

Classic Poetry Series

Alfred Austin

- poems -

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Alfred Austin (30 May 1835 – 2 June 1913)

A writer who wore several hats throughout his career, Alfred Austin was a critic, novelist and political journalist. Although he was educated in law, his professional life focused primarily on literature. Austin published regularly for half a century and succeeded Alfred, Lord Tennyson as poet laureate of England in 1896. Nonetheless, he carries the reputation of having been the worst and least read English poet.

Austin was born on May 30, 1835, in Headingley, near Leeds, to Roman Catholic parents Joseph and Mary Austin. His father was a merchant and a magistrate of Headingley and his mother was the sister of Joseph Locke, a member of Parliament and a civil engineer. He was schooled first at Stoneyhurst College and then St. Mary's College, Oscott. He received a B.A. in 1853 from the University of London. Called to the Bar of the Inner Temple in 1857, he became a barrister on the Northern Circuit at his parents urging but left the legal world within three years in pursuit of a career in literature. This decision came upon the heels of his father's death in 1861 and his newfound financial freedom with the assumption of an inheritance. In 1855, he published *Randolph: A Poem in Two Cantos*, and three years later he published a novel, entitled *Five Years of It*. From 1866 to 1896, he worked as a foreign affairs writer for the *London Standard*, where he was known as a conservative journalist.

Foreign politics was one of Austin's major interests. He had a special enthusiasm for Polish and Italian patriots. His hatred of Russia made him a steadfast devotee of Disraeli. He also was a frequent contributor to the *Quarterly Review*. He represented the *Standard* in Rome during the sittings of the Ecumenical Council of the Vatican. He was the *Standard's* special correspondent at the headquarters of the King of Prussia during the Franco-German War in 1870 and also served as the German correspondent at the Congress of Berlin in 1884. Among his political writings are "Russia Before Europe" (1861), "Tory Horrors" (1876) and "England's Policy and Peril" (1877). He founded the *National Review* in 1883 with William John Courthope and remained an energetic joint-editor for the journal until 1893, and then continued as its sole editor from 1887, when Courthope retired, until 1895. He had unsuccessful candidacies for Parliament as a Conservative for Taunton in 1865, and again for Dewsbury in 1880.

Although his writing was inspired and shaped by the works of [Byron](http://poemhunter.com/george-gordon-lord-byron/) and [Scott](http://poemhunter.com/sir-walter-scott/), Austin was actually a mediocre poet, and was the target of much derision. He was most often parodied for his ode on the Jameson Raid, in which he praised what turned out to be military disaster and embarrassment for the British

government. He saw narrative and dramatic verse as the height of poetic expression, and believed that [Shakespeare](http://poemhunter.com/william-shakespeare/) and [Milton](http://poemhunter.com/john-milton/) were exemplars of these styles and worthy of imitation. He codified these criticisms in *The Poetry of the Period*, which was published in 1869 in Temple Bar and appeared the following year in book form. In this work, he attacked highly accomplished and widely respected authors, including [Browning](http://poemhunter.com/elizabeth-barrett-browning/), [Swinburne](http://poemhunter.com/algernon-charles-swinburne/), Tennyson, and [Tennyson](http://poemhunter.com/alfred-lord-tennyson/) and [Whitman](http://poemhunter.com/walt-whitman/), seeing them as "feminine" and "essentially childish." It was the audacity, rather than the substance, of these claims that distinguished Austin at the time. Yet his attack on Tennyson included some astute observations that revealed some of the great poet's weaknesses.

Austin's only popular book, *The Garden that I Love* (1894), was considered to be his best work, and was thoroughly enjoyed by the public at the time. It was a work in prose of a type known as "garden diaries," which relished the charm of his Kentish home in Swinford Old Manor. Other idyllic prose works included *In Veronica's Garden* (1895), *Lamia's Winter Quarters* (1898) and *Spring and Autumn in Ireland* (1900). His best work revealed a literate and proficient writer, who benefits from simplicity and sincerity. Some critics believed that Austin, while generally acknowledged to be an untalented writer, did not deserve the opprobrium heaped upon him. In addition to his capable bucolic verses, his early satire, *The Season*, is a noteworthy piece of heroic poetry. However, its poor critical reception by the *Athenaeum* induced Austin to compose a sequel attacking the journal and its editor, William Hepworth Dixon. *Fortunatus the Pessimist: A Dramatic Poem* (1892) and *The Conversion of Winckelmann, and Other Poems* (1897) were also moderately successful publications.

Austin's surprising ascension to the status of poet laureate in 1896 following Tennyson was probably more due to his stature as journalist for the conservative party rather than his skill as a poet. A writer for *British Authors of the Nineteenth Century* mentions that Austin was "appointed over the heads of abler men because of sins he had not committed." Apparently, the logical candidates of [Swinburne](http://poemhunter.com/algernon-charles-swinburne/) and [Kipling](http://poemhunter.com/rudyard-kipling/) were deemed unacceptable to Queen Victoria. His appointment was made at the recommendation of Prime Minister Lord Salisbury, and was seen as a decision concerning Conservative Party patronage, as Austin had served that party well in his journalistic writings. Writing for the *Nation*, Stuart P. Sherman declared "his self-complacency appears in the record of his influence with political leaders," and claimed that he possessed "a divine satisfaction with his own position, [and] a bland unconsciousness of contemporary feeling and opinion."

Austin's appointment negatively affected the prestige of the laureateship. He became a standard target of ridicule in the journal *Punch*, appearing in a cartoon as "Alfred the Little," an appellation referring to Austin's 1896 play *England's Darling*, about Alfred the Great. Sherman went on to say that Austin was "the last minstrel of Toryism. As he writes, he feels himself soothed, sustained, and magnified by the support of the landed gentlemen of England. He is not, he fancies, dipping his pen into the shallow well of egotism, but into the inexhaustible springs of English sentiment." *Door of Humility*, a poem of fifty-seven cantos published in 1906, concerns the young poet's questioning of his religion and his travels across the globe in search for the truth. It was reviewed by a critic for the *Athenaeum*, who writes, "the philosophy and its sentimental setting are patiently planned on the Tennysonian model, but unhappily it is not enough to succeed a poet in order to be successful in imitating him."

Austin's Autobiography of Alfred Austin, Poet Laureate, 1835-1910 was written in a year and appeared in two volumes in 1911. Sherman reported that it is "written with unflagging zest and genuine power in self-revelation." In it, Austin voiced his pride in his family history, saying "no one admires honorable descent and the easy gradations of English society, from class to class, more than I do." However, Sherman claimed that "he contrives to cast an additional glamour over his family tree." A reviewer for the Saturday Review of Literature wrote of the Autobiography: "A traveller in many lands, a war correspondent, a diligent interviewer, Mr. Austin gossips about men and things in a way which is occasionally interesting, but not very entertaining on the whole. He tells us little that is new. In fact, the two portly volumes of his Autobiography might have been borne, not inaptly, as their motto, a line from one of his own verses which he quotes, 'Patter, chatter everywhere!'"

Sherman asserted that "the sentimental romantic Toryism of Mr. Austin is not so much dull as false; false and at the same time obsolete; obsolete but not yet old enough to have acquired an antiquarian interest." A contributor to British Authors of the Nineteenth Century stated that "his autobiography is almost incredible in its calm assumption that its writer was a great genius; it may survive his poems as a document portraying the vagaries of human self-deception." P. F. Bicknell, reviewing Austin's autobiography for Dial, maintained that "the world has a cruel way of refusing to take altogether seriously a man who takes himself too much so; and thus our autobiographer, with his somewhat conspicuous lack of humor, becomes, in a manner the reverse of Falstaff's, the cause of humor in other men."

Eserleri:

Novels

Five Years of It (1858)

An Artist's Proof (1864)

Won by a Head (1866)

Poetry

Randolph: A Poem in Two Cantos (1855)

The Human Tragedy: A Poem,(1862)

Interludes (1872)

At the Gate of the Convent and Other Poems (1885)

Love's Widowhood and Other Poems (1889)

Lyrical Poems (1891)

Narrative Poems (1891)

The Conversion of Winckelmann and Other Poems (1897)

A Tale of True Love and Other Poems (1902)

Sacred and Profane Love and Other Poems (1908)

Drama

The Tower of Babel: A Poetical Drama (1874)

Savonarola: A Tragedy (1881)

Fortunatus the Pessimist: A Dramatic Poem (1892)

England's Darling (1896)

Flodden Field: A Tragedy, Harper, (1903)

Other

A Vindication of Lord Byron (1869)

The Poetry of the Period (1870)

The Golden Age: A Satire in Verse (1871)

The Garden that I Love (1894)

In Veronica's Garden (1895)

Lamia's Winter-Quarters (1898)

Haunts of Ancient Peace (1902)

A Lesson in Harmony (1904)

The Poet's Diary (1904)

The Bridling of Pegasus: Prose Papers on Poetry (1910)

A Birthday

The love within my heart that dwells
Knows nought of days or hours;
I hear thee in the Christmas bells,
I feel thee in the vernal showers;
And thy breath is blent with the wandering scent
Of the summer fruits and flowers.

And yet this morn my blood is stirred
With more than wonted glow;
Thy absent voice is strangely heard,
Thy spells upon me stronger grow;
And my spirit sips from unseen lips
That can be but thine, I know.

For thou wast born upon this day,
When I was but a child,
Ere winter frosts were ta'en away,
Ere primroses peeped out and smiled;
Ere the snows were reft from the sheltering cleft,
And the winds were high and wild.

Thus early unto me wast thou
An earnest of the spring;
Of happy birds upon the bough,
And sweet trees blossoming;
Of all that is fair upon earth, in air,
And the streams that bound and sing.

I wonder what the world was like
Before thou didst appear-
Did young lambs skip o'er mound and dyke?
Did throstles warble loud and clear?
And were sea and sky as deep and high
As they are now thou art here?

It were a dreary world indeed
To me, wert thou away;
The night no tumults sweet would breed,
No tranquil dalliance the day;
And though earth should fling all that Fame can bring
At my feet, I would not stay.

So, though sore-severed still we be,
Here, helpful one, remain!
Through travels long a bourne to me,
A crowning joy 'mid crushing pain;
An abiding star when the storm-waves jar,
And a rainbow 'mid the rain.

And fear not, sweet, but love like ours
Will keep us ever young:
No prey to the corroding hours,

No feast for the malignant tongue,
But as firm and fond in the years beyond
As when first we clasped and clung.

Age cannot touch such charms as thine;
My heart defies the sun:
Both shall but glow yet more divine,
His course more oft as he may run:
Till we spurn the earth for that second birth,
When we twain shall be only one.

Alfred Austin

A Birthday Present

`` ` Say what, to please you, you would have me be."
Then listen, dear!
I fain would have you very fair to see,
And sweet to hear.

` You should have Aphrodite's form and face,
With Dian's tread;
And something of Minerva's lofty grace
Should crown your head.

` Summer should wander in your voice, and Spring
Gleam in your gaze,
And pure thoughts ripen in your heart that bring
Calm Autumn days.

` Yours should be winning ways that make Love live,
And ne'er grow old,
With ever something yet more sweet to give,
Which you withhold.

` You should have generous hopes that can beguile
Life's doubts and fears,
And, ever waiting on your April smile,
The gift of tears.

` You should be close to us as earth and sea,
And yet as far
As Heaven itself. In sooth, I'd have you be
Just what you are.'

Alfred Austin

A Border Burn

Where Autumn runnels fret and foam
Past banks of amber fern,
Since track was none I chanced to roam
Along a Border burn.

The rain was gone, the winds were furled,
No cloud was in the sky,
So that there seemed in all the world
Only the stream and I.

At length upon a grey-green stone
I sate me down to dream,
Till, with its flow familiar grown,
I thus addressed the stream:

`` Dear Border Burn, that had your birth
Where hills stand bright and high,
Whose lowlier parent is the earth,
Whose loftier the sky;

`` Half-heavenly therefore in your source,
Withal to man akin,
Betraying by your wayward course
Your mingled origin;

`` Why, in a scene so fair as this,
Not linger while you may,
And lengthen out unchided bliss
In childlike holiday?

`` Encircled here by native hills,
And fringed by wilding flowers,
With all your playmate sister rills
To wile away the hours,

`` Past glowing heather, silvery sedge,
You hurry on, and on,
Rush at the rock, then leap the ledge,
All eager to be gone.

`` For you the mavis thrills the brake,
For you the laverocks soar,
And even snow and sleet but make
You dance and sing the more.

`` The water-ouzels dip and shoot
Amid your flashing spray,
Where flapping heron, skimming coot,
Forage, and pair, and play.

`` The forest doe forsakes the hill,
Companioned by her fawn,

In your clear pools to drink her fill,
As darkness yields to dawn.

`` When meadows gleam with burnished gold,
Some tender-bosomed maid
Comes down from far-off manse or fold,
And, under birchen shade,

`` Trembles to tale of manhood brave,
Or courtship long and sweet,
And sometimes in your freshening wave
Will dip her dainty feet;

`` And, deaf to sound from neighbouring glen
Of summer-cooing doves,
Hear but your voice, and deem it then
The voice of him she loves.

`` And, be the season keen or kind,
Frowning or fair the sky,
The poet, with his musing mind,
Hither will ofttimes hie,

`` And listening, lost among the fern,
To murmur sweet or strong,
Now not less strong than sweet, doth learn
To modulate his song.

`` And, thus attuned to every string
Nature is skilled to strike,
Mellows the thoughts that comfort bring
To glad and sad alike.

`` Friends fond and faithful such as these
Why do you long to leave,
For scenes that, since untried, can please,
But lure you to deceive?

`` The forward quest, the feverish chase,
Foul city, venal mart,
Will cloud the fairness of your face,
And desecrate your heart.

`` Here betwixt fern and flower you still
Can wind and wander free;
There granite banks will curb your will,
And chain your liberty."

I ceased. But though I paused to learn,
No answer seemed to come,
And, save an onward-bickering burn,
All now again was dumb.

It rolled and rippled, swept and swirled,
No other sound was nigh;
So that there seemed, in all the world,
Only the stream and I.

But, like the babbled words that make
The mother's heart rejoice,
Slowly the stream's soul seemed to wake,
And find a human voice:

Till, waxing stronger and more clear
Still as it rushed along,
Its answer sounded on mine ear,
Lucid as poet's song:

`` Here was I born, here nursed and bred,
From here shall carry still
Something of moor and bracken-bed,
Something of heath and hill.

`` Yet, like to you, who suckled first
Where becks through boulders wind,
In youth from loving bondage burst,
And left your home behind,

`` To seek the far-off larger life
Where mind with mind contends,
On peaceful fields, in generous strife,
To further loftier ends;

`` So do I quit my native hills,
Red rowan, hawthorn pearled,
My brother braes, my sister rills,
To find a wider world,

`` And, with a half-reluctant heart,
Leave dingle, dale, and wood,
To bear a meek but manly part
In burdened brotherhood.

`` Why should I selfishly remain
A simple mountain stream,
Or shrink, because some earthy stain
Cloudeth each heavenly dream?

`` Chide me not, then, nor seek to stay
The current of my soul,
Though conflict check or chafe my way,
The Ocean is my goal;

`` Where I from sea to sea shall ride,

Shall roll from shore to shore,
And with the Universal Tide
Be one for evermore;

``Yet, by Heaven's Law of Love allowed,
Revolving, to return,
Wafted by wind, and borne on cloud,
Still be a Border Burn."

Alfred Austin

A Captive Thristle

Poor little mite with mottled breast,
Half-fledged, and fallen from the nest,
For whom this world hath just begun,
Who want to fly, yet scarce can run;
Why open wide your yellow beak?
Is it for hunger, or to speak-
To tell me that you fain would be
Loosed from my hand to liberty?

Well, you yourself decide your fate,
But be not too precipitate.
Which will you have? If you agree
To quit the lanes, and lodge with me,
I promise you a bed more soft,
Even than that where you aloft
First opened wondering eyes, and found
A world of green leaves all around.
When you awake, you straight shall see
A fresh turf, green and velvety,
Well of clear water, sifted seed,
All things, in short, that bird can need;
And gentle beings, far more fair
Than build on bough, or skim through air,
When all without is wet and bleak,
Laying against your cage their cheek,
To make you pipe shall coax and coo,
And bud their pretty lips at you.
And when the clammy winter rain
Drips from the roof and clouds the pane,
When windows creak and chimneys roar,
And beggars wail outside the door,
And stretch out fingers lank and thin,
You shall be safely housed within,
And through the wood-fire's flickering glow
Watch drifting leaves or driving snow,
Till Marian pulls the shutters up,
And you go sleep, and I go sup.

But now suppose I let you go,
To rains that beat, to winds that blow,
To heedless chance and prowling foe?
Mayhap this very day, alas!
You will be drowned in tangled grass:
Or, that escaped, some slinking stoat
May seize and suck your speckled throat;
Or hawk slow wheeling in the sky
Your fluttering feeble wings descry,
And, straightway downward flashing thence,
Relish and rend your innocence.
Should you survive, and glad and strong
Make autumn spring-like with your song,
You will be lured, the very first,

Where netted berries bulge and burst,
And, by their guardian caught alive,
You may, before I can arrive
To bid him not be so unsparing,
Have paid the forfeit of your daring.
Time too will come, there will not be
Berry on bush, or pod on tree,
Stripped be the hawthorn, bare the holly,
And all the boughs drip melancholy;
And you will have to scrape for food
Amid a frosty solitude.

Which shall it be? Now quick decide!
Safety confined, or peril wide?

Then did the little bird reply:
``'Tis true, as yet I scarce can fly;
But oh! it is such joy to try!
Just as you came, I was beginning
To win my wings, exult in winning;
To feel the promptings of the pinion,
The dawn of a divine dominion
Over the empty air, and over
Fields of young wheat and breadths of clover:
Pledge of a power to scale, some day,
My native elm-tree's topmost spray,
And mid the leaves and branches warm
Sing far beyond the reach of harm.
And shall I barter gift like this
For doled-out joy and measured bliss?
For a trim couch and dainty fare
Forfeit the freedom of the air?
Shall I exchange for punctual food
April's sweet loves and summer's brood;
The dewy nest 'neath twinkling stars
For crushing roof and cramping bars?
No! Come what chance or foe that may,
Menace of death this very day,
The weasel's clutch, the falcon's swoop-
What if these kill? they do not coop.
Autumn's worst ambush, winter's rage,
Are sweeter than the safest cage."

Off, little mite! I let you fly,
And do as I would be done by.

Nature within your heart hath sown
A wisdom wiser than my own,
And from your choice I learn to prize
The birth-right of unbounded skies,
Delightful danger of being free,
Sweet sense of insecurity;

The privilege to risk one's all
On being nor captive, caged, nor thrall,
The wish to range, the wing to soar
Past space behind, through space before,
The ecstasy of unknown flight,
The doubt, the danger, the delight,
To range and roam, unchained, unvext,
Nor know what worlds will open next;
And, since Death waits both caged and free
To die, at least, of liberty.

Alfred Austin

A Christmas Carol

Hark! In the air, around, above,
The Angelic Music soars and swells,
And, in the Garden that I love,
I hear the sound of Christmas Bells.

From hamlet hollow, village height,
The silvery Message seems to start,
And, far away, its notes to-night
Are surging through the city's heart.

Assurance clear to those who fret
O'er vanished Faith and feelings fled,
That not in English homes is yet
Tradition dumb, or Reverence dead:

Nor, when anew from town-girt tower
Or fen-swept spire the Yule-bells peal,
Are those who watch o'er England's power
Too wise to pray, too proud to kneel.

Now onward floats the sacred tale,
Past leafless woodlands, freezing rills;
It wakes from sleep the silent vale,
It skims the mere, it scales the hills;

And, rippling on up rings of space,
Sounds faint and fainter as more high,
Till mortal ear no more may trace
The music homeward to the sky.

To courtly roof and rustic cot
Old comrades wend from far and wide:
Now is the ancient feud forgot,
The growing grudge is laid aside.

Bright on the board the gifts are spread,
The flagons gleam, the trenchers smoke;
The boar's is now the laurelled head,
Now is the Feast of simple folk.

The aged tell of ancient cheer,
And boast 'twas merrier then than now;
The children shout 'A glad New Year!'
And kiss beneath the berried bough.

But, in the pauses of their mirth,
The Heavenly Hymn is carolled still:
'Glory to God on high, on Earth
Peace, and to all mankind good-will.'

Peace and good-will 'twixt rich and poor!
Good-will and peace 'twixt class and class!

Let old with new, let Prince with boor,
Send round the bowl, and drain the glass!

That still behind the steely sea,
That guards our greatness like a sword,
The free-born children of the free
May own one law, one land, one lord;

And never in our midst may sound
Discordant voice or threat morose,
But every Year that circles round
May find and bind us yet more close.

But not alone for those who still
Within the Mother-Land abide,
We deck the porch, we dress the sill,
And fling the portals open wide.

But unto all of British blood,-
Whether they cling to Egbert's Throne,
Or, far beyond the Western flood,
Have reared a Sceptre of their own,

And, half-regretful, yearn to win
Their way back home, and fondly claim
The rightful share of kith and kin
In Alfred's glory, Shakespeare's fame,-

We pile the logs, we troll the stave,
We waft the tidings wide and far,
And speed the wish, on wind and wave,
To Southern Cross and Northern Star.

Yes! Peace on earth, Atlantic strand!
Peace and good-will, Pacific shore!
Across the waters stretch your hand,
And be our brothers more and more!

Blood of our blood, in every clime!
Race of our race, by every sea!
To you we sing the Christmas rhyme,
For you we light the Christmas-tree.

Alfred Austin

A Country Nosegay

Where have you been through the long sweet hours
That follow the fragrant feet of June?
By the dells and the dingles gathering flowers,
Ere the dew of the dawn be sipped by noon.

And sooth each wilding that buds and blows
You seem to have found and clustered here,
Round the rustic sprays of the child-like rose
That smiles in one's face till it stirs a tear.

The clambering vetch, and the meadow-sweet tall,
That nodded good-day as you sauntered past,
And the poppy flaunting atop of the wall,
Which, proud as glory, will fade as fast.

The campion bladders the children burst,
The bramble that clutches and won't take nay,
And the pensive delicate foxgloves nursed
In woods that curtain from glare of day.

The prosperous elder that always smells
Of homely joys and the cares that bless,
And the woodbine's waxen and honeyed cells,
A hive of the sweetest idleness.

And this wayside nosegay is all for me,
For me, the poet-the word sounds strong;-
Well, for him at least, whatever he be,
Who has loitered his morning away in song.

And though sweetest poems that ever were writ,
With the posy that up to my gaze you lift,
Seem void of music and poor of wit,
Yet I guess your meaning, and take your gift.

For 'tis true among fields and woods I sing,
Aloof from cities, and my poor strains
Were born, like the simple flowers you bring,
In English meadows and English lanes.

If e'er in my verse lurks tender thought,
'Tis borrowed from cushat or blackbird's throat;
If sweetness any, 'tis culled or caught
From boughs that blossom and clouds that float.

No rare exotics nor forced are these;
They budded in darkness and throve in storm;
They drank their colour from rain and breeze,
And from sun and season they took their form.

They peeped through the drift of the winter snows;
They waxed and waned with the waning moon;

Their music they stole from the deep-hushed rose,
And all the year round to them is June.

So let us exchange, nor ask who gains,
What each has saved from the morning hours:
Take, such as they are, my wilding strains,
And I will accept your wilding flowers.

Alfred Austin

A Defence Of English Spring

Unnamed, unknown, but surely bred
Where Thames, once silver, now runs lead,
Whose journeys daily ebb and flow
'Twi't Tyburn and the bells of Bow,
You late in learn'd prose have told
How, for the happy bards of old,
Spring burst upon Sicilian seas,
Or blossomed in the Cyclades,
But never yet hath deigned to smile
On poets of this shivering isle,
Who, when to vernal strains they melt,
Discourse of joys they never felt,
And, pilfering from each other's page,
Pass on the lie from age to age.

Well, now in turn give ear to me,
Who, with your leave, friend, claim to be,
Degenerate, but withal allied,
At least on mother Nature's side,
To Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, all,
Foremost or hindmost, great or small,
My kindred, and whose numbers ring
With woodnotes of the English Spring:
Leave for awhile your polished town,
Unto my rural home come down,
Where you shall find such bed and board
As rude bucolic roofs afford,
And judge, with your own ear and eye,
If Spring exists, or poets lie.

Welcome! Now plunge at once with me
Into the nearest copse you see.
The boles are brown, the branches gray,
Yet green buds live on every spray.
But 'tis the ground most wins your gaze,
And makes you question, with amaze,
What these are! Shells flung far and wide
By Winter's now fast-ebbing tide,
In language called, for him who sees
But grossly, wood-anemones.
Those, too? Nay, pluck not. You will find
That they maintain a silent mind.
You do not understand? I meant
They will not talk to you in scent.
Sweet violets you know; but these
Have their own rustic way to please.
Their charm is in their look, their free
Unfrightened gaze of gaiety.
Are they not everywhere? Their eyes
Glance up to the cerulean skies,
And challenge them to match the glow
Of their own bluer heaven below.

Anon the trunks and boughs fall back,
And along winding track on track,
Lo! wheresoe'er you onward press,
Shine milky ways of primroses;
So thick, there are, when these have birth,
Far fewer stars in heaven than earth.
You know them, for their face one meets
Still smiling in your London streets;
And one I loved, but who with Fame
Sleeps quiet now, hath made their name,
Even for those, alas! who share
No fellowship with woodlands fair,
Wherever English speech is heard,
A meaning sound, a grateful word.
Yet unto me they seem, when there,
Like young things that should be elsewhere,
In lanes, in dells, in rustic air.
But looked on here, where they have space
To peep from every sheltered place,
Their simple, open faces seem-
Or doth again a poet dream?-
The wondering soul of child-like Spring,
Inquisitive of everything.

Now frowns the sky, the air bites bleak,
The young boughs rock, the old trunks creak,
And fast before the following gale
Come slanting drops, then slashing hail,
As keen as sword, as thick as shot.
Nay, do not cower, but heed them not!
For these one neither flies nor stirs;
They are but April skirmishers,
Thrown out to cover the advance
Of gleaming spear and glittering lance,
With which the sunshine scours amain
Heaven, earth, and air, and routs the rain.
See how the sparkling branches sway,
And, laughing, shake the drops away,
While, glimmering through, the meads beyond
Are emerald and diamond.
And hark! behind baptismal shower,
Whose drops, new-poured on leaf and flower,
Unto their infant faces cling,
The cuckoo, sponsor of the Spring,
Breaks in, and strives, with loud acclaim,
To christen it with his own name.
Now he begins, he will not cease,
Nor leave the woodlands any peace,
That have to listen all day long
To him reciting his one song.
And oft you may, when all is still,
And night lies smooth on vale and hill,

Hear him call ``Cuckoo!" in his dream,
Still haunted by the egoist theme.

Out of the wood now, and we gain,
The freedom of the winding lane:
Push through the open gap, and leap;
What! have you tumbled all ahead?
Only a scratch. See! ditch and bank
With the same flowers are lush and rank,
With more beside. As yet but single,
The bluebells with the grasses mingle;
But soon their azure will be scrolled
Upon the primrose cloth-of-gold.
Yes, those are early ladysmocks,
The children crumple in their frocks,
And carry many a zigzag mile,
O'er meadow, footpath, gate, and stile,
To stick in pots and jugs to dress
Their cottage sills and lattices.
As yet they only fleck the grass;
But again hither shortly pass,
And with them knolls that now are bare
Will be a blaze of lavender.
What lends yon dingle such a sheen?
How! Buttercups? No, celandine.
Complete in its own self, each one
A looking-glass is for the sun,
Soon as his waking hours begin,
To see his own effulgence in.
Crave you for brighter still, behold
Yon clusters of marsh-marigold.
This is our rustic wealth, and found
Not under, but above the ground;
Mines that bring wealth without its sting,
Enrich without impoverishing.

Yes, Cuckoo! cuckoo! cuckoo, still!
Do you not feel an impulse thrill
Your vernal blood to do the same,
And, boylike, shout him back his name?
But though he loudest, longest sings,
Music is shook from myriad wings.
Hear you the lark advancing now,
Through seas of air, with rippling prow?
They say that from the poet's tears
Spring sweetest songs for unseen ears;
And, from its moist and lowly bed,
The lark mounts up aloft to shed,
In heavenly fields beyond our view,
Music still drenched with earthly dew.
The robin, that in winter cheers
With his lone voice our lonelier ears,

Though warbling still on neighbouring bough,
Sings all unheard, unnoticed now.
Chatter the jays, the starlings flute,
There's not a single throat that's mute.
From tree to tree the finches flit,
Nor once their carols intermit.
The willow-warbler mounts, then drops,
And in his silvery solo stops
Just as it bubbles to the brim,
To hark if any answer him.
High on a bare conspicuous spray,
That none may doubt who chants the lay,
Proud of his undisputed skill
To breast whatever note he will,
The thrush runs revelling all along
The spacious gamut of his song;
Varies, inverts, repeats the strain,
Then sings it different again.
The blackbird, less expert than he,
Coaxes and scolds alternately;
Then, with a sudden scream and rush,
Is off into another bush,
Feigning to fear for life and limb,
Though none have interfered with him.
But listen! ne'er on urban bough
Was perched the note you caught just now.
Hush! move a little down the lane;
When we have passed, he'll start again.
There! Did you ever hear a strain
Of such apotheosized pain,
Such sadness almost sung to bliss,
Blending of woe and joy like this?
Yes, he descants all day, despite
The name he borrows from the night.
Though then perchance the wails increase,
When doth true anguish ever cease?
He is the poet-bird that sings
Through joy, through sorrow, through all things.
'Tis only we that do not hark
Until our own bright days grow dark.

Now, think you that I gleaned all this,
This mite of wisdom, wealth of bliss,
In dusty shelf and yellowing tome?
Is it not rather that I roam,
From dawn to noon, from noon till eve,
Ready to gladden or to grieve
With every aspect, impulse, mood,
Of Nature's active solitude?
Ah! if you knew the hours on hours
One lives with birds, one spends with flowers;
How many a time one's eyes grow wet

By gazing on the violet;
How often all one has to show
For days that come, and days that go,
Are woodland nosegays all ablow;
You then, I think, would scarcely deem
One's songs of Spring a borrowed theme,
But own that English poets learn,
In every hour, at every turn,
From Nature's page, from Nature's speech,
What neither book nor bard can teach.
Nor deem this pride. I am to her
A student and interpreter,
Loving to read what lessons lurk
In her unlettered handiwork,
To find the helpful meanings writ
In waves that break, in clouds that flit,
Some balm extract for weeping eyes
From rain that falls, from dew that dries;
Infer from her uncertain text
A hopeful creed for souls perplexed,
To them her busy calm impart,
And harmonise the human heart.

Halt we a little here, and gaze.
Gambol the lambs, their mothers graze,
While cloudland shadows o'er the grass
In noiseless billows break and pass.
Beholding these, would you not say
The world was born but yesterday?
And while the years such scenes unfold
Afresh, it never can grow old.
Yon yeanlings, by their dam's warm fleece,
Fixed image of ephemeral peace,
How cunningly and snug they cower
From driving gust and drenching shower.
One symbol more, for me at least,
Who, let the world blow north or east,
By mother Nature once reclined,
Am sheltered from each bitter wind.

Yet deeper lessons may we read
In this unacademic mead:
The wisdom of untutored sense,
Sagacity of reverence.
See! the lambs kneel, that they may drain
From life's sweet source a deeper strain.
And if from Nature's lavish breast
We would imbibe the fullest, best,
All that she is so prompt to give,
That we may learn, that we may live,
Howe'er you proud town-sceptics view it,
We too must bend our knees to do it.

Confess this is not bookish lore;
'Tis feeling only, and no more.
Poets lack what you learning call,
And rustic poets, most of all.
Why from the plain truth should I shrink?
In woods men feel; in towns they think.
Yet, which is best? Thought, stumbling, plods
Past fallen temples, vanished gods,
Altars unincensed, fanes undecked,
Eternal systems flown or wrecked;
Through trackless centuries that grant
To the poor trudge refreshment scant,
Age after age, pants on to find
A melting mirage of the mind.
But feeling never wanders far,
Content to fare with things that are,
The same old track, the same loved face,
Familiar genius of the place;
From nature's simples to distil
Homely receipt for homely ill;
And finds, betwixt the sky and ground,
The sunshine of its daily round.
So swallows, though awhile they range
In quest of joy, in chase of change,
Once tenderer instincts flood their breast,
And twittering voices brim the nest,
Grown far too wise and well to roam,
Keep circling round the roof of home.

Now understand you, friend, why here
I linger passive all the year,
And let old thoughts and feelings gain
Their growth, like lichen, on my brain?-
Why the loud gusts of blame and praise,
That blow about your London ways,
To me are but as wind that shrills
About my orchard daffodils,
Only to make them shake their scent
Unto a wider continent!
But ere you go, if go you must,
Take this from me, at least, on trust.
In that fair tract 'twixt hill and main,
I sang of in my earliest strain,
Where fades not flower, nor falls the leaf,
And Godfrid brought Olympia grief,
Oft have I heard, as Spring comes round,
The snow-fed streams begin to sound;
Oft have I seen the almonds bloom
Round Dante's cradle, Petrarch's tomb;
Been there when banksia roses fall
In cataracts over Tuscan wall;

Oft watched Rome's dead Campagna break
To asphodels for April's sake;
Smelt the green myrtle browsed and left
By clambering goats in Ischian cleft;
Gathered the cistus-blooms that lay,
Like flecks of fresh unmelted spray,
Round Paleocastrizza's bay;
Drunk of the nectar wafted o'er
The wave from Zante's perfumed shore;
Plucked Delphi's flowering bays that twine
No garlands now for brows divine;
Stretched me on Acro-Corinth's brow,
Just when the year was young as now;
Have half-way up Hymettus heard
In Attic grove the Attic bird;
Sailed past the crimson Judas-trees
That flame o'er Stamboul's narrow seas,
And marked the cuckoo, from the shore,
Bid wintry Danube thaw once more.
But none of these, nor all, can match,
At least for him who loves to watch
The wild-flowers come, hear wild birds sing,
The rapture of an English Spring.
With us it loiters more than where
It comes, it goes, half unaware;
Makes winter short, makes summer long,
In autumn half renews its song,
Nor even then doth hence depart,
But hibernates within my heart.

Alfred Austin

A Dialogue At Fiesole

HE.
Halt here awhile. That mossy-cushioned seat
Is for your queenliness a natural throne;
As I am fitly couched on this low sward,
Here at your feet.

SHE.
And I, in thought, at yours:
My adoration, deepest.

HE.
Deep, so deep,
I have no thought wherewith to fathom it;
Or, shall I say, no flight of song so high,
To reach the Heaven whence you look down on me,
My star, my far-off star!

SHE.
If far, yet fixed:
No shifting planet leaving you to seek
Where now it shines.

HE.
A little light, if near,
Glowes livelier than the largest orb in Heaven.

SHE.
But little lights burn quickly out, and then,
Another must be kindled. Stars gleam on,
Unreached, but unextinguished. . . . Now, the song.

HE.
Yes, yes, the song: your music to my verse.

SHE.
In this sequestered dimple of the hill,
Forgotten by the furrow, none will hear:
Only the nightingales, that misconceive
The mid-day darkness of the cypresses
For curtained night.

HE.
And they will hush to hear
A sudden singing sweeter than their own.
Delay not the enchantment, but begin.

SHE
(singing).
If you were here, if you were here,
The cattle-bells would sound more clear;
The cataracts would flash and leap
More silvery from steep to steep;

The farewell of a rosier glow
Soften the summit of the snow;
The valley take a tenderer green;
In dewy gorge and dim ravine
The loving bramble-flowers embrace
The rough thorn with a gentler grace;
The gentian open bluer eyes,
In bluer air, to bluer skies:
The frail anemone delay,
The jonquil hasten on its way,
The primrose linger past its time,
The violet prolong its prime;
And every flower that seeks the light,
On Alpine lowland, Alpine height,
Wear April's smile without its tear,
If you were here; if you were here!

If you were here, the Spring would wake
A fuller music in the brake.
The mottled misselthrush would pipe
A note more ringing, rich, and ripe;
The whitethroat peer above its nest
With brighter eye and downier breast;
The cuckoo greet the amorous year,
Chanting its joy without its jeer;
The lark betroth the earth and sky
With peals of heavenlier minstrelsy;
And every wildwood bird rejoice
On fleeter wing, with sweeter voice,
If you were here!

If you were here, I too should feel
The moisture of the Springtide steal
Along my veins, and rise and roll
Through every fibre of my soul.
In my live breast would melt the snow,
And all its channels flush and flow
With waves of life and streams of song,
Frozen and silent all too long.
A something in each wilding flower,
Something in every scented shower,
Something in flitting voice and wing,
Would drench my heart and bid me sing:
Not in this feeble halting note,
But, like the merle's exulting throat,
With carol full and carol clear,
If you were here, if you were here.

HE.
Hark! How the hills have caught the strain, and seem
Loth to surrender it, and now enclose
Its cadence in the silence of their folds.

Still as you sang, the verses had the wing
Of that which buoyed them, and your aery voice
Lifted my drooping music from the ground.
Now that you cease, there is an empty nest,
From which the full-fledged melody hath flown.

SHE.

Dare I with you contend in metaphor,
It might not be so fanciful to show
That nest, and eggs, and music, all are yours.
But modesty in poets is too rare,
To be reproved for error. Let me then
Be crowned full queen of song, albeit in sooth
I am but consort, owing my degree
To the real sceptred Sovereign at my side.
But now repay my music, and in kind.
Unfolding to my ear the youngest flower
Of song that seems to blossom all the year;
``Delay not the enchantment, but begin."''

HE

(reciting). Yet, you are here; yes, you are here.
There's not a voice that wakes the year,
In vale frequented, upland lone,
But steals some sweetness from your own.
When dream and darkness have withdrawn,
I feel you in the freshening dawn:
You fill the noonday's hushed repose;
You scent the dew of daylight's close.
The twilight whispers you are nigh;
The stars announce you in the sky.
The moon, when most alone in space,
Fills all the heavens with your face.
In darkest hour of deepest night,
I see you with the spirit's sight;
And slumber murmurs in my ear,
``Hush! she is here. Sleep! she is here."''

SHE.

Hark how you bare your secret when you sing!
Imagination's universal scope
Can swift endue this gray and shapeless world
With the designs and colour of the sky.
What want you with our fixed and lumpish forms,
You, unconditioned arbiter of air?
``Yet, you are here; yes, you are here." The span
Of nimble fancy leaps the interval,
And brings the distant nearer than the near.

HE.

Distance is nearer than proximity,
When distance longs, proximity doth not.

SHE.

The near is always distant to the mind
That craves for satisfaction of its end;
Nor doth the distance ever feel so far
As when the end is touched. Retard that goal,
Prolonging appetite beyond the feast
That feeds anticipation.

HE.

Specious foil!
That parries every stroke before 'tis made.
Yet surfeit's self doth not more surely cloy
Than endless fasting.

SHE.

Still a swifter cure
Waits on too little than attends too much.
While disappointment merely woundeth Hope,
The deadly blow by disenchantment dealt
Strikes at the heart of Faith. O happy you,
The favourites of Fancy, who replace
Illusion with illusion, and conceive
Fresh cradles in the dark womb of the grave.
While we, prosaic victims, prove that time
Kills love while leaving loveless life alive,
You still, divinely duped, sing deathless love,
And with your wizard music, once again,
Make Winter Spring. Yet surely you forgive
That I have too much pity for the flowers
Children and poets cull to fling away,
To be an April nosegay.

HE.

How you swell
The common chorus! Women, who are wronged
So roughly by men's undiscerning word,
As though one pattern served to show them all,
Should be more just to poets. These, in truth,
Diverge from one another nowise less
Than "women," vaguely labelled: children some,
With childish voice and nature, lyric bards,
Weaklings that on life's threshold sweetly wail,
But never from that silvery treble pass
Into the note and chant of manliness.
Their love is like their verse, a frail desire,
A fluttering fountain falling feebly back
Into its shallow origin. Next there are
The poets of contention, wrestlers born,
Who challenge iron Circumstance, and fail:
Generous and strong, withal not strong enough,
Since lacking sinewy wisdom, hard as life.

The love of these is like the lightning spear,
And shrivels whom it touches. They consume
All things within their reach, and, last of all,
Their lonely selves; and then through time they tower,
Sublime but charred, and wear on their high fronts
The gloomy glory of the sunlit pine.
But the great gods of Song, in clear white light,
The radiance of their godhead, calmly dwell,
And with immutable cold starlike gaze
Scan both the upper and the under world,
As it revolves, themselves serenely fixed.
Their bias is the bias of the sphere,
That turns all ways, but turns away from none,
Save to return to it. They have no feud
With gods or men, the living or the dead,
The past or present, and their words complete
Life's incompleteness with a healing note.
For they are not more sensitive than strong,
More wise than tender; understanding all,
At peace with all, at peace with life and death,
And love that gives a meaning unto life
And takes from death the meaning and the sting:
At peace with hate, and every opposite.
Were I but one of these-presumptuous thought!-
Even you, the live fulfilment of such dreams
As these secrete, would hazard well your love
On my more largely loving. 'Twould be you,
Yes, even you, that first would flag and fail
In either of my choosing; you, whose wing
Would droop on mine and pray to be upborne.
And when my pinions did no more suffice
For that their double load, then softly down,
Softly and smoothly as descending lark
That hath fulfilled its rhapsody in Heaven,
And with diminished music must decline
To earthy sounds and concepts, I should curb
Illimitable longings to the range
Of lower aspiration. Were I such!-
But, since I am not-

SHE.

