, has a weekly print
Whose sale is large ; he seldom fails therein
With some new wonder to electrify
His readers, and each week—it seems—fulfils
Apocalyptic prophecies, and his.
We have a poet also, Austin Blake
His name, a youth in years, whose fervid heart

Has higher promise than his songs, may be,
 But he'll do something by mere earnestness,
 A fair chance given. Of him I speak no more,
 For he comes yonder striding o'er the stones.
 His eyes turn'd sea-ward, dreaming harmonies,
 I doubt not you will like him.

SCENE VII.—*Green Lanes.* JASPER CARTWRIGHT,
 AUSTIN BLAKE.

Austin Blake. I've seen thee once, and yet we
 greet this day

Like oldest friends, as if I knew thee well ;
 I speak out secrets not as things told newly,
 But to thine ears familiar. Why is this ?
 We live in daily intercourse with some
 For years, yet to each other's inner selves,
 And the true feelings of the heart, remain,
 Like strangers ; then with others by a chance
 Speak once, and in a moment is the soul
 Laid bare.

Jasper. We are strangers all till our hearts touch,
 And ever after, whether late or soon,
 We are friends, true friends.

Austin Blake. But I am drawn to thee
 And tell thee all, while nothing of thyself
 Is spoken.

Jasper. We were speaking last of love.

Austin Blake. And I who am a poet have found
 none

To love, by some unhappy fate shut out
From Nature's circle of sweet sympathy.
A subtle current of attraction draws
The birds together, and the same blind sense
Moves in the meanest flower ; but I can draw
No soul towards mine. Does too much love repel
When offer'd? Or has Fate thrust Nature back,
And her kind ministries, to shape some high,
Exceptional end in me, preparing now
My soul by pain for lonely heights remote?
In high, expectant moments I elect
Such uncompanion'd solitude to prove
For the high recompense of that path apart.

Alone to stand, sufficient to one's self,
Strength gaining from within, to mark unmoved
The beautiful, the youthful passing by,
For whose love once thy soul was search'd with
flame,—

Hard task, yet needful, if to wisdom's crown,
And those high mountains whence the soul looks
forth

O'er the world's strife, the end of all foreseeing,
Thou would'st attain. A little, and my soul
Will gather all her forces, will be nerved
This fate to meet, alone will stand or fall,
Nor seek a foreign solace and support.
But, overtaken by dependent mood,
A little while, a little, let me lean
On human love ; and thus my heart is tried,

And preconvinced of failure, that the search
Is in the teeth of highest Destiny,
Spurr'd onward still pursues the same old quest
For love ne'er found.

Jasper. And wilt thou then go forth
On that wild search? I will not stay thee, no,
Nor chide thee, but the end too well foresee,
Who once myself along that thorny path
Went seeking soul-athirst. The hollow depth
Within thy heart bears witness painful, true,
Unto an ample nature, which in vain
Will seek its complement where the level of life
Spreads out a shallow stream. The common soul,
Whose smaller scope a little of love demands,
A little offers, will receive a free
And ready response, and therewith content
Conceives no deeper longing. The clear stream
And shallow, between its daisied banks runs down,
And the rains feed it and the rills make full,
In the bright sunshine sparkling, music-making,
It feels the joy of being. But the sea—
Wide, waste, unfathom'd—asks of earth and air,
With multitudinous voices, vainly ever
Some vast inclusive being its peer to be,
And silence listens; by a thousand streams
'Tis daily fed, yet chafes and hungers still,
Until in torment storming on the shore
It raves despairing; seeking pity in vain,
'Tis pitiless, death seeking vainly, death
Inflicts, nor ever from itself is free,

Nor in an ampler being can lose its own.
Thou art no shallow stream with daisied banks ;
Capacity and passion of stormy main
Are found in thee, so vast thy soul, so deep
The thirst within ! Where shall the sea find rest ?
Say, in what void abyss pour'd surging down
At length no movement know through all its depths ?
Insensate search ! But as at times the sea
Soothed by its streams, by gentle showers made
smooth,

Feels all its longing dead, smiles, and is calm,
And from the silence which its rending voice
Vex'd with vain questions, doth some secrets learn
Surpassing speech, from disappointment thou,
With thine unanswer'd longing, wilt gain at length
A secret. Thou hast sought the love which few
Have power to give, but of that power possess'd,
Give Thou ! no answer seeking, no return ;
Pour thyself forth ! Thus shalt thou win relief,
Thus shall the pent-up passion of thy heart
Escape, and thou find refuge from thyself.