Am not? Who shall say,
Save she who tests, and haply to her loss?
'Tis better left untested. Strange that you,
Who can imagine whatso thing you will,
Should lack imagination to appraise
Imagination at its topmost worth.
Now wield your native sceptre and extend
Your fancy forth where Florence overbrims
In eddies fairer even than herself.
Look how the landscape smiles complacently
At its own beauty, as indeed it may;

Villa and vineyard each a separate home,
Containing possibilities unseen,
Materials for your pleasure. Now disport!
Which homestead may it please my lord of song
To chalk for his, as those rough Frenchmen did
Who came with bow-legged Charles to justify
Savonarola's scourgeful prophecies?
Shall it be that one gazing in our face,
Not jealous of its beauty, but exposed
To all the wantonness of sun and air,
With roses girt, with roses garlanded,
And balustraded terrace topped with jars
Of clove carnations; unambitious roof,
Italian equivalent to house
Love in a cottage? Why, the very place
For her you once described! Wait! Let me see,
Can I recall the lines? Yes, thus they ran.
Do you remember them? Or are they now
A chronicle forgotten and erased
From that convenient palimpsest, the heart?

In dewy covert of her eyes
The secret of the violet lies;
The sun and wind caress and pair
In the lithe wavelets of her hair;
The fragrance of the warm soft south
Hovers about her honeyed mouth;
And, when she moves, she floats through air
Like zephyr-wafted gossamer.
Hers is no lore of dumb dead books;
Her learning liveth in her looks;
And still she shows, in meek replies,
Wisdom enough to deem you wise.
Her voice as soothing is and sweet
As whispers of the waving wheat,
And in the moisture of her kiss
Is April-like deliciousness.
Like gloaming-hour, she doth inspire
A vague, an infinite desire;
And, like the stars, though out of sight,
Filleth the loneliness of night.
Come how she may, or slow or fleet,
She brings the morning on her feet;
Gone, leaves behind a nameless pain,
Like the sadness of a silenced strain.

HE.
A youthful dream.

SHE.
Yet memory can surmise
That young dream fruited to reality,

Then, like reality, was dream no more.
All dreams are youthful; you are dreaming still.
What lovely visions denizen your sleep!
Let me recall another; for I know
All you have written, thought, and felt, and much
You neither thought nor felt, but only sang.
A wondrous gift, a godlike gift, that breathes
Into our exiled clay unexiled lives,
Manlier than Adam, comelier than Eve.
That massive villa, we both know so well,
With one face set toward Settignano, one
Gazing at Bellosguardo, and its rear
Locked from the north by clustered cypresses,
That seem like fixed colossal sentinels,
And tower above its tower, but look not in,
Might be abode for her whom you conceived
In tropes so mystical, you must forgive
If recollection trips.

To dwell with her is calmly to abide
Through every change of time and every flux of tide.

In her the Present, Past, and Future meet,
The Father, and the Son, and dovelike Paraclete.

She holdeth silent intercourse with Night,
Still journeying with the stars, and shining with their light.

Her love, illumination; her embrace,
The sweep of angels' wings across a mortal's face.

Her lap is piled with autumn fruits, her brow
Crowned with the blossoming trails that smile from April's bough.

Like wintry stars that shine with frosty fire,
Her loftiness excites to elevate desire.

To love her is to burn with such a flame
As lights the lamp which bears the Sanctuary's name.

That lamp burns on for ever, day and night,
Before her mystic shrine. I am its acolyte.

HE.
The merest foam of fancy; foam and spray.

SHE.
Foam-drift of fancy that hath ebbed away.
See how the very simile rebukes
Man's all unsealike longings! For confess,
While ocean still returns, the puny waves
Of mortal love are sucked into the sand,

Their motion felt, their music heard, no more.
Look when the vines are linking hands, and seem
As pausing from the dance of Spring, or just
Preparing to renew it, round and round,
On the green carpet of the bladed corn,
That spreads about their feet: corn, vine, and fig,
Almond and mulberry, cherry, and pear, and peach,
Not taught to know their place, but left to range
Up to the villa's walls, windows, and doors,
And peep into its life and smile good-day,
A portion of its homeliness and joy:
A poet's villa once, a poet's again,
If you but dream it such; a roof for her,
To whom you wrote-I wonder who she was-
This saucy sonnet; saucy, withal sweet,
And O, how true of the reflected love
You poets render to your worshippers.

TRUE AS THE DIAL TO THE SUN.

You are the sun, and I the dial, sweet,
So you can mark on me what time you will.
If you move slowly, how can I move fleet?
And when you halt, I too must fain be still.
Chide not the cloudy humours of my brow,
If you behold no settled sunshine there:
Rather upbraid your own, sweet, and allow,
My looks cannot be foul if yours be fair.
Then from the heaven of your high witchery shine,
And I with smiles shall watch the hours glide by;
You have no mood that is not straightway mine;
My cheek but takes complexion from your eye.
All that I am dependeth so on you,
What clouds the sun must cloud the dial too.

HE.

No man should quarrel with his Past, and I
Maintain no feud with mine. Do we not ripen,
Ripen and mellow in love, unto the close,
Thanks no more to the present than the past?
First love is fresh but fugitive as Spring,
A wilding flower no sooner plucked than faded;
And summer's sultry fervour ends in storm,
Recriminating thunder, wasteful tears,
And angry gleam of lightning menaces.
Give me October's meditative haze,
Its gossamer mornings, dewy-wimpled eyes,
Dewy and fragrant, fragrant and secure,
The long slow sound of farmward-wending wains,
When homely Love sups quiet 'mong its sheaves,
Sups 'mong its sheaves, its sickle at its side,
And all is peace, peace and plump fruitfulness.

SHE.

Picture of all we dream and we desire:
Autumn's grave cheerfulness and sober bliss,
Rich resignation, humble constancy.
For, prone to bear the load piled up by life,
We, once youth's pasture season at an end,
Submit to crawl. Unbroken to the last,
You spurn the goad of stern taskmaster Time.
Even 'mid autumn harvest you demand
Returning hope and blossom of the Spring,
All seasons and sensations, and at once,
Or in too quick succession. Do we blame?
We envy rather the eternal youth
We cannot share. But youth is pitiless,
And, marching onward, neither asks nor seeks
Who falls behind. Thus women who are wise,
Beside their thresholds knitting homely gear,
Wave wistful salutation as you pass,
And think of you regretfully, when gone:
A soft regret, a sweet regret, that is
Only the mellow fruit of unplucked joy.
Now improvise some other simple strain,
That with harmonious cadence may attune
The vain and hazard discords of discourse.

HE.

When Love was young, it asked for wings,
That it might still be roaming;
And away it sped, by fancy led,
Through dawn, and noon, and gloaming.
Each daintiness that blooms and blows
It wooed in honeyed metre,
And when it won the sweetest sweet,
It flew off to a sweeter:
When Love was young.

When Love was old, it craved for rest,
For home, and hearth, and haven;
For quiet talks round sheltered walks,
And long lawns smoothly shaven.
And what Love sought, at last it found,
A roof, a porch, a garden,
And from a fond unquestioning heart
Peace, sympathy, and pardon,
When Love was old.

SHE.

Simple, in sooth, and haply true: withal,
Too, too autumnal even for my heart.
I never weary of your vernal note.
Carol again, and sing me back my youth
With the redundant melodies of Spring.

HE.

I breathe my heart in the heart of the rose,
The rose that I pluck and send you,
With a prayer that the perfume its leaves enclose
May kiss, and caress, and tend you:
Caress and tend you till I can come,
To the garden where first I found you,
And the thought that as yet in the rose is dumb
Can ripple in music round you.

O rose, that will shortly be her guest,
You may well look happy, at leaving:
Will you lie in the cradle her snowy breast
Doth rock with its gentle heaving?
Will you mount the throne of her hazel hair,
That waves like a summer billow,
Or be hidden and hushed, at nightfall prayer,
In the folds of her dimpled pillow?

And when she awakes at dawn to feel
If you have been dreaming with her,
Then the whole of your secret, sweet rose, reveal,
And say I am coming thither:
And that when there is silence in earth and sky,
And peace from the cares that cumber,
She must not ask if your leaves or I
Be clasped in her perfumed slumber.

SHE.

Give me your hand; and, if you will, keep mine
Engraffed in yours, as slowly thus we skirt
La Doccia's dark declivity, and make
Athwart Majano's pathless pines a path
To lead us onward haply where it may.
Lo! the Carrara mountains flush to view,
That in the noonday were not visible.
Shall we not fold this comfort to our hearts,
Humbly rejoiced to think as there are heights
Seen only in the sunset, so our lives,
If that they lack not loftiness, may wear
A glow of glory on their furrowed fronts,
Until they faint and fade into the night!

Alfred Austin

A Dream Of England

I had a dream of England. Wild and weird,
The billows ravened round her, and the wrack,
Darkening and dwindling, blotted out the track,
Then flashed on her a bolt that scorched and seared.
She, writhing in her ruin, rolled, and reared,
Then headlonged unto doom, that drove her back
To welter on the waters, blind and black,
A homeless hulk, a derelict unsteered.
Wailing I woke, and through the dawn descried,
Throned on the waves that threatened to o'erwhelm,
The England of my dream resplendent ride,
And armoured Wisdom, sovran at the helm,
Through foaming furrows of the future guide
To wider empire a majestic Realm.

Alfred Austin

A Farewell

Good-bye, old year, good-bye!
Gentle you were to many as to me,
And so we, meditating, sigh,
Since what hath been will be,
That you must die.
Hark! In the crumbling grey church tower,
Tolls the recording bell
The deeply-sounding solemnising knell
For your last hour.

How quietly you die!
No canonised Saint
E'er put life by
With less of struggle or complaint.
You seem to feel nor grief nor pain,
No retrospection vain,
As if, departing, you would have us know
It is not hard to go,
Since pang is none, but only peace, in Death,
And Life it is that suffereth.

Closer and clearer comes the last slow knell,
And on my lip for you awaits
That final formula of Fate's,
The low, lamenting, lingering word, Farewell!
For you the curved-backed sexton need not stir
The mould, for there is nothing to inter,
No worn integument to doff,
No bodily corruption to put off;
Begotten of the earth and sun,
And ending spirit-wise as you begun,
You pass, a mere memento of the mind,
Leaving no lees behind.

Hark! What is that we hear?
A quick-jerked, jocund peal,
Making the fretted church tower reel,
Telling the wakeful of a young New Year,
Young, but of lusty birth,
To face the masked vicissitudes of earth.

Let us, then, look not back,
Though smooth and partial was the track
Of the receding Past,
But through the vista vast
Of unknown Future wend intrepid way,
Framed to contend and cope
With perils new by vanished yesterday,
Whose last bequests to Man are Love, and
Faith, and Hope.

Alfred Austin

A Farewell To Youth

Ere that I say farewell to youth, and take
The homely road that leads to life's decline,
Let me be sure again I shall not pine
To taste the bliss you bid me to forsake:
That Spring's returning raptures will not wake
Too late repentance for abjuring mine,
Nor the old sweets I pledge me to resign
Behind them leave the bitterness of ache.
Yet is there nothing of one's generous prime
To bear me kindred company to the end,
Some passionate longing, some belief sublime,
Some wrong to right, some failure to befriend?
Leave me but these, I care not where I wend,
But down life's slope go hand-in-hand with Time.

Alfred Austin

A Farmhouse Dirge

Will you walk with me to the brow of the hill, to visit the farmer's wife,
Whose daughter lies in the churchyard now, eased of the ache of life?
Half a mile by the winding lane, another half to the top:
There you may lean o'er the gate and rest; she will want me awhile to stop,
Stop and talk of her girl that is gone and no more will wake or weep,
Or to listen rather, for sorrow loves to babble its pain to sleep.

How thick with acorns the ground is strewn, rent from their cups and brown!
How the golden leaves of the windless elms come singly fluttering down!
The briony hangs in the thinning hedge, as russet as harvest corn,
The stragglng blackberries glisten jet, the haws are red on the thorn;
The clematis smells no more but lifts its gossamer weight on high;-
If you only gazed on the year, you would think how beautiful 'tis to die.

The stream scarce flows underneath the bridge; they have dropped the sluice of the mill;
The roach bask deep in the pool above, and the water-wheel is still.
The meal lies quiet on bin and floor; and here where the deep banks wind,
The water-mosses nor sway nor bend, so nothing seems left behind.
If the wheels of life would but sometimes stop, and the grinding awhile would cease,
'Twere so sweet to have, without dying quite, just a spell of autumn peace.

Cottages four, two new, two old, each with its clambering rose:
Lath and plaster and weather tiles these, brick faced with stone are those.
Two crouch low from the wind and the rain, and tell of the humbler days,
Whilst the other pair stand up and stare with a self-asserting gaze;
But I warrant you'd find the old as snug as the new did you lift the latch,
For the human heart keeps no whit more warm under slate than beneath the thatch.

Tenants of two of them work for me, punctual, sober, true;
I often wish that I did as well the work I have got to do.
Think not to pity their lowly lot, nor wish that their thoughts soared higher;
The canker comes on the garden rose, and not on the wilding brier.
Doubt and gloom are not theirs and so they but work and love, they live
Rich in the only valid boons that life can withhold or give.

Here is the railway bridge, and see how straight do the bright lines keep,
With pheasant copses on either side, or pastures of quiet sheep.
The big loud city lies far away, far too is the cliffbound shore,
But the trains that travel betwixt them seem as if burdened with their roar.
Yet, quickly they pass, and leave no trace, not the echo e'en of their noise:
Don't you think that silence and stillness are the sweetest of all our joys?

Lo! yonder the Farm, and these the ruts that the broad-wheeled wains have worn,
As they bore up the hill the faggots sere, or the mellow shocks of corn.
The hops are gathered, the twisted bines now brown on the brown clods lie,
And nothing of all man sowed to reap is seen betwixt earth and sky.
Year after year doth the harvest come, though at summer's and beauty's cost:
One can only hope, when our lives grow bare, some reap what our hearts have lost.

And this is the orchard, small and rude, and uncaredfor, but oh! in spring,

How white is the slope with cherry bloom, and the nightingales sit and sing!
You would think that the world had grown young once more, had forgotten death and fear,
That the nearest thing unto woe on earth was the smile of an April tear;
That goodness and gladness were twin, were one:- The robin is chorister now:
The russet fruit on the ground is piled, and the lichen cleaves to the bough.

Will you lean o'er the gate, whilst I go on? You can watch the farmyard life,
The beeves, the farmer's hope, and the poults, that gladden his thrifty wife;
Or, turning, look on the hazy weald,-you will not be seen from here,-
Till your thoughts, like it, grow blurred and vague, and mingle the far and near.
Grief is a flood, and not a spring, whatever in grief we say;
And perhaps her woe, should she see me alone, will run more quickly away.

` I thought you would come this morning, ma'am. Yes, Edith at last has gone;
To-morrow's a week, ay, just as the sun right into her window shone;
Went with the night, the vicar says, where endeth never the day;
But she's left a darkness behind her here I wish she had taken away.
She is no longer with us, but we seem to be always with her,
In the lonely bed where we laid her last, and can't get her to speak or stir.

` ` Yes, I'm at work; 'tis time I was. I should have begun before;
But this is the room where she lay so still, ere they carried her past the door.
I thought I never could let her go where it seems so lonely of nights;
But now I am scrubbing and dusting down, and setting the place to rights.
All I have kept are the flowers there, the last that stood by her bed.
I suppose I must throw them away. She looked much fairer when she was dead.

` ` Thank you, for thinking of her so much. Kind thought is the truest friend.
I wish you had seen how pleased she was with the peaches you used to send.
She tired of them too ere the end, so she did with all we tried;
But she liked to look at them all the same, so we set them down by her side.
Their bloom and the flush upon her cheek were alike, I used to say;
Both were so smooth, and soft, and round, and both have faded away.

` ` I never could tell you how kind too were the ladies up at the hall;
Every noon, or fair or wet, one of them used to call.
Worry and work seems ours, but yours pleasant and easy days,
And when all goes smooth, the rich and poor have different lives and ways.
Sorrow and death bring men more close, 'tis joy that puts us apart;
'Tis a comfort to think, though we're severed so, we're all of us one at heart.

` ` She never wished to be smart and rich, as so many in these days do,
Nor cared to go in on market days to stare at the gay and new.
She liked to remain at home and pluck the white violets down in the wood;
She said to her sisters before she died, ` 'Tis so easy to be good.'
She must have found it so, I think, and that was the reason why
God deemed it needless to leave her here, so took her up to the sky.

` ` The vicar says that he knows she is there, and surely she ought to be;
But though I repeat the words, 'tis hard to believe what one does not see.
They did not want me to go to the grave, but I could not have kept away,

And whatever I do I can only see a coffin and church-yard clay.
Yes, I know it's wrong to keep lingering there, and wicked and weak to fret;
And that's why I'm hard at work again, for it helps one to forget.

`` The young ones don't seem to take to work as their mothers and fathers did.
We never were asked if we liked or no, but had to obey when bid.
There's Bessie won't swill the dairy now, nor Richard call home the cows,
And all of them cry, `How can you, mother?' when I carry the wash to the sows.
Edith would drudge, for Death one's hearth of the helpful one always robs.
But she was so pretty I could not bear to set her on dirty jobs.

`` I don't know how it'll be with them when sorrow and loss are theirs,
For it isn't likely that they'll escape their pack of worrits and cares.
They say it's an age of progress this, and a sight of things improves,
But sickness, and age, and bereavement seem to work in the same old grooves.
Fine they may grow, and that, but Death as lief takes the moth as the grub.
When their dear ones die, I suspect they'll wish they'd a floor of their own to scrub.

`` Some day they'll have a home of their own, much grander than this, no doubt,
But polish the porch as you will you can't keep doctors and coffins out.
I've done very well with my fowls this year, but what are pullets and eggs,
When the heart in vain at the door of the grave the return of the lost one begs?
The rich have leisure to wail and weep, the poor haven't time to be sad:
If the cream hadn't been so contrary this week, I think grief would have driven me mad.

`` How does my husband bear up, you ask? Well, thank you, ma'am, fairly well;
For he too is busy just now, you see, with the wheat and the hops to sell:
It's when the work of the day is done, and he comes indoors at night,
While the twilight hangs round the window-panes before I bring in the light,
And takes down his pipe, and says not a word, but watches the faggots roar-
And then I know he is thinking of her who will sit on his knee no more.

`` Must you be going? It seems so short. But thank you for thinking to come;
It does me good to talk of it all, and grief feels doubled when dumb.
An the butter's not quite so good this week, if you please, ma'am, you must not mind,
And I'll not forget to send the ducks and all the eggs we can find;
I've scarcely had time to look round me yet, work gets into such arrears,
With only one pair of hands, and those fast wiping away one's tears.

`` You've got some flowers, yet, haven't you, ma'am? though they now must be going fast;
We never have any to speak of here, and I placed on her coffin the last.
Could you spare me a few for Sunday next? I should like to go all alone,
And lay them down on the little mound where there isn't as yet a stone.
Thank you kindly, I'm sure they'll do, and I promise to heed what you say;
I'll only just go and lay them there, and then I will come away."

Come, let us go. Yes, down the hill, and home by the winding lane.
The low-lying fields are suffused with haze, as life is suffused with pain.
The noon mists gain on the morning sun, so despondency gains on youth;
We grope, and wrangle, and boast, but Death is the only certain truth.

O love of life! what a foolish love! we should weary of life did it last.
While it lingers, it is but a little thing; 'tis nothing at all when past.

The acorns thicker and thicker lie, the briony limper grows,
There are mildewing beads on the leafless brier where once smiled the sweet dog-rose.
You may see the leaves of the primrose push through the litter of sodden ground;
Their pale stars dream in the wintry womb, and the pimpernel sleepeth sound.
They will awake; shall we awake? Are we more than imprisoned breath?
When the heart grows weak, then hope grows strong, but stronger than hope is Death.

Alfred Austin

A Florilegium

I

All the seasons of the year,
I have flowers for you, dear.
When the ploughland's flecked with snow,
And the blue-eyed scyllas blow,
Gazing, through the wintry gale,
Like your eyes when you are pale;
When in many a cloistered walk
Droop upon their modest stalk
Vestal snowdrops, one by one,
White as is a wimpled nun;
When, as sleet away doth slip,
And the thawing gables drip,
The precocious crocus peers,-
Childlike, sunshine half, half tears,-
And from out the snug warm leaves
Silent housewife Winter weaves,
Scarlet windflowers, wide unfurled,
Dazzle an awakened world;
These and more to you I bring,
Bold outriders of the Spring.

II

When along the Northern skies
Routed Winter shrieks and flies,
And again the mavis shrills,
Come the dauntless daffodils,
Laughing, as they sway and swing,
At rude March's blustering.
These I gather, and with these
Rosy-white anemones,
Like the coral-shells you wear
Sometimes in your hazel hair;
Primroses loved none the less
For their wilding lavishness;
Honeysuckle, like to you,
To what's near it clinging true;
Violets, surprised in shade,
By their own sweet breath betrayed;
Lagging hawthorn prized the more
That it long was waited for;
These unto your bower I bring,
Gifts of Summer lent to Spring.

III

Which are loveliest, lilies dight
In their stateliness of white,
Safe against a touch too rude
By their cold proud maidenhood,
Or the unreservèd rose,

Careless where it gads or goes,
So it be allowed to cling,
Rioting and revelling?
Rose and lily both I cull,
Iris scarce less beautiful,
Mignonette more sweet than myrrh,
Homely-smelling lavender,
Pinks and pansies, golden whin,
Constellated jessamine,
Bunches of the maiden's-bower,
Tufts of gaudy gillyflower,
Sprays of softening maidenhair;
With my posy mount your stair
To the chamber where you sit,
Tenderly awaiting it.

IV

Then, when gorgeous Summer wanes,
Autumn woods and Winter lanes
Do I haunt, that I may dress
With their lingering loveliness
Nook and ingle where you be
Busy with your housewifery:
Ripened reed-mace' barren sheaves,
Hardy hornbeam's russet leaves,
Jewels from the spindle-tree,
Coral-fruited briony,
Crimson haws and purple sloes,
Rubies that were once the rose,
Holly-berries warm in snow,
Amber-beaded misletoe,
Everything the waning year
Spares, that I may bring you, dear.

V

But should frost and rifling wind
Leave not even these behind,
And from out the leafless blast
I must come to you at last
Empty-handed, you would be
More than all the flowers to me.

Alfred Austin

A Fragment

Should fickle hands in far-off days
No longer stroke thy hair,
And lips that once were proud to praise
Forget to call thee fair,
Sigh but my name, and though I be
Mute in the churchyard mould,
I will arise and come to thee,
And worship as of old.

And should I meet the wrinkled brow,
Or find the silver tress,
What were't to me, it would be thou,
I could not love thee less.
'Gainst love time wages bootless strife,
What now is would be then;
The cry that brought me back to life
Would make thee young again.

Alfred Austin

A Last Request

Let not the roses lie
Too thickly tangled round my tomb,
Lest fleecy clouds that skim the summer sky,
Flinging their faint soft shadows, pass it by,
And know not over whom.

And let not footsteps come
Too frequent round that nook of rest;
Should I-who knoweth?-not be deaf, though dumb,
Bird's idle pipe, or bee's laborious hum,
Would suit me, listening, best.

And, pray you, do not hew
Words to provoke a smile or sneer;
But only carve-at least if they be true-
These simple words, or some such, and as few,
``He whom we loved lies here."''

And if you only could
Find out some quite sequestered slope
That, girt behind with undeciduous wood,
In front o'erlooks the ocean-then I should
Die with a calmer hope.

And if you will but so
This last request of mine fulfil,
I rest your debtor for the final throw
And if I can but help you where I go,
Be sure, fond friends, I will.

Alfred Austin

A Letter From Italy

I

Lately, when we wished good-bye
Underneath a gloomy sky,
"Bear," you said, "my love in mind,
Leaving me not quite behind;
And across the mountains send
News and greeting to your friend."

II

Swiftly though we did advance
Through the rich flat fields of France,
Still the eye grew tired to see
Patches of equality.
Nothing wanton, waste, or wild;
Women delving, lonely child
Tending cattle lank and lean;
Not a hedgerow to be seen,
Where the eglantine may ramble,
Or the vagrant unkempt bramble
Might its flowers upon you press
Simple-sweet but profitless:
Jealous ditches, straight and square
Sordid comfort everywhere.
Pollard poplars, stunted vine,
Nowhere happy-pasturing kine
Wandering in untended groups
Through the uncut buttercups.
All things pruned to pile the shelf
Nothing left to be itself:
Neither horn, nor hound, nor stirrup,
Not a carol, not a chirrup;
Every idle sound repressed,
Like a Sabbath without rest.

III

O the sense of freedom when
Kingly mountains rose again!
Congregated, but alone,
Each upon his separate throne;
Like to mighty minds that dwell,
Lonely, inaccessible,
High above the human race,
Single and supreme in space:
Soaring higher, higher, higher,
Carrying with them our desire,
Irrepressible if fond,
To push on to worlds beyond!
Many a peak august I saw,
Crowned with mist and girt with awe,
Fertilising, as is fit,
Valleys that look up to it,
With the melted snows down-driven,

Which itself received from Heaven.
Then, to see the torrents flashing,
Leaping, twisting, foaming, crashing,
Like a youth who feels, at length,
Freedom ample as his strength,
Hurrying from the home that bore him,
With the whole of life before him!

IV

As, when summer sunshine gleams,
Glaciers soften into streams,
So to liquid, flowing vowels,
As we pierced the mountains' bowels,
Teuton consonants did melt
When Italian warmth was felt.
Gloomy fir and pine austere,
Unto precipices sheer
Clinging, as one holds one's breath,
Half-way betwixt life and death,
Changed to gently-shelving slope,
Where man tills with faith and hope,
And the tenderest-tendrilled tree
Prosperes in security.
Softer outlines, balmier air,
Belfries unto evening prayer
Calling, as the shadows fade,
Halting crone, and hurrying maid,
With her bare black tresses twined
Into massive coils behind,
And her snowy-pleated vest
Folded o'er mysterious breast,
Like the dove's wings chastely crossed
At the Feast of Pentecost.
Something, in scent, sight, and sound,
Elsewhere craved for, never found,
Underneath, around, above,
Moves to tenderness and love.

V

But three nights I halted where
Stands the temple, vowed to prayer,
That surmounts the Lombard plain,
Green with strips of grape and grain.
There, Spiaggiascura's child,
By too hopeful love beguiled,
Yet resolved, save faith should flow
Through his parched heart, to forego
Earthly bliss for heavenly pain,
Prayed for Godfrid, prayed in vain.

VI

How looked Florence? Fair as when

Beatrice was nearly ten:
Nowise altered, just the same
Marble city, mountain frame,
Turbid river, cloudless sky,
As in days when you and I
Roamed its sunny streets, apart,
Ignorant of each other's heart,
Little knowing that our feet
Slow were moving on to meet,
And that we should find, at last,
Kinship in a common Past.
But a shadow falls athwart
All her beauty, all her art.
For alas! I vainly seek
Outstretched hand and kindling cheek,
Such as, in the bygone days,
Sweetened, sanctified, her ways.
When, as evening belfries chime,
I to Bellosguardo climb,
Vaguely thinking there to find
Faces that still haunt my mind,
Though the doors stand open wide,
No one waits for me inside;
Not a voice comes forth to greet,
As of old, my nearing feet.
So I stand without, and stare,
Wishing you were here to share
Void too vast alone to bear.
To Ricorboli I wend:
But where now the dear old friend,
Heart as open as his gate,
Song, and jest, and simple state?
They who loved me all are fled;
Some are gone, and some are dead.
So, though young and lovely be
Florence still, it feels to me,
Thinking of the days that were,
Like a marble sepulchre.

VII

Yet, thank Heaven! he liveth still,
Now no more upon the hill
Where was perched his Tuscan home,
But in liberated Rome:
Hale as ever; still his stride
Keeps me panting at his side.
Would that you were here to stray
With me up the Appian Way,
Climb with me the Coelian mount,
With me find Egeria's fount,
See the clear sun sink and set
From the Pincian parapet,

Or from Sant' Onofrio watch
Shaggy Monte Cavo catch
Gloomy glory on its face,
As the red dawn mounts apace.
Twenty years and more have fled
Since I first with youthful tread
Wandered 'mong these wrecks of Fate,
Lonely but not desolate,
Proud to ponder and to brood,
Satisfied with solitude.
But as fruit that, hard in Spring,
Tender grows with mellowing,
So one's nature, year by year,
Softens as it ripens, dear,
And youth's selfish strain and stress
Sweeten into tenderness.
Therefore is it that I pine
For a gentle hand in mine,
For a voice to murmur clear
All I know but love to hear,
Crave to feel, think, hear, and see,
Through your lucid sympathy.

VIII

Shortly, shortly, we shall meet.
Southern skies awhile are sweet;
But in whatso land I roam,
Half my heart remains at home.
Tell me, for I long to hear,
Tidings of our English year.
Was the cuckoo soon or late?
Beg the primroses to wait,
That their homely smile may greet
Faithfully returning feet.
Have the apple blossoms burst?
Is the oak or ash the first?
Are there snowballs on the guelder?
Can you scent as yet the elder?
On the bankside that we know,
Is the golden gorse ablow,
Like love's evergreen delight
Never out of season quite,
But most prodigal in Spring,
When the whitethroats pair and sing?
Tell me, tell me, most of all,
When you hear the thrushes call,
When you see soft shadows fleeting
O'er the grass where lambs are bleating.
When the lyric lark, returning
From the mirage of its yearning,-
Like a fountain that in vain
Rises but to fall again,-

Seeks its nest with drooping wing,
Do you miss me from the Spring?

IX
Quickly then I come. Adieu,
Mouldering arch and ether blue!
For in you I sure shall find
All that here I leave behind:
Steadfastness of Roman rays
In the candour of your gaze;
In your friendship comfort more
Than in warmth of Oscan shore;
In the smiles that light your mouth,
All the sunshine of the South.

Alfred Austin

A March Minstrel

Hail! once again, that sweet strong note!
Loud on my loftiest larch,
Thou quaverest with thy mottled throat,
Brave minstrel of bleak March!

Hearing thee flute, who pines or grieves
For vernal smiles and showers?
Thy voice is greener than the leaves,
And fresher than the flowers.

Scorning to wait for tuneful May
When every throat can sing,
Thou floutest Winter with thy lay,
And art thyself the Spring.

While daffodils, half mournful still,
Muffle their golden bells,
Thy silvery peal o'er landscape chill
Surges, and sinks, and swells.

Across the unsheltered pasture floats
The young lamb's shivering bleat:
There is no trembling in thy notes,
For all the snow and sleet.

Let the bullace bide till frosts have ceased,
The blackthorn loiter long;
Undaunted by the blustering east,
Thou burgeonest into song.

Yet who can wonder thou dost dare
Confront what others flee?
Thy carol cuts the keen March air
Keener than it cuts Thee.

The selfish cuckoo tarrieth till
April repays his boast.
Thou, thou art lavish of thy trill,
Now when we need it most.

The nightingale, while birds are coy,
Delays to chant its grief.
Brave throstle! thou dost pipe for joy
With never a bough in leaf.

Even fond turtle-doves forbear
To coo till woods are warm:
Thou hast the heart to love and pair
Ere the cherry blossoms swarm.

The skylark, fluttering to be heard
In realms beyond his birth,

Soars vainly heavenward. Thou, wise bird!
Art satisfied with earth.

Thy home is not upon the ground,
Thy hope not in the sky:
Near to thy nest thy notes resound,
Neither too low nor high.

Blow what wind will, thou dost rejoice
To carol, and build, and woo.
Throstle! to me impart thy voice;
Impart thy wisdom too.

Alfred Austin

A Meeting

Queen, widowed Mother of a widowed child,
Whose ancient sorrow goeth forth to meet
Her new-born sorrow with parental feet,
And tearful eyes that oft on hers have smiled,
Will not your generous heart be now beguiled
From its too lonely anguish, as You greet
Her anguish, yet more cruel and complete,
And, through her woe, with woe be reconciled?
Or if this may not be, and all the years
Of love's bereavement be withal too brief
To bring slow solace to still lengthening grief
For loss of One whom distance but endears,
Surely to Both will come some sad relief,
Sharing the comfort of commingled tears.

Alfred Austin

A Night In June

Lady! in this night of June
Fair like thee and holy,
Art thou gazing at the moon
That is rising slowly?
I am gazing on her now:
Something tells me, so art thou.

Night hath been when thou and I
Side by side were sitting,
Watching o'er the moonlit sky
Fleecy cloudlets flitting.
Close our hands were linkèd then;
When will they be linkèd again?

What to me the starlight still,
Or the moonbeams' splendour,
If I do not feel the thrill
Of thy fingers slender?
Summer nights in vain are clear,
If thy footstep be not near.

Roses slumbering in their sheaths
O'er my threshold clamber,
And the honeysuckle wreathes
Its translucent amber
Round the gables of my home:
How is it thou dost not come?

If thou camest, rose on rose
From its sleep would waken;
From each flower and leaf that blows
Spices would be shaken;
Floating down from star and tree,
Dreamy perfumes welcome thee.

I would lead thee where the leaves
In the moon-rays glisten;
And, where shadows fall in sheaves,
We would lean and listen
For the song of that sweet bird
That in April nights is heard.

And when weary lids would close,
And thy head was drooping,
Then, like dew that steeps the rose,
O'er thy languor stooping,
I would, till I woke a sigh,
Kiss thy sweet lips silently.

I would give thee all I own,
All thou hast would borrow;
I from thee would keep alone

Fear and doubt and sorrow.
All of tender that is mine,
Should most tenderly be thine.

Moonlight! into other skies,
I beseech thee wander.
Cruel, thus to mock mine eyes,
Idle, thus to squander
Love's own light on this dark spot;-
For my lady cometh not!

Alfred Austin

A November Note

Why, throstle, do you sing
In this November haze?
Singing for what? for whom?
Deem you that it is Spring,
Or that your lonely lays
Will stave off Winter's gloom?

Then did the bird reply:
`` I sing because I know
That Spring will surely come:
That is the reason why,
Though menaced by the snow,
Even now I am not dumb.

`` But few are they that hear,
And fewer still that feel,
The meaning of my song,
Until the note be clear,
Re-echoed be the peal,
Early, and late, and long.

`` But you have heard and owned
The sound of my refrain,
Yet tentative and low.
Thus, poet, be intoned
Your own foreshadowing strain,
Trusting that some will know:

`` That some will know and say,
When greetings of the Spring
Wake Winter from its bed,
This is the self-same lay
We overheard him sing
When dead hearts deemed him dead."

Alfred Austin

A Poet's Eightieth Birthday

`` He dieth young whom the Gods love," was said
By Greek Menander; nor alone by One
Who gave to Greece his English song and sword
Re-echoed is the saying, but likewise he
`` Who uttered nothing base," and from whose brow,
By right divine, the laurel lapsed to yours,-
Great sire, great successor,-in verse confirmed
The avowal of `` the Morning-Star of Song,"
Happiest is he that dieth in his flower.
Yet can it be that it is gain, not loss,
To quit the pageant of this life before
The heart hath learnt its meaning; leave half-seen,
Half-seen, half-felt, and not yet understood,
The beauty and the bounty of the world;
The fertile waywardness of wanton Spring,
Summer's deep calm, the modulated joy
Of Autumn conscious of a task fulfilled,
And home-abiding Winter's pregnant sleep,
The secret of the seasons? Gain, to leave
The depths of love unfathomed, its heights unscaled,
Rapture and woe unreconciled, and pain
Unprized, unapprehended? This is loss,
Loss and not gain, sheer forfeiture of good,
Is banishment from Eden, though its fruit
Remains untasted.

Interpret then the oracle, `` He dies young
Whom the Gods love," for Song infallible
Hath so pronounced! . . . Thus I interpret it:
The favourites of the Gods die young, for they,
They grow not old with grief and deadening time,
But still keep April moisture in their heart
May's music in their ears. Their voice revives,
Revives, rejuvenates, the wintry world,
Flushes the veins of gnarled and knotted age,
And crowns the majesty of life with leaves
As green as are the sapling's.

Thrice happy Poet! to have thus renewed
Your youth with wisdom,-who, though life still seems
To your fresh gaze as frolic and as fair
As in the callow season when your heart
Was but the haunt and pairing-place and nest
Of nightingale and cuckoo, have enriched
Joy's inexperienced warblings with the note
Of mellow music, and whose mind mature,
Laden with life's sustaining lessons, still
Gleams bright with hope; even as I saw, to-day,
An April rainbow span the August corn.

Long may your green maturity maintain
Its universal season; and your voice,

A household sound, be heard about our hearths,
Now as a Christmas carol, now as the glee
Of vernal Maypole, now as harvest song.
And when, like light withdrawn from earth to heaven,
Your glorious gloaming fades into the sky,
We, looking upward, shall behold you there,
Shining amid the young unageing stars.

Alfred Austin

A Point Of Honour

`` Tell me again; I did not hear: It was wailing so sadly. Nay,
Hush! little one, for mother wants to know what they have to say.
There! At my breast be good and still! What quiets you calms me too.
They say that the source is poisoned; still, it seems pure enough for you!

`` I shall bring them to shame, aye one and all, my Father who loves me so,
Dear Mother, a little severe at times, but with story as white as snow,
And sister Effie, so trim and quick, so fair and betrothed so long,
Who will wait for her lover for years and years, but would die at the thought of wrong.

`` O don't! For I know what my brother Ralph, if he knew it, would think and say.
He would drive me across the lonely moor, and would curse me all the way;
Would call on the cold wet winds to whip, and the sunshine to pass me by,
And vow that the ditch were too good a grave for a thing as foul as I.

`` And then there is grand-dad, worn and white, who can scarcely speak or see,
But sits in the sun in his wicker chair, with the Bible upon his knee.
To him 'twould but sound like a buzzing hive if they talked to him of my fall:
Yet I almost think that I dread his face, turned heavenward, more than all.

`` We have never been either rich or poor, but a proud, stiff yeoman stock.
And to think that I am the first to bring sin's scab on a cleanly flock!
The pet lamb, too, as they call me still, the dearest of all their dears!
Hush, little one! But you well may wail, suckled not upon milk, but tears.

`` He never will marry me now, that's sure. Who takes a wife with a stain?
How we used to sit in the bluebell wood, and roam through the primrose lane!
And I was thinking of some one else, while the nightingale trilled above.
He alone, I think, will forgive me though, such a wonderful thing is Love.

`` Do you think I do not foresee it all?-a mother and not a wife,
A babe but without a father still, and the lack and the shame for life,
The nudge and the sidelong sneer, in church, at market, year out, year in.
But what would you have me do to escape the wages of my sin?

`` Give up the child? To whom? To what? To honest and kindly folk
Who have never a chit of their own and long for a wee thing to kiss and stroke,
Who will call it their own, will rear as such, will teach it to lisp and pray:
He will find the money for that and more. There is nothing he will not pay.

`` Pay? Well, go on: I am listening hard, for the little one's now at rest.
Just look how it sucks and smiles in sleep on the pillow of mother's breast.
Though I never thought-does Love ever think?-that such was the end of all,
It is wicked, but still for a joy like this I would almost repeat my fall.

`` Yes, I understand. He has done his best. O, you make it perfectly clear.
He is doing it all for me, no doubt; he has nothing to face or fear.
But 'tis strange that fathers with gold may pay for their guilt, and can then forget,
And that lasting shame and a broken heart are the share of the mother's debt.

`` I have sometimes thought that Nature has against woman some lasting pique,
For she makes us weak where we should be strong, and strong where we might be

weak,
Most good when a little badness pays, and bad when 'tis safe being good.
To be always good, and nothing but good, 's the one hope for womanhood.

`` And I then should be good, or seem to be, which is pretty well much the same,
Should hold up my head with the straightest then, and be shocked at a sister's shame.
Be called by the Vicar his model maid, be kissed by the Vicar's wife,
And may-be marry an honest man, and be happy and loved for life.

`` The hollyhocks now up the garden walk are flowering strong and straight,
The bees are out in the mignonette, and the mossrose lingers late;
The orchard reddens, the acorn cups are thick 'neath the pollard oak,
And up from the old red chimney-stack curls the first blue Autumn smoke.

The kine from the lowland are trailing home, and file betwixt shed and rick,
In the wide brown bowls on the dairy shelf the cream lies smooth and thick;
I can hear the geese in the farmyard pond, I can see the neat new thatch.
Now what if I went there brave and bold, and took courage to lift the latch?

`` They never would know, they would cluster round, they would drag me in through
the door,
Would fondle and cuddle, and hug and kiss, and pull me down to the floor;
And who should kiss first, and who kiss last, would be all they would think of then;
And at night we should all of us kneel and pray, and I too should say, `` Amen!"

`` They never would know; but I should know, and, when they were all asleep,
I should lie awake through the long dark night, and wonder, and sob, and weep,
Through the dear sweet bitter detested past would my wavering fancy roam,
And at dawn I should learn to smile again, for at least I should be at home.

`` And where would It be? I must not ask-for I'm to be strong and wise,-
If well or ailing, alive or dead, what colour its hair and eyes,
Never knit a sock for its little feet, to the end never know its name.
There's a shamelessness yet more shameful far than the worst abyss of shame!

`` Well, you see I am going. And where? Why, home! Yes, straight unto Father's door,
With this tell-tale thing in my warm weak arms, right over the windy moor.
I shall tremble and stammer and halt, no doubt, and look like a thing accurst,
And so double my fault by my helplessness; and then I shall know the worst.

`` If my Mother scolds, I will bow my head; if my sister shrinks, I will weep;
If my brother smites, I will let him smite, for a sin so dark and deep.
But what if my Father rises up, and drives from the door,-what then?
Well, then I will go to the Father of all Who pardoned Magdalen."

Alfred Austin

A Portrait

When friends grown faithless, or the fickle throng,
Withdrawing from my life the love they lent,
Breed in my heart disdainful discontent,
And sadden sunshine with a sense of wrong,
Then I, forgetting to be wise and strong,
And on my own endearment too intent,
Unto myself make musical lament,
And lullaby my pain with plaintive song.
But, when I gaze upon this face august,
Her gift, who, seated on earth's loftiest throne,
For others' weal holds half the world in trust,
Pondering on cares of Empire all alone,
I, then rebuked, remember to be just,
Think of her griefs, and quite forget my own.