Austin Blake. Thy words are as a prophecy, the
heart

Constraining towards fulfilment. And, behold,
Night falls ! And now with night yon cold grey pall,
Heaven hiding, broken by the rain and wind,
Sweeps past in stormy masses. From the West
Uplifted like a veil, it leaves the sky
Bare suddenly, revealing a divine
Impenetrable depth of shining space,

Blue-green and deep'ning momentarily to blue,
 Wherein the lustre of a single star
 Is visibly increasing, to be soon
 By fainter spheres companion'd. Dark and long,
 An ominous bank of vapour lingers still
 On the horizon, with one slender strip,
 Like the forefinger of a phantom hand
 Gigantic, pointing starward. . . . It is now
 Withdrawn in silence. On the lonely road
 Black stand the hedges dripping ; wide and far
 The fields stretch darkly westward ; mark beyond
 Those ancient trees a mill with naked arms •
 Outstretch'd against the sky !

SCENE VIII.—*The Bridge at Sandwich.* FATHER
 PAUL, AUSTIN BLAKE.

Father Paul. Right on the threshold of thy life to
 come

There stands a great event awaiting thee.
 I fain would lead thee with a bright, white soul
 Down the one path of safety, peace and joy
 To meet it bravely.

Austin Blake. On the bridge we pause,
 And look towards Thanet, where the sinking sun
 Rich fields and pastures bathes in amber light.

Father Paul. I am an old, old man and soon must
 die,
 Can I wish anything on earth for thee
 But thy soul's weal ? I have no cause to serve

But Christ's, my Master. Thou art melting now !
The angels listen from their thrones to catch
Thy broken words, the Queen of Heaven leans over,
The soft bright eyes of Jesus turn on thee,
As once on Peter through a fringe of blood—
Thou wilt not let them listen and wait in vain,
Thy friends that love thee well, thy friends most
true ?

The Church herself, the spotless Bride of Christ,
In my poor person lifts extended arms,
To her maternal, fond, and fruitful breast
She waits to clasp thee ! If mine eyes are dim,
It is the Church herself who weeps for thee.
Why wilt thou stand in haughty pride apart ?
When did she harm or pain thee ? . . . In the night,
In the wind, Austin, in the light of stars,
Thou can'st not say thy soul has prosper'd since !
She gave thee once a bright baptismal robe—
What rags now wrap thee ? She invoked on thee
The Spirit of God's uncreated Love—
What mournful spirit of the pride of life
Now reigns within thee ? As a boy, thy soul,
God's shrine, transfigured by the mystic bread,
Partook of that Divinity who once
Thy human nature for thy soul's dear sake
Partook of long ago—what idols now
Within thee dwell ?

Austin Blake. Thy kindness has indeed
My whole heart melted, and thy tears in truth
Have prompted mine ; the secret source of doubt

Thou hast not reach'd. . . . My father, an abyss
 Divides me ever from that fount of faith
 At which thy spirit drinks eternal life!

Father Paul. Ah, do not say so, do not speak
 thus rashly!

Think, Austin, think!

Austin Blake. I have thought long and deeply.

Father Paul. Pray, Austin, pray!

Austin Blake. Yea, I have tried that also!

But my soul, father, is a stormy sea
 Which the dove Prayer can never brood upon.

Father Paul. That is because thy heart is wrong
 with God.

Austin Blake. There is no meaning left in ancient
 forms.

Father Paul. 'Tis thou hast lost their spirit!

Austin Blake. What are words?

Thy God can search this turbid heart of mine,
 As stars search streams in silence night by night.
 Pray! I have pray'd, if it be prayer to stand
 At night by the waste sea, and there groan deeper
 Than that groans, beating vainly the deaf shore,
 Or midst lone meadows when the world is sleeping
 To call on God, to shriek for God to soothe
 My spirit's misery and madness. Speak!
 Is that not prayer? O I have watch'd all night,
 Pacing the city's streets, with all my soul
 Beseeching God to give me something great
 T' achieve for Him, beseeching God to burn
 With fire divine all that is mean in me,

To save me from myself, to send His angels
That they may scourge me with unsparing hands
Till my soul frenzied seeks those heights of life
My purer moments aye reveal to me ! . . .
And the night falls, ah, father, the cold, still night !
The pale moon calmly from her face removes
The mists, and uncompanion'd, stately, slowly,
She rises up ; there is no haste, no fever ;
The revolution of the sky goes on,
The sea itself for ever comes and goes
With measur'd motions, thine own face is still,
Thy words are gentle ; there is rest all round me—
Mind-rest and stately movements ; only here—
Here in this heart—the fever burns away !

Father Paul. Thou hast been sever'd from the
source of peace ;

Ah, soul distress'd, thou hast thyself withdrawn
From living fountains which alone thy thirst
Can slake !

Austin Blake. There came to me a dream one
night—

Some angel drew me upward to God's throne,
And bade me look in His eternal eyes ;
So I gazed long with gaze of yearning soul,
And ever after, to my latest day,
I'll have no fear of God ; if He come to me
With stripes and scourges or the Crown of Life,
In love or anger, still I fear him not !

Father Paul. Strange thoughts are thine, and in
thy soul I see

The sense of greatness ; thy last words have thrill'd
me—

What art thou, Austin ?

Austin Blake. From my soul I cry—

A poet ! To be a poet is to bear
The weight of all men's woes ; it is to poise
The world upon thy shoulders, and to be,
Like Atlas, ever in thy toil alone.

Father Paul. How all things show their darkest
side to thee !

It is thy long-neglected, starving soul
Which rent with anguish battles in thy breast,
And sets thy brain in fever. To its needs
I bid thee minister and peace is thine !

Austin Blake. When in this groaning, miserable
world

A man finds time to think of his own soul,
Preferring that before his neighbour's weal,
May fate derisive recompense the wretch
With infamous salvation ! May a crown
Of burnish'd gold about his brows be set,
And may its flaming rubies all day long
Make light about him ; may he shine and sing ;
And in the pauses of his song look down
And see the still unaided strait of men,
Till o'er the howling chorus unsubdued
Wherewith his kindred spirits and himself
Eternal patience vex, some hero valiant-voiced
Foretell the world's new age, in pain fulfil
The prophecy, by sacrificial flames

Bring in the bright new morning of the world ;
The searching tones shall fill those natures void,
And they shall burst like bubbles into air !

Father Paul. May God forgive thee thy blaspheming
speech !

Austin Blake. My words are wild I know, but pardon
me !

It is my wretchedness which wrings them out.
Thou dost not dream how terrible it is
To feel unworthy of the hopes we cherish,
To live a life so utterly below
The spirit's aspirations and design.
I see the light of a great day unfolding
In glory far before me, yet I dwell
In darkness still ; my nature grown perverse
Inclines itself to evil. Mighty will,
Within me latent, once thyself assert,
Then will the soul rise, a strong conqueror !

Father Paul. I have no medicine for thy mind
diseased,

May God in mercy minister !

Austin Blake. And night
And stars, and solitude, and this vast sea,
Their ministry continue—all things great
Enlarge the spirit which responds to them !

Father Paul. Thy deathless nature turns from
things of time

Athirst for the Eternal ; thy large heart
Invokes the Infinite ; thy soul seeks God.
Thine aspirations verify the faith

From which thy reason hath divorced itself.
 I say that after the strong, living God
 Thy spirit hungers, and the loss of Him
 Like pain torments thee. Knowledge cannot fill
 The void within, nor earth, nor sea, nor man,
 Nor bliss, nor aught created, only God.

Austin Blake. Science is building round our social
 life

A granite wall of providence; the same
 May in the future from material ills
 Successfully defend us ; but if mew'd
 Within those grey, forbidding, unadorn'd,
 Heaven-riding ramparts ; if the heaven indeed
 Be hidden, if from loopholes none may look
 And mark what spiritual pastures stretch
 Beyond them, then the soul herself will starve
 And from the hunger and the thirst within
 The providence of science no release
 Can ever give, nor least defence afford,
 Unless it deaden with its drugs indeed
 That aching soul.

Father Paul. Thou hast struck there on truth !
 Hold fast to that, as when the sea sucks down
 The roaring shingle, the wreck'd seaman clutches
 The rough rock slippery with slime and sea-weed.
 Beyond the smiling continent of Faith,
 With wealthy pastures and fair sloping uplands,
 Shall when the morning breaks make glad thine eyes,
 Who in Doubt's sea dost struggle seeking land.

Austin Blake. The world of waters gives thee
 images.

Behold, we pause before it, having cross'd
The melancholy marshes ! . . . Only think
How all the long night on the lonely coasts
The lonely sea washes, how it chafes and falls,
While all along the stony beach is still,
How it speaks always and its vast voice fills
The night, and there is nothing in the world,
There is no thing in all the waste, wide world
To answer. It is pitiful indeed
When in the darkness anything so great
As the great sea begins to moan and weep—
When things of majesty like human souls,
Or open seas, begin to moan and weep !

SCENE IX.—*By the Sea.* JASPER, AUSTIN BLAKE.

Jasper. Mark, Austin, now beneath the gathering
clouds

The sea's sun-brilliant azure slowly change
To yellow, green, and grey.

Austin Blake. The wind is keen,
The storm rack threatens in the North, there is
A brilliant burst of sunshine on the sea,
The cliffs of France fade dimly far away ;
The boatmen cover up their boats and bear
The yellow nets to shelter.

Jasper. You say that love has fled you, that you
seek

In vain to win it ; let us reason now
Together. With a depth of heart yourself

Endow'd beyond the common, do you ask
 As much of weaker natures? A demand
 So great would overtax them, draining out
 Their soul's resources. Think! There passes, say,
 Some lovely face, and for an answering flush
 To that white heat of passion which makes pale
 Your own, this poem's everlasting life
 You work for now were sacrificed with mind
 Eased, as it were, of labour. Nay, you ask
 Too much of weakness; should one kindly smile
 To all thy warmth make answer, thou hast won
 The most that nature's narrow scope constrain'd
 Can spare unlabour'd. For a heart like thine
 The grand arcanum is to love—to love—
 And nothing more.