Alfred Austin

A Question

Love, wilt thou love me still when wintry streak
Steals on the tresses of autumnal brow;
When the pale rose hath perished in my cheek,
And those are wrinkles that are dimples now?
Wilt thou, when this fond arm that here I twine
Round thy dear neck to help thee in thy need,
Droops faint and feeble, and hath need of thine,
Be then my prop, and not a broken reed?
When thou canst only glean along the Past,
And garner in thy heart what Time doth leave,
O, wilt thou then to me, love, cling as fast
As nest of April to December eave;
And, while my beauty dwindles and decays,
Still warm thee by the embers of my gaze?

Alfred Austin

A Question Answered

I saw the lark at break of day
Rise from its dewy bed,
And, winged with melody, away
Circle to Heaven o'erhead.

I watched it higher and higher soar,
Still ceasing not to trill,
When, though I could descry no more
Its flight, I heard it still.

But shortly quavered back its note,
And, hovering into sight,
I saw it, homeward sinking, float
Over its nest of night.

``Tell me," I cried, ``glad songster, why
You, privileged to wend
Up to the blue and boundless sky,
Where only wings ascend,

``Full into Heaven, to look and gaze
Whither our thoughts aspire,
And, unrebuked, terrestrial lays
Blend with celestial choir,

``Why you, thus welcomed to the height
Of minstrelsy and mirth,
Pavilioned high from mortal sight,
Come back again to Earth."

Then shook the lark again its wings,
And, fluttering o'er its bed
Deep-bosomed in the grassy floor,
In rippling answer said:-

``'Tis joy to mount, alone, aloft,
Into the ether clear,
And thence look down on garth and croft
Of red-roofed hamlets here.

``To sing my song through endless space,
Towering above, above,
While mortals watch with upturned face
Of longing and of love;

``Then, for a while, unseen to pass
Through unsubstantial dome,
But treble back to tangled grass-
Not Heaven, withal my home.

``And tell me, when I skyward sing,
Am I unlike to you,

That on Imagination's wing
Strain sometimes out of view

`` Into the radiant Realms untrod
Song can alone descry,
And whilom join, by grace of God,
Angelic company

`` Yet sink down from the firmament
Back to life's dearth and dole,
Knowing full well that song was sent
To comfort and console."

Alfred Austin

A Rare Guest

Love, that all men think they know,
Is a rare guest here below;
But with mortals when it stays,
These are its unerring ways.

I

Love builds secret, half afraid,
In the covert, in the shade,
Fostering, where none know it is,
Solitary gladnesses.
Pry not on its brooding breast,
Lest it should desert its nest.
Then, all seen, you naught can save;
'Twas a cradle;-'tis a grave.

II

Love loves tumult closed with rest,
Spreads its wings and bares its breast
To the unrelenting strain
Of the passionate hurricane.
Though its plumes are frayed like foam,
On it presses still for home,
Upward, slowly-onward, fast-
Till, when it descries at last
Tall tops swaying to and fro,
Down it drops to nest below.
Then the wind that rocks the tree
Is to it a lullaby.

III

Fancy talks itself away,
Love hath ever naught to say,
Save again the hushed caress,
And the sweet long silences,
Glistening gaze of trustful eyes,
Where none questions, none replies
Like, enraptured with its lot,
Star that shines but speaketh not.

IV

Men wax rich by thrifty living;
Love is opulent from giving,
Keeps its store from growing less
By unceasing lavishness;
Richest when it squanders all,
Never ruined prodigal.

V

Lastly, Love, if it could choose,
Would not, as gross worldlings use,
Summon smiles and state to be
Sponsors to felicity.

These it fain would keep apart
From the nuptials of the heart,
Or, if they perforce attend,
Find them rather foe than friend.
For, without the world's disfavour,
Sweet love loses half its savour.

Love, that all men think they know,
Is a rare guest here below;
But with mortals when it stays,
These are its unerring ways.

Alfred Austin

A Reply To A Pessimist

O beautiful bright world! for ever young,
And now with Wisdom grafted on thy Spring,
Why do they slander thee with wailing tongue,
And lose the wealth of thy long harvesting?
Why do they say that thou art old and sad,
When, each fresh April, nightingales are glad,
And, each returning May, paired misselthrushes sing?

`` Stripped of our dreams"! It is the sleeper then,
And not the shadowy corridors of night,
Fair visions have deserted. Hill and glen
As haunted are with wonder and delight
As when Endymion felt his eyelids kissed
By the moist moon, and through the morning mist
Foam-sandalled Venus flowered, immaculately white.

`` No deities in sky, or sun, or moon!
No nymphs in grove or hill, in sea or stream"!
Why, I saw Artemis, this very noon,
Slip through the wood, a momentary gleam,
As satin as the willow and as lithe,
And heard her eager sleuth-hounds baying blithe
Hard on the intruder's heels, then rent Actaeon's scream.

`` Dead"! Hamadryads frisk in every wood,
In every pool elusive Naiads dwell;
Neptune's dread voice, deep as when Troy still stood,
Is stored for us in every murmuring shell.
List! you will hear. But look, and you will find
Iris in rainbow, Hermes in the wind,
Delphi's inspiring fount in every wayside well.

`` No God! no Heaven"! The Gods you cannot kill,
Nor banish from their seats the sainted choirs.
The deep-toned organ is Cecilia's still,
Still lamb-like Agnes quencheth wanton fires;
Stephen still sanctifies the martyr's lot,
And many a maiden, though believing not,
Beholds Madonna's face, then chastens her desires.

O beautiful bright world! for ever young,
With gifts for ever fresh. The seasons bring
All that they ever brought, since flowers first sprung
To deck the blushing consciousness of Spring.
Summer still makes us glad that we were born,
Our musings mellow with the mellowing corn,
And to our fireside loves wise Winter bids us cling.

What is there we have lost while hearts still beat,
While thought still burns? You cannot Man dethrone,
Time's Heir-Apparent, from his sovran seat,
Assail his empire, or curtail its zone.

What though fledged Science fearlessly explore
New worlds of knowledge unsurmised of yore,
These fresh-found realms the Muse annexes to its own.

Thus have we Eld's delights, our own as well:
Science is but Imagination's slave;
Nor have ``the antique fables" lost their spell,
Because we pierce the sky and plumb the wave.
For us the stars still sing, the moon still grieves,
The Fauns still rustle in the fallen leaves,
The Crucified is risen, and glorifies the grave.

Is Love less sweet because men loved of yore?
No, sweeter, stronger, with the ages' growth.
Love's long descent ennobles loving more,
And Helen's falsehood fortifies one's troth.
Bridging Time's stream with life's commanding span,
We stand upon the Present, and we scan
Future and Past, and seem to live along them both.

What have we lost?-we, who have gained so much:
The mind of man, familiar afar,
Hath upon sun, star, planet, laid its touch,
Lassoed the lightning, yoked it to his car.
Yet fear not lest that Knowledge should deflower
The awe that veils the inviolable Power,
Or that we e'er shall learn what, whence, and why we are.

'Tis Mystery lends a meaning unto Life,
Never quite guessed; and simple souls, mean-while,
Find Paradise in mother, sister, wife,
The far one's faithfulness, the near one's smile.
So long as valour wins and beauty charms,
And lovers throb into each other's arms,
How can you rail at life, reproach it and revile?

``Woe, agony, despair"! Woe, yes, there is,
Despair there need not be. Meek wisdom tries
To gain from grief an after-taste of bliss,
And sees a rainbow through its streaming eyes.
Nor, if I could, would I quite part with pain,
Lest pity die;-a loss, and not a gain.
'Tis Pride alone despairs. Be humble, and be wise.

We bear no ``burden of the bygone years."
Their matter perishes, their soul survives,
Widening our hopes and narrowing our fears;
Shedding a shadowy charm athwart our lives,
Guiding our gropings, steadying our feet,
Like to an aged nurse, that we may meet
The Future without dread, whatever rue arrives.

What if there were no Heaven? there is the Earth.
What if there were no goal? there is the race.
'Tis unfulfilled desire that staves off dearth,
Sustains the march and stimulates the pace.
Where is the ``prodigal waste of myriad lives" ?
No life is wasted that loves, hopes, and strives,
And wears an eastward glow upon its fading face.

O beautiful bright world! Earth, Heaven, in one,
I thank thee for thy gifts: the gift of birth,
The unbought bounty of air, sky, sea, sun,
Seed-time and shower, harvest and mellow mirth;
For privilege to think, to feel, to strive;
I thank thee for the boon of being alive,
For Glory's deathless dream, and Virtue's matchless worth.

Alfred Austin

A Royal Home-Coming

Welcome, right welcome home, to these blest Isles,
Where, unforgotten, loved Victoria sleeps,
But now with happy pride your Father smiles,
Your Mother weeps.

You went as came the swallow, homeward draw
Now it hath winged its way to winters green;
But never swallow or wandering sea-bird saw
What You have seen.

For You have circled the earth with pinions fleet,
The seasons through, and everywhere a throng
Of glowing hearts your coming trooped to greet
With flowers and song.

Over the unchanging sea eight changeful moons
Have moved from shield to sickle, seed to sheaves,
And twice a hundred dawns, a hundred noons,
A hundred eves,

Waned to their slumber in the star-lit night,
And ever from land or lake, from wave or crag,
From fixed or floating fort, You had in sight
The British Flag.

And wider, further, onward round the world,
Scouring the field or furrowing the sea,
You found that Emblem, which, where'er unfurled,
Floats o'er the Free:

So that on man, and man's laborious hand,
Nor manacle nor hindrance shall be laid,
But mind with mind, and strand with generous strand,
Contend and trade.

And, though the shade of treasonable strife
Falls on our homes and theirs, You, wandering, saw,
Young Commonwealths You found, surging with life,
Yet ruled by Law:

Whose blood, infused in ours in War's emprise,
To vindicate one Sceptre, sword, and tongue,-
As ours perchance may help to keep them wise,-
Hath made us young.

Fountain of Youth England in mellower years
Hath found and drained, so that She ne'er need know
What Nature feels when Autumn stacks and seres,
Or Yule-gusts blow.

You sailed from us to them, from them to us,
Love at the prow and wisdom at the helm,

August Ambassadors, who strengthen thus
Her Rule and Realm.

Round You to-day a People stand arrayed,
That fain with Peace two wedded worlds would dower,
Therefore rejoicing mightier hath been made
Imperial Power.

Alfred Austin

A Shakespeare Memorial

Why should we lodge in marble or in bronze
Spirits more vast than earth, or sea, or sky?
Wiser the silent worshipper that cons
Their words for wisdom that will never die.
Unto the favourite of the passing hour
Erect the statue and parade the bust;
Whereon decisive Time will slowly shower
Oblivion's refuse and disdainful dust.
The Monarchs of the Mind, self-sceptred Kings,
Need no memento to transmit their name:
Throned on their thoughts and high imaginings,
They are the Lords, not sycophants of Fame.
Raise pedestals to perishable stuff:
Gods for themselves are monuments enough.

Alfred Austin

A Sleepless Night

Within the hollow silence of the night
I lay awake and listened. I could hear
Planet with punctual planet chiming clear,
And unto star star cadencing aright.
Nor these alone: cloistered from deafening sight,
All things that are, made music to my ear:
Hushed woods, dumb caves, and many a soundless mere,
With Arctic mains in rigid sleep locked tight.
But ever with this chant from shore and sea,
From singing constellation, humming thought,
And life through time's stops blowing variously,
A melancholy undertone was wrought;
And from its boundless prison-house I caught
The awful wail of lone Eternity.

Alfred Austin

A Snow-White Lily

There was a snow-white lily
Grew by a cottage door:
Such a white and wonderful lily
Never was seen before.

The earth and the ether brought it
Sustenance, raiment, grace,
And the feet of the west wind sought it,
And smiled in its smiling face.

Tall were its leaves and slender,
Slender and tall its stem;
Purity, all its splendour,
Beauty, its diadem.

Still from the ground it sprouted,
Statelier year by year,
Till loveliness clung about it,
And was its atmosphere.

And the fame of this lily was bruited
'Mong men ever more and more;
They came, and they saw, and uprooted
Its life from the cottage door.

For they said, ``'Twere shame, 'twere pity,
It here should dwell half despised.
We must carry it off to the city,
Where lilies are loved and prized."

The city was moved to wonder,
And burst into praise and song,
And the multitude parted asunder
To gaze on it borne along.

Along and aloft 'twas uplifted,
From palace to palace led;
Men vowed 'twas the lily most gifted
Of lilies living or dead.

And wisdom, and wealth, and power,
Bowed down to it more and more:-
Yet it never was quite the same flower
That bloomed by the cottage door.

For no longer the night-dews wrought it
Raiment, and food, and grace;
Nor the feet of the west wind sought it,
To dance in its dimpling face.

'Twas pursued by the frivolous rabble,
With poisonous lips and eyes;

They drenched it with prurient babble,
And fed it with fulsome lies.

Thus into the lily there entered
The taint of the tainted crew,
Till itself in itself grew centred,
And it flattery drank like dew.

Then tongues began words to bandy
As to whose might the lily be.
``'Tis mine," said the titled dandy;
Said the plutocrat, ``'tis for me."

Thus over the lily they wrangled,
Making the beautiful base,
Till its purity seemed all mangled,
And its gracefulness half disgrace.

Next they who had first enthroned it,
And blatantly hymned its fame,
Now, curdling their smiles, disowned it,
And secretly schemed its shame.

The lily began to wither,
Since the world was no longer sweet;
And hands that had brought it thither,
Flung it into the street.

A sensitive soul and tender
The flung-away lily found:
He had seen it in hours of splendour,
So he lifted it from the ground.

He carried it back to the garden
Where in olden days it grew,
And he knelt, and prayed for it pardon
From the sun, and the breeze, and the dew.

Then the breeze, since it knows no malice,
And the sun that detesteth strife,
And the dew whose abode is the chalice,
Would have coaxed back the lily to life.

But the lily would not waken,
Nor ever will waken more;
And feet and fame have forsaken
Its place by the cottage door.

Alfred Austin

A Souless Singer

Hail! throstle, by thy ringing voice descried,
Not by the wanderings of the tuneless wing!
Now once again where forked boughs divide,
Lost in green leafage thou dost perch and sing:
Trilling, shrilling, far and wide,
``It is Spring."

Thy matins peal long ere the rosy dawn
Unfolds its hull and burgeons into light;
Nor cease thy vespers till from darkling lawn
The silent shadows steal away in flight,
And the star-lit tent is drawn
Round the Night.

Is it in Heaven, or mid-way of the Earth,
Thou learn'st to outvoice, outnumber all the Nine?
What is the secret of thy madcap mirth?
Wilt thou not tell it me, and make it mine?
What is all my singing worth,
Matched with thine?

If heedless mortals only understood
What the prerogatives of real renown,
Hearing thee warble in umbrageous wood,
Or in the dingles of the rolling down,
It is thou, not I, that should
Wear the Crown.

And yet perchance more deep and more divine
The insufficiency of my poor strain.
One single solitary note is thine:
Weak though they haply be, yet I have twain.
Joy is all thy song; of mine
Half is pain.

Thou with thy carol flatterest the Year
But when it frolics into happy bloom:
Only those notes hast thou, wild chanticleer,
That with their thoughtlessness can banish gloom
From its cradle; I, a tear
For its tomb.

Thou with the blossom and bud and baby leaf,
Heartless of woe, dost revel and rejoice,
But for sere sorrow and the pensive sheaf
Lackest, for all thy minstrelsy, the voice:
There are seasons when sweet grief
Is our choice.

So, throstle, be the very voice of Spring,
And bring back rapture to the wrinkled bole!
Of all life's chords joy is the leading string,

And happiness is much, but not the whole.
Leave it then to me to sing
To the soul!

Alfred Austin

A Spring Carol

I

Blithe friend! blithe throstle! Is it thou,
Whom I at last again hear sing,
Perched on thy old accustomed bough,
Poet-prophet of the Spring?
Yes! Singing as thou oft hast sung,
I can see thee there among
The clustered branches of my leafless oak;
Where, thy plumage gray as it,
Thou mightst unsuspected sit,
Didst thou not thyself betray
With thy penetrating lay,
Swelling thy mottled breast at each triumphant stroke.
Wherefore warble half concealed,
When thy notes are shaft and shield,
And no hand that lives would slay
Singer of such a roundelay?
Telling of thy presence thus,
Be nor coy nor timorous!
Sing loud! Sing long!
And let thy song
Usurp the air 'twixt earth and sky:
Let it soar and sink and rally,
Ripple low along the valley,
Break against the fir-trees high,
Ofttimes pausing, never dying,
While we lean where fancy bids,
Listening, with half-closed lids,
Unto the self-same chant, most sweet, most satisfying.

II

Where hast thou been all the dumb winter days,
When neither sunlight was nor smile of flowers,
Neither life, nor love, nor frolic,
Only expanse melancholic,
With never a note of thy exhilarating lays?
But, instead, the raven's croak,
Sluggish dawns and draggled hours,
Gusts morose and callous showers,
Underneath whose cutting stroke
Huddle the seasoned kine, and even the robin cowers.
Wast thou asleep in some snug hollow
Of my hybernating oak,
Through the dripping weeks that follow
One another slow, and soak
Summer's extinguished fire and autumn's drifting smoke?
Did its waking awake thee,
Or thou it with melody?
Or together did ye both
Start from winter's sleep and sloth,
And the self-same sap that woke
Bole and branch, and sets them budding,

Is thy throat with rapture flooding?
Or, avoiding icy yoke,
When golden leaves floated on silver meres,
And pensive Autumn, keeping back her tears,
Nursed waning Summer in her quiet lap,
Didst thou timely pinions flap,
Fleeing from a land of loss,
And, with happy mates, across
Ocean's restless ridges travel,
To that lemon-scented shore
Where, beneath a deep-domed sky,
Carven of lapis-lazuli,
Golden sunlight evermore
Glistens against golden gravel,
Nor ever a snowflake falls, nor rain-clouds wheel and ravel;
Clime where I wandered once among
Ruins old with feelings young,
Whither too I count to fly
When my songful seasons die,
And with the self-same spell which, first when mine,
Intensified my youth, to temper my decline.

III

Wherefore dost thou sing, and sing?
Is it for sheer joy of singing?
Is it to hasten lagging Spring,
Or greet the Lenten lilies through turf and turf upspringing?
Dost thou sing to earth or sky?
Never comes but one reply:
Carol faint, carol high,
Ringing, ringing, ringing!
Are those iterated trills
For the down-looking daffodils,
That have strained and split their sheath,
And are listening underneath?
Or but music's prompting note,
Whereunto the lambs may skip?
Haply dost thou swell thy throat,
Only to show thy craftsmanship?
Wouldst thou pipe if none should hearken?
If the sky should droop and darken,
And, as came the hills more close,
Moody March to wooing Spring
Sudden turned a mouth morose,-
Unheeded wouldst, unheeding, sing?
What is it rules thy singing season?
Instinct, that diviner reason,
To which the thirst to know seemeth a sort of treason?
If it be,
Enough for me,
And any motive for thy music I
Will not ask thee to impart,

Letting my head play traitor to my heart,
Too deeply questioning why.
Sing for nothing, if thou wilt,
Or, if thou for aught must sing,
Sing unto thy anxious spouse,
Sitting somewhere 'mong the boughs,
In the nest that thou hast built,
Underneath her close-furled wing
Future carols fostering.
Sing, because it is thy bent;
Sing, to heighten thy content!
Sing, for secret none can guess;
Sing for very uselessness!
Sing for love of love and pleasure,
Unborn joy, unfound treasure,
Rapture no words can reach, yearning no thoughts can measure!

IV

Why dost thou ever cease to sing?
Singing is such sweet comfort, who,
If he could sing the whole year through,
Would barter it for anything?
Why do not thou and joy their reign assert
Over winter, death, and hurt?
If thou forcest them to flee,
They in turn will banish thee,
Making life betwixt ye thus
Mutably monotonous.
O, why dost thou not perch and pipe perpetually?
All the answer I do get,
Is louder, madder music yet;
Thus rebuking: Thou dost err!
I am no philosopher;
Only a poet, forced to sing,
When the cold gusts gather and go,
When the earth stirs in its tomb,
And, asudden, witching Spring
Into her bosom sucks the snow,
To give it back in thorn and cherry-bloom:
When along the hedgerows twinkle
Roguish eyes of periwinkle,
When with undulating glee
Yaffles scream from tree to tree,
And on every bank are seen
Primroses that long have been
Lying in wait with ambushed eyes
To break forth when Winter flies,
Joined by all things swift and sweet,
Following him with noiseless feet,
Pelting him with April showers,
Chasing and chanting his defeat,
Till with undisputed flowers

Thronged are all the lanes to greet
Dove-like inspiring Spring, many-voiced Paraclete.

V

Therefore, glad bird! warble, and shrill, and carol,
Now that Earth whom winter stripped,
Putteth on her Spring apparel,
Daintily woven, gaily tipped;
Now that in the tussocked mead
Lambkins one another jostle,-
Carol, carol! jocund throstle!
Impregnating the air with thy melodious seed,
Which, albeit scattered late,
Now will quickly germinate,
Giving us who waited long
Vernal harvest of ripe song:
Which, I do perceive, was sent
Nowise to deepen argument,
Rather to teach me how, like thee,
To merge doubt in melody.
Sing, sing away,
All through the day,
Lengthening out the twilight gray,
And with thy trebles of delight
Invade the threshold of the night:
Until felicity, too high, too deep,
Saturated senses steep,
And all that lives and loves subside to songless sleep.

Alfred Austin

A Tale Of True Love

Not in the mist of legendary ages,
Which in sad moments men call long ago,
And people with bards, heroes, saints, and sages,
And virtues vanished, since we do not know,
But here to-day wherein we all grow old,
But only we, this Tale of True Love will be told.

For Earth to tender wisdom grows not older,
But to young hearts remains for ever young,
Spring no less winsome, Winter winds no colder,
Than when tales first were told, songs first were sung.
And all things always still remain the same,
That touch the human heart, and feed Love's vestal flame.

And, if you have ears to hear and eyes for seeing,
Maidens there be, as were there in your youth,
That round you breathe, and move, and have their being,
Fair as Greek Helen, pure as Hebrew Ruth;
With Heaven-appointed poets, quick to sing
Of blameless warrior brave, and wisdom-counselled king.

And, tho' in this our day, youth, love, and beauty,
Are far too often glorified as slave
Of every sense except the sense of Duty,
In fables that dishonour and deprave,
The old-world Creeds still linger, taught us by
The pious lips that mute now in the churchyard lie.

And this true simple tale in verse as simple
Will from its prelude to its close be told,
As free from artifice as is the dimple
In childhood's cheek, whereby is age consoled.
And haply it may soothe some sufferer's lot,
When noisier notes are husht, and newer ones forgot.

And think not, of your graciousness, I pray you,
Who tells the tale is one of those who deem
That love will beckon only to betray you,
Life an illusion, happiness a dream;
Only that noble grief is happier far
Than transitory lusts and feverish raptures are.

It was the season when aggressive Winter,
That had so long invested the sealed world,
With frosts that starve and hurricanes that splinter,
And rain, hail, blizzard, mercilessly hurled,
Made one forlorn last effort to assail
Ere Spring's relieving spears came riding on the gale.

For Amazonian March with breast uncovered
Blew loud her clarion, and the wintry host
Took courage fresh and lingeringly hovered

Round vale and hill, wherever needed most;
And ever and anon the raging weather
And wolfish winds re-formed, and onward swept together,

Loud-bellowing to the thunder-clouds to follow:
But all in vain, for here, there, everywhere,
Primrose battalions, seizing ridge and hollow,
Dingle, and covert, wind-flowers wild that dare
Beyond their seeming, bluebells without sound,
And scentless violets peeped, to spring up from the ground.

And, covering their advance, swift-scouring showers,
Gathering, dispersing, skirmished through the sky,
Till squadrons of innumerable flowers
Thronged through the land far as you could descry.
Then Winter, smitten with despair and dread,
Folded his fluttering tents, sounded retreat, and fled.

Whereat the land, so long beleaguered, seeing
The peril past, and Winter's iron ring
Broken, and all his cohorts norward fleeing,
Came forth to welcome and embrace the Spring,
Spring the Deliverer, and from sea and shore
Rose the rejoicing shout, ``See, April dawns once more!"

Radiant she came, attended by her zephyrs,
And forth from dusky stall and hurdled fold
Poured lowing kine and sleeky-coated heifers,
To roam at will through pastures green and gold,
Where unweaned lambs from morning until night
Raced round their nibbling dams, and frolicked with delight.

High up, on larch and cypress, merle and mavis
Vociferated love-lays sweet as strong,
And the bird dear to Homer and to Hafiz
Proclaimed the joy of sadness all night long;
Vowed each new Spring more Spring-like than the last,
And triumphed over Time, futile iconoclast.

Then imperceptibly and slowly rounded
Slim girlish April into maiden May,
Whereat still louder everywhere resounded
The cuckoo's call and throstle's roundelay.
It was as though in meadow, chase, and wood,
God made the world anew, and saw that it was good.

Then feudal Avoncourt, the stern and stately,
Whose dawn deep hidden in undated days,
Not like those palaces erected lately
Whose feet swift crumble, and whose face decays,
Defieth Time's insatiable tooth,
Relaxed grave gaze and wore the countenance of youth.

It had beheld kings and proud empires vanish,
Male sceptres shattered, princedoms pass away,
Norman, Plantagenet, Lombard, Swabian, Spanish,
Rise, rule, then totter, and topple from their sway;
York and Lancastrian Rose unfold and bloom,
Then canker and decay, and vanish in the tomb.

It faces the four winds with like demeanour
Norward as Southernward, as though to say,
"Blow from some other, stronger and still keener,
Wherefrom you will, and I will face that way."
And round it as you roam, to gaze perplexed
Each side seems loveliest till you look upon the next.

Its present seeming unto ages Tudor
It owes, by unnamed, unknown hands designed,
Who planned and worked amid a folk deemed ruder,
But who with grace enduring strength combined.
Like sturdy oak with all its leaves still on,
When foliage from elm and sycamore have gone.

Upon its delicate, lofty-jutting portal
Imaginative minds and hands have wrought
Of dead artificers once deemed immortal,
From Southern climes by kings and magnates brought,
When architects and sculptors smiled in scorn
On plain defensive days and called the world reborn.

But time hath mellowed mullion, roof, and gable,
Stone-work without, and wainscotting within;
And nigh them oaken-timbered barn and stable,
Lowlier, withal of countenance akin,
Cluster, for in times olden, meek, and proud,
Being nearer much than now, their kinship was avowed.

From its slope woodlands and long alleys shaded,
Saving that all around it and more near
Stretches wild chase by ploughshare uninvaded,
Where roam rough cattle and unherded deer,
That look up as you pass from brackened sod,
Then flee with step as fleet as that whereon they trod.

Through vale below from many a source unfailing
A river flows where deft hands cast the line,
Well stocked with wary trout and bolder grayling.
Through smooth, fat pastures dotted o'er with kine
League after league the water winds away,
Oft turning as though loth from Avoncourt to stray.

It was in the sweet season that hath ravished
The virgin heart since ever love began,

A maiden, upon whom had Nature lavished
Each fair gift given to maiden or to man,
Roamed all alone through windings of its wood,
Seeking the way to where Avoncourt haply stood.

Onward in search of it she went, but slowly,
For who could hasten through so fresh a scene,
With violets paved, the lovelier because lowly,
And pallid primroses on ground of green;
While overhead each bird that hath a voice
Seemed in its own blithe notes to revel and rejoice.

And ever and anon she gazed around her,
Or knelt to gather some appealing flower,
And to dear God, the Father and the Founder
Of all things good, the all-protecting Power,
Breathed a brief prayer of thanks within her breast,
Feeling she roamed in Heaven on earth made manifest.

Sometimes she broke into spontaneous singing,
Such as fond nurse to fretful babe might sing,
Whose close as sudden is as its beginning.
Herself she seemed a portion of the Spring
Which, if she went, would lose the chiefest part
Of that which charms the gaze and captivates the heart.

At length she passed from out these paths embowered
To where meek does, young fawns, and shaggy beeves
Ranged amid bracken; but the House, that towered
Full nigh at hand, for intercepting leaves
She still descried not, so, advancing under
An arch of hornbeam, stood in husht, astonished wonder.

For there it rose as silent and abstracted
As though it nothing shared or had to say
With those that shadow-like have lived and acted
Upon the stage we call our later day;
From passing passions thoughtfully aloof,
Through age, not pride, without lamenting or reproof.

Then slowly timid, tentative explorer,
Longing to see yet dreading to be seen,
Asudden living figure rose before her
Of manly mould and meditative mien;
Modern, withal with air of ancient port,
As if the same blood flowed through him and Avoncourt.

``Forgive," she said, ``an overbold intruder!"
``I doubt if anywhere you would intrude;
But sooth none do on this survival Tudor,
Who visit its old age in reverent mood."
``And that indeed I do. I never saw

Aught that I so admired, or felt for so much awe."

`` Will you, I round it willingly can guide you,
Unless-and, told, shall fully understand,-
Wander you rather would with none beside you
To mar the silence of the windless land,
Saving Spring's choristers, whose constant trills
One hears or doth not hear, according as one wills."

`` You know it well?" she asked. `` I ought to know it.
Here was I born, here grew to boy's estate,
Pored o'er the page of storier and poet,
All that is big, magnanimous, and great,
Hardened my own, tried my dear Mother's nerves,
Robbed the home orchard, poached my Father's own preserves."

`` And are you now its occupant and possessor?"
`` So called, alas! whose ancestors have paid
The final tax, by Death the stern assessor
On all poor mortals equitably laid.
I have a leasehold; no one can have more,
This side at least the vague, still-undiscovered shore."

Thereat there fell a silence on their speaking,
And on they moved, he follower more than guide;
Oblivious she what 'twas that she was seeking,
Since conscious now of manhood at her side.
Withal, so much there was to lure her gaze,
That his on her could rest, nor stint its look of praise.

Then when they reached the Jacobean portal,
Back rolled its doors of iron brace and stay,
On grooves that seemed more cut for feet immortal
Than for a feeble transitory day,
And mounted oaken stair axe-hewn, unplanned,
With lion-headed piers unpolished and unstained.

From coffered ceiling hung down tattered banners,
And weapons warlike deadly deemed no more
Were parked on landing; grants of ancient manors,
With charts and parchments of black-letter lore,
Stacked spears and dented armour; ebon presses
With jealous bolts stood locked in embrasured recesses.

Chamber on chamber wainscotted and spacious
Was lined with effigies of warriors wise,
Reticent rulers, dames revered and gracious,
Whose fingers wove the silken tapestries,
Time-toned but faded not, that draped the wall
Of gallery long and straight, and square-set banquet-hall.

About lay obsolete instruments, wheel and spindle,

When women read much less and knew much more,
Huge logs for early-rising maids to kindle
On deep-set hearths, mottoes of lasting lore
In ancient tongues, Norman, or Saxon stave,
Bidding man live and die, meek, pious, steadfast, brave.

And many a question asked she, always getting
The answer craved for, given prompt and plain.
`` But look," she said, `` the sun will soon be setting,
And that old dial-hand that doth nor gain
Nor lose, I am sure, in its diurnal pace,
Reproves me I still lag in this enthralling place."

`` Then come again," he answered, `` at your leisure,"
And led her outward where the ancient pile
Looked as though dwelt within no special treasure,
And owned no spell nor charm save sunset's smile;
Like one of those large natures that betray
No sign that they are made of more than common clay.

`` And may I ask, your homeward footsteps, whither?
What! there! it is on Avoncourt estate,
And I by shorter path can guide you thither
Than that you came by, fear you to be late.
You lodge with much-loved tenants, for the wife
My foster-parent was in rosy-dawning life."

`` She did not tell me that; but sooth our meeting
Was but two days back, though I quickly saw
That she for you would evermore be bleating
With voice of blent solicitude and awe."
`` 'Tis so: on Sundays with a spirit meek
She worships God, then me the rest of all the week."

Wending and winding under curved ways shaded,
Wider than heretofore, they farmward trod,
While twilight incense all the air pervaded
Round flower-decked altar at the shrine of God,
This sacred Earth, and for approaching night
One star kept watch, as yet Heaven's only lamp alight.

To her it seemed the Real and Ideal
At last were one, and every bird that sings
Joined prayerfully in chorus hymeneal,
Ere folding music underneath its wings.
How little did she guess that ambushed grief
Watched all her thoughts and lurked 'neath every dewy leaf!

`` Are both your parents at the farmstead staying?"
`` Alas!" she said, `` like yours, they both abide
My coming further off, and in my praying
Alone survive; my guardian and my guide

My Mother's sister, whom we there shall find,
Most loving and most loved of living womankind."

Where buttressed Church with crenellated Tower
Over the village still kept watch and ward;
"For these," he said, "inherited have that power,
The pious citadels of peace that guard
The sin-beleaguered soul, and still repel
From humble homes and hearts the ravening hosts of hell."

Within were monuments of home-delved marble,
Whereon lay figures of his race and name,
Crusaders whose dead deeds no time can garble,
Learning destroy, malignity defame:
Legs crossed, feet resting against faithful hound,
And, at their side, their dames and children kneeling round.

Then would they wend them valeward to the river,
And he cast line that neither curled nor sank.
Round ran the reel, then the lithe rod would quiver,
And May-fly trout lie gasping on the bank,
Or, like a flying shadow through the stream,
Startled, would pass to pool sheltered from noonday gleam.

Which pleased her most, for sooth she thought sport cruel,
Yet watched it for the sake of his rare skill,
But happiest when asudden wingèd jewel,
The king-fisher, disturbed near rustic mill,
Darted, and deep into its nest withdrew,
Shortly to issue forth, and, flickering, raid anew.

So passed the days unnoticed and uncounted,
As louder, longer, later, piped the merle,
And cuckoo oftener called, if harsher throated,
And hawthorn decked itself with loops of pearl.
It seemed a world reborn without its woes:
Woodbine was in the lanes, and everywhere the rose.

All things that are in that seductive season
In them struck root and with them got entwined;
Looking before or after had seemed treason
To the free heart and unconditioned mind,
As daily tightened beyond time's control
That strongest of all ties, the kinship of the soul.

And deeper into bliss they wandered blindly,
While woe and wet winds kept from them aloof,
As from screened homestead visitings unkindly,
Where old-world windows under gabled roof
Seem gazing at the present from the past,
And wondering how long such happiness will last.

Ah me! the days of Summer, not of Winter,
The shortest are and swiftest glide away,
And leaves of Autumn, sober mezzotinter,
Linger far longer than the blooms of May.
Time that, when fledged by joy, finds wings to fly,
With sorrow for its load limps slowly, wearily.

One evening, as they watched the sunset fading,
`` To strangers Avoncourt must never pass,
For that would be dishonouring and degrading,"
Thinking aloud he said: `` withal, alas!
Sit by its hearth they must, and much I fear
That there they must abide for many a coming year.

`` No fault of mine nor yet of those now sleeping
In tombs ancestral. Unrelenting time,
That hath the future in its unseen keeping,
Hath lowered the lofty, let the lowly climb,
And swept away the sustenance of my home.
What is there that endures? Go ask of Greece or Rome.

`` Mullion from sill, transom from beam, is cracking,
Beauty and majesty their only stay;
And, save new wealth supply what now is lacking,
These too in turn will slowly pass away.
And I must save and strive in duteous ways,
So irksome felt by most in these luxurious days."

`` There is another way, some deem a duty,
None call unworthy," slowly she replied.
`` Women there be, gifted with charm and beauty,
On whom hath Fortune lavished wealth beside."
`` I am not made like that," he firmly said;
`` I but for love alone should ever woo or wed."

And, as he said it, on her face he centred
Strong tender gaze, as though to search her soul,
Which straight so deep into her being entered,
She felt a current beyond will's control.
Crimsoning she turned aside, and thus confessed
The secret she had thought to hide within her breast.

Out of a cloud long gathering burst a flashing,
Followed by thunder's discontented sound;
And straight they heard slow big round raindrops plashing
On the green leaves o'erhead and emerald ground.
`` Hark! I must hasten home," she said, `` before
The storm-wrack breaks."- `` And I will see you to your door."

All through the morrow much he seemed to ponder,
And oft would halt and gaze upon the ground,
Or look out fixedly on something yonder,

Unseen by others, which at last he found,
And then strode quickly on, since he had solved
The doubt that would die out oftener the years revolved.

``Yes, for she hath that higher understanding
That routs Life's phantoms with a fearless face,
And knows, when spectral enemies throng banding,
The good from bad, the noble from the base.
To-morrow will I offer, ask for, all,
Love, Faith, and Hope can give, whatever else befall."

But on the morrow came she not. More lonely,
Wandering, he felt than ever heretofore;
Nor on the morrow's morrow, and he only
Could wait her will, nor wend unto their door
Till wearily some doubtful days crept on,
And then the farmstead sought, to find its guests had gone!

Gone three days back, and none knew why or whither.
Then he with promptitude unleashed his mind,
In search for trace, now hither and now thither,
But trace or tidings nowhere could he find.
Still unremittingly he sought: in vain
Was search within our shore, was search beyond the main.

Slowly the glory from the Summer faded,
And ominously leaves began to fall;
And ever and anon harsh gusts invaded
Avoncourt, moaning through deserted hall,
And roaring woefully up chimney wide;
And mute the deerhound clung unto her master's side,

Or gazed at him with sad look sympathetic,
As though it too missed what its master missed.
``Ah, Lufra!" said he in a voice prophetic,
``She is gone, and we shall never see her more.
Cling you to me, and I will take you where
Wander awhile I must, wherever I may fare.

``No more than you can I unmask the meaning
Of hapless things that baffle mortal vows."
Then, sighing, saw he white-haired Winter gleaning,
Amid the crackling drift and fallen boughs
That lay on avenue, chase, and garden garth,
Fuel to feed faint flame upon her widowed hearth.

He was not one of those who love to wrangle
Before the populace for place and power,
Or fight for wealth with weapons that but strangle
The nobler passions, manhood's richest dower.
``I will return when wound shall less be felt,
And work among my folk, dwelling where once she dwelt."

Farewell he took of wood-reeve, keeper, ranger,
And tenants grave with grief, and some in tears,
And order gave that Avoncourt to stranger
Be leased for maybe many coming years;
Then crossed the vigilant, unsleeping sea
That ranges round our Isle, to keep it great and free.

He lingered not in that vain-glorious city,
Whose Rulers pass the sceptre to the crowd,
But wended to the Land where amorous ditty
By swain at work to maid is sung aloud;
Where life is simple, and unchanging ways
Of tillage still recall loved Virgil's rustic lays:

Where on majestic pedestals the mighty
Marble imaginings of Art august,
Thought-wrinkled Zeus and dimpled Aphrodité,
Exact our homage and command our trust;
Immortal gods whose never-ending sway
Rebellion cannot shake nor scoffing sweep away.

And in that high companionship he slowly
Stifled his sighs and cicatrised his wound,
And, with the griefs the lofty and the lowly
Alike must feel, his share of pain attuned;
More willingly, it may be, since he knew
He unto love and loss would evermore keep true.

Ofttimes he stood by shrines where peasants kneeling
Told of their sorrows to the Mother-Maid,
Unto celestial sympathy appealing
From the world's pitiless splendour and parade;
And in that sight he resignation found,
With sun, and sea, and sky, and mountain-peaks around.

So that when nigh upon a year had vanished
Homeward his longing and his looks were cast,
Feeling 'twere base to longer stay self-banished,
Grafting his future on a fruitless past.
And soon his steadfast journeying came to close,
Where Avoncourt amid its unchanged woodlands rose.

It had meanwhile been leased to lately wedded
Tenants, unknown to Fame, but well endowed
With what could rescue it from fate so dreaded
Of slow decay and ruin-mantling shroud,
And who already had done much to win
Its walls from storm without, and worm and moth within.

So, as in duty bound, he promptly started
From home prepared for him on his estate,

With cheerful step if somewhat heavy-hearted,
To visit those who lived within his gate;
Ascending through the woodland's winding ways,
That wore more careful mien than in the bygone days.

It was the dawn of Autumn, very season
When he from further search for her forbore,
Whom to forget had seemed to him a treason,
Though well he knew he ne'er should see her more.
Sound, sight, scent, yellowing elm, and conecrowned fir,
Sunshine and shade alike, reminded him of her.

But, resolute to curb regret, he entered,
And, led through hall and corridor, he wound
To long ancestral gallery, and centred
His curious gaze on what he saw around.
It seemed to have lost no look of days gone by,
Withal to blend young smile with ancient majesty.

Still on the walls the effigies ancestral,
In armour or in ermine, hung unchanged,
With the device of wild boar, wolf, or kestrel,
That once in English forests freely ranged;
With later draperies that seemed to bring
Distance more near and shed a grace round everything.

While gazing out on well-remembered garden,
Where old yew hedges screened new-planted rose,
Against whose beauty none his heart could harden,
He heard a door soft open and then close.
And, turning, saw Egeria, with a face
Pale as a moon that moves alone through lonely space!

``Are you a guest," he said, ``in my poor dwelling?"
``I am," she answered, ``your-your tenant's wife.
Hear me in patience, dear, while I am telling
What tell I must, but tell this once for life."
Whereat they towards each other drew more near:
One spoke, one listened, both without a sob or tear.

``I loved, I love you. Noble since I know you,
Here I confess that I shall love you still;
Since you will never show me nor I show you
More tenderness than now, for such God's will.
Knowing I should, love once avowed, rejoice,
Should not refuse your love, could not resist your voice,

``From you I fled, and steadfast left behind me
No word to weaken you, no sign, no trace,
Whereby your manliness could following find me.
For well I knew, that day your face my face
Scanned in strong silence, probing to my heart,

Love once confessed, no power could keep our lives apart.

`` And well, too well I knew, for all things told me,
Men's tongues, the air, I thus should wreck your life,
And Avoncourt reproachfully behold me
A selfish bride and paralysing wife;
That duty had decreed a harder fate
For you, for me. If wrong, I know the right too late.

`` In innocency's life there comes an hour
When stands revealed what it could never guess:
That there is magical and mystic power
To make love strong or leave it powerless;
If felt, if given without one selfish thought,
That Love is Wisdom's self, and all beside is nought.

`` Ask me no more, I beg, than what I tell you:
I am your tenant, at another's will.
How, wherefore, when, on that which then befell, you,
Though I be mute, will understand me still.
Forgive, but ne'er forget me. Now depart,
Till to endurance Time shall mellowed have the smart."