Austin Blake. Pass out into the fields,
 For now the sun's supremacy complete
 Has been asserted; by the rising wind
 The clouds are scatter'd, and the heaven once more
 Shews white and blue, though pallid vapours still
 Brood round the low horizon.

Jasper. Let us walk
 Among the sandhills. Though the trees be leafless,
 It now seems summer by some sudden change
 Of natural magic; 'tis at least late spring's
 Sweet girlhood opening slowly to that full
 And perfect womanhood. Shines all the day
 The still low sun to southward; the sea lies
 Blue-bright and listless.

Austin Blake. Now we stand alone

Among these barren flats that fringe the shore !
The long north foreland's belt of gleaming cliff
Shews bright ; the tide into the bay between
Is swiftly rolling ; 'twixt the West and North
The town of Sandwich stands ; and straining eyes
The humble spire of Worth can glimpse among
The flat, ill-cultured fields and wilted green
Of sheep-cropp'd pastures. Think we now look forth,
From this far outpost, on the vast extent
Of solemn Faërie Land ! It lies spell-bound,
And all its folk are dreaming ; in the roads,
Be sure, grass sprouts, upon the chapel-steps
The green moss gathers ; there from day to day
Abides the patient spirit of the place,
With fortitude unearthly waiteth there
The worshippers.

Jasper. Beside this pool I stand !
Can the strong the soul her history forget,
And chequer'd life its æras ? Only then
Can I forget thee, Mary. Does the earth,
Our common mother, count thee still her child ?
How has Fate finish'd the romance begun
Between us ?

Austin Blake. Art thou wedded in thy heart
To yon salt sea as was the doge of old ?
My thought is this ; a symbol of the soul,
Of wisdom, immortality, the pure
Intelligence which dwells in, searching all,
Is salt ; its other name is bitterness.
Profound the mystic union of the soul

(The salt) with evil (bitterness)—profound
 The deep sea's mystic union, soul of earth,
 With woman's soul in Mary, Star and Queen
 Of ocean, mother of the Salt Divine,
 And sorrow. Then if names have power to shape
 The destinies of beings, and in truth
 Their's is a subtle influence, who bears
 The name of Mary is with ocean join'd
 And star thereof. If thou wouldst join thy soul
 By love with Mary, to the sea be vow'd,
 Whose hardy mariners to Mary Queen
 In charge are given. Love the sea, ye all
 Who bear that name, or may its bearers love,—
 Thou who hast loved a Mary and myself
 A Mary's son !

Jasper. O lost and gentle friend !
 Dost thou remember how we wander'd here
 On winter mornings when the sea was blue
 And the wind balmy, while the white dream-ships,
 With unapparent motion through the dim
 Mists of the distance, beautiful as ghosts,
 Pass'd on their course unknown ?

Austin Blake. A Kentish maid
 Perchance thy boyhood woo'd. From Saltwood
 came
 My mother. In this town full long she dwelt,
 O'er all these sandhills wander'd. . . . Can I walk
 Among them, and not visibly impress'd
 On every spot behold thy memory ?
 I pass'd among them in a dream this day—

Thy girlhood's haunts, where Saltwood's soaring
towers

Look eastward o'er the sea. From Brockman's Mount
How oft thine eyes have gazed on shore and sea,
A prospect fair! On Eachend's further hill
Oft hast thou stood; a white and winding road
Ascends the eastern side—the rover thence
Looks down into a woodland vale, and there
A little stretch of undulating turf
Gives pleasant pasture unto dreaming kine.
And though these scenes will know thee now no more,
Nor ever here thy roaming steps return,
Who on a mission undeclared hast gone
Forth into lands remote, there lingers yet
The memory of thy presence—the winds and birds
Interpret in intelligible forms
The secrets Nature in her mighty heart
Stores of thee still. Thy picture fills my mind;
I bear it with me to the ocean's marge,
And its vast voices, seeking news of thee,
Oft will I question; or to lonely lanes
Retiring, fir-clothed slopes, and shelt'ring yews .
In churchyard closes wait the answering voice.

Jasper. The wind is cool; the night approaches;
see,

Betwixt the north and east, that cloud fire-tinged!
The naked masts of every anchor'd ship
Shine redly, and the steel-blue, shifting sea
Takes wandering lights and blushes. . . . For a space
It lasts. Look northward! Suddenly the air

Has clear'd, the low light of the Ramsgate pier
 Shews plainly ; every spire and house behind it
 Is visible—dark uplands loom above
 The dead-white cliffs ! Turn backward now ! Behold,
 Westward the blazing body of the sun
 Hovers, descending visibly ! . . . 'Tis now
 Dropp'd utterly ; intolerable light
 Broods o'er its track, transfigured clouds of gold
 And purple, with above them all the deep
 Miraculous height of azure. The sea's swell
 Deepens. . . . (His mother out of Saltwood came !
 If this be true which on my mind hath flash'd,
 This thought supreme !) The twilight falls apace ;
 We spake about thy mother.