Her hand she stretched towards him, and, low bending,
On it his lips he reverently laid,
As on some sacred relic pilgrims wending
From far-off land with faith still undecayed.
Then he went forth, and she remained, alone,
Stern Duty unassailed upon its sovran throne.

But with the morrow's dawn there came the tidings
How that a crafty, freedom-loathing race,
Its schemes unmasked, had come from out its hidings,
And flung defiance in its Suzerain's face,
Then on his open territories burst,
Proclaiming these annexed unto its rule accursed.

Then England said, `` I must endure no longer
This long-conspiring, now presumptuous brood,
But must assert the Sceptre of the stronger
Against their vapourings vain and challenge rude,
Who have against me their false flag unfurled,
Urged to their ruin by an Empire-envying world."

Nor England only, nor main-moated Britain,
But their brave offspring homed beyond the sea,
In righteous wrath arose, and, duty-smitten,
Vowed that their Afric brethren should be free
To think and speak the thing they would, and dwell
Equal and safe around Law's peaceful citadel.

Then said Sir Alured, `` Against such foemen

I too will ride and strike," and round him drew
All Avoncourt's hard-knit, well-mounted yeomen,
And to his lands ancestral bade adieu.
Beneath him seethed the waters no one barred,
Over the wave-wide track our steel-shod sentries guard.

And day by day Egeria scans and watches
The ebb and flow of fluctuating war,
And ofttimes sees his name in terse dispatches
Shine among those that most distinguished are.
Then pride and terror in her heart contend,
And low she prays anew, `` Dear God! his life befriend!"

And when she reads of some fresh deed of daring
That decorates his breast and crowns his brow,
Sparing of others, of himself unsparing,
She weeps apart where no one sees. But now
This Tale of True Love hath been truly told.
May it by some be read, and by it some consoled!

Alfred Austin

A Te Deum

Now let me praise the Lord,
The Lord, the Maker of all!
I will praise Him on timbrel and chord;
Will praise Him, whatever befall.

For the Heavens are His, and the Earth,
His are the wind and the wave;
His the begetting, the birth,
And His the jaws of the grave.

'Tis He that hath made us, not we;
We were dust and slime of the ground:
He breathed on the dark, and we see;
He flooded the silence with sound.

Shall I pick and choose for His praise?
Shall I thank Him for good, not ill?
He is the Ancient of Days,
And He hews the rocks as He will.

So I praise Thee, O Lord, for the good,
For the ill, for the weal, for the woe,
For the cushat that coos in the wood,
And the wolves that howl in the snow.

For the close-fitting doors that are barred,
Lest the vagrant should whine for bread,
And the yawn of the slinking pard
That hath gorged and surfeited.

For the owl that jibbers and blinks
In the arches the Flavian planned,
And the stare of the stony Sphynx
O'er the ribs of the fleshless sand.

What is there Thou hast done,
I will not thank for and praise?
Thanks for the sands that are run,
Thanks for the unborn days.

For the stealthy mildew and blight
That shows on the mellowing corn,
And the bankrupt that wakes at night
And weeps o'er the day he was born.

For the fears and the years that are null,
And the hopes Thou dost bring to nought,
And the worm-thridden ways of the skull
In which Shakespeare thought.

How shall I thank Thee, O Lord!
For Thy infinite ways and deeds?

For the edge of the cleaving sword,
And the neigh of riderless steeds:

The murderous glitter and tramp,
And the lives that are mown like grain,
The cheers of the victors' camp,
And the clammy sleep of the slain.

The laurels and loves that await
The Hero returned from the strife,
And the widows that stand at the gate
Loveless and lonely for life.

Thanks for all things that are,
For the fair, the foul, the fell;
Thanks for the Morning-star,
And the nethermost murk of Hell.

For the music of moonlight nights,
And the savour of summer days,
For the swoop of carrion kites,
And the stench of gibbeted jays.

The soft ripples that laugh in the bay,
The soft shadows that sweep o'er the moor,
And the plunge of the tides at their prey
When they level the homes of the poor.

Lift up your throats, ye waves!
Swell out your voice, ye hills!
Thank for the chance that saves;
Thank for the flash that kills.

For the bliss of a dewy dell
When lover and maiden meet,
And the venal kisses they sell
In the shade of the lamp-lit street.

For the tumult of hopes and fears
When the bridegroom steals to his bride,
And the coldness born of the years,
Though they still lie side by side.

Praise we, praise we the Lord,
The Lord, the Maker of all!
Praise Him on timbrel and chord;
Praise Him, whatever befall!

Alfred Austin

A Tusculan Question

One day as on an ass I rode,
By many a twisting gully,
To where once stood the famed abode
Of philosophic Tully,

A shepherd lad with hat aslouch
Was singing to his flock O;
I pulled my money from my pouch,
And chucked him a baiocco.

A moment gone, and with his psalm
The hills and woods were ringing;
But when the copper touched his palm,
Sudden he ceased his singing.

Ah! like to bees that cease to hum,
When pressing on for honey,
So doth the singing soul grow dumb,
Intent on clogging money.

Kind Heaven! forbid that ever I
Should sink in golden torpor!
If, living, I may sing, I'll die
Contentedly a pauper.

Alfred Austin

A Twilight Song

Why, rapturous bird, though shades of night
Muffle the leaves and swathe the lawn,
Singing thou still with all thy might,
As though 'twere noon, as though 'twere dawn?
Silence darkens on vale and hill,
But thou, unseen, art singing still.

'Tis because, though in dusky bower,
With love delighted still thou art;
Nor hath the deepening twilight power
To lay a curfew on thy heart.
Thou lovest; and, loving, dost prolong
The sense of sunlight with thy song.

Thus may love's rapture haunt me still
When life's full radiance fadeth slow
Along the faltering west, and fill
With melody my afterglow,
And something of Song's morning might
Linger, to make you doubt 'tis night.

Alfred Austin

A Voice From The West

What is the voice I hear
On the wind of the Western Sea?
Sentinel, listen from out Cape Clear
And say what the voice may be.
``Tis a proud, free people calling loud to a people proud and free.

`` And it says to them, ` Kinsmen, hail!
We severed have been too long.
Now let us have done with a worn-out tale-
The tale of an ancient Wrong;
And our friendship last long as Love doth last,
and be stronger than Death is strong!"

Answer them, `` Sons of the self-same race,
And blood of the self-same clan,
Let us speak with each other face to face,
And answer man to man;
And loyally love and trust each other as none but free men can.

`` So fling them out to the breeze,
Shamrock, Thistle, and Rose!
And the Star-Spangled Banner unfurl with these,
A message to friends and foes,
Wherever the sails of peace are seen and wherever the war-wind blows.

`` A message to bond and thrall to wake:
For wherever we come, we twain,
The throne of the tyrant shall rock and quake,
And his menace be void and vain;
For you are lords of a strong, young land, and we are lords of the main."

Yes, this is the voice on the bluff March gale:
`` We severed have been too long.
But now we have done with a worn-out tale,
The tale of an ancient Wrong;
And our friendship shall last long as Love doth last, and be stronger than Death is strong!"

Alfred Austin

A Wild Rose

The first wild rose in wayside hedge,
This year I wandering see,
I pluck, and send it as a pledge,
My own Wild Rose, to Thee.

For when my gaze first met thy gaze,
We were knee-deep in June:
The nights were only dreamier days,
And all the hours in tune.

I found thee, like the eglantine,
Sweet, simple, and apart;
And, from that hour, thy smile hath been
The flower that scents my heart.

And, ever since, when tendrils grace
Young copse or weathered bole
With rosebuds, straight I see thy face,
And gaze into thy soul.

A natural bud of love Thou art,
Where, gazing down, I view,
Deep hidden in thy fragrant heart,
A drop of heavenly dew.

Go, wild rose, to my Wild Rose dear;
Bid her come swift and soon.
O would that She were always here!
It then were always June.

Alfred Austin

A Wintry Picture

Now where the bare sky spans the landscape bare,
Up long brown fallows creeps the slow brown team,
Scattering the seed-corn that must sleep and dream,
Till by Spring's carillon awakened there.
Ruffling the tangles of his thicket hair,
The stripling yokel steadies now the beam,
Now strides erect with cheeks that glow and gleam,
And whistles shrewdly to the spacious air.
Lured onward to the distance dim and blear,
The road crawls weary of the travelled miles:
The kine stand cowering in unmoving files;
The shrewmouse rustles through the bracken sere;
And, in the sculptured woodland's leafless aisles,
The robin chants the vespers of the year.

Alfred Austin

A Wintry Picture (II)

Now in the woodlands from the creaking boughs
The last sere leaves are loosened and unstrung,
Where once the tender honeysuckle clung,
And the fond mavis fluted to his spouse.
Already dreaming of her winter drowse,
And brooding dimly on her unborn young,
The dormouse rakes the beechmast, and among
The matted roots the moldwarp paws and ploughs.
Over the furrows brown and pastures grey
The melancholy plovers flap and 'plain;
And, along shivering pool and sodden lane,
As lower droop the lids of dying day,
Like to a disembodied soul in pain,
The homeless wind goes wailing all the way.

Alfred Austin

A Woman's Apology

In the green darkness of a summer wood,
Wherethro' ran winding ways, a lady stood,
Carved from the air in curving womanhood.

A maiden's form crowned by a matron's mien,
As, about Lammas, wheat-stems may be seen,
The ear all golden, but the stalk still green.

There as she stood, waiting for sight or sound,
Down a dim alley without break or bound,
Slowly he came, his gaze upon the ground.

Nor ever once he lifted up his eyes
Till he no more her presence could disguise;
Then he her face saluted silentwise.

And silentwise no less she turned, as though
She was the leaf and he the current's flow,
And where he went, there she perforce must go.

And both kept speechless as the dumb or dead,
Nor did the earth so much as speak their tread,
So soft by last year's leaves 'twas carpeted.

And not a sound moved all the greenwood through,
Save when some quest with fluttering wings outflew,
Ruffling the leaves; then silence was anew.

And when the track they followed forked in twain,
They never doubted which one should be ta'en,
But chose as though obeying secret rein.

Until they came where boughs no longer screened
The sky, and soon abruptly intervened
A rustic gate, and over it they leaned.

Leaned over it, and green before them lay
A meadow ribbed with drying swathes of hay,
From which the hinds had lately gone away.

Beyond it, yet more woods, these too at rest,
Smooth-dipping down to shore, unseen, but guessed;
For lo! the Sea, with nothing on its breast.

``I was sure you would come," she said, with a voice like a broken wing
That flutters, and fails, then flags, while it nurses the failure's sting;
``You could not refuse me that, 'tis but such a little thing.

``Do I remember the words, the farewell words that you spoke,
Answering soft with hard, ere we parted under the oak?
Remember them? Can I forget? For each of them cut like a stroke.

`` True-were they true? You think so, or they had never been said;
But somehow, like lightning flashes, they flickered about my head,
Flickered but touched me not. They ought to have stricken me dead.

`` What do I want with you now? What I always wanted, you know;
A voice to be heard in the darkness, a flower to be seen in the snow,
And a bond linking each fresh future with a lengthening long-ago.

`` Is it too much? Too little! Well, little or much, 'tis all
That rescues my life from the nothing it seems to be when I call
For a life to reply, and my voice comes back like a voice from the wall.

`` If one played sweet on a lute, yea so soft that you scarce could hear,
Would you clang all the chords with your hand that the octaves might ring out clear?
Lo! asunder the strings are snapped, and the music shrinks silent for fear.

`` See! the earth through the infinite spaces goes silently round and round,
And the moon moveth on through the heavens and never maketh a sound,
And the wheels of eternity traverse their journey in stillness profound.

`` 'Tis only the barren breakers that bellow on barren shore;
'Tis only the braggart thunders that rumble and rage and roar;
Like a wave is the love that babbles; but silent love loves evermore.

`` Feeble, shadowy, shallow? Is ocean then shallow that keeps
Its harvest of shell and seaweed that none or garners or reaps,
That the diver may sound a moment, but never drag from its deeps?

`` Cowardice? Yes, we are cowards; cowards from cradle to bier,
And the terror of life grows upon us as we grow year by year;
Our smiles are but trembling ripples urged on by a subside of fear.

`` And hence, or at substance or shadow we start, though we scarce know why.
Life seems like a haunted wood, where we tremble and crouch and cry.
Beast, or robber, or ghost,-our courage is still to fly.

`` So we look around for a guide, and to place all our fears in his hand,
That his courage may keep us brave, that his grandeur may make us grand:
But, remember, a guide, not an ambush. Oh, tell me you understand!

`` Still silent, still unpersuaded. Ah! I know what your thoughts repeat.
We are all alike, and we love to keep passion aglow at our feet,
Like one that sitteth in shade and complacently smiles at the heat.

`` You think so? Then come into shade. Rise up, take the seat at my side;
Or, see, I will kneel, not you. What is humble, if this be pride?
What seems cold now will chance feel warm when the fierce glare of noon hath died.

`` Have you never, when waves were breaking, watched children at sport on the beach,
With their little feet tempting the foam-fringe, till with stronger and further reach
Than they dreamed of, a billow comes bursting, how they turn and scamper and
screech!

`` Are we more than timider children? With its blending of terror and glee,
To us life-call it love, if you will-is a deep mysterious sea,
That we play with till it grows earnest; then straight we tremble and flee.

`` Oh, never the pale east flushes with ripples of rising day,
Never, never, the birds awakening sing loud upon gable and spray,
But afresh you dawn on my life, and my soul chants its matin lay.

`` When the scent of the elder is wafted from the hedge in the cottage lane,
Up the walk, and over the terrace, and in at the open pane,
You are there, and my life seems perfumed like a garden after rain.

`` The nightingale brings you nearer, the woodpecker borrows your voice;
The flower where the bees cling and cluster seems the flower of the flowers of your
choice.
I am sad with the cloud of your sadness, with the joy of your joy I rejoice.

`` What dearer, what nearer would you? Once heart is betrothed to heart,
No closeness can bring them closer, no parting can put them apart.
Oh! take all the balm, leave the bitter, give the sweetness with none of its smart."

The blue sea now had saddened into gray;
Solid and close the darkening woodlands lay,
And twilight's floating dews clung heavy with the hay.

One with all these, he neither stirred nor spake,
Though for a sound the silence seemed to ache,
Waiting and wondering when his voice the pain would break.

Then since the words hope forced despair to say
Seemed to have vanished with the vanished day,
She turned her from the gate, and slowly moved away.

And he too turned; but pacing side by side,
This mocking nearness did them more divide,
Than if betwixt them moaned the round of ocean wide.

But when o'erhead boughs once more met and spanned,
She halted, laid upon his arm her hand,
And questioned blank his face, his heart to understand.

Had trust or tenderness been hovering there,
She would have known it in the duskiest air;
But face and form alike of every trace was bare.

Her touch he neither welcomed nor repelled;
Pulses that once had quickened straight seemed quelled;
He stood like one that is by courteous bondage held.

One hand thus foiled, the other rescuing came,
And in the darkness sheltered against shame,

She fawned on him with both, and trembled out his name.

Then as a reaper, when the days are meet,
His sickle curves about the bending wheat,
He hollowed out his arms, and harvested his sweet.

`` Now what shall I cling to?" she murmured, `` Behold! I am weak, you are strong.
Brief, brief is the bridal of summer, the mourning of winter is long;
Never leave me unloved to discover love's right was but rapturous wrong!"

Again was silence. Then she slowly felt
The clasp of cruel fondness round her melt,
And heard a voice that seemed the voice of one that knelt.

`` The long, long mourning of the winter days
Waits sure for them that bask in summer rays;
One must depart, then life is death to one that stays.

`` This fixed decree we can nor change nor cheat;
For I must either leave or lose you, sweet,
And all love's triumphs end in death and dark defeat.

`` Death is unconscious change, change conscious death.
Better to die outright than gasp for breath.
Life, dead, hath done with pain; Love, lingering, suffereth.

`` The only loss-and this may you be spared!-
For which who stake on love must be prepared,
Is still that, though life may, yet death can not be shared.

`` No other pain shall come to you from me.
What love withholds, love needs must ask. But, see!
Since you embrace love's chains, love's self doth set you free."

So free they wandered, drinking with delight
The scented silence of the summer night,
And in the darkness saw what ne'er is seen in light.

Hushed deep in slumber seemed all earthy jars,
And, looking up, they saw, 'twixt leafy bars,
The untrod fields of Heaven glistening with dewy stars.

Alfred Austin

Agatha

SHE wanders in the April woods,
That glisten with the fallen shower;
She leans her face against the buds,
She stops, she stoops, she plucks a flower.
She feels the ferment of the hour:
She broodeth when the ringdove broods;
The sun and flying clouds have power
Upon her cheek and changing moods.
She cannot think she is alone,
As o'er her senses warmly steal
Floods of unrest she fears to own,
And almost dreads to feel.

Among the summer woodlands wide
Anew she roams, no more alone;
The joy she fear'd is at her side,
Spring's blushing secret now is known.
The primrose and its mates have flown,
The thrush's ringing note hath died;
But glancing eye and glowing tone
Fall on her from her god, her guide.
She knows not, asks not, what the goal,
She only feels she moves towards bliss,
And yields her pure unquestioning soul
To touch and fondling kiss.

And still she haunts those woodland ways,
Though all fond fancy finds there now
To mind of spring or summer days,
Are sodden trunk and songless bough.
The past sits widow'd on her brow,
Homeward she wends with wintry gaze,
To walls that house a hollow vow,
To hearth where love hath ceas'd to blaze:
Watches the clammy twilight wane,
With grief too fix'd for woe or tear;
And, with her forehead 'gainst the pane,
Envies the dying year.

Alfred Austin

Alea Jacta

Dearest, I know thee wise and good,
Beloved by all the best;
With fancy like Ithuriel's spear,
A judgment proof 'gainst rage or fear,
Heart firm through many a stormy year,
And conscience calm in rest.

Why should I let my wayward feet
Cross the fair threshold of thy life?
My hopes and cares of little worth
Drag down thy heavenlier part to earth,
And, like strange discord marring mirth,
Fill thy sweet soul with strife?

But though such fears will cloud my brain,
Nay, though stern Time their truth should prove,
Yet none the less I bid thee take
My life into thine own, forsake
Thy high heart, bid it beat and break,
Like mine, but, like mine, love!

Alfred Austin

Alfred's Song

In the Beginning when, out of darkness,
The Earth, the Heaven,
The stars, the seasons,
The mighty mainland,
And whale-ploughed water,
By God the Maker
Were formed and fashioned,
Then God made England.

He made it shapely,
With land-locked inlets,
And gray-green nesses;
With rivers roaming
From fair-leaved forests
Through windless valleys,
Past plain and pasture,
To sloping shingle:
Thus God made England.

Then like to the long-backed bounding billows,
That foam and follow
In rolling ridges,
Before and after,
To bluff and headland,
Hither there tided
The loose-limbed Briton,
The lording Roman,
And strong on his oars the sea-borne Saxon,
And now the Norsemen
Who hard with Alfred
Wrestle for England.

But onward and forward,
In far days fairer,
I see this England
Made one and mighty:
Mighty and master
Of all within it.
Mighty and master
Of men high-seated,
Of free-necked labour,
Lowland and upland,
And corn and cattle,
And ploughland peaceful,
Of happy homesteads
That warmly nestle
In holt and hollow.
This is the England,
In fair days forward,
I see and sing of.

Then, mighty and master of all within her,

Of Celt and Briton,
Angle and Frisian,
Saxon and Norseman,
Shall England plough, like the whale and walrus,
The roaring ridges
Of foam-necked water,
With long-oared warships
And keels high-beakèd;
And never a foeman,
Eastward or westward,
Shall dare to raven
Her salt-sea inlets,
Her grim gray nesses,
But, swift at the sight of her rearing cradles,
Shall scud and scatter,
Like wild geese fleeing
'Twixt wave and welkin,
Away from the dread of the shrilling weapons
Of foam-fenced England!

Alfred Austin

All Hail To The Czar!

All hail to the Czar! By the fringe of the foam
That thunders, untamed, around Albion's shore,
See multitudes throng, dense as sea-birds whose home
Is betwixt the deaf rocks and the ocean's mad roar;
And across the ridged waters stand straining their eyes
For a glimpse of the Eagle that comes from afar:
Lo! it swoops towards the beach, and they greet it with cries
That silence the billows- `` All hail to the Czar!"

All hail to the Czar! England's noblest and best,
Her oldest, her newest, her proudest are there,
And they vie in obeisance before the great guest,
For the prize of his nod, for the alms of his stare.
To the seat of their Empire they draw him along,
Where the Palace flies open to welcome his car,
And Prince, Press, and People, with leader and song,
Ring the change on the paean- `` All hail to the Czar!"

All hail to the Czar! the bold Monarch who shook
From the heart of the Lion its insolent lust,
That once from the strongest no outrage would brook,
Till it crouched at his feet, till it crawled in the dust!
Who the laurels bequeathed to us tore from our brow,
Who extinguished our fame that once shone like a star,
Made our rulers to tremble, our heralds to bow,
And our bosoms to mock us- `` All hail to the Czar!"

All hail to the Czar! O yes! show him your ships,
Had your courage not failed, he had seen before now,
As they dally at anchor, the gag on their lips,
And the peace-loving holiday trim on their prow!
Yes! show him your army, that mighty array
He so rashly defied when he ventured to mar
The last work of its hands, and remind it to say,
But with bayonets inverted- `` All hail to the Czar!"

All hail to the Czar! As ye revel and feast,
I marvel the ghosts of the bootlessly slain
Do not come from their cold lonely graves in the East,
From the hillside that looks o'er the desolate main,
Which they perished to save, ye surrender, to live,
To the man ye now slaver, all base as ye are!
Do not stalk through the banquet-hall, pallid, and give
The gay toast ere ye drink it- `` All hail to the Czar!"

All hail to the Czar! For his daughter he gave,
Like Atrides of old, without shrinking or qualm,
Though not that the white ships might move o'er the wave,
But that ours still might ride in immovable calm!
What Religion could once, now can Statecraft persuade;
And if ye would devote to the furies of war
Half as freely your sons as he gave up his maid,

Without shame might ye shout then- `` All hail to the Czar!"

All hail to the Czar! Are ye then sunk so low,
O ye sons of the once fearless masters of earth!
That ye pour out the wine for an insolent foe,
That in depths of dishonour ye simulate mirth?
That, like unto mongrel hounds beaten and cowed,
Ye, crouched, lick alternately smiter and scar?-
Oh, rather my country lay deaf in its shroud,
Than had lived to hear silent- `` All hail to the Czar!"

Alfred Austin

Although no stupid scoffer

Although no stupid scoffer, I
Am wholly at a loss
To apprehend the reason why
You kiss Lorenzo's Cross.

For though indeed a hundred days'
Indulgence thus you win,
There does not move a lip but says
That you did never sin.

Ha! but I did not read the whole.
I see it now; the gain
May be applied to any soul
In purgatorial pain.

And oh, how many spirits lie
In such sad bondage through
Having too often passed it by
Whilst gazing after you!

They longed, instead, your lips to kiss;
Their wish, though vain, was clear;
They fondly thought they would by this
Make sure of heaven here.

Indulgence each your lip acquires,
On them it doth bestow;
And you who lighted here their fires,
Do quench their flames below.

And so you soothe-'tis only fair-
The souls you lately vexed.
'Tis lucky you have grace to spare
For this world and-the next.

Alfred Austin

An Answer

Come, let us go into the lane, love mine,
And mark and gather what the Autumn grows:
The creamy elder mellowed into wine,
The russet hip that was the pink-white rose;
The amber woodbine into rubies turned,
The blackberry that was the bramble born;
Nor let the seeded clematis be spurned,
Nor pearls, that now are corals, of the thorn.
Look! what a lovely posy we have made
From the wild garden of the waning year.
So when, dear love, your summer is decayed,
Beauty more touching than is clustered here
Will linger in your life, and I shall cling
Closely as now, nor ask if it be Spring.

Alfred Austin

An April Fool

I sallied afield when the bud first swells,
And the sun first slanteth hotly,
And I came on a yokel in cap and bells,
And a suit of saffron motley.

He was squat on a bank where a self-taught stream,
Fingering flint and pebble,
Was playing in tune to the yaffel's scream,
And the shake of the throstle's treble.

`` Now, who may you be?" I asked, `` and where
Do you look for your meals and pillow?"
`` My roof," he said, `` is the spacious air,
And my curtain the waving willow.

`` My meal is a shive of the miller's loaf,
And hunger the grace that blesses:
'Tis banquet enough for a village oaf,
With a handful of fresh green cresses.

`` A plague on your feasts where the dish goes round,
Though I know where the truffles burrow,
And the plover's eggs may, in fours, be found,
In the folds of the pleated furrow.

`` And my name? O, I am an April Fool,
So yclept in the hamlet yonder;
For when old and young are at work or school,
I sit on a stile and ponder.

`` I gather the yellow weasel-snout,
As I wander the woods at random,
Or I stoop stone-still, and tickle the trout,
And at times, for a lark, I land 'em.

`` But I flick them back ere they gape and pant,
After gazing at gill and speckle.
For why should I keep what I do not want,
Who can fish without hook or heckle?

`` Yes, I am an April Fool: confessed!
And my pate grows not wise for scratching;
But I know where the kingfisher drills his nest,
And the long-tailed tits are hatching."

Then he leaped to his feet, and he shook his bells,
And they jangled all together,
As blithe as the chime that sinks and swells
For the joy of a nuptial tether.

And, as they chimed, in the covert near
Where ripens the juicy whortle,

The rustling whisper reached my ear
Of a loitering maiden's kirtle.

Whereat he laughed: ``I'm an April Fool,
But am jocund withal and jolly,
So long as I have this realm to rule,
And a lass to love my folly.

``Go and woo, where the deftly fair parade,
The smiles of a fine court lady;
But I will cuddle my rustic maid,
In the pheasant-drives husht and shady.

``Her cheek is as creamy as milk in June,
And the winds nor chap nor warp it;
We dance, with the blackbird to give the tune,
And with primroses for carpet.

``Her quick-flashing fingers knit the hose
For her little feet neat and nimble;
Her kiss is as sweet as a half-shut rose,
And her laugh like a silver cymbal.

``She never asks how my fortunes fare,
Nor wonders how full my purse is;
She sits on my knee, and she strokes my hair,
And I tell her my wildwood verses.

``She has not a gem she can call her own,
But I rest on a sheepfold hurdle,
And, out of the daffodils newly blown,
Entwine her a golden girdle.

``And soon I shall have for my nut-sweet girl,
When the May tree is adorning
Its weather-tanned skin with rows of pearl,
A new necklace, night and morning.

``When shortly we catch the cuckoo's call,
We shall clap our hands to hear him;
For let whom they may his gibes appal,
This April Fool don't fear him."

Then a wind-cloud, hued like a ringdove's neck,
Made the rain run helter-skelter;
The keen drops pattered on bank and beck,
And I crouched in the ditch for shelter.

But he whistled his love, and he waved his cap,
And the bells all rang together;
``Just fancy!" he cried, ``to care one rap
For the whims of wind or weather.

``Through all the seasons I keep my youth,
Which is more than you town-folk do, sir.
Now, which is the April Fool, in sooth?
Do you think it is I,-or you, sir?"

Then the rain ceased slashing on branch and pool,
And swift came the sunshine, after;
And the thrush and the yaffel screamed, ``April Fool!"
And the covert rang with laughter.

Alfred Austin

An April Love

Nay, be not June, nor yet December, dear,
But April always, as I find thee now:
A constant freshness unto me be thou,
And not the ripeness that must soon be sere.
Why should I be Time's dupe, and wish more near
The sobering harvest of thy vernal vow?
I am content, so still across thy brow
Returning smile chase transitory tear.
Then scatter thy April heart in sunny showers;
I crave nor Summer drouth nor Winter sleet:
As Spring be fickle, so thou be as sweet;
With half-kept promise tantalise the hours;
And let Love's frolic hands and woodland feet
Fill high the lap of Life with wilding flowers.

Alfred Austin

An Autumn Homily

Here let us sit beneath this oak, and hear
The acorns fitfully fall one by one,
The final harvest of the fading year
Now Summer eves and Autumn days are done.
The orchard rows stand desolate and bare,
Even the mellow quince is gathered now;
The furrow yields the sickle to the share,
And lonely trunks stretch out the leafless bough.
Thus wanes the body ere the mind decays,
And through the heart the vernal sap still flows,
While warm within, on short-lived winter days,
The soul's clear lamp unflickeringly glows.
So are we one with Nature, in the round
Of seasonable change, knit by some tie profound.

Alfred Austin

An Autumn Picture

Now round red roofs stand russet stacks arow:
Homeward from gleaning in the stubbly wheat,
High overhead the harsh rook saileth slow,
And cupless acorns crackle 'neath your feet.
No breeze, no breath, veereth the oasthouse hoods,
Whence the faint smoke floats fragrantly away;
And, in the distance, the half-hazy woods
Glow with the barren glory of decay.
Vainly the bramble strives to drape the hedge,
Whose leafless gaps show many an empty nest:
The chill pool stagnates round the seeded sedge;
And, as the sunset saddens in the west,
Funereal mist comes creeping down the dale,
And widowed Autumn weeps behind her veil.

Alfred Austin

An Autumn—Blooming Rose

I found, and plucked, an autumn-blooming rose,
And shut my eyes, and scented all its savour:
When lo! as in the month the blackthorn blows,
Lambs 'gan to bleat, and merle and lark to quaver.

Flower of my life! inestimably dear,
Now that its calendar wanes sere and sober,
To me your freshness, turning back the year,
Makes that seem April others call October.

With me 'tis Autumn, and with you 'tis Spring,
But Love hath brought these seasons sweet together.
Within your leafy life I sit and sing,
And you with me share wealth of harvest weather.

Thus all things we exchange, and nothing lose:
Take you life's wisdom, lend to me life's sweetness.
Your vernal voice shall wed my mellow muse,
And song give youth, and youth give song, completeness.

Alfred Austin

An Experiment In Translation

Blest husbandmen! if they but knew their bliss!
For whom, from war remote, fair-minded Earth
Teems, to light toil, with ready sustenance.
What though from splendid palace streams at dawn
No servile train, gaping at inlaid gates,
Corinthian bronzes, garments tricked with gold;
What though for them no snow-white wool be stained
By Eastern dyes, nor oil be smeared with nard,
Secure tranquillity is theirs, a life
Of rural wealth, from galling failure free,
Of ample leisure amid broad domains,
Cool grotts, and shimmering pools, and shady groves,
Lowing of kine, and, after woodland chase,
Delight of slumber under noonday boughs:
Hard-working hinds to homely fare inured,
Fear of the Gods, and reverence for age.
Justice, deserting Earth, forsook them last.

For me, enamoured of the darling Muse,
Whose badge I bear, may she to me reveal
The secret of the stars, the sun's eclipse,
Moon's endless labour, earthquake, storm, and calm,
Why winter suns subside into the sea
So soon, and summer twilights stay so long.
But if not mine the native fire and force
To find my way to Nature's very heart,
Leave me green vales and irrigating rills,
And soothe my lack of fame with woods and streams.
Where are the braes and burns of Thessaly,
And Spartan maidens wantoning in the woods!
O who will hence now wizard me away
To Haemus' dewy dingles, and with dense
Umbrageous branches curtain my retreat!
Thrice blest indeed is he that apprehends
The root and real significance of things,
Who tramples under foot both fear and fate,
Nor dreads the roar of Acheron's yawning surge.
Nor happy less, who knows the rustic gods,
Pan, old Sylvanus, and the sister nymphs.
To menace of the mob or regal frown,
To Dacian hosts and fratricidal strife,
Future of Rome, and perishable realms,
Insensible alike, his heart is spared
Pain for the poor and envy of the rich.
His wealth the harvest trunk and furrow yield,
Nothing he recks of edicts cast in bronze,
News of the hour, or Senate's wrangling strife.
Some scour the seas in search of war, and storm
The gates of Kings, put cities to the sword,
To drain gemmed goblets, snore in Tyrian sheets;
Some gloat upon their golden hoards, while some
Are dazed by sounding rhetoric or befooled

By cheers repeated from patrician lips
And plebs alike; exult in brother's blood;
Or in sheer lust of exile quit their home
To seek a roof beneath some other sky.
With his curved share the wise swain stirs the soil,
Source of his constant care, and sustenance
Of country, kin, sleek kine, and generous steers.
Respite is none; for still the season teems
With fruits, or lambing flocks; or mellow sheaves
Crest the long furrows, and restock the barns.
Then Winter comes; the olives must be pressed,
The hogs grunt homeward gorged with mast; the grove
Yields arbutus, the Autumn peach and pear,
And the grapes ripen on the warm dry soil.
Meanwhile his children clamber to be kissed,
His honour lives unstained, the foaming pail
Brimms with abounding milk, and on the sward
Young kids do mimic battle with their horns.
'Tis he that leads the Feast; and when his folk
Have lit the altar-fire and wreathed the cup,
Thee, Bacchus, with libation he invokes, and then
Tests at the target his head-shepherds' skill,
Or bids them strip and wrestle for the prize.
Such was the life the Sabines led of old,
Such Remus and his twin; and thus it was
Etruria throve; thus seven-hilled Rome became
One with itself, the glory of the world.
Such, too, ere yet unnatural Minos reigned,
And impious mortals banqueted on flesh,
The simple manners of the Golden Age.

Alfred Austin

Another Spring Carol

Now Winter hath drifted
To bygone years,
And the sod is uplifted
By crocus spears;
And out of the hive the bee wings humming,
And we know that the Spring, the Spring, is coming.

For the snow hath melted
From sunless cleft,
And the clouds that pelted
Slant sleet have left
The sky as blue as a child's gaze after
Its tears have vanished and veered to laughter.

See! light is gleaming
In primrose brakes,
And out of its dreaming
The speedwell wakes,
And the tender tips of the timid clover
Peep forth to see if the frost be over.

The celandine gazes
Straight at the sun;
The starlike daisies
Peer one by one;
And, over the pool where the sallow glistens,
The daffodil hangs its head and listens.

At first but single,
And then in flocks,
In dell and dingle
The lady-smocks
Make mist for the golden cowslip tapers
To shine like sunrise through morning vapours.

In fat-ribbed fallows
The lapwings nest,
And the home-coming swallows
Seek out where best
They may build, with a love that is sure and stable,
Their cosy cribs under last year's gable.

The blackcaps treble
A strain as sweet
As stream o'er pebble,
Or wind through wheat,
While, like flickering light, the kinglet hovers
Round woodbined haven of hiding lovers.

The lark chants, soaring
From moist brown heath,
'Twixt Heaven's high flooring

And earth beneath,
Like a true wise poet, in wavering weather,
A carol to link the twain together.

The cuckoo, flaunting
O'er glen and glade,
Flies loudly vaunting
New loves betrayed,
Till we all of us echo the madcap saying,
And laugh, and joyously wend a'maying.

Then in mask and tabard
The mummer trips,
And out of its scabbard
The iris slips,
And calls to the lily and rose, ``Why tarry,
Now the nightingale under the silence starry,

``Keeps trilling, trilling,
Its nest above,
The descant thrilling
Of straining love,
That yearneth for more-more-more,-till gladness,
Still winged with wanting, seems one with sadness."

But once the roses
And lilies blow,
Our wilding posies
Follow the snow,
And, turning to greet the fair new comer,
We find the face of the fearless Summer.

But though sultry shimmer
And panting heat
Lure senses dimmer
To deem them sweet,
Who would not exchange their passionate thunder
For May's moist blushes of maiden wonder?

But Winter hath drifted
To bygone years,
And the sod is uplifted
By crocus spears;
And out of the hive the bee wings humming,
And we know that the Spring is coming, coming!

Alfred Austin

Any Poet At Any Time

Time, thou supreme inexorable Judge,
Whom none can bribe, and none can overawe,
Who unto party rancour, private grudge,
Calmly opposeth equitable law,
Before whom advocacy vainly strives
To make the better cause to seem the worse,
To thy Tribunal, when our jangling lives
Are husht, I leave the verdict on my verse.
Irrevocably then wilt thou proclaim
What should have been, what now must ever be,
If in oblivion perish should my name,
Or shine aloft in mighty company.
I to my kind proffering of my poor best,
Remit to Time's arbitrament the rest.

Alfred Austin

As Dies The Year

The Old Year knocks at the farmhouse door.
October, come with your matron gaze,
From the fruit you are storing for winter days,
And prop him up on the granary floor,
Where the straw lies threshed and the corn stands heaped:
Let him eat of the bread he reaped;
He is feeble and faint, and can work no more.

Weaker he waneth, and weaker yet.
November, shower your harvest down,
Chestnut, and mast, and acorn brown;
For you he laboured, so pay the debt.
Make him a pallet-he cannot speak-
And a pillow of moss for his pale pinched cheek,
With your golden leaves for coverlet.

He is numb to touch, he is deaf to call.
December, hither with muffled tread,
And gaze on the Year, for the Year is dead,
And over him cast a wan white pall.
Take down the mattock, and ply the spade.
And deep in the clay let his clay be laid,
And snowflakes fall at his funeral.

Thus may I die, since it must be,
My wage well earned and my work-days done,
And the seasons following one by one
To the slow sweet end that the wise foresee;
Fed from the store of my ripened sheaves,
Laid to rest on my fallen leaves,
And with snow-white souls to weep for me.

Alfred Austin

Aspromonte

So you think he is defeated, O ye comfortably seated,
And that Victory is meted in your loaded huckster's scales?
O ye fools! though justice tarry, yet by heaven broad and starry,
Right, howe'er it may miscarry, ere the end arrive, prevails.

And you think a wounded hero may hereafter count as zero,
And that every desperate Nero rules the cities which he burns;
That a wild steed caught and snaffled means a nation wholly baffled,
And its future may be raffled in your diplomatic urns!

Well, then, know we would not barter this our never flinching martyr
For the very largest charter we could coax from ``Right Divine,"
That his blood upon your ermine only makes us more determine
To exterminate the vermin who have balked his grand design.

Dolts! upon successful traitor vengeance groweth only greater,
Not one whit less sure, the later the account may be delayed,
And will one day have its grip on every decorated fripon,
Though he loudly laugh and lip on, whilst the world is plunged in shade.

And I pray ye, O ye people! trust in palace nor in steeple!
If you sow ill you will reap ill, to your misery and scorn;
In your generation wiser, know that vows of priest and kaiser
Only supple cheats and lies are, to be broken swift as sworn.

But have faith that Time the Scourger will be even with the perjure,
When shall greener be the verdure upon Aspromonte's slope,
When the populations fitted to be wholly manumitted,
Shall be trampled nor outwitted, or by Emperor or Pope.

And no longer forced to tremble, or whilst cursing to dissemble,
Shall free Italy assemble, 'neath a new and grander dome;
Grander far than that of Peter, wherein Liberty shall seat her,
By his martyrdom completer who first struck for ``Death or Rome!"

Alfred Austin

At Delphi

I

Apollo! Apollo! Apollo!

II

Where hast thou, Apollo, gone?
I have wandered on and on,
Through the shaggy Dorian gorges,
Down from where Parnassus forges
Thunder for the Phocian valleys;
Where the Pleistus springs and sallies
Past ravines and caverns dread,
Have, like it, meanderèd;
But I cannot see thee, hear thee,
Find thee, feel thee, get anear thee.
Though in quest of thee I go where
Thou didst haunt, I find thee nowhere,
Apollo! Apollo! Apollo!

III

Still no answer comes. . . . Apollo!
Vainly do I call and holloa
Into each Crissoean cleft
Where the last year's leaves are left.
Deem not I have pushed my way
But from stony Amphissà.
I have come from far-off land,
Traversed foam, traversed sand,
From green pastures sea-surrounded,
Where thy phorminx never sounded;
O'er the broad and barren acres
Of the vainly furrowed breakers,
Across mountains loftier far
Than the peaks of Pindus are;
Skirted groves of pine and fir
Denser than lone Tempe's were,
With no selfish tread, but only
I might find thee, lovely, lonely,
Lingering by thy sacred city:
On me wilt thou not have pity?
Sun-god! Song-god! I implore thee!
Glow, and let me pale before thee,
Apollo! Apollo! Apollo!

IV

Fallen tablet, prostrate column,
Solitude and silence solemn!
Half-tilled patches, squalid hovels,
Where life multiplies and grovels-
Is this Delphi, this the shrine
Of the Musagete divine?
This the cavern, this the cell,
Of the Pythian oracle!

Where the tripod, where the altar,
Incense, embassy, and psalter?
Can this pool of cresses be
Cradle of pure Castaly?
From the rock though still it bubbles,
Travels onwards, halts, and doubles,
Where the Muses went to lave
Limbs as vestal as its wave,
'Mong the flashing waters flashing,-
Gaunt and withered crones are washing.
Not a note of lyre or zittern,
But, below, the booming bittern
Waits his quarry to inveigle,
While o'erhead the silent eagle,
Blinking, stares at the blank sun-
All of thee that is not gone,
Apollo! Apollo!

V

Who art thou, intruder weird!
With the fine and flowing beard?
Whom no snowy robes encumber,
But a habit black and sombre,
Yet in whose composèd eyes
Lurks the light of mysteries.
Priest thou seemest, but not one
Of the loved Latona's son.
In thy aspect is no gladness,
Glance nor gleam of joyous madness,
Only gloom, only sadness.
Underneath thy knotted girdle
Thoughts congeal and passions curdle,
And about thy brow ascetic
Lives nor light nor line prophetic.
Priest, but priest not of Apollo,
Whither wouldst thou have me follow?
Lead but onward, I will enter
Where thy cold gaze seems to centre,
Underneath yon portal dismal,
Into dusk and chill abysmal.
Hast thou pent him? Is He lying
There within, dethroned and dying?
If thou breathest, hear me crying,
`` Apollo! Apollo! Apollo!"

VI

No, but here He cannot be,
God of light and poesy!
What are these I see around,
Gloomy upon gloomy ground,
Making wall and roof to seem
Sepulchre of morbid dream?

Visages with aspect stony,
Bodies lean, and lank, and bony,
In whose lineaments I trace
Neither love, nor joy, nor grace:
Youth with limbs disused and old,
Maidens pale, contorted, cold,
Flames devouring, pincers wrenching
Muscles naked but unblenching,
Writhing snakes forked venom darting
Into flesh-wounds, gaping, smarting,
Furies shagged with tresses fell,
Ghouls and ghosts of nether hell!
Priest of beauty! Priest of song!
Aid me, if thou still art strong!
See me! save me! bear me whither
Glow thy light that brought me hither,
Apollo! Apollo! Apollo!

VII

O the sunshine once again!
O to stand a man 'mong men!
Lo! the horrid nightmare pales
In the light of flowing vales,
In the gaze of steadfast mountains,
Sidelong runnels, forward fountains,
Spacious sky, receding air,
Breadth and bounty everywhere.
What if all the gods be dead,
Nature reigneth in their stead.
Let me dream the noon away
Underneath this full-blown bay,
Where the yellow bees are busy,
Till they stagger, drowsy, dizzy,
From the honeyed wine that wells
Up the branches to the cells
Of the myriad-clustered flowers
Dropping golden flakes in showers.
Here reclined, I will surrender
Sense and soul unto the tender
Mingling of remote and close:
Gods voluptuous, gods morose;
Altars at whose marble meet
Downcast eyes and dancing feet;
Awful dirges, glad carouse,
Unveiled bosoms, shaded brows,
Wreathèd steer and tonsured skull,
Shapes austere with beautiful;
Till the past and present swim
In an ether distant, dim,
And the Delphic fumes rise denser
From a silver-swinging censer,
And in one harmonious dream,

Through a heavenly nimbus, gleam
Lovely limbs and longings saintly,
And pale virgins murmur faintly,
``Apollo! Apollo! Apollo!"

VIII

Priest, but priest not of Apollo,
Why dost thou my footsteps follow
From the deep dark shrine down there
To this temple of the air?
What, profaner! wouldst thou lay
Hands upon the sacred bay,
Tearing Daphne limb from limb!
Hast thou, then, no dread of Him?
How? For me? Avaunt, and pass!
I am not fool Marsyas.
Stay! Then to my forehead bind it,
Round my temples wreath and wind it;
'Chance the Avenger then will come,
Haunt and grot no more be dumb,
But the rills and steeps be ringing,
And a long array come singing,
``Apollo! Apollo! Apollo!"

IX

All in vain! Nor prayer nor taunt
Tempt him back to his loved haunt.
Fretted tablet, fallen column,
Solitude and silence solemn!
He again from Peneus ne'er
Will to Castaly repair;
Never more in cavern dread
Will his oracles be read;
Now I know that Thou art dead,
Apollo!

X

Then like fountain in mine ear
Spake the god aloud and clear:
'Take it! Wear it! Tis for thee,
Singer from the Northern Sea.
If the least, not last of those,
Suckled 'mong the genial snows.
Though the Muses may have left
Tempe's glen and Delphi's cleft,
Wanderer! they have only gone
Hence to murmuring Albion.
Need was none to travel hither:
Child of England, go back thither.
Traverse foam, traverse sand;
Back, and in thy native land
Thou wilt find what thou dost seek.

There the oracles still speak;
There the mounting fumes inspire
Glowing brain and living lyre.
There the Muses prompt the strain,
There they renovate my reign;
There thou wilt not call in vain,
'Apollo! Apollo! Apollo!'"

Alfred Austin

At Her Grave

Lo, here among the rest you sleep,
As though no difference were
'Twixt them and you, more wide, more deep,
Than such as fondness loves to keep
Round each lone sepulchre.

Yet they but human, you divine,
Warmed by that heavenly breath,
Which, when ephemeral lights decline,
Like lamp before nocturnal shrine,
Still burneth after death.

Yes, here in Tuscan soil you lie,
With Tuscan turf above;
And, lifting silent spires on high,
The cypresses remind the sky
Of the city of your love.

And you did grow so like to her
Wherein you dwelt so long,
Your thoughts, like her May roses, were
Untrained, unchecked, but how astir,
And oh how sweet, with song!

The Poet of Olympian mien
His frenzy doth control,
And, gazing on the dread Unseen,
Keep mind majestic, will serene,
And adamant soul.

He, save to Wisdom sternly true,
Is but the sport of Fate
And gladiatorial pain. But you!
A poet, and a woman too!
The burden was too great.

And so you laid it down, and here,
Oblivious of life's load,
Quiet you sleep through all the year,
Young Spring, staid Summer, Autumn sere,
And Winter's icy goad.

The swallows, freshly on the wing,
In April's sun rejoice;
The nightingales unceasing sing;
Yes, Spring brings back the birds of Spring,
But not, alas! your voice.

So round your sleep I soft let fall
Frail emblems of regret;
The lowly wind-flower, tulip tall,
The iris mantling wayside wall,

And weeping violet.

My votive flowers to-day will blow,
To-morrow be decayed;
But, though long sunk from sight, I know,
The glory of your afterglow
Will never wholly fade.

Alfred Austin

At His Grave

LEAVE me a little while alone,
Here at his grave that still is strown
 With crumbling flower and wreath;
The laughing rivulet leaps and falls,
The thrush exults, the cuckoo calls,
 And he lies hush'd beneath.

With myrtle cross and crown of rose,
And every lowlier flower that blows,
 His new-made couch is dress'd;
Primrose and cowslip, hyacinth wild,
Gather'd by monarch, peasant, child,
 A nation's grief attest.

I stood not with the mournful crowd
That hither came when round his shroud
 Pious farewells were said.
In the fam'd city that he sav'd,
By minaret crown'd, by billow lav'd,
 I heard that he was dead.

Now o'er his tomb at last I bend,
No greeting get, no greeting tend,
 Who never came before
Unto his presence, but I took,
From word or gesture, tone or look,
 Some wisdom from his door.

And must I now unanswer'd wait,
And, though a suppliant at the gate,
 No sound my ears rejoice?
Listen! Yes, even as I stand,
I feel the pressure of his hand,
 The comfort of his voice.

How poor were Fame, did grief confess
That death can make a great life less,
 Or end the help it gave!
Our wreaths may fade, our flowers may wane,
But his well-ripen'd deeds remain,
 Untouch'd, above his grave.

Let this, too, soothe our widow'd minds;
Silenced are the opprobrious winds
 Whene'er the sun goes down;
And free henceforth from noonday noise,
He at a tranquil height enjoys
 The starlight of renown.

Thus hence we something more may take
Than sterile grief, than formless ache,
 Or vainly utter'd vow;

Death hath bestow'd what life withheld
And he round whom detraction swell'd
Hath peace with honor now.

The open jeer, the covert taunt,
The falsehood coin'd in factious haunt,
These loving gifts reprove.
They never were but thwarted sound
Of ebbing waves that bluster round
A rock that will not move.

And now the idle roar rolls off,
Hush'd is the gibe and sham'd the scoff,
Repress'd the envious gird;
Since death, the looking-glass of life,
Clear'd of the misty breath of strife,
Reflects his face unblurr'd.

From callow youth to mellow age,
Men turn the leaf and scan the page,
And note, with smart of loss,
How wit to wisdom did mature,
How duty burn'd ambition pure,
And purged away the dross.

Youth is self-love; our manhood lends
Its heart to pleasure, mistress, friends,
So that when age steals nigh,
How few find any worthier aim
Than to protract a flickering flame,
Whose oil hath long run dry!

But he, unwitting youth once flown,
With England's greatness link'd his own,
And, steadfast to that part,
Held praise and blame but fitful sound,
And in the love of country found
Full solace for his heart.

Now in an English grave he lies:
With flowers that tell of English skies
And mind of English air,
A grateful sovereign decks his bed,
And hither long with pilgrim tread
Will English feet repair.

Yet not beside his grave alone
We seek the glance, the touch, the tone;
His home is nigh,—but there,
See from the hearth his figure fled,
The pen unrais'd, the page unread,
Untenanted the chair!

Vainly the beechen boughs have made
A fresh green canopy of shade,
Vainly the peacocks stray;
While Carlo, with despondent gait,
Wonders how long affairs of State
Will keep his lord away.

Here most we miss the guide, the friend;
Back to the churchyard let me wend,
And, by the posied mound,
Lingering where late stood worthier feet,
Wish that some voice, more strong, more sweet,
A loftier dirge would sound.

At least I bring not tardy flowers:
Votive to him life's budding powers,
Such as they were, I gave—
He not rejecting, so I may
Perhaps these poor faint spices lay,
Unhidden, on his grave!

Alfred Austin

At San Giovanni Del Lago

I leaned upon the rustic bridge,
And watched the streamlet make
Its chattering way past zigzag ridge
Down to the silent lake.

The sunlight flickered on the wave,
Lay quiet on the hill;
Italian sunshine, bright and brave,
Though 'twas but April still.

I heard the distant shepherd's shout,
I heard the fisher's call;
The lizards glistened in and out,
Along the crannied wall.

Hard-by, in rudely frescoed niche,
Hung Christ upon the tree;
Round Him the Maries knelt, and each
Was weeping bitterly.

A nightingale from out the trees
Rippled, and then was dumb;
But in the golden bays the bees
Kept up a constant hum.

Two peasant women of the land,
Barefoot, with tresses black,
Came slowly toward me from the strand,
With their burdens on their back:

Two wicker crates with linen piled,
Just newly washed and wrung;
And, close behind, a little child
That made the morning young.

Reaching the bridge, each doffed her load,
Resting before they clomb,
Along the stony twisting road,
Up to their mountain home.

Shortly the child, just half its height,
Stooped 'neath her mother's pack,
And strove and strove with all her might
To lift it on her back.

Thereat my heart began to smile:
Haply I speak their tongue:
``Can you," I said, ``not wait awhile?
You won't be always young.

``Why long to share the toil you see,
Why hurry on the years,

When life will one long season be
Of labour and of tears?

`` Be patient with your childhood. Work
Will come full soon enough.
From year to year, from morn till murk,
Life will be hard and rough.

`` And yours will grow, and haply I,
Revisiting this shore,
In years to come will see and sigh
You are a child no more.

`` Yours then will be the toil, the heat,
Yours be the strain and stress.
Pray Heaven Love then attend your feet
To make life's burden less."

Thus as I spoke, with steadfast stare
She clung between the two,
Scarce understanding, yet aware
That the sad words were true.

Down from the mother's face a tear
Fell to her naked feet.
`` But now unto the Signor, dear,
Your poesy repeat."

Without demur the little maid
Spread out her palms, and lo!
From lips that lisped, yet unafraid,
Sweet verse began to flow.

She told the story that we all
Learn at our mother's knee,
Of Eve's transgression, Adam's fall,
And Heaven's great clemency:

How Jesus was by Mary's hands
In the rough manger laid,
And by rich Kings from far-off lands
Was pious homage paid:

Then how, though cruel Herod slew
The suckling babes, and thought
To baffle God, Christ lived and grew,
And in the temple taught.

She raised her hands to suit the rhyme,
She clasped them on her heart;
There never lived the city mime
So well had played the part.

When she broke off, I was too choked
With tenderness to speak.
And so her little form I stroked,
And kissed her on the cheek;

And took a sweetmeat that I had,
And put it in her mouth.
O then she danced like a stream that's glad
When it hurries to the south.

She danced, she skipped, she kissed ``good-bye,"
She frolicked round and round:
The pair resumed their packs, and I
Sate rooted to the ground.

``A rivederla!" Then the three
Went winding up the hill.
Ah! they have long forgotten me;
But I remember still.

Alfred Austin

At Shelley's Grave

Beneath this marble, mute of praise,
Is hushed the heart of One
Who, whilst it beat, had eagle's gaze
To stare upon the sun.
Equal in flight
To any height,
He lies where they that crawl but come,
Sleeping most sound,-Cor Cordium.

No rippling notes announcing spring,
No bloom-evoking breeze,
No fleecy clouds that earnest bring
Of summer on the seas,
Avail to wake
The heart whose ache
Was to be tender overmuch
To Nature's every tone and touch.

The insolence of stranger drum,
Vexing the broad blue air,
To smite a nation's clamour dumb,
Or spur a rash despair,
Which once had wrung
That prophet tongue
To challenge force or cheer the slave,
Rolls unrebuked around his grave.

The cruel clarion's senseless bray,
The lamb's half-human bleat,
Patter of shower on sward or spray,
Or clang of mailed feet,
Are weak alike
To stir or strike
The once swift voice that now is dumb
To war's reveil, cicala's hum.

Oh wake, dead heart! come back! indeed
Come back! Thy thunderous brow
And levin shafts the world did need
Never so much as now.
The chain, the rack,
The hopes kept back
By those whom serfs are forced to trust,
Might well reanimate thy dust.

Nay, Poet, rest thou quiet there,
'Neath sunshine, wind, and rain;
At least if thou canst scarce repair,
Thou dost not share our pain.
It is enough
That cold rebuff
And calumny of knave and dunce

Did vex thy tender spirit once.

Where was the marvel, though thy corse
Submitted to the pyre,
Thy heart of hearts should foil the force
Of the sea-wind-blown fire?
It was but just
That what was dust
Should own the cradle whence it came-
But when did flame e'er feed on flame?

Or rather say the sacred torch,
The while it did illumine
Thy heart, did also so far scorch,
Was nought left to consume?
That ardent zeal
For human weal
Had searched and parched it o'er and o'er,
Till, lava like, 'twould burn no more.

I snatch the banner from thy grave,
I wave the torch on high;
'Spite smiling tyrant, crouching slave,
The Cause shall never die!
Sceptre and cowl
May smite or scowl,
Serfs hug the chains they half deserve-
Right cannot miss, howe'er it swerve!

Alas! you failed, who were so strong:
Shall I succeed, so weak?
Life grows still shorter, art more long;
You sang-I scarce can speak.
Promethean fire
Within your lyre
Made manly words with music mate,
Whilst I am scarce articulate.

He sang too early to be heard;
The world is drowsy still;
And only those whose sleep is stirred
By lines that streak the hill,
Or the first notes
Of matin throats,
Have heard his strain 'mid hush of night,
And known it harbinger of Light.

But when the Day shall come whose dawn
He early did forbode,
When men by Knowledge shall be drawn,
Not driven by the goad,
This spot apart,

Where sleeps his heart,
Deaf to all clamour, wrong, or rage,
Shall be their choicest pilgrimage.

Alfred Austin

At Shelley's House At Lerici

Maiden, with English hair, and eyes
The colour of Italian skies,
What seek you by this shore?
`` I seek, sir, for the latest home
Where Shelley dwelt, and, o'er the foam
Speeding, returned no more."

Come, then, with me: I seek it, too.
Are you his kith? For strangely you
Resemble him in mien.
`` No, save it be that all are kin
Who cherish the same thoughts within,
And gaze on things unseen."

It should be easy, sure, to find.
Waves close in front, woods close behind,
Green shutters, whitewashed walls;
A little space of rocky ground,
Where climbs the wave, and, round and round
The seagull curves and calls.

Lo! there it stands. A quiet spot,
Untenanted, it seems forgot,
Like shrine from which the God
Hath vanished, and but left behind
A something in the air, the wind,
Recalling where he trod.

Upon this balcony how oft,
When waves were smooth and winds were soft,
As now, he must have stood,
And dreamed of days when men should be
Bondless as this unfettered sea,
And peaceful as that wood.

What would he find if came he now?
A phantom crown on kingly brow,
Veiled sceptre, trembling throne;
Pulpits where threat and curse have ceased,
And shrines whereat half-sceptic priest
Worships, too oft, alone.

With muffled psalm and whispered hymn,
At secret dawn or twilight dim,
A pious remnant pray;
For their maimed rites indulgence plead,
And, half uncertain of their creed,
Explain their God away.

Gone the conventions Shelley cursed:
The first are last, the last are first;
The lame, the halt, the blind,

Now in the seat of power, along
With the far-seeing and the strong,
Mould mandates for mankind.

No longer doth man's will decide,
And woman's feebler impulse guide;
He yields to her his might:
Duty hath grown an old-world tale,
And chaste Obedience rends her veil,
For epicene delight.

Where now do towering despots reign
Over lithe knee and servile brain,
The scared, the base, the bought?
Monarchs themselves now bend with awe
Before the kingliness of Law,
The majesty of Thought.

Yes, Kings have gone, or reign as slaves;
Religion mumbles round our graves,
But shapes our lives no more:
Tradition, thrice-spurned Sibyl, burns
The leaves mob Sovereignty spurns,
Contemptuous of her lore.

Fair Maiden with the sea-blue eyes,
With whom, beneath these sea-blue skies,
Shelley had loved to live,
Forgive me if his dream, unborn
Then, but now adult, moves my scorn:
Would He too not forgive?

For where both Crown and Cowl defied
Sue for the ruth they once denied,
What would he find instead?
A fiercer despot, fouler creed,
The Rule of Gold, the rites of Greed,
And a bitterer cry for bread.

Wake, poet! and retune your strings.
The earth now swarms with petty kings,
Seated on self-made thrones,
And altar-tables richly spread,
Where Roguery consecrates the bread,
And Opulence atones.

Here Shelley prayed that War might cease
From earth, and Pentecostal Peace
Descend with dovelike breath.
Look round this bay! each treeless gorge,
Each scarred ravine, incessant forge
The instruments of death.

From Salterbrand's unfreezing peaks
To sunny Manfredonia's creeks,
Have alien satraps gone;
But, guarding Italy the Free,
Her murderous mammoth-monsters, see,
Come grimly wallowing on.

Yes, here He dwelt and dreamed: and there,
Gleams Porto Venere the fair,
The mockery of a name.
Where fervent Venus once was Queen,
Hot Mars now ravishes the scene,
And fans a fiercer flame.

Fair Maiden with the English brow,
Although from me, who shortly now
Must tread life's downward slope,
Illusions one by one depart,
Still foster in your virgin heart
The embryo of Hope.

The hills remain, the woods, the waves;
And they alone are dupes or slaves
Who, spurning Nature's breast,
Too high would soar, too deep would sound,
And madden vainly round and round
The orbit of unrest.

Pity, too, lingers. As I speak,
The teardrops tremble on your cheek,
Too silent to deceive;
And with assuaging hand you show
How tenderness still tempers woe,
And none need singly grieve.

Yes! sweet it were, with you for guide,
To float across that dimpling tide,
And, on its farther shore,
To prove if Venus still holds sway,
And, wandering with you round the bay,
Tempt back one's youth once more.

But, child! it is not Shelley's world.
Fancy's light sails had best be furled,
Before they surge and swell.
What helm can steer the heart? or who
Keep moored, inspired by such as You?
Heaven prosper you! Farewell.

Alfred Austin

At The Gate Of The Convent

Beside the Convent Gate I stood,
Lingering to take farewell of those
To whom I owed the simple good
Of three days' peace, three nights' repose.

My sumpter-mule did blink and blink;
Was nothing more to munch or quaff;
Antonio, far too wise to think,
Leaned vacantly upon his staff.

It was the childhood of the year:
Bright was the morning, blithe the air;
And in the choir I plain could hear
The monks still chanting matin prayer.

The throstle and the blackbird shrilled,
Loudly as in an English copse,
Fountain-like note that, still refilled,
Rises and falls, but never stops.

As lush as in an English chase,
The hawthorn, guessed by its perfume,
With folds on folds of snowy lace
Blindfolded all its leaves with bloom.

Scarce seen, and only faintly heard,
A torrent, 'mid far snow-peaks born,
Sang kindred with the gurgling bird,
Flowed kindred with the foaming thorn.

The chanting ceased, and soon instead
Came shuffling sound of sandalled shoon;
Each to his cell and narrow bed
Withdrew, to pray and muse till noon.

Only the Prior-for such their Rule-
Into the morning sunshine came.
Antonio bared his locks; the mule
Kept blinking, blinking, just the same.

I thanked him with a faltering tongue;
I thanked him with a flowing heart.
` ` This for the poor." His hand I wrung,
And gave the signal to depart.

But still in his he held my hand,
As though averse that I should go.
His brow was grave, his look was bland,
His beard was white as Alpine snow.

And in his eye a light there shone,
A soft, subdued, but steadfast ray,

Like to those lamps that still burn on
In shrines where no one comes to pray.

And in his voice I seemed to hear
The hymns that novice-sisters sing,
When only anguished Christ is near,
And earth and life seem vanishing.

`` Why do you leave us, dear my son?
Why from calm cloisters backward wend,
Where moil is much and peace is none,
And journeying hath nor bourne nor end?

`` Read I your inmost soul aright,
Heaven hath to you been strangely kind;
Gave gentle cradle, boyhood bright,
A fostered soul, a tutored mind.

`` Nor wealth did lure, nor penury cramp,
Your ripening soul; it lived and throve,
Nightly beside the lettered lamp,
Daily in field, and glade, and grove.

`` And when the dawn of manhood brought
The hour to choose to be of those
Who serve for gold, or sway by thought,
You doubted not, and rightly chose.

`` Loving your Land, you face the strife;
Loved by the Muse, you shun the throng;
And blend within your dual life
The patriot's pen, the poet's song.

`` Hence now, in gaze mature and wise,
Dwells scorn of praise, dwells scorn of blame;
Calm consciousness of surer prize
Than dying noise of living fame.

`` Have you not loved, been loved, as few
Love, or are loved, on loveless earth?
How often have you felt its dew?
Say, have you ever known its dearth?

`` I speak of love divorced from pelf,
I speak of love unyoked and free,
Of love that deadens sense of self,
Of love that loveth utterly.

`` And this along your life hath flowed
In full and never-failing stream,
Fresh from its source, unbought, unowed,
Beyond your boyhood's fondest dream."

He paused. The cuckoo called. I thought
Of English voices, English trees.
The far-off fancy instant brought
The tears; and he, misled by these,

With hand upon my shoulder, said,
``You own 'tis true. The richest years
Bequeath the beggared heart, when fled,
Only this legacy of tears.

``Why is it that all raptures cloy?
Though men extol, though women bless,
Why are we still chagrined with joy,
Dissatisfied with happiness?

``Yes, the care-flouting cuckoo calls,
And yet your smile betokens grief,
Like meditative light that falls
Through branches fringed with autumn leaf.

``Whence comes this shadow? You are now
In the full summer of the soul.
The answer darkens on your brow:
'Winter the end, and death the goal.'

``Yes, vain the fires of pride and lust
Fierce in meridian pulses burn:
Remember, Man, that thou art dust,
And unto dust thou shalt return.

``Rude are our walls, our beds are rough,
But use is hardship's subtle friend.
He hath got all that hath enough;
And rough feels softest, in the end.

``While luxury hath this disease,
It ever craves and pushes on.
Pleasures, repeated, cease to please,
And rapture, once 'tis reaped, is gone.

``My flesh hath long since ceased to creep,
Although the hairshirt pricketh oft.
A plank my couch; withal, I sleep
Soundly as he that lieth soft.

``And meagre though may be the meal
That decks the simple board you see,
At least, my son, we never feel
The hunger of satiety.

``You have perhaps discreetly drunk:

O, then, discreetly, drink no more!
Which is the happier, worldling, monk,
When youth is past, and manhood o'er?

`` Of life beyond I speak not yet.
'Tis solitude alone can e'er,
By hushing controversy, let
Man catch earth's undertone of prayer.

`` Your soul which Heaven at last must reap,
From too much noise hath barren grown;
Long fallow silence must it keep,
Ere faith revive, and grace be sown.

`` Let guide and mule alone return.
For you I will prepare a cell,
In whose calm silence you will learn,
Living or dying, All is well!"

Again the cuckoo called; again
The merle and mavis shook their throats;
The torrent rambled down the glen,
The ringdove cooed in sylvan cotes.

The hawthorn moved not, but still kept
As fixedly white as far cascade;
The russet squirrel frisked and leapt
From breadth of sheen to breadth of shade.

I did not know the words had ceased,
I thought that he was speaking still,
Nor had distinguished sacred priest
From pagan thorn, from pagan rill.

Not that I had not harked and heard;
But all he bade me shun or do,
Seemed just as sweet as warbling bird,
But not more grave and not more true.

So deep yet indistinct my bliss,
That when his counsels ceased to sound,
That one sweet note I did not miss
From other sweet notes all around.

But he, misreading my delight,
Again with urging accents spoke.
Then I, like one that's touched at night,
From the deep swoon of sweetness woke.

And just as one that, waking, can
Recall the thing he dreamed, but knows
'Twas of the phantom world that man

Visits in languors of repose;

So, though I straight repictured plain
All he had said, it seemed to me,
Recalled from slumber, to retain
No kinship with reality.

``Father, forgive!" I said; ``and look!
Who taught its carolling to the merle?
Who wed the music to the brook?
Who decked the thorn with flakes of pearl?

``'Twas He, you answer, that did make
Earth, sea, and sky: He maketh all;
The gleeful notes that flood the brake,
The sad notes wailed in Convent stall.

``And my poor voice He also made;
And like the brook, and like the bird,
And like your brethren mute and staid,
I too can but fulfil His word.

``Were I about my loins to tie
A girdle, and to hold in scorn
Beauty and Love, what then were I
But songless stream, but flowerless thorn?

``Why do our senses love to list
When distant cataracts murmur thus?
Why stealeth o'er your eyes a mist
When belfries toll the Angelus?

``It is that every tender sound
Art can evoke, or Nature yield,
Betokens something more profound,
Hinted, but never quite revealed.

``And though it be the self-same Hand
That doth the complex concert strike,
The notes, to those that understand,
Are individual, and unlike.

``Allow my nature. All things are,
If true to instinct, well and wise.
The dewdrop hinders not the star;
The waves do not rebuke the skies.

``So leave me free, good Father dear,
While you on humbler, holier chord
Chant your secluded Vespers here,
To fling my matin notes abroad.

` ` While you with sacred sandals wend
To trim the lamp, to deck the shrine,
Let me my country's altar tend,
Nor deem such worship less divine.

` ` Mine earthly, yours celestial love:
Each hath its harvest; both are sweet.
You wait to reap your Heaven, above;
I reap the Heaven about my feet.

` ` And what if I-forgive your guest
Who feels, so frankly speaks, his qualm-
Though calm amid the world's unrest,
Should restless be amid your calm?

` ` But though we two be severed quite,
Your holy words will sound between
Our lives, like stream one hears at night,
Louder, because it is not seen.

` ` Father, farewell! Be not distressed;
And take my vow, ere I depart,
To found a Convent in my breast,
And keep a cloister in my heart."

The mule from off his ribs a fly
Flicked, and then zigzagged down the road.
Antonio lit his pipe, and I
Behind them somewhat sadly strode.

Just ere the Convent dipped from view,
Backward I glanced: he was not there.
Within the chapel, well I knew,
His lips were now composed in prayer.

But I have kept my vow. And when
The cuckoo chuckleth o'er his theft,
When throstles sing, again, again,
And runnels gambol down the cleft,

With these I roam, I sing with those,
And should the world with smiles or jeers
Provoke or lure, my lids I close,
And draw a cowl about my ears.

Alfred Austin

At The Lattice

Behind the curtain,
With glance uncertain,
Peeps pet Florence as I gaily ride;
Half demurely,
But, though purely,
Most, most surely
Wishing she were riding, riding by my side.

In leafy alleys,
Where sunlight dallies,
Pleasant were it, bonnie, to be riding rein by rein;
And where summer tosses,
All about in bosses,
Velvet verdant mosses,
Still more pleasant, surely, to dismount us and remain.

O thou Beauty!
Hanging ripe and fruity
At the muslined lattice in the drooping eve,
Whisper from the casement
If that blushing face meant,
`` At the cottage basement,
Gallant, halt, I come to thee; I come to never leave."

But if those coy lashes
Stir for whoso dashes
Past the scented window in the fading light,
Close the lattice, sweetest;
Darkness were discreetest;
And, with bridle fleetest,
I will gallop onwards, unattended, through the Night.

Alfred Austin

At Vaucluse

By Avignon's dismantled walls,
Where cloudless mid-March sunshine falls,
Rhone, through broad belts of green,
Flecked with the light of almond groves,
Upon itself reverting, roves
Reluctant from the scene.

Yet from stern moat and storied tower,
From sprouting vine, from spreading flower,
My footsteps cannot choose
But turn aside, as though some friend
Were waiting for my voice, and wend
Unto thy vale, Vaucluse!

For here, by Sorgue's sequestered stream,
Did Petrarch fly from fame, and dream
Life's noonday light away;
Here build himself a studious home,
And, careless of the crowns of Rome,
To Laura lend his lay:

Teaching vain tongues that would reward
With noisy praise the shrinking bard,
Reminding thus the proud,
Love's sympathy, to him that sings,
Is more than smiles of courts and kings,
Or plaudits of the crowd.

For poor though love that doth not rouse
To deeds of glory dreaming brows,
What but a bitter sweet
Is loftiest fame, unless it lay
The soldier's sword, the poet's bay,
Low at some loved one's feet?

Where are his books? His garden, where?
I mount from flowery stair to stair,
While fancy fondly feigns
Here rose his learned lintel, here
He pondered, till the text grew clear,
Of long-forgotten strains.

On trackless slopes and brambled mounds
The laurel still so thick abounds,
That Nature's self, one deems,
Regretful of his vanished halls,
Still plants the tree whose name recalls
The lady of his dreams.

Aught more than this I cannot trace.
There is no footstep, form, nor face
To vivify the scene;

Save where, but culled to fling away,
Posies of withering wildflowers say,
"Here children's feet have been."

Yet there's strange softness in the skies:
The violet opens limpid eyes,
The woodbine tendrils start;
Like childhood, winning without guile,
The primrose wears a constant smile,
And captive takes the heart.

All things remind of him, of her.
Stripped are the slopes of beech and fir,
Bare rise the crags above;
But hillside, valley, stream, and plain,
The freshness of his muse retain,
The fragrance of his love.

Why did he hither turn? Why choose
Thy solitary gorge, Vaucluse?
Thy Fountain makes reply,
That, like the muse, its waters well
From source none ne'er can sound, and swell
From springs that run not dry.

Or was it he might drink the air
That Laura breathed in surging prayer
Or duty's stifled sigh;
Feel on his cheek the self-same gale,
And listen to the same sweet wail
When summer nights are nigh?

May-be. Of Fame he deeply quaffed:
But thirsting for the sweeter draught
Of Love, alas for him!
Though draining glory to the dregs,
He was like one that vainly begs,
And scarcely sips the brim.

Is it then so, that glory ne'er
Its throne with happiness will share,
But, baffling half our aim,
Grief is the forfeit greatness pays,
Lone places grow the greenest bays,
And anguish suckles fame?

Let this to lowlier bards atone,
Whose unknown Laura is their own,
Possessing and possest;
Of whom if sooth they do not sing,
'Tis that near her they fold their wing,
To drop within her nest.

Adieu, Vaucluse! Swift Sorgue, farewell!
Thy winding waters seem to swell
Louder as I depart;
But evermore, where'er I go,
Thy stream will down my memory flow
And murmur through my heart.

Alfred Austin

Ave Maria

In the ages of Faith, before the day
When men were too proud to weep or pray,
There stood in a red-roofed Breton town
Snugly nestled 'twixt sea and down,
A chapel for simple souls to meet,
Nightly, and sing with voices sweet,
Ave Maria!

There was an idiot, palsied, bleared,
With unkempt locks and a matted beard,
Hunched from the cradle, vacant-eyed,
And whose head kept rolling from side to side;
Yet who, when the sunset-glow grew dim,
Joined with the rest in the twilight hymn,
Ave Maria!

But when they up-got and wended home,
Those up the hillside, these to the foam,
He hobbled along in the narrowing dusk,
Like a thing that is only hull and husk;
On as he hobbled, chanting still,
Now to himself, now loud and shrill,
Ave Maria!

When morning smiled on the smiling deep,
And the fisherman woke from dreamless sleep,
And ran up his sail, and trimmed his craft,
While his little ones leaped on the sand and laughed,
The senseless cripple would stand and stare,
Then suddenly holloa his wonted prayer,
Ave Maria!

Others might plough, and reap, and sow,
Delve in the sunshine, spin in snow,
Make sweet love in a shelter sweet,
Or trundle their dead in a winding-sheet;
But he, through rapture, and pain, and wrong,
Kept singing his one monotonous song,
Ave Maria!

When thunder growled from the ravelled wrack,
And ocean to welkin bellowed back,
And the lightning sprang from its cloudy sheath,
And tore through the forest with jagged teeth,
Then leaped and laughed o'er the havoc wreaked,
The idiot clapped with his hands, and shrieked,
Ave Maria!

Children mocked, and mimicked his feet,
As he slouched or sidled along the street;
Maidens shrank as he passed them by,
And mothers with child eschewed his eye;

And half in pity, half scorn, the folk
Christened him, from the words he spoke,
Ave Maria.

One year when the harvest feasts were done,
And the mending of tattered nets begun,
And the kittiwake's scream took a weirder key
From the wailing wind and the moaning sea,
He was found, at morn, on the fresh-strewn snow,
Frozen, and faint, and crooning low,
Ave Maria!

They stirred up the ashes between the dogs,
And warmed his limbs by the blazing logs,
Chafed his puckered and bloodless skin,
And strove to quiet his chattering chin;
But, ebbing with unreturning tide,
He kept on murmuring till he died,
Ave Maria!

Idiot, soulless, brute from birth,
He could not be buried in sacred earth;
So they laid him afar, apart, alone,
Without or a cross, or turf, or stone,
Senseless clay unto senseless clay,
To which none ever came nigh to say,
Ave Maria!

When the meads grew saffron, the hawthorn white,
And the lark bore his music out of sight,
And the swallow outraced the racing wave,
Up from the lonely, outcast grave
Sprouted a lily, straight and high,
Such as She bears to whom men cry,
Ave Maria!

None had planted it, no one knew
How it had come there, why it grew;
Grew up strong, till its stately stem
Was crowned with a snow-white diadem,-
One pure lily, round which, behold!
Was written by God in veins of gold,
``Ave Maria!''

Over the lily they built a shrine,
Where are mingled the mystic bread and wine;
Shrine you may see in the little town
That is snugly nestled 'twixt deep and down.
Through the Breton land it hath wondrous fame,
And it bears the unshriven idiot's name,
Ave Maria.

Hunchbacked, gibbering, blear-eyed, halt,
From forehead to footstep one foul fault,
Crazy, contorted, mindless-born,
The gentle's pity, the cruel's scorn,
Who shall bar you the gates of Day,
So you have simple faith to say,
Ave Maria?

Alfred Austin

Awake! Awake!

`` Awake, awake, for the Springtime's sake,
March daffodils too long dreaming;
The lark is high in the spacious sky
And the celandine's stars are gleaming.
The gorse is ablaze, and the woodland sprays
Are as purple as August heather,
The buds unfurl, and mavis and merle
Are singing duets together.

`` The rivulets run, first one by one,
Then meet in the swirling river,
And on out-peeping roots the sun-god shoots
The shafts of his golden quiver.
In the hazel copse the thrush never stops
Till with music the world seems ringing,
And the milkmaid hale, as she carries her pail,
Goes home to the dairy, singing:

`` And the swain and his sweet in the love-lanes meet,
And welcome and face each other,
Till he folds her charms in his world-wide arms,
With kisses that blind and smother."
Then the daffodils came, aflame, aflame,
In orchard, and garth, and cover,
And out April leapt, first smiled, then wept,
And longed for her May-day lover.

Alfred Austin

Beatrice

She came into the April air,
And passed across the silvery lawn;
Blithe was her voice, her brow was bare,
And rippled from her radiant hair
The glow and glory of the dawn.
Her footfall scared nor doe nor fawn,
No timid songster ceased to sing;
But, wheresoe'er she strayed or stood,
Her maiden coming seemed to bring
A wider wonder to the wood,
And more of magic to the Spring.

When June is throned, and round her blows
The rambling briar and lily tall,
I saw her watch the buds unclose,
Herself, herself the loveliest rose,
And stateliest lily of them all.
The blackbirds' fluting, cuckoo's call,
She scarcely heard, for trembled near,
And thrilled her wheresoe'er she strayed,
That note more deep, that voice more dear,
That lures to love the listening maid,
When half is fondness, half is fear.

Among the rows of ripened sheaves,
And orchard harvests golden-red,
The tapestry that Autumn weaves
From fallen fruit and fading leaves,
Pensive she paced with matron tread.
Low was her voice, but all she said
Seemed strangely true, and deeply wise;
And mute her offspring gathered round,
To gaze into her tranquil eyes,
And listen to the sacred sound
Of mellow words and meek replies.

Now by the wintry hearth she sits,
Grey guardian of the household fire,
Foretells the Future, as she knits,
Then back her loving memory flits
To bygone days and dead desire.
Anon her fingers seem to tire,
And weary sense to droop its wing;
But, though her gaze hath feebler grown,
Nor knows she what the children sing,
She sees the Lamb before the Throne,
And hears the Angels canticle.

Alfred Austin

Because I failed, shall I asperse the End

Because I failed, shall I asperse the End
With scorn or doubt, my failure to excuse;
'Gainst arduous Truth my feeble falseness use,
Like that worst foe, a vain splenetic friend?
Deem'st thou, self-amorous fool, the High will bend
If that thy utmost stature prove too small?
Though thou be dwarf, some other is more tall.
The End is fixed; have faith; the means will mend.
Failures but carve a pathway to success;
Our force is many, so our aim be one:
The foremost drop; on, those behind must press.
What boots my doing, so the deed be done?
Let my poor body lie beneath the breach:
I clomb and fell; who stand on me will reach.

Alfred Austin

Before, Behind, And Beyond

O the sunny days before us, before us, before us,
When all was bright
From holt to height,
And the heavens were shining o'er us;
When sound and scent, with vision blent,
Wingèd Hope, and perched Content,
Joys that came, and ills that went,
Seemed singing all in chorus.

O the dreary days behind us, behind us, behind us,
When all is dark,
And care, and cark,
Or transient gleams remind us
Of fruitless sighs, averted eyes,
Baffled hopes and loosened ties,
Pain that lingers, time that flies,
And the hot tears come and blind us.

Oh! is there nought beyond us, beyond us, beyond us,
When all the dead,
The changed, the fled,
Will rise, and look as fond as
Ere Faith put out, and Love in rout,
Foes with vigour, friends without,
Pique and rancour, make us doubt
Hoc tolerare pondus?

Alfred Austin

Beyond the pasture's withered bents

Beyond the pasture's withered bents,
Upstanding hop, recumbent fleece,
And sheaves of wheat, like weathered tents,
A twilight bivouac of peace.

Alfred Austin

Blanche

Breeze! brisk breeze! that movest with the morn!
Breeze! lithe breeze! that creepst through the corn!
Breeze! O breeze! that fannest the forlorn!
Oh linger by the lattice of sweet Blanche of mine!

Breeze! coy breeze! that loiterest for noon!
Breeze! true breeze! that hast a tryst with June!
Breeze! kind breeze! I beg of thee a boon!
Oh peep in through the lattice of poor Blanche of mine!

Breeze! fleet breeze! that goest with the day!
Breeze! dear breeze! that hastenest away!
Breeze! breeze! breeze! I beg of thee to stay,
And breathe upon the pillow of pale Blanche of mine!

Breeze! night-breeze! that wailest on the wold!
Breeze! lost breeze! that wanderest in the cold!
Breeze! dread breeze! oh flit not by the mould
Which shelters what is left me of lost Blanche of mine!

Alfred Austin

Brother Benedict

Brother Benedict rose and left his cell
With the last slow swing of the evening bell.
In his hand he carried his only book,
And he followed the path to the Abbey brook,
And, crossing the stepping-stones, paused midway,
For the journeying water seemed to say,
Benedicite.

But when he stood on the other bank,
The flags rose tall, and the grass grew rank,
And the sorrel red and the white meadow-sweet
Shook their dust on his sandalled feet,
And, lifting their heads where his girdle hung,
Would surely have said had they found a tongue,
Benedicite.

Onward and upward he clomb and wound,
Bruising the thyme on the nibbled ground
Here and there, in the untrimmed brake,
The dog-rose bloomed for its own sweet sake;
The woodbine clambered up out of reach,
But the scent of them all breathed as plain as speech,
Benedicite.

Shortly he came to a leafy nook,
Where wind never entered nor branch ever shook.
Itself was the only thing in sight,
And the rest of the world was shut out quite.
'Twas as self-contained as the holy place
Where the children quire with upturned face,
Benedicite.

A dell so curtained with trunks and boughs,
That in hours when the ringdove coos to his spouse,
The sun to its heart scarce a way could win.
But the trees now had drawn all their shadows in;
There was nothing but scent in the dewy air,
And the silence seemed saying in mental prayer,
Benedicite.

'Gainst the trunk of a beech, round, smooth, and gray,
Brother Benedict leaned, with intent to pray,
And opened his book: with vellum bound;
Within, red letters on faded ground;
Pater, and Ave, and saving Creed:-
But look where you would, you seemed to read,
Benedicite.

He scarce had a verse of his office said,
Ere a bird in the branches overhead
Began to warble so sweet a strain,
That, strive as he would, still he strove in vain

To close his ears; so he closed his book,
While the unseen throat to the air outshook
Benedicite.

'Twas a song that rippled, and revelled, and ran
Ever back to the note whence it began;
Rising, and falling, and never did stay,
Like a fountain that feeds on itself all day,
Wanting no answer, answering none,
But beginning again as each verse was done,
Benedicite.

It brought an ecstasy into his face,
It weaned his senses from time and space,
It carried him off to worlds unseen,
And showed him what is not and ne'er has been,
Transporting his soul to those realms of calm,
More blessed and blessing than even the psalm,
Benedicite.

Then, carolling still, it drew him thence
Slowly back to the spheres of sense,
But held him awhile where self expires,
And vague recollections and vague desires
Banish the burden of things that are,
And angels seem canticling, faint and far,
Benedicite.

Then across him there flitted the days that are dead,
And those that will follow when these are fled;
Generations of sorrow, wave after wave,
With their samesome journey from womb to grave;
Men's love of the fleshly sweets that sting,
And the comfort that comes when we kneel and sing,
Benedicite.

He suddenly started and gazed around,
For silence can waken as well as sound,
And the bird had ceased singing. The dewy air
Still was immersed in mental prayer.
Time seemed to have stopped. So he quickened pace,
But forgot not to say ere he left the lone place,
Benedicite.