Austin Blake.

All thy words

Are lost upon me, who myself have lost !
 This sunset which we linger'd long to see
 Has now departed, all the clouds about
 The west are burnt to ashes.

Jasper.

Draw that cloak

About thy body. . . . Austin, where is he—
 (Is that the moon behind us ? Turn ! The moon
 Shoots upwards from the ocean scarlet, vast,
 All draped in lurid panoply, and leaves
 A bloody blush upon the eastern sea
 Perceptibly ascending)—where is he
 That bore thee, Austin ? Do not turn, nor shrink !
 Is that the ruddy moonlight on thy face,
 Or burning flush that mantles either cheek ?
 Speak quickly ! With the shame in face and eyes,

Not with the lips, make answer ! Is thy birth
 A secret to be whisper'd in the dark
 By thy most inward spirit to thy mind
 Alone ? In mercy, for a space avert
 Those blazing eyes ! Keep silence, breathe it not !
 Look round, look up ! The night is round, the stars
 Are o'er us, and the moon within the mist
 Is monstrous and amazing as the thought
 Within my soul ; this vast, mysterious thing
 Before us is the ocean. Let us stand
 A little and speak nothing, lest the life
 Go suddenly from out us.

Austin Blake. I must speak,
 Or madness intervening ends with shrieks
 Intolerable silence.

Jasper. Mary Blake,
 Was she thy mother ? Do not answer ! Strive
 To meet this sudden, unexpected thing
 As something old, familiar, long fore-dream'd !
 Be it between us now as it may be
 To-morrow in the morning, when the truth
 Is twelve hours old, when we can meet and say—
 My son !

Austin Blake. My father !

SCENE X.—*A room in an Inn.* JASPER, AUSTIN.

Jasper. Throw up the window, let the breeze come
 in !
 What is the day like—this my latest day ?

Describe it, poet !

Austin. A cool wind blowing from the
north drives on

The ling'ring ships, a mist is on the sea,
But the sun breaking southward kindles now
On its calm breast a blaze of golden light.

Jasper. I have not lived in vain who have found
the great,

The golden secret. Mine are the mystic keys,
By Solomon sought, which open to the soul
The hidden stores of earth, of heaven, and sea ;
Mine is the Great Arcanum, I achieve
Thereby the *magnum opus*, and lay bare
Life's deepest problems. In my hands I hold
The magian stone wherewith from evil things
And things held worthless is the soul enrich'd ;
From secret sources drawn, the Wine of Life
Renews my being with eternal youth.
I know the path which leads to life's supreme,
Supernal heights.

Austin. I hold it surely true
That on some high soul-eminence is hidden
A lamp of God, miraculously fed,
Star-brilliant, being kindred to divine
Light, of eternal origin, itself
The true illumination of the soul.
Unwaning, pure, that solitary flame
Doth beautify the mountains of the mind,
Its home. The mists of passion and evil thoughts
Ascending, hide from the inferior self

Those saving rays, which still will strike below
Some fitful shafts, whose transitory gleam,
Made variously manifest, we call
By various names—prevision, the gift of faith,
The inspiration of the seer and bard,
A revelation from the world beyond
In flashes and reflections to the soul.
And these half-words, the swift-extinguish'd light,
Beyond all speech have thrill'd the heart of man,
Have waken'd thoughts beyond all thoughts profound,
Deep longings fed, and shaped from dream and
deed

High aims and hopes sublime, the stars of life !

Jasper. To give all, seeking nothing ; to be faithful,
Though all were faithless, that's the way to peace
And amplitude of spirit ! To lose self
In others, that's the best, the one true way
To find our nobler self which dwells alone
On unattempted summits of the soul !
This is the Great Arcanum, this the truth
My strange life-tale doth illustrate and prove.
I leave the sacred mission of thy self's
Eternal loss an offer'd gift to thee.
Choose leave to serve and love, not love's return,
Whose mercenary principle demands
On every gift repayment. Let thy lips
Seek no responsive kisses, the white brow
Pressing alone, whose cool and smooth expanse
Takes all, returning nothing. Let thy tongue
Most gentle words, most soothing balm of speech,

On thine elected pour ; from them seek none.
And be thy life (for these in joy so rich)
By thy devotion beautified alone ;
To them give all, and be their gifts and smiles
For others, since their loveliness enough
Will feed thy heart, whose riches of resource
Renew'd for ever can the world endow
Desiring, needing nothing. So thy soul
Shall soar in triumph towards the Source of Light,
Whose glory, blinding to mere mortal eyes,
The strengthen'd nature fill'd with God supports.

I hold the keys of immortality ;
I offer them, but, ere thou takest, pause !
To seek the peace and fulness Nature gave
Before thy soul was ravish'd by the sight
Of supernatural beauties, is a quest
As vain as love. Her beauty still remains,
But substance, depth, and truth are gone for aye.
The early wish to see the world is lost—
One sea, one hill, from which o'er land and sea
To gaze, sufficient, one wide open space
For sunrise and sunseting. Weigh it well !
The high vocation out of Nature's arms
Will take her child, and thou art evermore
An orphan. Now, the glory of the Lord
His holy place illuminates, but choose
The part I offer thee, the part supreme,
And, lo, that glory vanish'd ! It will light
The human face alone ; new beauty there

Each day will manifest ; thine every act
Renouncing self, a veil therefrom removes ;
The soul shines out, and visibly transfuses
The gracious shrine, the glory there abides ;
It grows and will not wane, till thou thyself
Shalt cease to love and live for it. Choose now !
Thy falling tears have chosen.

Austin Blake. I set my heart upon the nobler hope
And fight with Nature. . . .

Ernest Johnson sends
A final message ; thou hast conquer'd him !
He vows himself through all his days remaining
To work with zeal for man, because of thee ;
He hopes to found a hospital and schools,
One son will follow in the course he takes ;
He looks to greet thee in Eternity.

Jasper. Thou dost Thy servant bid depart in peace!

[*A long pause.*]

I have not had, my God, recourse to Thee
In common moments ; the Ideal within
My soul its origin unsearchable
To Thee refers, and thence has drawn its strength.
I pray Thee now that I may live once more,
And once again for love myself cast out,
Life's scope increase, that I may suffer and win,
And by my pain and passion evermore
Lift up new lights and fair to fill Thy world !
Not crowns I ask, though these be beautiful ;
Not throne exalted by the crystal sea,
Though there be kingship of eternal peace ;

But widen in me, I beseech, the scope
Of thought sublime, O be my soul enlarged !
The end of knowledge is the end of life !

[*To Austin Blake.*]

I see thee stand before me, a bright soul
In body graceful, beautiful, and strong ;
Thine eyes shine in the sunlight, thy dark hair
The yellow sunlight brightens ; thou art brave,
And towards the future dost a stalwart front
Present ; thy brain with purpose fair and high,
With golden dreams, and growing in thy heart
The sense of mission, is inform'd ; to me
Life and its joy thou owest, any height
Of act and thought is possible to thee
Through me alone. A problem comes thereby.
From something judged a wanton, evil thing,
Love's folly and the passion of my youth,
Springs forth the gifted being, who may yet
Shine on this age's forehead, like a star,
The first in all her diadem of fame !
What shall I say, then ? By the fruits it bears
We judge the worth of action ?—That man's fate,
That all man's future, may have hung one night
In trembling scales, upon a single turn
Of chance depending ; whether indeed or not
The boy's vague longing would instinct teach aright,
And in the woman passion conquer shame,
And in love's gentle triumph be man's weal
Eternally secured—shall I say this ?
Then pass unfeared to the world beyond,

By whom thy life's achievement was for earth
Made possible. . . . What shaped thy life and mine
Has out of folly, out of shame, a fair
And holy end led forth—'tis that I say!
While something suddenly, like shaft of light
Shot in dark covert, doth my doubtful mind
Illumine, a revealment is vouchsafed.

Upon a memorable day my soul
Her meaner life rejected, and thenceforth
Through all her days by sacrifice renew'd
Immortal life within her. And for this,
Because my life in painful service pass'd,
The faults and follies of my early youth,
Not turned to spectres the affrighted soul
Through time pursuing, and in life beyond
Avenging furies, for the world and self
Are shaped to blessings. Pausing on the verge
Of time's dark shore, soul-litten from beyond,
To each himself renouncing—a true thing,
Well-proved, I promise; that his early sins,
Done in weak moments, ere the light was full,
Shall virtues bear, the follies and the faults
Go forth like spirits of a lineage high
To minister. But he who self alone,
Or chiefly, seeks, his virtues soon as born
Shall wither, and the deed he counted best
In all his days at death shall turn on him
A demon's face and haunt his soul in hell.

And now the matter in thy hands remains,

All rests with thee to whom the chance is given—
 Look to it, Austin, the chance with life is given !
 Thy years are all before thee, and the world—
 Forth to the strife, thou hero, poet, forth !
 The world awaits thee, the world calls thee, go !
 God with thee, in thee (prove the god within !),
 And by the sacrifice of meaner self
 Thine own transcendent nature's life æterne
 Insure for ever ! My life dissolves away
 In thy life's light. Look to it, Austin, look !
 Son of the morning, it is in thy hands—
 All rests with thee, to fail or to fulfil !