Downward he wended, and under his feet,
As on mounting, the bruised thyme answered sweet;
As before, in the brake the dog-rose bloomed,
And the woodbine with fragrance the hedge perfumed;
And the white meadow-sweet and the sorrel red,
Had they found a tongue, would still surely have said,
Benedicite.

But where were the flags and the tall rank grass,
And the stepping-stones smooth for his feet to pass?
Were they swept away? Did he wake or dream?
A bridge that he knew not spanned the stream;
Though under its archway he still could hear
The journeying water purling clear,
Benedicite.

Where had he wandered? This never could
Be the spot where the Abbey orchard stood?
Where the filberts once mellowed, lay tumbled blocks,
And cherry stumps peered through tares and docks;
A rough plot stretched where in times gone by
The plump apples dropped to the joyous cry,
Benedicite.

The gateway had vanished, the portal flown,
The walls of the Abbey were ivy-grown;
The arches were shattered, the roof was gone,
The mullions were mouldering one by one;
Wrecked was the oriel's tracery light
That the sun streamed through when they met to recite
Benedicite.

Chancel and choir and nave and aisle
Were but one ruinous vacant pile.
So utter the havoc, you could not tell
Which was corridor, cloister, cell.
Cow-grass, and foxglove, and waving weed,
Covered the scrolls where you used to read,
Benedicite.

High up where of old the belfry towered,
An elder had rooted and whitely flowered:
Surviving ruin and rain and wind,
Below it a lichened gargoyle grinned.
Though birds were chirping and flitting about,
They paused not to treble the anthem devout,
Benedicite.

Then he went where the Abbot was wont to lay
His children to rest till the Judgment Day,
And at length in the grass the name he found
Of a friar he fancied alive and sound.
The slab was hoary, the carving blurred,
And he rather guessed than could read the word,
Benedicite.

He sate him down on a fretted stone,
Where rains had beaten and winds had blown,
And opened his office-book, and read
The prayers that we read for our loved ones dead,

While nightfall crept on the twilight air,
And darkened the page of the final prayer,
Benedicite.

But to murkiest gloom when the gloaming did wane,
In the air there still floated a shadowy strain.
'Twas distilled with the dew, it was showered from the star,
It was murmuring near, it was tingling afar;
In silence it sounded, in darkness it shone,
And in sleep that is deepest it wakeful dreamed on,
Benedicite.

Do you ask what had witched Brother Benedict's ears?
The bird had been singing a thousand years:
Sweetly confounding in its sweet lay
To-day, to-morrow, and yesterday.
Time? What is Time but a fiction vain,
To him that o'erhears the Eternal strain,
Benedicite?

Alfred Austin

Burns's Statue At Irvine

Yes! let His place be there!
Where the lone moorland gazes on the sea,
Not in the squalid street nor pompous square:
So that he again may be
From contamination free,
His pedestal the plain, his canopy the air!

There leave him all alone!
Too much, too long, he herded with his kind,
Lured by the frolic phantoms that dethrone
Honest heart and homely mind,
Phantoms that besot and blind,
Then leave the troubled soul to suffer and atone.

From city stain and broil
Hither his rustic memory reclaim,
Leading him back, strayed suckling of the soil,
Homeward, that forgiving Fame
May around his shriven name
A halo wind, shall Time nor Truth itself despoil.

Quickly the Poet learns
The little that the alien world can teach.
Then he, if wise, to solitude returns,
Communing on brae and beach
With old Ocean's rhythmic speech,
Message of wandering winds, or lore of mountain burns.

'Tis there that Nature fills
His brooding heart with all he needs to know,
Moan of the main, and rapture of the rills;
So that, whether joy or woe
Fire his verse, it still may glow
Clear as her heaven-fed streams, and soaring as her hills.

Alfred Austin

By The Fates

By the fates that have fastened our life,
By the distance that holds us apart,
By our passion, its sweetness, its strife,
By the longing and ache of the heart;
By our meeting, our parting, our pain
When meeting and parting are o'er,-
Take me hence to where once I have lain,
Ere I die of despair and disdain,
I implore!

'Tis in vain that you bid me be calm.
Can we bridle our pulses at will?
Is fasting for hunger a balm?
Can emptiness emptiness fill?
Shall I wait till I shrivel with fire,
Till I perish of parching and thirst?
Shall I make of my passion a pyre,
And, martyred by drouth and desire,
Die accursed?

I appeal to the hills which beheld
The dawning, the day of our love;
To the moon, when our bosoms first swelled
With its birth, that watched fondly above;
To the city surpassingly fair,
To the revel, the rapture divine,
That flooded the earth and the air
When our mutinous secret lay bare,-
Am I thine?

Will you leave me to faint and to fall,
Plunge me back in the slough of despond?
Shall I be to earth's darkness a thrall,
When I see a whole heaven beyond?
Shall you, who might waken my shell,
Consign it to silence and shame,
And, just as the notes 'gin to swell,
With your hands smite the chords, and dispel
All its fame?

Be this, at your bidding, our doom,
Together, then, break we our chains!
There is hope, there is rest, in the tomb,
When in life nought but anguish remains.
If love be but one torment more,
Oh, come then the gulf or the glaive!
Let us live our delirium once o'er,
Just once, then the comfort explore
Of the grave!

Alfred Austin

Celestial Heights

Hail! steep ascents and winding ways,
Glimmering through melting morning haze,
Hail! mountain herd-bells chiming clear!
Hail! meads and cherry-orchards green,
And hail, thrice hail! thou golden mean,
The ch  let's simple cheer!

I leave the highwayed world behind,
And amid pathless pinewoods wind,
I drink their aromatic air;
Leap with kin feet the leaping stream,
And wake, as from an evil dream,
To dawn and speechless prayer.

Louder I hear the cattle-bells,
Wider the prospect spreads and swells,
Lakes, mountains, snow-peaks, round me throng;
I veil mine eyes, with awe oppressed,
Then gaze, and with a carolling breast
Burst into native song.

The moist cool dews are round my feet;
Forests of wild-flowers, simple, sweet,
With honey load each vacant breeze,
Which healing bears upon its wing,
Breathes with an air of more than Spring,
And banishes disease.

My limbs their youthful stride regain,
From off me fall fatigue and pain,
I mount more borne on wings than feet;
My blood in faster current flows,
Yet, like stream fed by mountain snows,
Is coolest when most fleet.

And not this common frame alone
Reclaims its youth, remounts its throne;
I feel, as air and sky expand,
That here the spirit, as the flesh,
Grows fragrant, dewy, healthful, fresh,
And like the landscape, grand.

Is it then so? And must the soul,
That unseen wing towards unseen goal,
Disdain the crowded vale's delights,
Its heat unfruitful, vapid noise,
And soaring, solitary, poise
Among celestial heights?

Even so. And, poised aloft, my soul
Far above human fret and dole
In empyrean calm abides.

No mortal voice the silence mars;
I hear the singing of the stars,
And the eternal tides.

The greedy aims, the lean regrets,
The disenchantment Hope begets
On ravished hearts,-beheld from here,
Like unto hamlet, pasture, stream,
Confused in one indifferent dream,
Mean and minute appear.

Man's feeble fury, trivial hate,
The pains that upon pleasure wait,
The exhaustion of tumultuous love,
The hopes that dwindle, fears that grow,
All that upheaves the plain below,
Tranquil, I breathe above.

Yet 'mid these sun-confronting peaks,
The undesisting spirit seeks
To mount to loftier, rarer height.
Are what we see but toys of sense,
And we who see them but a lens
Refracting heavenly light?-

-Imperfect mirror, faulty glass,
Who let the pure white rays to pass
But twist the coloured beams awry,
Belittle all the good we see,
And ill, since of our own degree,
Absorb, to magnify?

Who knoweth, or shall answer find?
I hear the rising of the wind,
More near and full the torrent's plash;
The swaying pine-woods murmur deep,
The lightnings laugh, and, roused from sleep,
The storm-winds meet and crash!

From underneath their lurid cowls,
Rossberg 'gainst Rigi frowns and scowls,
Across Arth's vale that cowers for dread;
And, mustering for their awful goal,
The phalanxed thunders, rumbling, roll
Around Pilatus' head.

Zug's gentle bosom heaves with fear,
And Küssnachts' waves, late soft and clear
As maiden's gaze or childhood's kiss,
Wax black as murkiest pool of hell,
When the infernal tempests swell,
And demons jeer and hiss.

'Mid such a ferment what is Man?
He sits beneath the rainbow's span,
And contemplates his little state:
He hears the darkness call, and deems
The skies speak to him in his dreams,
And recognise him great.

Yet not for him the Heavens engage
In their reverberating rage,
For him the ambushed levins fight.
Him?-but a fainter lightning-flash,
Him?-but a feebler thunder-crash,
Ending in deeper night!

Lo! unto other lands of air
The elemental furies bear
The roar of unexhausted strife;
And, freed from the sepulchral gloom,
Earth once again, as from the tomb,
Rises to light and life.

Pilatus frees his rugged head,
Zug's crouching lake, released from dread,
Looks up and smiles with face serene;
And, gazed on by the dying sun,
The phantom snow-crests, one by one,
Glow with transfigured mien.

Dead! And the tender twilight sighs.
Wan wane her cheeks, moist grow her eyes,
She draws her robes of mourning round:
Slowly she lights her widowed lamp,
And listens, through the night-dews damp,
To catch some cheering sound.

Yet in her loneliness how fair!
There is a sadness in the air
Sweeter than all the chords of joy;
A fragrance, as of spices borne
Unto the tomb of one we mourn,
And can no more annoy.

Cham's spire, I scarce in heaven descry,
Inverted, in that other sky,
The lake's lit breast, still plain doth glow:
So Soul, that darkly points above,
Shows sure and clear, when glassed by love
In answering heart below.

No more the grazing herds I see,
But still their bells chime silvery

The tuneful, if unmeasured peal,
And, as when heard in dewy morn,
From lonely mind and heart forlorn
Their desolation steal.

The legions of the starry host,
Each to their high and solemn post
In silent discipline repair,
And, from the unbattlemented sky,
With an intrepid calm defy
The demons of the air.

And, lo! athwart their ordered lines,
That strange auxiliary shines,
Who wears the bright long-flowing crest;
Weird warrior from another world,
Whose banner shortly will be furled,
Or waved in realms unguessed.

Erratic pilgrim! go not yet!
And, each fair planet, do not set!
For once, if only once, O Time!
Stay thine interminable march
Round and still round that hollow arch,
Where aeons vainly chime.

For when the tide, which unto Heaven
Brings night, 'gainst earth is backward driven
In waves of rising day, ah! then
Me helpless will it bear once more
Unto that thronged but barren shore,
Ploughed by the cares of men.

Alfred Austin

Chi È?

When for a buonamano
Cometh, at break of day,
Knock at the terzo piano,
A little voice answers, Chi è?
` `I, the facchino, awaiting
The bounty of cara lei."
She droppeth a paul through the grating,
And silently steals away.

When, with a long low mumble
Of lips that appear to pray,
There cometh a knock-so humble-
The little voice answers, Chi è?
` `I, the poor monk." Just a little
She opens, but nought doth say;
Gives him baiocchi or victual,
And silently steals away.

But when, as the shadows longer
Stretch half athwart the way,
There cometh a knock, much stronger,
The little voice answers, Chi è?
And when I answer, Io!
No bolts nor bars delay;
But, with the wild whisper, Ah Dio!
We kiss, and we steal away.

Alfred Austin

CHRISTMAS, 1870

Heaven strews the earth with snow,
That neither friend nor foe
May break the sleep of the fast-dying year;
A world arrayed in white,
Late dawns, and shrouded light,
Attest to us once more that Christmas-tide is here.

And yet, and yet I hear
No strains of pious cheer,
No children singing round the Yule-log fire;
No carol's sacred notes,
Warbled by infant throats,
On brooding mother's lap, or knee of pleased sire.

Comes with the hallowed time
No sweet accustomed chime,
No peal of bells athwart the midnight air;
No mimes or jocund waits
Within wide-opened gates,
Loud laughter in the hall, or glee of children fair.

No loving cup sent round?
No footing of the ground?
No sister's kiss under the berried bough?
No chimney's joyous roar,
No hospitable store,
Though it be Christmas-tide, to make us note it now?

No! only human hate,
And fear, and death, and fate,
And fierce hands locked in fratricidal strife;
The distant hearth stripped bare
By the gaunt guest, Despair,
Pale groups of pining babes round lonely-weeping wife.

Can it be Christmas-tide?
The snow with blood is dyed,
From human hearts wrung out by human hands.
Hark! did not sweet bells peal?
No! 'twas the ring of steel,
The clang of armed men and shock of murderous bands.

Didst Thou, then, really come?-
Silence that dreadful drum!-
Christ! Saviour! Babe, of lowly Virgin born!
If Thou, indeed, Most High,
Didst in a manger lie,
Then be the Prince of Peace, and save us from Hell's scorn.

We weep if men deny
That Thou didst live and die,
Didst ever walk upon this mortal sphere;

Yet of Thy Passion, Lord!
What know these times abhorred,
Save the rude soldier's stripes, sharp sponge, and piercing spear?

Therefore we, Father, plead,
Grant us in this our need
Another Revelation from Thy throne,
That we may surely know
We are not sons of woe,
Forgotten and cast off, but verily Thine own.

Yet if He came anew,
Where, where would shelter due
Be found for load divine and footsteps sore?
Here, not the inns alone,
But fold and stable groan
With sterner guests than drove sad Mary from the door.

And thou, 'mong women blest,
Who laidst, with awe-struck breast,
Thy precious babe upon the lowly straw,
Now for thy new-born Son
Were nook and cradle none,
If not in bloody trench or cannon's smoking jaw.

Round her what alien rites,
What savage sounds and sights-
The plunging war-horse and sulphureous match.
Than such as these, alas!
Better the ox, the ass,
The manger's crib secure and peace-bestowing thatch.

The trumpet's challenge dire
Would hush the angelic choir,
The outpost's oath replace the Shepherd's vow;
No frankincense or myrrh
Would there be brought to her,
For Wise Men kneel no more-Kings are not humble now.

O Lord! O Lord! how long?
Thou that art good, art strong,
Put forth Thy strength, Thy ruling love declare;
Stay Thou the smiting hand,
Invert the flaming brand,
And teach the proud to yield, the omnipotent to spare.

Renew our Christmas-tide!
Let weeping eyes be dried,
Love bloom afresh, bloodshed and frenzy cease!
And at Thy bidding reign,
As in the heavenly strain,
Glory to God on high! on earth perpetual peace!

*****above ready for slurp

Alfred Austin

Church—Door Should Still Stand Open

Church-doors should still stand open, night and day,
Open to all who come for praise or prayer,
Laden with gift of love or load of care,
Nimbused with gold, or flecked with locks of gray,
Mother, or snow-white bride, or pallid clay,
The blithe, the sad, the uncomely as the fair,
Each on his secret errand wending there,
Nor even the mighty and strong be turned away.
And so the poet's heart should ever be
Portal of joy and welcomer of woe,
That makes the deaf to hear, the blind to see,
Open confessional for high and low,
An unshut shrine where all may come and go,
And by their tears an enriched sanctuary.

Alfred Austin

Content Written Off Ithaca

I could not find the little maid Content,
So out I rushed, and sought her far and wide;
But not where Pleasure each new fancy tried,
Heading the maze of reeling merriment,
Nor where, with restless eyes and bow half bent,
Love in a brake of sweetbrier smiled and sighed,
Nor yet where Fame towered crowned and glorified,
Found I her face, nor wheresoe'er I went.
So homeward back I crawled like wounded bird,
When lo! Content sate spinning at my door:
And when I asked her where she was before-
``Here all the time," she said; ``I never stirred;
Too eager in your search, you passed me o'er,
And, though I called, you neither saw nor heard."

Alfred Austin

Could I but leave men wiser by my song

Could I but leave men wiser by my song,
And somewhat happier in their little day,
Wean them from things that lure but to betray,
Make the harsh gentle, and the feeble strong,
Shunning the paths where pride and folly throng,
Then would I carol all the livelong day,
And, as the golden sunset waned to grey,
With vesper voice my twilight hour prolong.
But now they hear me heedlessly, or pass,
With hurrying steps, to pomp's ambitious strife
But with chagrin and disappointment rife,
And shadows fleeting as one's breath on glass,
Still with foiled feet and baffled hopes, alas!
Lost in the long vain labyrinth of Life.

Alfred Austin

Covet who will the patronage of Kings

` Covet who will the patronage of Kings,
And pompous titles Emperors bestow,
Splendour, and revelry, and all that brings
A thousand bitter thoughts, a world of woe:
A meadow glistening in an April shower,
A green-banked rivulet, and, near his nest,
A blackbird carolling in guelder bower,
'Tis these that soothe and satisfy the breast.'

Alfred Austin

Dead!

Hush! or you'll wake her. Softly tread!
She slumbers in her little bed.
What do I see? A coffin! Dead?
Yes, dead at break of morning.

No, no, it cannot, cannot be!
I know that I can wake her. See!
She only plays at sleep. Ma mie,
Kiss me, for it is morning.

Look, pretty, look! Within, without,
Snowdrops and hyacinths lie about.
Why don't you clutch them with a shout
Blither than birds of morning?

You used to clap your hands with glee,
When I brought flowers. ``Are these for me?"
Now, now, you neither scent nor see
These incense-buds of morning.

Do you not know me, pet? Speak! speak!
There is no answer in her cheek.
To find her now where shall I seek?-
Seek in the vanished morning!

What can I do to make her heed?
I am crying, love; I am indeed.
Open your eyes and see. What need
To tease me all the morning?

Look! We will sally forth and play;
Ramble, and never ask our way,
Lessons and tasks all put away,
As though it were not morning.

We will do all that you desire,
And I will never, never tire
Of romping with you by the fire,
When 'tis no longer morning.

Your favourite tales, oft told before,
I'll tell you, darling, o'er and o'er;
It never shall be bedtime more,
Will you but wake this morning.

I will not ask you to sit still;
You shall be naughty when you will;
Shall spill my ink and spoil my quill,
And squander all my morning.

Alas! Alas! it is no cheat!
Quiet she lies from face to feet!

No smile, no sigh, no hue, no heat,
No earnest of the morning.

Draw high the sheet above her head.
She liked it, so. Dead? No, not dead.
The angels, hovering round her bed,
Will greet her in the morning.

Alfred Austin

December Matins

`` Why, on this drear December morn,
Dost thou, lone Misselthrush, rehearse thy chanting?
The corals have been rifled from the thorn,
The pastures lie undenized and lorn,
And everywhere around there seems a something wanting."
Whereat, as tho' awondering at my wonder,
And brooded somewhere nigh a love-mate nesting,
He more loud and longer still
'Gan to tremble and to trill,
Height after height of sound robustly breasting;
As if o'erhead were Heaven of blue, and under,
Fresh green leafage, and he would
Cleave with shafts of hardihood
The mists asunder.

Only the singer it is foresees,
Only the Poet has the voice foretelling.
When the ways harden and the sedge-pools freeze,
He hears light-hearted Spring upon the breeze,
And feels the hawthorn buds mysteriously swelling.
Though to the eaves the icicles are clinging,
Or from the sunward gables dripping, dripping,
He with inward gaze beholds
Liberated flocks and folds,
The runnels leaping, and the young lambs skipping,
And dauntless daffodils anew upspringing,
So throughout the wintry days
Meditates prophetic lays,
And keeps on singing.

Not the full-volumed Springtime song,
Not April's note with rapture overflowing,
Melodious cadence, early, late, and long,
Now low and suing, now serenely strong,
But the heart's intimations musically showing
That Love and Verse are never out of season.
Though the winds bluster, and the branches splinter,
He, through cold and dire distress,
Companioned by cheerfulness,
Descries young Mayday through the mask of Winter.
Doubt and despair to him were veiled treason,
Fashioned never to despond,
By Foreseeing far beyond
The range of Reason.

Therefore, brave bird, sing on, for some to hear
If faintly, fitfully, and though to-morrow
Will be the shortest day of all the year,
Though fields be flowerless and fallows drear,
And earth seems cherishing some secret sorrow,
The dawn will come when it anew will glisten
With tears of gladness, glen and dingle waken,

Winter's tents be furled and routed,
April notes be sung and shouted,
Over the fleeing host and camp forsaken;
The nightingale ne'er cease, the cuckoo christen
Hedgerow posies with its call,
And unto glee and madrigal
The whole world listen.

Alfred Austin

Dedication To Lady Windsor

Where violets blue to olives gray
From furrows brown lift laughing eyes,
And silvery Mensola sings its way
Through terraced slopes, nor seeks to stay,
But onward and downward leaps and flies;

Where vines, just newly burgeoned, link
Their hands to join the dance of Spring,
Green lizards glisten from cleft and chink,
And almond blossoms rosy pink
Cluster and perch, ere taking wing;

Where over strips of emerald wheat
Glimmer red peach and snowy pear,
And nightingales all day long repeat
Their love-song, not less glad than sweet,
They chant in sorrow and gloom elsewhere;

Where, as the mid-day belfries peal,
The peasant halts beside his steer,
And, while he muncheth his homely meal,
The swelling tulips blush to feel
The amorous currents of the year;

Where purple iris-banners scale
Defending wall and crumbling ledge,
And virgin windflowers, lithe and frail,
Now mantling red, now trembling pale,
Peep out from furrow and hide in hedge;

Where with loud song the labourer tells
His love to maiden loitering nigh,
And in the fig-tree's wakening cells
The honeyed sweetness swarms and swells,
And mountains prop the spacious sky;

Where April-daring roses blow
From sunny wall and sheltered bower,
And Arno flushes with melted snow,
And Florence glittering down below
Peoples the air with dome and tower;-

How sweet, when vernal thoughts once more
Uncoil them in one's veins, and urge
My feet to fly, my wings to soar,
And, hastening downward to the shore,
I spurn the sand and skim the surge,

And, never lingering by the way,
But hastening on past candid lakes,
Mysterious mountains grim and gray,
Past pine woods dark, and bounding spray

White as its far-off parent flakes;

And thence from Alp's unfurrowed snow,
By Apennine's relenting slope,
Zigzagging downward smooth and slow
To where, all flushed with the morning glow,
Valdarno keeps its pledge with hope;

And then,-the end, the longed-for end!
Climbing the hill I oft have clomb,
Down which Mugello's waters wend,
Again, dear hospitable friend,
To find You in your Tuscan home.

You, with your kind lord, standing there,
Crowning the morn with youth and grace,
And radiant smiles that reach me ere
Our hands can touch, and Florence fair
Seems fairer in your comely face.

Behind you, Phyllis, mother's pet,
Your gift unto the Future, stands,
Dimpling your skirt, uncertain yet
If she recalls or I forget,
With violets fresh in both her hands.

And next, his eyes and cheeks aflame,
See Other with his sword arrive;
Other, who thus recalls the name,
May he some day renew the fame
And feats, who boasts the blood, of Clive.

How sweet! how fair! From vale to crest,
Come wafts of song and waves of scent,
Whose sensuous beauty in the breast
Might haply breed a vague unrest,
Did not your presence bring content.

For you, not tender more than true,
Blend Northern worth with Southern grace;
And sure Boccaccio never drew
A being so designed as you
To be the Genius of the place.

But whether among Tuscan flowers
You dwell, fair English flower, or where
Saint Fagan lifts its feudal towers,
Or Hewell from ancestral bowers
Riseth afresh, and yet more fair;

Still may your portals, eve or morn,
Fly open when they hear his name,

Who, though indeed he would not scorn
Welcome from distant days unborn,
Prizes your friendship more than fame.

Alfred Austin

Dedication To The Edition Of 1876 To H.J.A.

Three graces still attend me, since the day
Your step across my graceless threshold came:
Reverence, and Gratitude, and Love, their name.
Reverence, whose gaze fears from the ground to stray,
And bows its head, and sues to you to lay
Your foot thereon, and keep my base self down:
Next, Gratitude, that, bolder, by degrees
Creeps up the folds of wedlock's rescuing gown,
To make a circling fondness round your knees;
And lastly, Love, which from that low perch sees
Chaste lips, and tender eyes, and tresses brown,
And, darting upward, finds a home with these.
So stand we level in that high embrace,
And I have all your glory on my face.

Alfred Austin

Farewell

Farewell! I breathe that wonted prayer,
But oh! though countless leagues divide
Our gaze, our grasp, they shall not tear
My soul, my spirit, from thy side.
Waking or sleeping, thou shalt own
My fervour hovers round thee still;
And when thou deem'st thyself alone,
My whispers shall the silence fill.

And as, in summer's ardent days,
The sun withdraws not all his light,
But, long past setting, twilight rays,
Lingering, illumine half the night;
So shall our Love's enduring glow
Through lonely hours its radiance pour,
O'er our dark lot some comfort throw,
Until we blend and burn once more.

Alfred Austin

Farewell To Italy

Incomparable Italy, farewell!
Tears not unmanly trespass to the eyes,
From thy soft touch and glance unspeakable
Compelled to turn and suffer other skies.
E'en as I leave thee, the maternal vine
Under the weight of clustering fruitage bends;
And the plump fig, beyond where tendrils twine,
Shows greener, moister, as the sap ascends.
When I return, as I most surely will,
Me will salute the thirst-dispelling grape,
Purple or opal, and when noon is still,
The snow-cold fruit provoke permitted rape.
Even, dear land, flourish thy fortunes so,
Which, formed, need only interval to grow.

Alfred Austin

Farewell To Spring

I saw this morning, with a sudden smart,
Spring preparing to depart.
I know her well and so I told her all my heart.

`` Why did you, Spring, your coming so delay,
If, now here, you cannot stay?
You win my love and then unloving pass away.

`` We waited, waited, O so long, so long,
Just to hear the ousel's song.
To-morrow 'twill be hushed, to-day that is so strong.

`` Day after day, and dawn again on dawn,
Winter's shroud was on the lawn,
So still, so smooth, we thought 'twould never be withdrawn.

`` Now that at last your welcome mimic snow
Doth upon the hawthorn blow,
It bides not on the bough, but melts before we know.

`` Scarce hath the primrose o'er the sordid mould
Lavished treasure, than behold!
Our wealth of simple joy is robbed of all its gold.

`` When to the woods we hie with feet of mirth,
Now the hyacinths have birth,
Swiftly the blue of Heaven fades from the face of earth.

`` You with dry gusts and unrelenting wrack
Kept the liquid cuckoo back.
Now, even ere he goes, he turneth hoarse, alack!

`` When, in the long warm nights of June,
Nightingales have got their tune,
Their sweet woe dies, and we are beggared of the boon.

`` First drops the bloom, then darkens the green leaf;
Everything in life is brief,
Save autumn's deepening gloom and winter's changeless grief."

Then with a smile thus answered me the Spring:
`` To my voice and flight you cling,
For I, before I perch, again am on the wing.

`` With you were I the whole year round to stay,
'Twould be you that went away,
Your love made fickle by monotony of May.

`` Love cannot live save upon love beyond.
Leaving you, I keep you fond,
Not letting you despair, but making you despond.

` Farewell, and love me still, my lover dear,
Love me till another year,
And you, if you be true, again will find me here."

Then darker, deeper, waxed the woods; the ground
Flowerless turned and then embrowned;
And less was of sweet scent, and less was of sweet sound.

Mute was the mavis, moulted was the thorn,
Meads were cut, and lambs were shorn,
And I by Spring was left forsaken and forlorn.

Forlorn, forsaken, shall I be until
Primrose peep and throstle shrill,
And in the orchard gleam the outriding daffodil.

Then shall I know that Spring among the trees
Hiding is, and that the breeze
Anew will fling abroad odours and melodies.

Alfred Austin

Father, farewell! Be not distressed

` Father, farewell! Be not distressed,
And take my vow, ere I depart,
To found a Convent in my breast,
And keep a cloister in my heart.'

Alfred Austin

Felix Opportunitate Mortis

Exile or Caesar? Death hath solved thy doubt,
And made thee certain of thy changeless fate;
And thou no more hast wearily to wait,
Straining to catch the people's tarrying shout
That from unrestful rest would drag thee out,
And push thee to those pinnacles of State
Round which throng courtly loves, uncourted hate,
Servility's applause, and envy's flout.
Twice happy boy! though cut off in thy flower,
The timeliest doom of all thy race is thine:
Saved from the sad alternative, to pine
For heights unreached, or icily to tower,
Like Alpine crests that only specious shine,
And glitter on the lonely peak of Power.

Alfred Austin

Florence

City acclaimed from far-off days
Fair, and baptized in field of flowers,
Once more I scan, with eager gaze,
Your soaring domes, your storied towers.

Nigh on eight lustres now have flown
Since first with trembling heart I came,
And, girdled by your mountain zone,
Found you yet fairer than your fame.

It was the season purple-sweet,
When figs are plucked, and grapes are pressed,
And all your folk with following feet
Bore a dead Poet to sacred rest.

You seemed to fling your gates ajar,
And gently lead me by the hand,
Saying, "Behold! henceforth you are
No stranger in this Tuscan land."

And though no love my love can wean
From Albion's crags and cradling sea,
You, Florence, since that hour, have been
More than a foster-nurse to me.

And seems that welcome half profaned,
If, in your lap lain oft and long,
I cherish to have something drained
Of Dante's soul and Petrarch's song?

But more than even Muse can give,
Is Love, which, songless though we be,
While the unloving jarring live,
Makes life one long sweet melody.

And you with love and friendship still
Have teemed, as teem your hills with wine,
And, through the seasons good or ill,
Have made their mellow vintage mine.

But most, while Fancy yet was young,
Yet timely cared no more to roam,
You lent your tender Tuscan tongue
To help me in my English home.

So now from soft Sicilian shore,
And Tiber's sterner tide, I bring
My Autumn sheaves, to share once more
The rapture of your rainbow Spring.

I, lingering in your palaced town,
Asudden, 'neath some beetling pile,

Catch sight of Dante's awful frown,
Or Vinci's enigmatic smile;

Then, following olden footsteps, stroll
To where, from May-day's mocking pyre,
Savonarola's tortured soul
Went up to Heaven in tongues of fire;

Or Buonarroti's godlike hand
Made marble block from Massa's steep
Dawn into Day at his command,
Or plunged it into Night and Sleep.

Onward I pass through radiant squares,
And widening ways whose foliage shames
Our leafless streets, to one that bears
The best-beloved of English names,

And climb the white-veiled slopes arrayed
In bridal bloom of peach and pear,
While, 'neath the olive's phantom shade,
Lupine and beanflower scent the air.

The wild-bees hum round golden bay,
The green frog sings on fig-tree bole,
And, see! down daisy-whitened way
Come the slow steers and swaying pole.

The fresh-pruned vine-stems, curving, bend
Over the peaceful wheaten spears,
And with the glittering sunshine blend
Their transitory April tears.

O'er wall and trellis trailed and wound,
Hang roses blushing, roses pale;
And, hark! what was that silvery sound?
The first note of the nightingale.

Curtained, I close my lids and dream
Of Beauty seen not but surmised,
And, lulled by scent and song, I seem
Immortally imparadised.

When from the deep sweet swoon I wake
And gaze past slopes of grape and grain,
Where Arno, like some lonely lake,
Silters the far-off seaward plain,

I see celestial sunset fires
That lift us from this earthly leaven,
And darkly silent cypress spires
Pointing the way from hill to Heaven.

Then something more than mortal steals
Over the wavering twilight air,
And, messenger of nightfall, peals
From each crowned peak a call to prayer.

And now the last meek prayer is said,
And, in the hallowed hush, there is
Only a starry dome o'erhead,
Propped by columnar cypresses.

Alfred Austin

Fontana Di Trevi

Why do I sit within the spell
Of eyes like thine, who oft have known
What 'tis in Beauty's gaze to dwell,
And then-to feel alone:
Back be remitted to my cell,
Too lately near a throne?

What though the moon on Trevi's fount,
Whilst we together drink, doth shine,
Can it the rural miles remount,
Or I subtract from mine?
Whilst Time hath scarce begun to count
The pleasant paths of thine.

How vain to thus divide its wave!
It will not help to blend our own.
Thy voice is gay, but mine is grave,
As thine too will have grown
In days when nought is left thee save
A half-remembered tone.

The light that gilds my world no more,
But only now just breaks on thine;
Thy shadows stretch all bright before,
Behind in darkness mine.
Leave me my unillumined shore,
And in thy lustre shine!

Forth to thy Future, gifted child!
Oh, be it fair as thou!
As thy sweet tones and temper mild,
And cloudless as thy brow;
And thou wilt then be reconciled
That I am silent now!

Alfred Austin

Forgiveness

Now bury with the dead years conflicts dead
And with fresh days let all begin anew.
Why longer amid shrivelled leaf-drifts tread,
When buds are swelling, flower-sheaths peeping through?
Seen through the vista of the vanished years,
How trivial seem the struggle and the crown,
How vain past feuds, when reconciling tears
Course down the channel worn by vanished frown.
How few mean half the bitterness they speak!
Words more than feelings keep us still apart,
And, in the heat of passion or of pique,
The tongue is far more cruel than the heart.
Since love alone makes it worth while to live,
Let all be now forgiven, and forgive.

Alfred Austin

Free

Joy! Free, at last, from vulgar thrall:
No longer need my voice be dumb;
And quicker far than thou canst call,
O Italy, I come!

To feel me the adopted heir
Of Art and Nature wed and blent,
In days of trouble routed care;
In these will bring content.

To know the world is not a mart,
The soul a lackey, life a shame,
Will scare the past, allay its smart,
Almost annul the blame.

Away with all these makeshift toys,
Provisional for heart and sense,
Which kept a useful equipoise
'Gainst sheer indifference!

'Twas well enough, whilst ill at ease,
To parley with each passing whim,
Which, though accredited to please,
Was pleasure's pseudonym.

And if one pleasure lure me still-
Just one-I scarcely can but thank,
'Twere wisdom not to linger till
It, like the rest, be rank.

Bear me, rough breakers, swiftly on!
Yield, mist-wrapped mountains, passage through;
I fret, I fever, to be gone
To skies and waters blue:

Where, loosed from trammels, one may still
Complete the functions fettered here;
Heart unsuborned, unbiassed will,
And intellect sincere.

My senses with my spirit meet
To urge me from this northern soil,
Ere stealthy Winter's ambushed sleet
Swoop on autumnal spoil.

The sickle hath performed its work,
The storm-gusts sweep the aspens bare,
Careering clouds and shadows mirk
Cov' the disheartened air.

No swallow circles round the roof,
No chirp redeems the dripping shed;

The very gables frown reproof-
Why not already fled?

I fly. Decked forms and landscape bare,
Enticements robbed of every spell,
Frvolities no longer fair,
Ye bubbles all, farewell!

Alfred Austin

Free Will And Fate

` You ask me why I envy not
The Monarch on his throne.
It is that I myself have got
A Kingdom of my own:
Kingdom by Free Will divine
Made inalienably mine,
Where over motions blind and brute
I live and reign supreme, a Sovereign absolute.

` Ebbing and flowing as the seas,
And surging but to drown,
Think you that I will pass to these
My Sceptre and my Crown?
Unto rebel passions give
Empire and prerogative?
They are attendants in my train,
To come when I command, and crouch as I ordain.

` If Will by long succession be
Not arbiter of Fate,
Assail its majesty, and see
If it doth abdicate.
Chains that do the body bind
Cannot manacle the mind.
What fetters may the heart control,
Nor doth the Tyrant live that can enslave the soul.

` In Spring, when linnets lift their voice
To praise the Lord and bless,
They are thus punctual of free choice,
Detesting waywardness.
Throughout earth, and sky, and sea,
Law is loving liberty,
That could, but will not, go astray,
And, free though to rebel, delighteth to obey.

` And Spirit, though encased in clay,
To sense's grovelling mood
Accepteth not, befall what may,
Ignoble servitude.
In the faggot thrust the torch,
Till the flame-tongues search and scorch.
Calmly the martyr mounts the pyre,
And smiles amid the smoke, and prays above the fire.

` Nor is it Fate directs the waves,
Or dominates the wind:
They are God's servants, not His slaves,
And they surmise His mind.
If the planets walk aright
Though the dim and trackless night,
Nor their true pathway ever miss,

Know ye it is because their Will is one with His!

`What is it rules thy singing season?

`What is it rules thy singing season?

Instinct, that diviner Reason,

To which the wish to know seemeth a sort of treason.'

`Why dost thou ever cease to sing?

Singing is such sweet comfort, who,

If he could sing the whole year through,

Would barter it for anything?'

Alfred Austin

George Eliot

Dead! Is she dead?
And all that light extinguished!

Mend your words,
Those gropings of the blind along plain paths
Where all the Heavens are shining! Know you not,
Though the Eternal Luminary dips
Below our cramped horizon, leaving here
Only a train of glory, he but goes
To dawn on other and neglected worlds,
Benighted of his presence! So with her,
Whose round imagination, like the sun,
Drew the sad mists of the low-lying earth
Up to her own great altitude, and there
Made them in smiling tears evaporate.
Announce the sun's self dead, and o'er him roll
An epitaph of darkness;-then aver
She too has set for ever.

Think it thus,
If for sweet comfort's sake. What we call death
Is but another sentinel despatched
To relieve life, weary of being on guard,
Whose active service is not ended here,
But after intermission is renewed
In other fields of duty. This to her
Was an uncertain promise, since it seems,
Unto the eye of seriousness, unreal,
That, like a child, death should but play with life,
Blowing it out, to blow it in again.
This contradiction over, now she stands
Certain of all uncertainty, and dwells
Where death the sophist puzzles life no more,
But with disdainful silence or clear proof
Confuted is for ever. Yet our loss
By others' gain is mended not, and we
Sit in the darkness that her light hath left.
Comfort our grief with symbols as we will,
Her empty throne stares stony in our face,
And with a dumb relentlessness proclaims
That she has gone for ever, for ever gone,
Returning not. . . . How plain I see her now,
The twilight tresses, deepening into night,
The brow a benediction, and the eyes
Seat where compassion never set, and like
That firm, fixed star, which altereth not its place
While all the planets round it sink and swim,
Shone with a steady guidance. O, and a voice
Matched with whose modulations softest notes
Of dulcimer by daintiest fingers stroked,
Or zephyrs wafted over summer seas,
On summer shores subsiding, sounded harsh.

Listening whereto, steeled obduracy felt
The need to kneel, necessity to weep,
And craving to be comforted; a shrine
Of music and of incense and of flowers,
Where hearts, at length self-challenged, were content
Still to be sad and sinful, so they might
Feel that exonerating pity steal
In subtle absolution on their guilt.

Dead? Never dead!
That this, man's insignificant domain,
Which is not boundary of space, should be
The boundary of life, revolts the mind,
Even when bounded. Into soaring space
Soar, spacious spirit! unembarrassed now
By earthly boundaries, and circle up
Into the Heaven of Heavens, and take thy place
Where the Eternal Morning broadens out
To recognise thy coming. Realm on Realm
Of changeless revolution round thee roll,
Thou moving with them, and among the stars
Shine thou a star long looked for; or, unbuoyed,
Beyond the constellations of our ken,
Traverse the infinite azure with thy heart,
And with love's light elucidate the Spheres;
While we, below, this meek libation pour,
Mingled of honey and hyssop, on thy grave!

Alfred Austin

Give me a roof where Wisdom dwells

Give me a roof where Wisdom dwells,
Where honeysuckle smiles and smells,
A bleating flock, some lowing kine,
An honest welcome always mine,
A homely draught, a humble meal,

Leisure to live, to think, to feel,
A narrow plot, a prospect wide,
A patch upon the mountain side!
From these my heart you will not wean
For Fashion's tinsel, Splendour's sheen,
The Sceptre's favour, Senate's prize,
No, nor the Empire of your eyes.
Farewell! The Valley be your own!
And I will scale the heights,-alone.

Alfred Austin

Give me October's meditative haze

Give me October's meditative haze,
Its gossamer mornings, dewy-wimpled eyes,
Dewy and fragrant, fragrant and secure,
The long slow sound of farmward-wending wains,
When homely Love sups quiet 'mid his sheaves,
Sups 'mid his sheaves, his sickle at his side,
And all is peace, peace and plump fruitfulness.

Alfred Austin

Give Me Thy Heart

Give me thy heart, I leave thee mine;
But oh! till next our pulses meet,
May my fond spirit round thee shine,
Absorb thy soul and guide thy feet,
And then no more my passion pine,
My bosom idly beat.

I have thy pledge, yet take it back
If ever for a moment thou
In sweet resolve shouldst prove less slack
Than I, at parting, leave thee now.
Love's steady light must mark our track,
And not a flickering vow.

But if, when, past this parting ache,
I gaze upon thy face once more,
Thou still Love's burning thirst wouldst slake,
Still to Love's topmost heights wouldst soar;
Oh! then my life's full tide shall break
On thee, as on its shore.

Alfred Austin

Gleaners Of Fame

Hearken not, friend, for the resounding din
That did the Poet's verses once acclaim:
We are but gleaners in the field of fame,
Whence the main harvest hath been gathered in.
The sheaves of glory you are fain to win,
Long since were stored round many a household name,
The reapers of the Past, who timely came,
And brought to end what none can now begin.
Yet, in the stubbles of renown, 'tis right
To stoop and gather the remaining ears,
And carry homeward in the waning light
What hath been left us by our happier peers;
So that, befall what may, we be not quite
Famished of honour in the far-off years.

Alfred Austin

Go Away, Death!

Go away, Death!
You have come too soon.
To sunshine and song I but just awaken,
And the dew on my heart is undried and unshaken;
Come back at noon.

Go away, Death!
What a short reprieve!
The mists of the morning have vanished, I roam
Through a world bright with wonder, and feel it my home;
Come back at eve.

Go away, Death!
See, it still is light.
Over earth broods a quiet more blissful than glee,
And the beauty of sadness lies low on the sea;
Come back at night.

Come to me, Death!
I no more would stay.
The night-owl hath silenced the linnets and lark,
And the wailing of wisdom sounds sad in the dark;
Take me away.

Alfred Austin

Good-Night!