Austin Blake. I bow, my God, to Thy decree,
 I will not dare to question Thee,
 Henceforth in early hours and late
 To this high aim be my days dedicate ;
 With all my strength and all my skill
 I will Thy plans fulfil.
 Thou givest me the golden keys
 Which ope the gates of light,
 But contemplating these,
 And that immortal height
 My soul must scale, I pause and tremble at the sight !
 My deeds are known to Thee,
 My weakness Thou dost see,
 O Lord, Thy will be done—
 How shouldst Thou favour this rebellious son ?
 This child of earth and fire,

Say, wilt Thou choose to work out Thy desire?
High hopes I held, and many a lofty aim,
 These had redeem'd my shame,
 These crown'd my brows with light,
But I have waived the starry claim
 To work the flesh delight.
Mine aspiration saves my soul from death,
 For that descends from Thee ;
Thou wilt not cast it in the abyss beneath
 Of meanness and obscurity.
But Thou hast bidden me trust,
Hast raised me from the dust
 And pointed heights sublime,
Wherefrom the eternal stars look down
 On this dim waste of time,
 And Thou hast bidden me climb.
Take up the mystic wand and magic crown,
The symbols of soul-eminence and light ;
My soul turns breathless towards that wondrous
 height,
The glory dazzles me, and the silentness
Of those high places doth my heart oppress !
I am not worthy such illumined spheres,
I cry to Thee, and, lo, mine ears
 Are ringing with Thy promises !
The dark clouds quiver and roll,
They pass from off my soul,
 The Light Divine falls o'er me ;
The road is rough and long,
But it may be smooth'd by song,

The arm of the Lord is strong,
 I see my life before me.
I turn, I take my way ;
 O hope so brave and bold,
My steps shall nevermore delay
 Through weary paths of old !
The years are rich in Destiny,
The stars of Heaven do beckon me and bless ;
Set on the watch-towers of futurity,
 The beacons of immortal fame
 Burn with a stedfast flame ;
 While as I forward press, ●
There is a promise in the passing hours,
 A whisper in the leaves and flowers ;
 The smallest bird that sings
 Reveals me secret things ;
And day and night, and night and day,
 The promise never dies away
Miraculously written in the skies ;
The very winds are full of prophecies !

EPILOGUE.

By the Sea. AUSTIN BLAKE.

A book for mine elected, telling all
My life is theirs to use or lose for them
As best may serve them, telling that I love
Above the world their beauty. Is there one
Who reads this book, whose bright eyes light a face
In truth most lovely? Let him come to me,
On him my faith is fix'd, I choose him now,
My soul's true friend. And if his heart be pure,
His am I for the serving evermore ;
But if not pure, if it at least be kind,
His am I for the serving evermore ;
And if not kind, if it be brave and true,
His am I for the serving evermore ;
And if not brave, since he is beautiful
His am I for the serving evermore.

This book to mine elected, to the souls
In life's fair morning, whom I love, this book!
And with this poem I have made for them
I give myself, to prove as best I can
One aim alone is worth the while to live for—
To live for others ; an unselfish cause

Is the sole one worth dying in. What form
Of self-indulgence is of all its forms
Permissible? The luxury of free
Unbounded loving, limited by no
Desire of love return'd. To this delight
Add that which life's devotion, staking all
For those we love, will bring us, and enough
From these two sources flows of joy to last
The spirit through eternity or time.

This book to mine elected, to the souls
In life's fair morning, whom I love, this book !

Do your hearts beat within you, learning thus
Its aim so high? Do your tears fall like mine?
A thousand faces shining bright with soul
Reveal'd have ring'd me. What is that which sounds
O'er all? What angel with a mighty voice
Calls all by name upon the same steep path
To enter? In my body as I speak
I tremble greatly ; as ye hear, I know
Your spirits die. What sudden change is this? . . .

Is that the night upon the sea, my friends,
Descending? What have multiplied above?—
The stars ! What breaks and brightens in the east?
It is the moon, the mother of the gods,
Heaven's queen ascending ! Is there one this night
Takes up the wondrous story? . . . Who is this
Stands forth? My one believer, who alone

Accepts the poem ! It is well ; for thee,
God knows, I wrote it—thou hast heard—enough !
God bless the blue, illimitable sea
Which spreads before me—on its verge I stand.
My soul embarks for mystic coasts unknown
From all sea-roads which cross the main of mind
Remote. Thou knowest I am strong to bear
And braced for every venture. Morning Light,
Most royal Lily and azalean queen,
MIRANDA, promise of the time to come,
I battle ever for the truth and thee,
For man I work in thee. All joys be thine !
I'll crown thy spirit with the truth attain'd,
Which from thy virgin brow shall flood the earth.
All darkness, doubt, and sorrow disappear ;
The soften'd sunshine of eternal love,
The mildness, delicacy, and grace of God,
Inform the beauty of MIRANDA's face,
And melting ever with celestial love,
The splendour of thy visionary eyes
Beatify and beautify my soul.
O solemn spirit, to the distant stars
Thy glance directing, may those earnest eyes
With keen, far-reaching glance in moments high
Triumphant search that altitude remote !
I see thine eyes' light span the gulf of space ;
And space the final veil, the rarest, pass'd,
I see the Absolute reveal'd before thee. . . .
Behold, the universe of things created
The footstool of thy spirit, and, behold,

That spirit soaring and ascending still
Shall greaten through Eternity and Time !