Good-night! Now dwindle wan and low
The embers of the afterglow,
And slowly over leaf and lawn
Is twilight's dewy curtain drawn.
The slouching vixen leaves her lair,
And, prowling, sniffs the tell-tale air.
The frogs croak louder in the dyke,
And all the trees seem dark alike:
The bee is drowsing in the comb,
The sharded beetle hath gone home:
Good-night!

Good-night! The hawk is in his nest,
And the last rook hath dropped to rest.
There is no hum, no chirp, no bleat,
No rustle in the meadow-sweet.
The woodbine, somewhere out of sight,
Sweetens the loneliness of night.
The Sister Stars, that once were seven,
Mourn for their missing mate in Heaven.
The poppy's fair frail petals close,
The lily yet more languid grows,
And dewy-dreamy droops the rose:
Good-night!

Good-night! Caressing and caressed,
The moist babe warms its mother's breast.
Silent are rustic loom and lathe;
The scythe lies quiet as the swathe;
The woodreeve blinks in covert shed,
The weary yokel is abed,
The covey warm beneath the wing,
And sleep enfoldeth everything.
Forsaken love, its last tear shed,
On the lone pillow lays its head,
And all our woes are respited:
Good-night!

Alfred Austin

Grandmother's Teaching

`` Grandmother dear, you do not know; you have lived the old-world life,
Under the twittering eaves of home, sheltered from storm and strife;
Rocking cradles, and covering jams, knitting socks for baby feet,
Or piecing together lavender bags for keeping the linen sweet:
Daughter, wife, and mother in turn, and each with a blameless breast,
Then saying your prayers when the nightfall came, and quietly dropping to rest.

`` You must not think, Granny, I speak in scorn, for yours have been well-spent days,
And none ever paced with more faithful feet the dutiful ancient ways.
Grandfather's gone, but while he lived you clung to him close and true,
And mother's heart, like her eyes, I know, came to her straight from you.
If the good old times, at the good old pace, in the good old grooves would run,
One could not do better, I'm sure of that, than do as you all have done.

`` But the world has wondrously changed, Granny, since the days when you were
young;
It thinks quite different thoughts from then, and speaks with a different tongue.
The fences are broken, the cords are snapped, that tethered man's heart to home;
He ranges free as the wind or the wave, and changes his shore like the foam.
He drives his furrows through fallow seas, he reaps what the breakers sow,
And the flash of his iron flail is seen mid the barns of the barren snow.

`` He has lassoed the lightning and led it home, he has yoked it unto his need,
And made it answer the rein and trudge as straight as the steer or steed.
He has bridled the torrents and made them tame, he has bitted the champing tide,
It toils as his drudge and turns the wheels that spin for his use and pride.
He handles the planets and weighs their dust, he mounts on the comet's car,
And he lifts the veil of the sun, and stares in the eyes of the uttermost star.

`` 'Tis not the same world you knew, Granny; its fetters have fallen off;
The lowliest now may rise and rule where the proud used to sit and scoff.
No need to boast of a scutcheoned stock, claim rights from an ancient wrong;
All are born with a silver spoon in their mouths whose gums are sound and strong.
And I mean to be rich and great, Granny; I mean it with heart and soul:
At my feet is the ball, I will roll it on, till it spins through the golden goal.

`` Out on the thought that my copious life should trickle through trivial days,
Myself but a lonelier sort of beast, watching the cattle graze,
Scanning the year's monotonous change, gaping at wind and rain,
Or hanging with meek solicitous eyes on the whims of a creaking vane;
Wretched if ewes drop single lambs, blest so is oilcake cheap,
And growing old in a tedious round of worry, surfeit, and sleep.

`` You dear old Granny, how sweet your smile, and how soft your silvery hari!
But all has moved on while you sate still in your cap and easy-chair.
The torch of knowledge is lit for all, it flashes from hand to hand;
The alien tongues of the earth converse, and whisper from strand to strand.
The very churches are changed and boast new hymns, new rites, new truth;
Men worship a wiser and greater God than the halfknown God of your youth.

`` What! marry Connie and set up house, and dwell where my fathers dwelt,
Giving the homely feasts they gave and kneeling where they knelt?

She is pretty, and good, and void I am sure of vanity, greed, or guile;
But she has not travelled nor seen the world, and is lacking in air and style.
Women now are as wise and strong as men, and vie with men in renown;
The wife that will help to build my fame was not bred near a country town.

`` What a notion! to figure at parish boards, and wrangle o'er cess and rate,
I, who mean to sit for the county yet, and vote on an Empire's fate;
To take the chair at the Farmers' Feast, and tickle their bumpkin ears,
Who must shake a senate before I die, and waken a people's cheers!
In the olden days was no choice, so sons to the roof of their fathers clave:
But now! 'twere to perish before one's time, and to sleep in a living grave.

`` I see that you do not understand. How should you? Your memory clings
To the simple music of silenced days and the skirts of vanishing things.
Your fancy wanders round ruined haunts, and dwells upon oft-told tales;
Your eyes discern not the widening dawn, nor your ears catch the rising gales.
But live on, Granny, till I come back, and then perhaps you will own
The dear old Past is an empty nest, and the Present the brood that is flown."

`` And so, my dear, you've come back at last? I always fancied you would.
Well, you see the old home of your childhood's days is standing where it stood.
The roses still clamber from porch to roof, the elder is white at the gate,
And over the long smooth gravel path the peacock still struts in state.
On the gabled lodge, as of old, in the sun, the pigeons sit and coo,
And our hearts, my dear, are no whit more changed, but have kept still warm for you.

`` You'll find little altered, unless it be me, and that since my last attack;
But so that you only give me time, I can walk to the church and back.
You bade me not die till you returned, and so you see I lived on:
I'm glad that I did now you've really come, but it's almost time I was gone.
I suppose that there isn't room for us all, and the old should depart the first.
That's as it should be. What is sad, is to bury the dead you've nursed.

`` Won't you have bit nor sup, my dear? Not even a glass of whey?
The dappled Alderney calved last week, and the baking is fresh to-day.
Have you lost your appetite too in town, or is it you've grown over-nice?
If you'd rather have biscuits and cowslip wine, they'll bring them up in a trice.
But what am I saying? Your coming down has set me all in a maze:
I forgot that you travelled here by train; I was thinking of coaching days.

`` There, sit you down, and give me your hand, and tell me about it all,
From the day that you left us, keen to go, to the pride that had a fall.
And all went well at the first? So it does, when we're young and puffed with hope;
But the foot of the hill is quicker reached the easier seems the slope.
And men thronged round you, and women too! Yes, that I can understand.
When there's gold in the palm, the greedy world is eager to grasp the hand.

`` I heard them tell of your smart town house, but I always shook my head.
One doesn't grow rich in a year and a day, in the time of my youth 'twas said.
Men do not reap in the spring, my dear, nor are granaries filled in May,
Save it be with the harvest of former years, stored up for a rainy day.
The seasons will keep their own true time, you can hurry nor furrow nor sod:

It's honest labour and steadfast thrift that alone are blest by God.

`` You say you were honest. I trust you were, nor do I judge you, my dear:
I have old-fashioned ways, and it's quite enough to keep one's own conscience clear.
But still the commandment, `` Thou shalt not steal," though a simple and ancient rule,
Was not made for modern cunning to baulk, nor for any new age to befool;
And if my growing rich unto others brought but penury, chill, and grief,
I should feel, though I never had filched with my hands, I was only a craftier thief.

`` That isn't the way they look at it there? All worshipped the rising sun?
Most of all the fine lady, in pride of purse you fancied your heart had won.
I don't want to hear of her beauty or birth: I reckon her foul and low;
Far better a steadfast cottage wench than grand loves that come and go.
To cleave to their husbands, through weal, through woe, is all women have to do:
In growing as clever as men they seem to have matched them in fickleness too.

`` But there's one in whose heart has your image still dwelt through many an absent
day,
As the scent of a flower will haunt a closed room, though the flower be taken away.
Connie's not quite so young as she was, no doubt, but faithfulness never grows old;
And were beauty the only fuel of love, the warmest hearth soon would grow cold.
Once you thought that she had not travelled, and knew neither the world nor life:
Not to roam, but to deem her own hearth the whole world, that's what a man wants in
a wife.

`` I'm sure you'd be happy with Connie, at least if your own heart's in the right place.
She will bring you nor power, nor station, nor wealth, but she never will bring you
disgrace.
They say that the moon, though she moves round the earth, never turns to him
morning or night
But one face of her sphere, and it must be because she's so true a satellite;
And Connie, if into your orbit once drawn by the sacrament sanctioned above,
Would revolve round you constantly, only to show the one-sided aspect of love.

`` You will never grow rich by the land, I own; but if Connie and you should wed,
It will feed your children and household too, as it you and your fathers fed.
The seasons have been unkindly of late; there's a wonderful cut of hay,
But the showers have washed all the goodness out, till it's scarcely worth carting away.
There's a fairish promise of barley straw, but the ears look rusty and slim:
I suppose God intends to remind us thus that something depends on Him.

`` God neither progresses nor changes, dear, as I once heard you rashly say:
Man's schools and philosophies come and go, but His word doth not pass away.
We worship Him here as we did of old, with simple and reverent rite:
In the morning we pray Him to bless our work, to forgive our transgressions at night.
To keep His commandments, to fear His name, and what should be done, to do,-
That's the beginning of wisdom still; I suspect 'tis the end of it too.

`` You must see the new-fangled machines at work, that harrow, and thresh, and reap;
They're wonderful quick, there's no mistake, and they say in the end they're cheap.
But they make such a clatter, and seem to bring the rule of the town to the fields:
There's something more precious in country life than the balance of wealth it yields.

But that seems going; I'm sure I hope that I shall be gone before:
Better poor sweet silence of rural toil than the factory's opulent roar.

`` They're a mighty saving of labour, though; so at least I hear them tell,
Making fewer hands and fewer mouths, but fewer hearts as well:
They sweep up so close that there's nothing left for widows and bairns to glean;
If machines are growing like men, man seems to be growing a half machine.
There's no friendliness left; the only tie is the wage upon Saturday nights:
Right used to mean duty; you'll find that now there's no duty, but only rights.

`` Still stick to your duty, my dear, and then things cannot go much amiss.
What made folks happy in bygone times, will make them happy in this.
There's little that's called amusement, here; but why should the old joys pall?
Has the blackbird ceased to sing loud in spring? Has the cuckoo forgotten to call?
Are bleating voices no longer heard when the cherryblossoms swarm?
And have home, and children, and fireside lost one gleam of their ancient charm?

`` Come, let us go round; to the farmyard first, with its litter of fresh-strewn straw,
Past the ash-tree dell, round whose branching tops the young rooks wheel and caw;
Through the ten-acre mead that was mown the first, and looks well for aftermath,
Then round by the beans-I shall tire by then,-and home up the garden-path,
Where the peonies hang their blushing heads, where the larkspur laughs from its stalk-
With my stick and your arm I can manage. But see! There, Connie comes up the walk."

Alfred Austin

Grata Juventas

She trembles when I touch
The tips of scarce-grown fingers,
Yet seems to think it overmuch
If for a moment lingers
Grasp that I hardly meant for such.

She clutcheth toy or book,
Or female hand beside her;
Now with askant, unsettled look,
Inviteth, then doth hide her,
Like struggling lily in a brook.

Anon she darteth glance
Athwart averted shoulder;
But when encouraged I advance,
Asudden waxing colder,
Her gaze lacks all significance.

O were she younger still,
Or more than a beginner,
I might control my troubled will,
Or give it rein and win her:
But now she is nor good nor ill.

Alfred Austin

Henry Bartle Edward Frere

Bend down and read-the birth, the death, the name.
Born in the year that Waterloo was won,
And died in this, whose days are not yet run,
But which, because a year conceived in shame,
No noble need will christen or will claim.
And yet this dead man, England, was Thy son,
And at his grave we ask what had he done,
Bred to be famous, to be foiled of Fame.
Be the reply his epitaph: That he,
In years as youth, the unyielding spirit bore
He got from Thee, but Thou hast got no more;
And that it is a bane and bar to be
A child of Thine, now the adventurous sea
All vainly beckons to a shrinking shore.

Therefore, great soul, within your marble bed
Sleep sound, nor hear the useless tears we weep.
Why should you wake, when England is asleep,
Or care to live, since England now is dead?
Forbidden are the steeps where Glory led;
No more from furrowed danger of the deep
We harvest greatness; to our hearths we creep,
Count and recount our coin, and nurse our dread.
The sophist's craft hath grown a prosperous trade,
And womanish Tribunes hush the manly drum:
The very fear of Empire strikes us numb,
Fumbling with pens, who brandished once the blade.
Therefore, great soul, sleep sound where you are laid,
Blest in being deaf when Honour now is dumb.

Alfred Austin

Here have I learnt the little that I know

Here have I learnt the little that I know,
Here where in these untutored woodland ways
The primrose, all unconscious of our praise,
Dimpled the dainty coverlet of the snow,
March's first-born, and, still averse to go,
Though drowsy-lidded, dallies and delays
When, dawning through the bluebell's heavenly haze,
June into full mid-summer broadeneth slow.
Forgive me, friend, if these mean more to me,
Imbue my being with a deeper lore,
Come nearer to my heart, instruct me more
In what I am and what I fain would be,
Even than Sabine summit, Oscan shore,
Or Tiber curving tawnily to the sea.'

Alfred Austin

Here, where the vine and fig bask hand in hand

Here, where the vine and fig bask hand in hand,
And the hot lizard lies along the wall,
Blinded I shrink where cypress shadows fall,
And gaze upon the far-off mountains bland:
Then down the dusty track Lorenzo planned
Watch the slow oxen oscillating crawl
Sleek in the sultry glare, and feel withal
Half alien still in a familiar land.
But when from out the stone-pine slopes that rise
In the clear ether, black against the blue,
The cuckoo suddenly calls, I close mine eyes
In visionary rapture, think of you,
Hear the home-music of your Kentish skies,
And dream that I am drenched with English dew.

Alfred Austin

How Florence Rings Her Bells

With shimmer of steel and blare of brass,
And Switzers marching with martial stride,
And cavaliers trampling brown the grass,
Came bow-legged Charles through the Apennine pass,
With black Il Moro for traitor guide;

And, passing by Pisa's ransomed towers,
He swept up stream over Arno's plain,
Where Florence garlands herself with flowers
From burgeoning vineyards and olive bowers,
And emerald furrows of sprouting grain;

And, flying and flaunting his pennons proud,
Crossed her bridges with naked sword,
And sware he would flourish his trumpets loud
And bristle his spears, save her beauty bowed
Itself to his stirrup, and owned him lord.

Then Savonarola's voice was heard
Swelling as Arno, storm-flushed, sweels,
And, with threat for threat, and with gird for gird,
Capponi flashed back the famous word,
``Then blow your trumpets, we'll ring our bells!"

And lo! as he spake, into street and square
Streamed Florentine burghers in grim array:
Then Charles, and Sforza, and groom Beaucaire,
Scared by the city they deemed but fair,
Shouldered their pikes, and passed away.

But now a Monarch more mighty far
Than ever from Gallic or Teuton throne
Swooped from the Alps upon wings of war,
Comes welcome as April and west winds are,
When Winter is over and mistral flown.

The Fair City peacefully rings her bells,
Rings her bells, and the loving peal
In the lazuline ether ascends and swells,
Till hoary turrets and convent cells
Feel young once more as the young buds feel.

And iris gonfalons scale her walls,
And rustic roses storm square and street;
In sound of her gates the cuckoo calls,
And the slow-swaying ox-wain creaks and crawls
'Twixt blossoming bean and beardless wheat.

In gabled pathway and shaded porch
Men gather and wait to acclaim ``The Queen";
While over the wall, where the sunrays scorch
And the lizard is lost, the silvery torch

Of the fig is tipped with a flame of green.

And cypress spire and stonepine dome,
And circling mountain look on and smile,
Saying, ``Hitherward evermore seek your home,
When you traverse the furrows of fallow foam
That nourish with glory your Northern Isle,

And from weightier cares than a Caesar's brain
Pondered of old, would crave release;
Wise Ruler whose long victorious Reign
Imposes on love-loyal land and main
The fetters of proud Imperial Peace."

Alfred Austin

Hymn To Death

I

What is it haunts the summer air?
A sense of something lately passed away;
Something pleasant, something fair,
That was with us yesterday,
And is no longer there.
Now from the pasture comes no baby bleat,
Nor the frisk of frolic feet
There is seen.
Blossom and bloom have spread their wings, and flown,
And the bosks and orchards green
The rosy flush of childhood have outgrown.
Lapwing and linnet and lark have fledged their brood;
Mavis and merle have gotten their desire;
The nightingale begins to tire;
Even the cuckoo's note hath fitful grown;
And in the closing leafage of the wood
The ringdove now is left to coo alone.

II

Then revel in your roses, reckless June!
Revel and ripen swift to your decay.
But your turn will follow soon,
And the rounding harvest-moon
Avenge the too brief innocence of May.
Yet once again there scents the morning air
The soul of something passed away;
Something precious, something fair,
That was breathing yesterday,
And is no longer there.
It is Autumn, dying, dying,
With her leaves around her lying,
And Winter, beggared heir, unprofitably sighing.
Let her die.
Unto us as unto her
Earth is but a sepulchre,
And the over-arching sky
Neither asks nor wonders why
Those who here are left behind
Season sweet and spacious mind
Fain would save;
Yet with pale visages and streaming tears
Must watch the harvest of the ripened years
Locked in the bootless granary of the grave.

III

Why do you call me hence?
To purge what fault, to punish what offence?
Had I maligned my lot,
Or ever once the privilege forgot
Of being, though the spirit's inward sense,
Mirror and measure of all things that are,

Then it were right, were just,
That, like a falling leaf or failing star,
The winds of Heaven should blow about my dust.
Or had I used the years as waifs and strays,
To build myself a comfortable nest,
Groped life for golden garbage, like the rest,
And, as a lacquey, on the public ways
For private profit hired out my tongue,
Then against death 'twere vain to plead,
Then, then 'twere meet indeed
I should grow silenced, like a bell unring.
But bear me witness, every Spring that came
Since first with trembling furtive frame
Out of my little crib I crept
While others slept,
Because to me the rising moon
Was more than sleep, or toy, or boon,
That never yet the thrush resumed to sing,
But straight my heart did build, my voice was on the wing;
Found the first primrose gazing frank
From its cradle in the bank,
Harked for the cuckoo days before he called,
Then halted, at his note enthralled.

IV

Why do you beckon to another sphere?
Here was I born,
Am deeply rooted here,
And would not be uptorn.
I want no other fields than these,
No other skies,
No redder dawn to break on bluer seas,
No brighter stars to rise.
Neither do I crave to know
The origin of joy and woe.
I love the doubt, the dark, the fear,
That still surroundeth all things here.
I love the mystery, nor seek to solve;
Content to let the stars revolve,
Nor ask to have their meaning clear.
Enough for me, enough to feel;
To let the mystic shadows steal
Into a land whither I cannot follow;
To see the stealthy sunlight leave
Dewy dingle, dappled hollow;
To watch, when falls the hour of eve,
Quiet shadows on a quiet hill;
To watch, to wonder, and be still.

V

And can it be,
That there will break the day,

For me, for me,
When I no more shall hear the throstle flute;
Not because his voice is mute,
But that my soul sleeps stupefied in clay?
Never! what, never again!
Deep within some silent glen
To make a couch with peace, far from surmise of men?
Never, never more to stand,
Spell-bound in a leafy land,
Lie among the grasses tall,
Hear the yaffel call, and call,
And lazily watch the lazy clouds slow floating over all?
That time and life will be, but I shall ne'er
Find little feet upon the stair,
Feel little arms about my throat,
Hear little gleeful voices float
Upon the wavelets of the summer air.
That I again shall never share
The peace that lies upon an English lawn,
Watch the last lingering planet shining fair
Upon the unwrinkled forehead of the dawn?
Never, never, never more,
When fate or fancy bids me roam,
Lessen with loving thoughts the last long mile
That leads unto my home,
Descry the roses down the casement falling,
Hear the garden thrushes calling,
Behold my dear ones standing at the door,
Void of fear, void of guile,
And hail, as I so oft have hailed before,
The broadening salutation of their smile?

VI

Who will salute me There?
Who, who come forth to greet?
Will Virgil stand upon the golden stair?
Shall I see Spenser's face, and sit at Shakespeare's feet?
Will Galileo with unshrouded gaze
Guide me through the starry maze,
Upon wings that never tire,
Up to the Heaven of Heavens, and higher and ever higher?
If this be so,
Quick let me go!
But ah! pale spectre, paler still you grow.
You would but lure me to the other bank,
To find it blank!
Of all we loved, not one hath e'er come back
To beckon us along the track,
To point the way, to indicate the goal,
And stretch out steadying arms to help the tottering soul.

VII

But wilt thou make this compact with me, Death,
And keep thy bond?
That even if mine be but borrowed breath,
Lent here awhile, to be reclaimed beyond,
And its poor husk be dug into the ground;
Then, though the Future may not find my face,
Nor arms that love me round my neck be wound,
Fair lips that lisp not yet my name shall sound,
And hearts that beat not yet be my warm dwellingplace;
That under trees which have no rootlets now,
But will then be trunk and bough
And dome of sheltering leaves, sometimes
A tender tear shall fall upon my rhymes;
And hearts at secret war with life,
Or dreaming maid or disillusioned wife,
Shall my persuasive music bless,
Shall call me comforter in their distress,
And make me live again in sorrowing loveliness?

VIII

So unto Death I do commend my Spirit,
And Time which is in league with Death, that they
May hold in trust, and see my kin inherit,
All of me that is not clay;
Embalm my voice and keep it from decay.
Then I will not ask to stay;-
Nay, rather start at once upon the way:
Cheered by the faith that, at our mortal birth,
For some high reason beyond Reason's ken,
We are put out to nurse on this strange earth,
Until Death comes to take us home again.

Alfred Austin

I Chide Not At The Seasons

I chide not at the seasons, for if Spring
With backward look refuses to be fair,
My Love still more than April makes me sing,
And shows May blossom in the bleak March air.
Should Summer fail its tryst, or June delay
To wreath my porch with roses red and pale,
Her breath is sweeter than the new-mown hay,
Her touch more clinging than the woodbine's trail.
Let Autumn like a spendthrift waste the year,
And reap no harvest save the fallen leaves,
My Love still ripeneth, though she grows not sere,
And smiles enthroned upon our piled-up sheaves.
And last, when miser Winter docks the days,
She warms my hearth and keeps my hopes ablaze.

Alfred Austin

If I To You But Sorry Bring

If I to you but sorrow bring,
But aching hours and brackish tears,
And that poor drooping Hope whose wing
Flags 'neath the weight of clogging fears,
Then let me in the desert hide
This fatal gift, this feverish breast;
Or, better, 'neath the sounding tide
Be hushed, and evermore at rest.

What recks it if at length I lie
In my cold bed of narrow earth,
And neither wave, nor sun, nor sky,
Vex me with its untimely mirth?
Have I not known what 'tis to hold
In pulsing arms your bounding heart?
Oh come, dear Death! and make them cold,
If life can do no more than part!

For even then at times would stir
The veins that now with passion glow,
And I, within my sepulchre,
Anon should warm and conscious grow.
The pulse would throb, the bosom wake,
And crave the joy they once had known,
And 'twere as easy, for your sake,
To find me there, as here, alone.

And then I feel that you would come,
Would pierce the sod, would cleave the wave,
And as my heart was waxing numb,
Would at my side a pillow crave.
And I should start, and live, and find
In narrow bounds, but tight embrace,
The bliss Despair had left behind,
And never thought again to face.

The world is wide, but tell me where,
Where shall I wander and not see,
See, hear, and feel, on earth, in air,
Something that doth remind of thee?
If I ascend to heaven, thou
Wilt be my first, sole seraph there;
And did I don the demon's brow,
Wouldst all my dear damnation share!

Not good nor ill, not life nor death,
Not dark, not light, not joy, not smart,
Not one of these betokeneth
What unto me thou-loved one-art!
Thou art my first, my last, my all,
What keeps me here, what calls me hence-
At once my freedom and my thrall,

My centre, my circumference!

Alfred Austin

If They Dare!

Realm of ocean-guarded Peace,
Humming loom and grazing steer,
Farm, and forge, and woven fleece,
Happier, homelier, year by year,
Hark! athwart the wintry air,
Menace mutters, foemen glare:
Leave the shuttle, leave the share,
For the spear!

Envious of her world-wide race,
Goaded by the greed and hate
Of the hungry and the base
For the opulent and great,
"See," they whisper, "did we band
All against Her, hand-in-hand,
We might bring that haughty Land
Face with Fate."

Plotters insolent and vain,
Mustering then your servile swarms.
Moated by the unbridged main,
We but laugh at such alarms.
Blinded braggarts, to forget
England old is England yet,
And can meet, as once She met,
World in arms.

Come athwart the ocean's crest,
Mob and Monarch, crowd and Crown!
Slavish East, or shrilling West,
Come, and strike at her renown.
Madmen! by your threats inane
What is it ye hope to gain?
Think of France, think of Spain,
Smitten down!

Derelict on wind and wave,
Tossing with the tossing tide,
Crushed by ice-floe, tombed in cave,
See the Armada's pomp and pride:
Prince and Pontiff, Rome and Spain,
Leagued against Her, leagued in vain;
England and her mother-main
Side by side.

Think of that self-sceptered King,
Caesar not by birth but brain,
Who with arbitrary wing
Hovered over hill and plain:
Headlong from that haughty height
Forced to sue to England's might,
And accept, for eagle's flight,

Cage and chain!

Still they cry, ``She is alone,
And must truckle to our nod."
What! with half the world her own!
What! still wielding Neptune's rod!
She is lonely as the breeze,
Lonely as the stars or seas,
Lone, unreachable as these,
Lone as God!

Let the bandits then deride
Loneliness they shall not share.
We are lonely, unallied,
As the lion in his lair.
Doubters, dastards, now be dumb:
Sound the clarion! Roll the drum!
Let them menace, let them come,
If they dare!

Alfred Austin

If you were mine, if you were mine,

` If you were mine, if you were mine,
The day would dawn, the stars would shine,
The sun would set, the moon arise,
In holier and yet heavenlier skies.
Then unto me the Year would bring
A younger April, fresher Spring.
I should not then seek sylvan ways
For primrose clusters, woodbine sprays,
To hear the mavis' matin tale,
Or nocturn of the nightingale.
For at your coming there would pass
A glow, a glory, o'er the grass,
The flowers would in your gaze rejoice,
The wildwood carol in your voice,
Returning gleam chase lingering gloom,
And life be never out of bloom,
If you were mine!

` If you were mine, I should not know
In what fair month the roses blow,
When the pure lily bares her brow,
Or ringdoves coo their nuptial vow.
For, with your hand soft-clasped in mine,
I still should smell the eglantine,
And, wheresoe'er our steps should stray,
The incense of the new-mown hay.
By restless wave or restful mere,
In wanderings far or wanderings near,
On cheerful down, in pensive glen,
It would be always Summer then,
If you were mine.

` If you were mine, I should not fear
The warnings of the waning year,
The garnering sickle, girdled sheaf,
The falling acorn, floating leaf,
Moisture of eve and haze of morn,
Pearls turned to rubies on the thorn,
The silvering tress on fading brow,
The dimples that are furrows now.
For, leaving summits once I clomb,
With you, would seem but wending home.
Leaning on love in life's decline,
More sweet the shadow than the shine,
The cushat's perch than swallow's wing,
And Autumn peace than pomp of Spring,
If you were mine.

` If you were mine, how then should I
Heed frozen fallow, churlish sky,
Bleak, songless branches, sapless rind,
The wailing of the homeless wind,

The dwindling days, the deepening snow,
The dull, dead weight of wintry woe?
For, harkening to the Christmas peal
Without, our hearts within would feel,
In glowing rafter, flickering blaze,
The sunshine of departed days,
And round the hearth dear memories swarm
To keep life young, to keep love warm,
If you were mine.

`Yet you are mine, yes, you are mine.
No length of land, no breadth of brine,
Can keep whom spirit links, apart,
Or make an exile of the heart.
And when from soul, no more the thrall
Of sense, the fleshly fetters fall,
And, purified by combats past,
Long-martyred love is crowned at last,
You then before the Heavenly Throne
Will take my hand, nor blush to own,
That you were mine!'

When June is wreathed with wilding rose
When June is wreathed with wilding rose,
And all the buds are blown,
And O, 'tis joy to dream and doze
In meadows newly mown,
Go take her where the graylings leap,
And where the dabchick dives,
Or where the bees from clover reap
The harvest for their hives;
For Summer is the season when,
If you but know the way,
A maid that's kissed will kiss again,
And pelt you with the hay,
The hay,
And pelt you with the hay.

Alfred Austin

Impromptu

Tell me your race, your name,
O Lady limned as dead, yet as when living fair!
That within this faded frame
An unfading beauty wear.
Were you ever known to fame,
Or, more wisely, chose to be
Lost in love's obscurity?
We may question, gaze, and guess,
You will never answer "yes,"
For your sweet lips are closed by Death's relentlessness.

Yes, you were chill before
Some thoughtful hand to us your loveliness bequeathed.
You already then no more
Moved, or spoke, or felt, or breathed,
But an eternal silence wore.
Dank and limp your ample hair,
And your eyelids kept the stare
Of a face that cannot speak;
And, where lived the rose's streak,
There only lingered then the lily in your cheek.

Was it your own strange prayer
That you, in death, should be in living garb arrayed,
And your aspect seem as fair,
Fanciful and undecayed,
As when life and love were there?
No! it was no idle whim:
Death was in love with you, and you in love with Him.
And when you, with tender dread,
All to Him surrender'd,
He took care you should retain
All of life except its pain,
And with unabated charms
Lie fast asleep in your unsleeping lover's arms.

Alfred Austin

Impromptu: To Frances Garnet Wolseley

Little maiden just beginning
To be comely, arch, and winning,
In whose form I catch the traces
Of your mother's gifts and graces,
And around whose head the glory
Of your father's growing story,
O'er whose cradle, fortune-guided,
Mars and Venus both presided,
May your fuller years inherit
Female charm and manly merit,
So that all may know who girt you
With vivacity and virtue,
Whence you had the luck to borrow
Pensive mien without its sorrow,
Dignity devoid of coldness,
Sprightliness without its boldness,
Raillery untipped by malice,
Playful wit and kindly sallies,
Eloquence averse from railing,
Each good point without its failing.
And when, little bud, you flower
Into maidenhood and power,
Fate no fainter heart allot you
Than the brave one that begot you,
So that you a race continue
Worthy of the blood within you,
Handing down the gifts you bring them,
With a better bard to sing them.

Alfred Austin

In Praise Of England

From tangled brake and trellised bower
Bring every bud that blows,
But never will you find the flower
To match an English rose.
It blooms with more than city grace,
Though rustic and apart;
It has a smile upon its face,
And a dewdrop in its heart.

Though wide the goodly world around
Your fancy may have strayed,
Where was the woman ever found
To match an English maid?
At work she smiles, through play she sings,
She doubts not nor denies;
She'll cling to you as woodbine clings,
And love you till she dies.

If you would put it to the proof,
Then round the zodiac roam;
But never will you find the roof
To match an English home.
You hear the sound of children's feet
Still pattering on the stair:
'Tis made by loving labour sweet,
And sanctified by prayer.

Go traverse tracts sublime or sweet,
Snow-peak or scorched ravine,
But where will you the landscape meet
To match an English scene?
The hamlet hallowed by its spire,
The wildwood fresh with flowers,
Garden and croft and thorp and byre
Gleaming through silvery showers.

Across the wave, along the wind,
Flutter and plough your way,
But where will you a Sceptre find
To match the English Sway?
Its conscience holds the world in awe
With blessing or with ban;
Its Freedom guards the Reign of Law,
And majesty of Man!

Alfred Austin

In Sutton Woods

There-peace once more; the restless roar
Of troubled cities dies away.
`` Welcome to our broad shade once more,"
The dear old woodlands seem to say.

The sweet suggestions of the wind,
That spake in whispers, now are stilled;
The songless branches all remind
That summer's glory is fulfilled.

The petulant plaint of falling leaves
Dimples the leaden pool awhile;
So Age, impassive, but receives
Youth's tale of troubles with a smile.

O fallen leaves! O feelings dead!
O dimpled pool! O scornful lips!
O hardening of the heart and head!-
The summer's and the soul's eclipse!

Thus, as the seasons slip away,
How much is schemed, how little done!
What splendid plans at break of day!
What void regrets at set of sun!

The world goes round, for you, for me,
For him who sits, for him who strives,
And the great Fates indifferent see
The rage or respite of our lives.

Then fall, ye leaves! die out, thou breeze!
Grow sedges thick on every pool!
Let each old rushing impulse freeze,
Let each old generous friendship cool.

It is not love, it is not worth,
Self-sacrifice, or yearnings true,
Make the dull devotees of earth
Prostrate themselves and worship you.

The savage consciousness of powers,
The selfish purpose, stubborn will,
Have ever, in this world of ours,
Achieved success-achieve it still.

Farewell, ye woods! no more I sit;
Great voices in the distance call:
If this be peace-enough of it.
I go. Fall, unseen foliage, fall!

Alfred Austin

In The Forum

The last warm gleams of sunset fade
From cypress spire and stonepine dome,
And, in the twilight's deepening shade,
Lingering, I scan the wrecks of Rome.

Husht the Madonna's Evening Bell;
The steers lie loosed from wain and plough;
The vagrant monk is in his cell,
The meek nun-novice cloistered now.

Pedant's presumptuous voice no more
Vexes the spot where Caesar trod,
And o'er the pavement's soundless floor
Come banished priest and exiled God.

The lank-ribbed she-wolf, couched among
The regal hillside's tangled scrubs,
With dotting gaze and fondling tongue
Suckles the Vestal's twin-born cubs.

Yet once again Evander leads
Æneas to his wattled home,
And, throned on Tiber's fresh-cut reeds,
Talks of burnt Troy and rising Rome.

From out the tawny dusk one hears
The half-feigned scream of Sabine maids,
The rush to arms, then swift the tears
That separate the clashing blades.

The Lictors with their fasces throng
To quell the Commons' rising roar,
As Tullia's chariot flames along,
Splashed with her murdered father's gore.

Her tresses free from band or comb,
Love-dimpled Venus, lithe and tall,
And fresh as Fiumicino's foam,
Mounts her pentelic pedestal.

With languid lids, and lips apart,
And curving limbs like wave half-furled,
Unarmed she dominates the heart,
And without sceptre sways the world.

Nerved by her smile, avenging Mars
Stalks through the Forum's fallen fanes,
Or, changed of mien and healed of scars,
Threads sylvan slopes and vineyard plains.

With waves of song from wakening lyre
Apollo routs the wavering night,

While, parsley-crowned, the white-robed choir
Wind chanting up the Sacred Height,

Where Jove, with thunder-garlands wreathed,
And crisp locks frayed like fretted foam,
Sits with his lightnings half unsheathed,
And frowns against the foes of Rome.

You cannot kill the Gods. They still
Reclaim the thrones where once they reigned,
Rehaunt the grove, remount the rill,
And renovate their rites profaned.

Diana's hounds still lead the chase,
Still Neptune's Trident crests the sea,
And still man's spirit soars through space
On feathered heels of Mercury.

No flood can quench the Vestals' Fire;
The Flamen's robes are still as white
As ere the Salii's armoured choir
Were drowned by droning anchorite.

The saint may seize the siren's seat,
The shaveling frown where frisked the Faun;
Ne'er will, though all beside should fleet,
The Olympian Presence be withdrawn.

Here, even in the noontide glare,
The Gods, recumbent, take their ease;
Go look, and you will find them there,
Slumbering behind some fallen frieze.

But most, when sunset glow hath paled,
And come, as now, the twilight hour,
In vesper vagueness dimly veiled
I feel their presence and their power.

What though their temples strew the ground,
And to the ruin owls repair,
Their home, their haunt, is all around;
They drive the cloud, they ride the air.

And, when the planets wend their way
Along the never-ageing skies,
``Revere the Gods'' I hear them say;
``The Gods are old, the Gods are wise.''

Build as man may, Time gnaws and peers
Through marble fissures, granite rents;
Only Imagination rears
Imperishable monuments.

Let Gaul and Goth pollute the shrine,
Level the altar, fire the fane:
There is no razing the Divine;
The Gods return, the Gods remain.

Alfred Austin

In The Month When Sings The Cuckoo

Hark! Spring is coming. Her herald sings,
Cuckoo!
The air resounds and the woodland rings,
Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
Leave the milking pail and the mantling cream,
And down by the meadow, and up by the stream,
Where movement is music and life a dream,
In the month when sings the cuckoo.

Away with old Winter's frowns and fears,
Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
Now May with a smile dries April's tears.
Cuckoo!
When the bees are humming in bloom and bud,
And the kine sit chewing the moist green cud,
Shall the snow not melt in a maiden's blood,
In the month when sings the cuckoo?

The popinjay mates and the lapwing woos;
Cuckoo!
In the lane is a footstep. I wonder whose?
Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
How sweet are low whispers! and sweet, so sweet,
When the warm hands touch and the shy lips meet,
And sorrel and woodruff are round our feet,
In the month when sings the cuckoo.

Your face is as fragrant as moist musk-rose;
Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
All the year in your cheek the windflower blows;
Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
You flit as blithely as bird on wing;
And when you answer, and when they sing,
I know not if they, or You, be Spring,
In the month when pairs the cuckoo.

Will you love me still when the blossom droops?
Cuckoo!
When the cracked husk falls and the fieldfare troops?
Cuckoo!
Let sere leaf or snowdrift shade your brow,
By the soul of the Spring, sweet-heart, I vow,
I will love you then as I love you now,
In the month when sings the cuckoo.

Smooth, smooth is the sward where the loosestrife grows,
Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
As we lie and hear in a dreamy doze,
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
And smooth is the curve of a maiden's cheek,
When she loves to listen but fears to speak,
And we yearn but we know not what we seek,

In the month when sings the cuckoo.

But in warm mid summer we hear no more,
Cuckoo!
And August brings not, with all its store,
Cuckoo!
When Autumn shivers on Winter's brink,
And the wet wind wails through crevice and chink,
We gaze at the logs, and sadly think
Of the month when called the cuckoo.

But the cuckoo comes back and shouts once more,
Cuckoo!
And the world is as young as it was before;
Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
It grows not older for mortal tears,
For the falsehood of men or for women's fears;
'Tis as young as it was in the bygone years,
When first was heard the cuckoo.

I will love you then as I love you now.
Cuckoo!
What cares the Spring for a broken vow?
Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
The broods of last year are pairing, this;
And there never will lack, while love is bliss,
Fresh ears to cozen, fresh lips to kiss,
In the month when sings the cuckoo.

O cruel bird! will you never have done?
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
You sing for the cloud, as you sang for the sun;
Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
You mock me now as you mocked me then,
When I knew not yet that the loves of men
Are as brief as the glamour of glade and glen,
And the glee of the fleeting cuckoo.

O, to lie once more in the long fresh grass,
Cuckoo!
And dream of the sounds and scents that pass;
Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
To savour the woodbine, surmise the dove,
With no roof save the far-off sky above,
And a curtain of kisses round couch of love,
While distantly called the cuckoo.

But if now I slept, I should sleep to wake
To the sleepless pang and the dreamless ache,
To the wild babe blossom within my heart,
To the darkening terror and swelling smart,
To the searching look and the words apart,

And the hint of the tell-tale cuckoo.

The meadow grows thick, and the stream runs deep,
Cuckoo!
Where the aspens quake and the willows weep;
Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
The dew of the night and the morning heat
Will close up the track of my farewell feet:-
So good-bye to the life that once was sweet,
When so sweetly called the cuckoo.

The kine are un milked, and the cream un churned,
Cuckoo!
The pillow un pressed, and the quilt un turned,
Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
'Twas easy to gibe at a beldame's fear
For the quick brief blush and the sidelong tear;
But if maids will gad in the youth of the year,
They should heed what says the cuckoo.

There are marks in the meadow laid up for hay,
Cuckoo!
And the tread of a foot where no foot should stray:
Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
The banks of the pool are broken down,
Where the water is quiet and deep and brown;-
The very spot, if one longed to drown,
And no more to hear the cuckoo.

'Tis a full taut net and a heavy haul.
Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
Look! her auburn hair and her trim new shawl!
Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
Draw a bit this way where 'tis not so steep;
There, cover her face! She but seems asleep;
While the swallows skim and the graylings leap,
And joyously sings the cuckoo.

Alfred Austin

Inflexible As Fate

When for one brief dark hour Rome's virile sway
Felt the sharp shock of Cannae's adverse day,
Forum, and field, and Senate-House were rent
With cries of nor misgiving nor lament,
Only of men contending now who should
Purchase the spot on which the Victor stood.
Legion on legion sprang up from the ground,
Gleamed through the land, and over ocean wound,
Till Scipio's eagles swarmed on Afric's shore,
And Carthage perished, to insult no more.

Not less resolved than Rome, now England stands
Facing foul fortune with unfaltering hands.
Throughout her Realms is neither fear nor feud,
But, calm in strength and steeled in fortitude,
She fills the gaps of death with eager life,
That will nor lag nor haggle in the strife,
Till, having backward rolled the lawless tide
Of crafty treason, tyranny, and pride,
Her Sword hath brought, inflexible as Fate,
Charter of Freedom to a fettered State.

Alfred Austin

Invocation

Where Apennine slopes unto Tuscan plain,
And breaks into dimples, and laughs to flowers,
To see where the terrors of Winter wane,
And out of a valley of grape and grain
There blossoms a City of domes and towers,

Teuton, Lombard, and grasping Gaul,
Prince and Pontiff, have forced their way,
Have forded the river, and scaled the wall,
And made in its palaces stye and stall,
Where spears might glisten and war-steeds neigh.

But ever since Florence was fair and young,
And the sun upon turret and belfry shone,
Were her windows bannered and joy-bells rung,
When back to his saddle the Stranger sprung,
And lances were lifted and pikemen gone.

Yes, ever and ever till you, my Queen,
Came over the sea that is all your own,
When the tear on the tip of the vine is seen,
And the fig-tree cressets have flamed to green,
And windflower wakened, and tulip blown.