Go forth, O Poem, to the Star of books
I leave thee ! Thou art written ; my soul's child
Must aid me now to bid the life of self
A long farewell. Command me therefore now,
All ye to whom I dedicate this book,
Command me in your service evermore !

O Light Divine, lead onward still this mind's
Supernal story, to the end lead on !
I give thee thanks, supreme and gracious God,
For Thy great glory, for Thy truth reveal'd ;
I give Thee thanks for this election high
To Thy surpassing knowledge, for this flood
Of soul illumination. In Thy hands
I put the story ; on the mountain heights
Be its next scene, I pray Thee ! Thou hast school'd
On wintry plains beside the scourging sea
Thy chosen son. To-day Thy call hath come
Beyond the mountains from a height undream'd ;
I follow on the mandate, only lead !
Lead Light which is unsearchable, lead God
Most holy, named yet nameless, ever more
Reveal'd, yet ever hidden and unknown ;
O'er wide sea-waste I follow, plain and hill,
I follow to the mountain of the Lord ! Amen.

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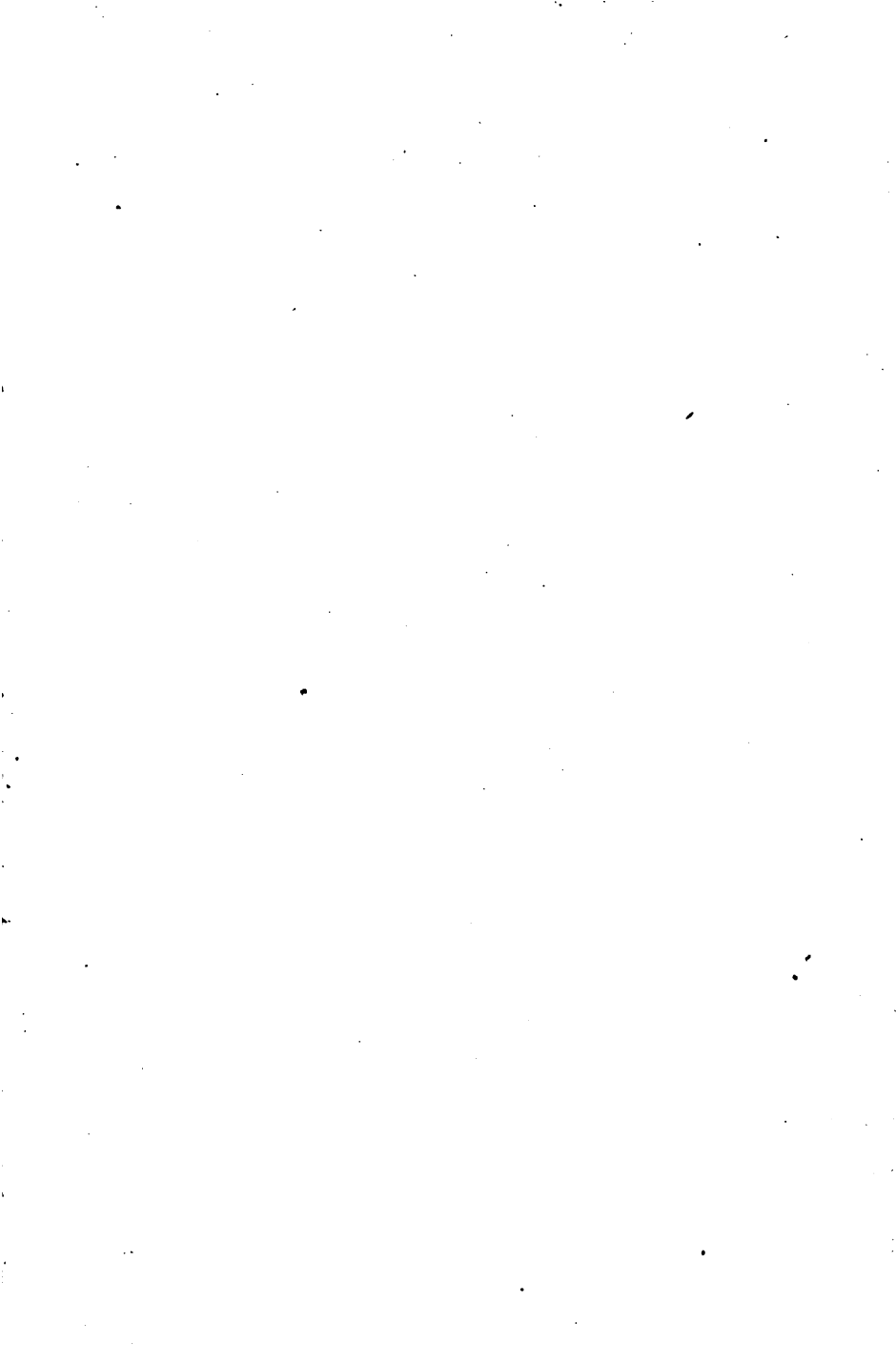
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