Then roses were showered before your feet,
And her lily-crowned gonfalons waved above,
And children chanted in square and street,
'All hail to the Monarch may free men greet,
Whose sceptre is Peace, and whose Throne is Love.'

And now that each snow-torrent foams and falls,
And the oreoles sing and the skylarks soar,
And the lithe swallow circles her rose-white walls,
Through the clefts of the Apennine Florence calls,
'More welcome than Spring, come back once more!

'Come back, for the cuckoo is on its way,
And the mountains, smiling, await your smile;
And still in my olive-groves bask and stray,
Till the warm-winged waters and winds of May
Shall waft you back to your own loved Isle.'

'The sickle hath performed its work
'The sickle hath performed its work,
The storm-gusts sweep the aspens bare,
Careering clouds and shadows mirk
Cov the disheartened air.

'No swallow circles round the roof,
No chirp redeems the dripping shed;
The very gables frown reproof,
'Why not already fled?''

Alfred Austin

Is Life Worth Living?

Is life worth living? Yes, so long
As Spring revives the year,
And hails us with the cuckoo's song,
To show that she is here;
So long as May of April takes,
In smiles and tears, farewell,
And windflowers dapple all the brakes,
And primroses the dell;
While children in the woodlands yet
Adorn their little laps
With ladysmock and violet,
And daisy-chain their caps;
While over orchard daffodils
Cloud-shadows float and fleet,
And ousel pipes and laverock trills,
And young lambs buck and bleat;
So long as that which bursts the bud
And swells and tunes the rill,
Makes springtime in the maiden's blood,
Life is worth living still.

Life not worth living! Come with me,
Now that, through vanishing veil,
Shimmers the dew on lawn and lea,
And milk foams in the pail;
Now that June's sweltering sunlight bathes
With sweat the striplings lithe,
As fall the long straight scented swathes
Over the crescent scythe;
Now that the throstle never stops
His self-sufficing strain,
And woodbine-trails festoon the copse,
And eglantine the lane;
Now rustic labour seems as sweet
As leisure, and blithe herds
Wend homeward with unweary feet,
Carolling like the birds;
Now all, except the lover's vow,
And nightingale, is still;
Here, in the twilight hour, allow,
Life is worth living still.

When Summer, lingering half-forlorn,
On Autumn loves to lean,
And fields of slowly yellowing corn
Are girt by woods still green;
When hazel-nuts wax brown and plump,
And apples rosy-red,
And the owlet hoots from hollow stump,
And the dormouse makes its bed;
When crammed are all the granary floors,
And the Hunter's moon is bright,

And life again is sweet indoors,
And logs again alight;
Aye, even when the houseless wind
Waileth through cleft and chink,
And in the twilight maids grow kind,
And jugs are filled and clink;
When children clasp their hands and pray
``Be done Thy heavenly will!"
Who doth not lift his voice, and say,
``Life is worth living still"?

Is life worth living? Yes, so long
As there is wrong to right,
Wail of the weak against the strong,
Or tyranny to fight;
Long as there lingers gloom to chase,
Or streaming tear to dry,
One kindred woe, one sorrowing face
That smiles as we draw nigh:
Long as at tale of anguish swells
The heart, and lids grow wet,
And at the sound of Christmas bells
We pardon and forget;
So long as Faith with Freedom reigns,
And loyal Hope survives,
And gracious Charity remains
To leaven lowly lives;
While there in one untrodden tract
For Intellect or Will,
And men are free to think and act
Life is worth living still.

Not care to live while English homes
Nestle in English trees,
And England's Trident-Sceptre roams
Her territorial seas!
Not live while English songs are sung
Wherever blows the wind,
And England's laws and England's tongue
Enfranchise half mankind!
So long as in Pacific main,
Or on Atlantic strand,
Our kin transmit the parent strain,
And love the Mother-Land;
So long as in this ocean Realm,
Victoria and her Line
Retain the heritage of the helm,
By loyalty divine;
So long as flashes English steel,
And English trumpets shrill,
He is dead already who doth not feel
Life is worth living still.

Alfred Austin

John Everett Millais

Now let no passing-bell be tolled,
Wail now no dirge of gloom;
Nor around purple pall unfold
The trappings of the tomb!
Dead? No, the Artist doth not die;
Enduring as the air, the sky,
He sees the mortal years roll by,
Indifferent to their doom.

With the abiding He abides,
Eternally the same;
From shore to shore Time's sounding tides
Roll and repeat His name.
Death, the kind pilot, from His home
But speeds Him unto widening foam,
Then leaves Him, sunk from sight, to roam
The ocean of his Fame.

Nor thus himself alone He lives,
But, by the magic known
To His "so potent art," He gives
Life lasting as His own.
See, on the canvas, foiling Fate,
With kindling gaze and flashing gait,
Dead Statesmen still defend the State,
And vindicate the Throne.

Stayed by His hand, the loved, the lost,
Still keep their wonted place;
And, fondly fooled, our hearts accost
The vanished form and face.
Beauty, most frail of earthly shows,
That fades as fleetly as it blows,
By Him arrested, gleams and glows
With never-waning grace.

His, too, the wizard power to bring,
When city-pent we be,
The matron Autumn, maiden Spring,
Bracken and birchen-tree.
Look, 'twixt gray boulders fringed with fern,
The tawny torrents chafe and churn,
And, lined with light, the amber burn
Goes bounding to the sea.

Toll then for Him no funeral knell,
Nor around aisle and nave
Let sorrow's farewell anthem swell,
Nor solemn symbols wave.
Your very brightest banners bring,
Your gayest flowers! Sing, voices, sing!
And let Fame's lofty joybells ring

Their greeting at His grave!

Alfred Austin

Know, Nature, like the cuckoo, laughs at law

` Know, Nature, like the cuckoo, laughs at law,
Placing her eggs in whatso nest she will;
And when, at callow-time, you think to find
The sparrow's stationary chirp, lo! bursts
Voyaging voice to glorify the Spring.'

Alfred Austin

Lady Mabel

Side by side with Lady Mabel
Sate I, with the sunshade down;
In the distance hummed the Babel
Of the many-footed town;
There we sate with looks unstable-
Now of tenderness, of frown.

`` Must we part? or may I linger?
Wax the shadows, wanes the day."
Then, with voice of sweetest singer
That hath all but died away,
`` Go," she said; but tightened finger
Said articulately, `` Stay!"

Face to face with Lady Mabel,
With the gauzy curtains drawn,
Till a sense I am unable
To portray began to dawn;
Till the slant sun flung the gable
Far athwart the sleepy lawn.

`` Now I go. Adieu, adieu, love!
This is weakness; sweet, be strong.
Comes the footfall of the dew, love!
Philomel's reminding song."
`` Go," she said; `` but I go too, love!
Go with you, my life along!"

Breast to breast with Lady Mabel,
Shrouded by the courteous night,
Baffling all the forms of fable
To describe our dreams aright;
And as pure as gifts of Abel,
In the Omnipresent sight.

Alfred Austin

Leszko The Bastard

`` Why do I bid the rising gale
To waft me from your shore?
Why hail I, as the vultures hail,
The scent of far-off gore?
Why wear I with defiant pride
The Paynim's badge and gear,
Though I am vowed to Christ that died,
And fain would staunch the gaping side
That felt the sceptic spear?
And why doth one in whom there runs
The blood of Sclavic sires and sons,
In those but find a foe,
That onward march with sword and flame,
To vindicate the Sclavic name,
From the fringe of Arctic snows,
To the cradle of the rose,
Where the Sweet Waters flow?
Strange! But 'twere stranger yet if I,
When Turk and Tartar splinters fly,
Lagged far behind the van.
While the wind dallies with my sail,
Listen! and you shall hear my tale;
Then marvel, if you can!

`` Nothing but snow! A white waste world,
Far as eye reached, or voice could call!
Motion within itself slept furled;
The earth was dead, and Heaven its pall!
Now nothing lived except the wind,
That, moaning round with restless mind,
Seemed like uncoffined ghost to flit
O'er vacant tracts, that it might find
Some kindred thing to speak with it.
Nothing to break the white expanse!
No far, no near, no high, no low!
Nothing to stop the wandering glance!
One smooth monotony of snow!
I lifted the latch, and I shivered in;
My mother stood by the larch-log blaze,
My mother, stately, and tall, and thin,
With the shapely head and the soft white skin,
And the sweetly-sorrowing gaze.
She was younger than you, aye, you who stand
In matron prime by your household fire,
A happy wife in a happy land,
And with all your heart's desire.
But though bred, like you, from the proud and brave,
Her hair was blanched and her voice was grave.
If you knew what it is to be born a slave,
And to feel a despot's ire!

`` She turned her round from the hearth like one

That hath waited long, and said,
`Come hither, and sit by me, my son!
For somehow to-night doth remembrance run
Back to the days that are dead.
And you are tall and stalwart now,
And coming manhood o'er your brow
Its shadow 'gins to shed.
Sit by me close!' and as I sate
Close, close as I could sit,
She took my hand and placed it flat
On hers, and fondled it.
Then with the same soft palm she brushed
My wind-tossed locks apart,
And, kissing my bared temples, hushed
The flow of love that else had gushed,
Love-loosened, from my heart.

`` ` Listen! you often have questioned why
Here 'neath this pale Siberian sky,
You scarcely live, I slowly die.
That we dwell on, but exiles here,
In regions barren, sunless, drear,
And have no more the power to fly
To brighter lands and bluer sky,
Than some poor bird whom man's caprice
Hath tethered by a clanking chain,
And leaves upon its perch in pain
To pine for, ne'er to find release,-
This do you know, and still have known
Since first I taught your mouth to frame
The syllables of Poland's name,
Even before my own.
But how could I to childhood's ears,
Or boyhood's, tell the tale of tears
That links me with the bygone years?-
Tale steeped in rapture, drenched with woe,
A tale of wrong, and loss, and love,
That opens in the heavens above,
And ends in worse than hell below?-
A tale I only could impart
To mind mature and full-grown heart;
A tale to fill your larger life
With hissing waters of distress
And overflowing bitterness,
And set you with yourself at strife?
But you must hear it now. The down
Of manhood fringes lip and cheek;
Your temples take a richer brown,
And on your forehead buds the crown
Of kingly thought that yet will speak.
Listen! and let no faintest word
Of all I utter fall unheard

Upon your ear or heart!
'Twill wring your youth, but nerve it too:-
And what have I now left to do,
But unveil tyranny to view,
And wing the avenging dart?

`` ` So like to you! The same blue eye,
Same lavish locks, same forehead high,
But of a manlier majesty!
His limbs, like yours, were straight and strong,
Yet supple as the bough in bud;
For tyrants cannot tame the blood,
Or noble lineage lose, through wrong
Its heritage of hardihood.
And maybe since his years were more,
And partly that you needs must bear
In every filial vein and pore
With his pure strain the base alloy
Of that in you which is my share,
Though you are tall and comely, boy!
Yet he was taller, comelier.
In days that now but live in song,
When Rurik's hinds felt Poland's heel,
And Poland's horsemen, cased in steel,
To Volo's plain were wont to throng,
A hundred thousand manes in strength,
And vowed, if Heaven let fall the sky,
To uphold it on their lance's length
As 'twere a silken canopy;
His sires were there in gallant trim,
Haught of mien and hard of limb-
Visors up and foreheads gashed,
Swords that poised, and swooped, and flashed,
Like the wings of the flaming Cherubim!
And when Imperial vultures tore
With banded beaks Sarmatia's breast,
And wallowed in Sarmatia's gore,
His fathers by their fathers swore
Ne'er to recede nor rest,
Till they had pushed the watchful points
Of vengeance in between the joints
Of armour dear to tyrants pricked
Of conscience never hushed nor tricked,
And made them feel what they inflict.
Vow sternly kept, but kept in vain!
For ninety hoping, hopeless years,
Poland hath known no couch save pain,
No mate except the dull cold chain,
Hath felt the lash, and fed on jeers,
While Heaven, it seems, no longer hears
The wail of prayers, the drip of tears,
Or the voices of the slain.

Thrice have her sons, despite their gyves,
Essayed to sell their worthless lives
At least against the price
Of ruin on their gaolers brought;
But each brave stroke hath come to nought,
And blood, and wounds, and death, have brought,
Only fresh bootless sacrifice.
No blow was struck they did not share,
No banner raised, but straight they flew
For one more tussle with despair;
And ever as they fought, they fell,
Waxing still fewer and more few,
Till only one remained to tell
How they had passed away, and dare
With front erect and unquelled stare
Those earthly ministers of hell.
One only of that kindred band-
Like some last column gazing lone
Across the bare and brackish sand,
In a depopulated land,
Telling of times and temples flown!

`` He loved me. Love in every clime,
Through all vicissitudes of time,
Is life's climacteric and prime.
Matched against it, all boons that bless,
All joys we chase, all good we prize,
All that of tender and sublime
Expands the heart and fills the eyes,
Tastes pitiful and savourless.
It glorifies the common air,
It clothes with light the mountains bare,
And shows the heavens all shining there.
It lifts our feet from off the ground,
It lets us walk along the skies;
It makes the daily silence sound
With transcendental harmonies.
It rules the seasons. Linnets sing
As loud in winter as in spring,
When hearts are leal, and love is king.
Bathed in its light, the distance glows
With all the colours of the rose.
Its vivid gaze blends far and near
In one delicious atmosphere,
Projects the future from the past,
And hugs the faith, without a fear,
Since love is all, that all will last.
The peevish voice of doubt grows dumb;
The demons of dejection flee;
And even sordid cares become
But a divine anxiety.
Hope sails no more in far-off skies,

But makes its nest upon the ground;
And happiness, coy wing that flies
Too oft when mortal yearning woos,
At love's sweet summons circling round,
Sits on the nearest bough, and coos.

`` `Yes! such is love in every land,
If blest or curst, enslaved or free.
But how can they whose chainless hand
May stretch towards all they dream or see,
Whose lungs exult, whose lives expand,
In air of bracing liberty,
Feel love's delirium like to those
Who, of all other bliss bereft,
And cooped from each hale wind that blows,
Fondle, amid a world of foes,
The solitary friend that's left?
Through whatso regions freemen roam,
They find a hearth, they make a home.
Their unfenced energies embrace
All realms of thought, all fields of space,
At each fresh step fresh prospects find,
Larger than any left behind,
And mount with still rewarded stress
From happiness to happiness.
E'en love itself for such can bring
To life's tuned lyre but one more string,
Or but with fingers subtly straying
Among the chords, and softly playing,
Make more harmonious everything.
But when to him whose hopes are bound
Within a dismal prison round,
Whose thoughts, suspected, must not soar
Beyond his straitened dungeon floor,
Who may not speak, nor groan, nor sigh,
Nor lend sharp agony a vent,
Lest those should hear him who are nigh,
And catch, perchance, in passing by,
Contagion from his discontent;
Who dwells an exile in his home,
And cannot rest and may not roam;
Whom even hope doth not delude;
Who vainly lives, in vain would die,
And, hemmed in close, alike would fly,
Society and solitude;-
Oh! when to such as he love brings
Message of heaven upon its wings,
It fills his heart, it floods his brain,
Riots in every pulse and vein,
And turns to paradise his pain.
Body, and soul, and sense conspire
To feed the rising, rushing fire.

The passions which are wont to share
Love's empire o'er distracted man,
Denied their outlet, in him fan
The exclusive fury of desire.
As one who faints of thirst, he takes
Swiftly what should be slowly quaffed,
With ravenous lips his fever slakes,
Then dies, delirious, of the draught!

``` He loved me. Do you ask if I  
His love returned? Go, ask the sky  
If it in vain pours sun and shower  
On herb and leaf, on tree and flower.  
Go, ask of echo if it wakes  
When voice in lonely places calls;  
Ask of the silence if it takes  
The sound of plashing waterfalls:  
Ask the parched plains if they refuse  
The solace of descending dews;  
Ask the unrippled lake that lies  
Under faint fleecy clouds that flit,  
If it reflects with tender eyes  
The heavenly forms that gaze on it;  
But ask not me if I returned  
The love with which his being burned.  
His passion such, in any heart  
It straight had worked its counterpart,  
Woke its own echo, roused a tone  
In perfect concert with its own,  
And made, the instant that it shone,  
Mirror of what it gazed upon.

``` We loved, as few have loved before,  
'Chance none; and lo! the hour drew nigh
To ratify the vows we swore
One night beneath the sky,
Before the solemn altar-rails
O'er which He hangs, pierced through with nails,
Who for our sins did die.
Oh! why is woman doomed to bear
The love, or lust, she cannot share;
And hear from alien lips the sighs
She fain herself would waken ne'er,
Save within kindred hearts and eyes?
Never by word, nor glance, nor e'en
That barren courtesy we give
Unto well nigh all things that live,
Did his detested rival glean
That I another's homage should
Not greet, as evil is by good.
But, had my heart been free as air,
Fickle as wind, as quick to take

Impression as some limpid lake
 That every wanton breath can stir,
 How had it ruffled been by one
 Who wore the livery of the brood
 By whom, with hands in blood imbrued,
 Thrice had my country been undone?
 But I, nor free, nor false, nor light,
 Bound both to Poland, and to him
 Who yearned for Poland's wrongs to fight,
 Had rather torn been limb from limb,
 Than share with such love's last delight!
 I answered softly, not in scorn;
 For in what guise soe'er it come,
 Because of gentle longings born,
 Love should leave indignation dumb.
 But he was, like his shifty race,
 Disloyal, cunning, vengeful, base,
 And when he heard the lips of fate,
 Love in him straightway turned to hate,
 Even before my face!
 He menaced me with vengeance dire.
 He knew my lover, brother, sire,
 All rebels to the core.
 And in the rush of lustful ire,
 By his schismatic saints he swore,
 That ruin, exile, death, should fall
 With speedy stroke upon them all,
 Unless I fed his foul desire.
 I knew it was no idle boast;
 He had the power to fetter, slay,
 Abetted by a servile host,
 Perjured, suborned by bribes to say
 Whatever falsehood pleased him most.
 Yet then I bridled not my scorn,
 But poured upon his dastard head
 All that by woman can be said,
 When she confronts, before her eyes,
 Creature created to despise,
 And, since of manlier weapons shorn,
 Can only wish him dead.
 ``Beware!" he croaked, with passion hoarse,
 ``Within your patriot arms shall lie,
 Repelled or welcomed, none but I;
 And what you now to love deny,
 You yet shall yield to fear or force."
 With scorn yet fiercer than at first
 I flashed, and bade him work his worst.
 ``Before to-morrow's sun hath set,"
 He answered, ``I shall pay the debt
 Of vengeance, never baffled yet.
 Think not to foil me or to fly!
 I ever do the thing I would."

Then laughing loud, he went; and I
Hated the ground where late he stood.

`` `The Night lay encamped in the summer sky,
And the burning stars kept watch;
All were asleep upon earth save I,
Who had waited the hour and lifted the latch,
And crept out noiselessly.
The air was as silent as love or death,
Except for the beat of my quickened breath,
And once the lonely belated wail
Of an answered nightingale.
I dared not quicken my steps, for fear
The silence should listening be, and hear.
Slowly, stealthily, foot by foot.
Girding my garments tightly round,
Lest they should touch and tell the ground,
I threaded the laurel-walk and passed
On to the latchet-gate, and put
My hand on the creaking key, aghast
Lest the first stage of flight should prove the last.
Through! and out in the meadows beyond,
With the cooling grass-dews round my feet,
Which would tell the tale of my journey fond,
But too late to hinder its purpose sweet;
Over the narrow and swaying planks
That span the neck of the marish pool
Where the tall spear-lilies close their ranks,
And the water-hens nestle safe and cool.
Then into the gloomy, darksome wood
Where the trunks seemed ghosts, and the big boughs stood
As though they would block my way.
Woman's love is stronger than woman's fright,
And though dogged by dread, yet I faced that night
What I ne'er had faced by day.
O the blessed break, and the blank without,
From each grinning bole and each staring leaf!
I clutched my temples, and gave a shout;
It was mad, but it brought relief.
And then with a saner fear I stopped
To know if my foolish cry was heard.
But, like to a stream where a stone is dropped,
The silence was only a moment stirred,
And stillness closed over the hazard word.

`` `I was there! in the garden where first I lent
My ear to the trembling music of love,
And my soul succumbed to its blandishment.
I was there! I could smell the syringa's scent
And the lilac plumes that loomed dark above,
But, like to the heart that keeps always
True to its friends, when friends betray,

Was lending the night that hid from view
Its delicate tufts and tender hue,
Odours sweeter than e'en by day.
The laburnum tassels brushed my cheek,
And the tangled clematis clutched my hair;
But I hurried along; though my limbs were weak,
I was strengthened by despair.
A moment more, and I should be
Hard by the window where he slept.
How should I wake him? how should flee,
If another o'erheard my voice? I crept
Softly, silently, over the sward.
The walls were dark, and the windows barred,
All saying-Yes, 'twas he! 'twas he!
Leaning out of his casement, lowly
Singing a love-song, sweetly, slowly,
That he first had sung to me.
He saw me not. He was gazing free
Across the dark, mysterious air,
At the shining stars, at the solemn sky,
At the unattainable far and fair,
The infinite something around, above,
With which, when alone, we identify
The finite thing we love.
I stood, and listened, and drank each note
Of love that came from the yearning throat,
As it rose, as it fell, as it floated and died;
And then with that courage that oft will spring,
When we have not time to think,
And impulse whispers the blessed thing
From which resolve would shrink,
I with the song replied.

`` ` One instant, and the echoed song,
The night, the dark, the heavens bare,
And all that was of far and fair,
And all that was of sweet and strong,
Seemed gathered into one embrace,
And showered their magic on my face.
His arms were round me, and his breath
As close to mine as life to death.
He murmured things I could not hear,
For I was deaf with bliss and fear.
Dumb, too; in vain I strove to speak;
I could but lean on breast and cheek,
And prove my passion wildly weak.
He drew me in. I still was dumb,
Panting for words that would not come,
But only tears instead, and sobs,
And broken syllables, and throbs,
With which hearts beat, whom rapture robs
Of all save love's delirium.

`` Why hast thou come?" I heard him say.
 `` There is no hour of night or day,
 The coming of thy worshipped feet
 Would not make richer or more sweet.
 O come! come! come! Yes, come away!
 Nay, never come, love! rather, stay!
 I must or miss you, or not meet;
 Absence is long, and presence fleet.
 And I am dead, when thou away!
 But why to-night, and here?" I saw
 Love's brightness overcast by awe;
 And terror in his face o'ercame
 The terror in my weakened frame;
 Till listening to his voice, I caught
 Contagion from his steadier thought,
 And found at length the words I sought.
 With rapid lips I told him all,
 What had befallen-might befall-
 The hateful lust, the lustful hate,
 The threats of one who, well he knew,
 If false in love, in wrath was true,
 And our impending fate.
 `` 'Twas this alone I came to tell,
 And, Leszko! now 'tis told, farewell!"
 I murmured with a faltering tongue.
 Round me his arms he tightly flung,
 And `` Never!" cried. `` Thy faith shall foil
 The base assassins of our soil.
 By the harmonious orbs that shine,
 To-night, within that dome divine,
 What thou hast promised me, must be mine!
 Before to-morrow's sun can sink,
 May deeds be done I would not name,
 And vengeance wreaked I dare not think.
 If thus you went, 'twere vain you came!
 To-night is ours, and, seized, will be
 Ours, ours, through all eternity.
 The dawn shall find us kneeling where
 Passion is purified by prayer;
 And hands of patriot priest shall bless
 And bind our premature caress.
 If we are parted then, we part,
 One, one in body, breast, and heart.
 Hate, lust, and tyranny, in vain
 Will strive to snap the cherished chain
 That we around ourselves have bound.
 Vanda! my love! my wife! my more!
 If more be in love's language found,
 Let them not baulk the troth we swore!
 Wed me with bonds not fiends can sever,
 And be thou mine-if once-for ever!"
 The winds of the morn began to stir,

And the stars began to pale;
We could feel the chill of the moving air,
And the lifting of the veil
That covers the face of the shrinking night,
Its dreams, its dangers, its delight.
We started up. We listened, heard
The pipe of an awaking bird;
Another-then another still-
Louder and longer, and more shrill,
Till every copse began to fill
With music piercing bitter, fell,
The discord of our forced farewell.
We clung one moment, panted, kissed,
Then bravely rending us, he cried-
`` Back through the curling morning mist,
Vanda! my love! my life! my bride!
A few brief hours, and side by side
Before Heaven's altar we shall stand,
As now in heart, then one in hand,
Then-be the future blest or curst-
Let Poland's tyrants wreak their worst!
One-one more kiss!"

```` We leaned, to give  
The richest of all boons that live,  
But paused, half given!. . .We each had heard  
A sound that was no waking bird,  
Nor stealthy footfall of the night,  
Scudding the unseen tracks of flight.  
The noise of human voices broke  
Upon our ears; the words they spoke  
Came nearer and more near.  
We clung in silence; 'twas too late  
To more than bide the feet of fate,  
And face them without fear.  
Loudest among them I could trace  
The voice I hated most on earth;  
Another moment, and his face,  
Lit with vindictiveness and mirth,  
Was gazing on our checked embrace.  
His myrmidons were at his heel:  
I did not shrink, I did not reel,  
But closer clung, to make him feel  
I loathed him and his alien race.  
I know no more. Unarmed we stood.  
I heard the clank of ordered steel,  
Then suddenly a blinding hood  
Over my head was flung, and I,  
Powerless to struggle, see, or cry,  
Felt myself wrenched from arms that fain  
Had fenced my freedom, but in vain,  
And, doubtful did he live or die,

Borne through the chilly morning air,  
Bound, stifled, cooped with dumb despair!

`` She paused, and strove for breath, as though  
The mere remembrance of that hour,  
Though fled and faded long ago,  
Retained the never-dying power  
To choke and stifle her again,  
And leave her dumb and dark, as then.  
But mute no less I sate; and she  
The horror in my stare could see,  
The speechless, open-mouthed suspense,  
That kept me gazing there, to know  
If I had heard the worst from woe,  
Or if I must prepare my sense  
For outrage deeper, more intense,  
And from extremity of wrong  
Become invulnerably strong.

`O no!' she cried, for swift she guessed  
The hell of anguish in my breast;  
`O no! not that! My boy! thou art  
The child of love and not of hate,  
Memento of my only mate!  
The birth of heart convulsed on heart  
With rapture pure and passionate!  
Though never more upon my breast  
His breast did beat, his head did rest;  
Though I no more beheld his eye  
Beaming above me like the sky  
When all is bright and all is high,  
And by which gazed on, one is blest;  
Though ne'er again his touch, his breath,  
Was blent with mine, to make me feel  
That something betwixt life and death,  
When the converging senses reel,  
And, through devotedness divine,  
Joy knows not what it suffereth;-  
No other hand has soiled the shrine;  
And, Leszko lost! though lost, yet mine,  
My senses, as my soul, kept thine!

`` She saw the shadow quit my brow;  
But, as it crept away, the light  
Seemed to desert her temples now.  
The hand she had imprisoned tight  
In hers, while travelling wildly back  
To passion's bourne o'er sorrow's track,  
She loosed, and half let go. `Hast heard,  
Hast drunk, hast understood, each word,  
Slowly she asked, `my lips have said?  
Ours was no sanctioned marriage-bed.  
No priestly blessing, altar's rite,

Confirmed the nuptials of that night.  
Leszko! thou art-

`` 'Twas not her tongue  
That paused upon the bitter word,  
But that before the name I heard  
I shrink not from, my arms I flung  
Around her sainted neck and showered  
The love with which my soul was stirred.  
I kissed her knees, her hands devoured,  
I hushed her mouth, I sealed her eyes,  
With kisses blent with broken cries,  
Such as from baffled lips arise  
When bursting hearts are overpowered  
With sense of sublime sacrifice.  
'Mother!' I cried, 'I'd sooner be  
The child of love, and him, and thee,  
Than bear or boast the tightest ties  
Altars can knit or priests devise!  
If love, faith, country cannot bind  
Two souls through love already blent,  
Where among mortals shall we find  
Solemnity or Sacrament?  
And were aught wanting to complete  
In face of God's just judgment-seat,  
Thy snapped-off love and life,  
The tyrant's outrage, years of wrong,  
Have weaved thee wedlock doubly strong,  
And made thee more than wife!

`` She smoothed my hair, caressed my brow;  
Consoling tears coursed down her cheek,  
Furrowed by sorrow's barren plough:  
She stroked my hand, she strove to speak:  
'Yes, Leszko! Holier bond was ne'er  
Sanctioned by heaven or sealed by prayer.  
Let others deem that formal vows  
Breathed between kneeling spouse and spouse,  
Can sanctify a link where each  
Is but the slave of ordered speech;  
Where vanity, ambition, greed,  
Are the base instincts that precede  
The purest of the passions, sent  
Life's desolate low steps to lead  
Up to the star-thronged firmament;  
Let others fancy, if they will,  
That pomp, and compliment, and smile,  
Are sacramental bonds, though guile  
And calculating coldness fill  
The hollows of the heart the while;  
Let those, too, scorn me who have knelt  
In fancied faithfulness, and sworn

The eternal troth they thought they felt,  
 But, soon as they were left to mourn  
 One to whose flesh their flesh they vowed  
 Not more in marriage-sheet than shroud,  
 After a few short trappings worn  
 To silence the censorious crowd,  
 Have let their facile feelings melt  
 Unto some second fancy, nursed  
 In the same lap where burned the first!  
 Let them!-Nor pomp nor pandars gave  
 Me unto him! 'Twas love alone  
 Anointed us; and not the grave,  
 Not life, not death, shall e'er deprave  
 The body that remains his own.  
 Not mine a fault for which to crave  
 By Heaven or mortal to be shriven.  
 If I a suppliant need to be  
 To any, 'tis, my boy, to thee!  
 And I by thee am all forgiven!  
 ````Yet-yet-that night of shining joy  
 Its shadow flings athwart thy life;
 I am not, I can ne'er be wife,
 And thou art no one's son, our boy!
 His name I gave thee, and despite
 Their jugglery of wrong and right,
 It shall thou bear, whate'er betide.
 But who can give thee aught beside?
 Bastard thou art! and thou canst claim,
 It boots not what thy blood, thy fame,
 Thy father's features, manly age,
 Only a bastard's heritage.
 But, Leszko! who would care to boast
 All that the rightful covet most;
 Who, who would wish to clutch and hold
 Honour, or rank, or lands, or gold,
 When lands, and gold, and rank, but be
 A brighter badge of slavery?
 They who have nothing may excuse
 Submission to the tyrant's beck;
 Too bare and beggared to refuse
 Unsavoury morsel from the hand
 That plants the heel upon the neck
 Of their assassinated land.
 But they who yet have aught to lose,
 Base must they be if they can use
 What still is left to them, to deck
 The mourning of their country's wreck.
 Be sure thy sire doth not retain
 What would but aggravate his pain.
 Of me, of love, when dispossessed,
 How would he care to keep the rest?
 Robbed of my arms, his arms would find

But emptiness in all behind,
Vacuous air and moaning wind.
Who tore me from him, must have torn
With it long since the worldly dregs
Easy resigned by him who begs
That death at least to him be kind,
And bans the day that he was born!

`` `Nay, ask not if he lives. I know
Nothing, since that cold dawn of woe.
Once more I had to hear, and bear,
The vengeful menace, lustful prayer,
Of one who sued, but would not spare.
He threatened he would blazen wide
That which he dared to call my shame.
Guess how I answered! I defied,
Exulted, and with patriot pride
Told him that I myself to fame
Would trumpet forth the deed that I
Had done to foil the treachery
Already hatching, and by whom!
He cursed me. That was his reply.
But mine, alas! had sealed my doom.

`` ` 'Twas over, quick. I saw no more
Familiar face, or roof, or floor,
Or anything I knew before.
My eyes were bandaged, limbs were bound,
As through rough distance on we wound,
Aware but of the unseen ground
We traversed ever, day and night.
At length they gave me back my sight;
And lo! there stretched before, around,
The desert steppe, inhuman, bare,
That answered me with stare for stare.
I gazed around me for some face,
Some answering look, some kindred guise,
Some woe that I might recognize
Even in this desert place.
But none of all I saw, I knew;
And never one among them threw
A pitying glance on me.
So desolate it seemed, I should
Have thankful been if there had stood
Before me even he
Who thuswise had my ruin wrought.
I vow to you, his face I sought,
Among the convoy, early, late.
No face, no fiend, my exiled fate
Could now or better make or worse:
And it to me relief had brought
Could I have seen him, but to hate,

And greeted, but to curse!

`` ` A mute and melancholy band,
For days and weeks we journeyed on,
Across a bare and level land,
On which the fierce sun ever shone,
But whence all life and growth were gone,
Utterly, as from salt-steeped strand.
Dawn after dawn, the steppe stretched round:
It seemed to have no halt, no end,
Centre, circumference, nor bound,
No sight, no shade, no scent, no sound;
But ever we appeared to wend
Into eternal exile, doomed
To make the endless track we trod,
Now over sand, now scanty sod,
Where nought save blight and canker bloomed.
Though on we gasped, no goal was gained;
Further we went, further remained,
As when thought struggles after God:
Save that, instead, we seemed to go
Towards infinity of woe.
Many we were, but each alone.
We durst not with each other speak,
And but exchanged a tear or groan.
The strong might not assist the weak,
And to be child or woman gave
No privilege or power, save
To suffer more and be more brave.
So wretched were we, we could bless
A lighter load of wretchedness;
And when at last the cruel sun
Began to pity us, and leave
In sleep our pain a short reprieve,
We almost felt our griefs were done.
We knew not they had scarce begun.
Into another land we passed,
Drearier and deader than the last,
That knows no future and no past,
But only one fixed present!-land
Where nothing waxeth more or less,
Nothing is born and nothing dies,
And where, 'neath never-changing skies,
E'en frozen time itself doth stand
Immutable and motionless!
A land of snow and snow-fed wind,
Which freeze the blood, congeal the mind,
And harden man against mankind:
Region of death that is not dead,
But ever on its icy bed
Lies dying, and must ever lie,
Forbid to live, forbid to die!

`` `And, as its doom, such too seemed mine,
The doom of deathlessness in death.
In vain I used to pray and pine
The greedy cold would suck my breath,
And leave my empty husk to bleach
On the untrodden waste of white,
And draw the prowling jackal's screech,
Or give the wolf one foul delight.

`` `One night, as, prostrate in despair
At each unanswered tear and prayer,
I blasphemed God, and wildly swore
That if at least He would not give
Me death, I would no longer live,
But would myself the torture end,
That had nor change, nor hope, nor friend,
Sudden I started, gave a cry;
I seemed as changed to flesh from stone:
Oh! joy! I was no more alone.
And then for worlds I would not die!
'Twas thou! 'twas thou! my babe! my boy!
In joylessness my more than joy!
My more than heaven 'mid more than hell!
Weeping, upon my knees I fell,
And prayed forgiveness for my sin.
What now to me or cold or heat,
My shivering head, my burning feet,
Hunger or ache? I held within
The memory of that midnight sweet.
I had no thought for things without:
Sensation, suffering, struggle, doubt,
Each sense wherewith we feel, hear, see,
Was concentrated inwardly.
My aim was how to feed the root
That in the silence 'gan to shoot,
And pulsed with promise of the fruit.
Sometimes, in fresh access of woe,
Hope veered, and longed that thou and I
Lay underneath the snug, warm snow,
Together, and with none to know;
But swung back ever, true and high,
From desperation's gusty strife,-
Pointing from love and set towards life!

`` `You lived!'. . . `O mother!' here I cried,
`Tell me no more! I cannot bear
The tale of love, and grief, and pride.
Is't not enough that now we share
Pride, love, and exile, side by side?
And, let what will of wrong betide,
No wrong my youth, at least, shall tear,

From your soft hand and silvery hair!
 ' ' ' ' What, Leszko! Leszko's son!' she said,
 Her voice was grave, her tears were fled:
 ' Think you I told this tale of woe,
 To stir your love for me, I know,
 Will hold you living, haunt you dead?
 Not quit my side, luxurious boy!
 Share anguish that is almost joy,
 To shrink from pain without alloy!
 By all my hopes of husband fled,
 My interrupted marriage-bed,
 I charge you, bid you, not to cling,
 To me, to love, to anything!
 Not leave me! What is this I hear?
 The mawkish kiss, the vapid tear,
 Not flashing eye and springing spear!
 She pushed me off. ' It cannot be
 His patriot seed and mine I see.
 Thou art some changeling! Go, then, go!
 And hunt the lynx across the snow,
 And when the blue-eyed scyllas blow,
 Gather thereof a dainty bunch,
 To woo some daughter of the foe,
 While jackals and hyenas crunch
 Thy country's flesh and bones, and bloom
 No flowers, of all Spring used to know,
 Save such as mourn o'er Poland's tomb!
 For Poland, I from him was torn,
 For Poland, he from me! But thou-
 Thou, thou forsooth, must cling on now,
 Like infant that, from threatened hurt
 Flies whimpering, to thy mother's skirt,
 Dead unto duty as to scorn!
 Bastard, indeed, thou doubly wert,
 And both are shamed that thou wast born!'

' ' I knelt me down; towards the ground
 I bowed my head in lowly guise.
 I did not dare to raise my eyes,
 But when at last my voice I found,
 ' Mother!' I cried, ' I am not base,
 Nor bastard, and his blood is mine;
 But gazing on thy holy face,
 I all forgot a woe, a wrong,
 Sadder, more sacred, e'en than thine.
 But now thy strength hath made me strong,
 And in my features thou shalt trace,
 And in my soul, that I belong
 Unto a noble name and race.'
 I stood up straight. There was no sign
 Of melting in my voice or gaze.
 ' When shall I go?' I said, ' The ways

Are not more ready stretched than I
To start at once, to run, to fly,
Whither thy sharp reproaches point.
Mother, farewell! In every joint
I feel the blood of Poland stir.
She is my mother! I for her
Can lonely live, will lonely die.'

`` `Kneel then once more!' she said. I knelt,
But this time with unbending brow.
Her face fawned towards me, and I felt
Her lips upon me, tender now.
She took the cross from off her breast,
Passed its cord softly o'er my head:
'I have no sword to give,' she said,
'But you will find one 'mong the dead
That now lie thick-though baffled, blest-
Among the forests where, once more,
Poland renews the hopeless strife,
And liberates with lavish gore,
Awhile, the fever of its life.
Listen! There shortly start from hence
Two fresh battalions of the foe,
For Poland bound. They doubtless go
To aid their kindred's violence.
You must march with them o'er the snow.
Nay, start not! must their colours wear,
Aye, boy! must false allegiance swear
To their detested Pontiff-Czar!
Such perjuries, I tell thee, are
Not heard at Heaven's just judgment-bar.
And if thy lips abhor the lie,
Poland absolves thee-so do I!'

`` `The hour had come, and face to face
We stood, my mother, there, and I.
We did not fondle nor embrace;
She did not weep, I did not sigh.
I wore the trappings of the race
That battens upon Poland's heart;
So, well I knew that uncaressed,
Unfolded to her craving breast,
I from her must depart.
'Have you the cross?' she asked. I laid
My hand where 'gainst my heart it lay,
But did not speak. `Both night and day,
Brood on it, as a constant maid
Broods on the face that cannot fade,
When he who loves her is away!
It was the one dumb thing on earth
That spoke to me; the only one,
Dead, that was eloquent of birth;

So have I given it thee, my son!
I have no gift of his, no toy,
No trinket, trifle, leaf, nor flower,
Naught to remind me of my joy.
But it was on my breast that hour,
That night, when it, and it alone,
Was 'twixt his bosom and my own.
Go, now! And I will nightly pray
The Queen of Poland, we may meet,
When bitter has been turned to sweet,
And earthly dark to heavenly day!
I bent. She raised her hands to bless;
And then I went without caress,
And left her to her loneliness.

`` Why tell the rest? Too well you know,
Ah! you, free child of Freedom's shore,
That spurred our hopes, but lent no blow
In aid of all our wasted gore,
How Poland, maddened, rose once more,
And blindly struck at friend and foe.
Why should I tell-the tale, too long!-
Of the weak writhing 'gainst the strong,
Pricked by reiterated wrong?
The orphaned pillows, rifled roofs,
The sudden rush of trampling hoofs,
The reeking village, blazing town;
The perjured charge, the traitor's mesh,
The virgin's lacerated flesh;
The wail of childhood, helpless fair,
Frenzy itself had stopped to spare;
Priests at the altar stricken down,
Mingling their blood with that of Christ,
While sacrificing, sacrificed;
Chaste spouses of the cloister, weaned
From earth, and from Earth's passions screened,
Shrieking beneath the clutch of fiend,
And outraged, less from lust than hate,
In refuges inviolate.-
Enough! Had Hell broke loose, and sent
Its demons forth, on man to vent
The tortures God's maligners feign
Heaven vents on them, they would in vain
Have striven to paragon the pain
Poland's oppressors knew to wreak
Upon the sensitive and weak,
When we, the strong, their strength defied,
And Freedom, foiling despots, died.

`` I was too late. 'Twas nearly o'er;
But straight I sloughed the garb I wore,
And joined one last determined band,

Who to the border forests clung
That sever from the Tartar's hand
That share of our partitioned land
Which owns a rule more just and bland,
Keeping at least its creed and tongue.
We did not think with fate to cope;
No! vengeance was our only hope,
And vengeance to me came.
We were pursued by one who gave
No mercy or to faint or brave:
I heard, and knew his name.
'Twas he, whose lust had torn apart
For ever loving heart from heart,
As far as hatred can.
We lay in ambush; they were caught,
And could not fly, so mercy sought.
We slew them, to a man!
He fell to me! One thrust I made,
And at my feet I saw him laid:
I sucked the blood from off my blade:
Christ! it was sweet! aye, sweeter far
Than the smile of home, than the kiss of maid,
Or the glow of the evening star!

`` It was the last blow struck. We fled
Across the frontier, each as best
A gap could gain, and left the dead
To stock the unclean raven's nest.
Exile once more, though all the earth
Henceforth lay open to my tread,
All save the one that gave me birth,
I saw no goal except the one
Where, sitting mute in deepest dearth,
The mother waited for the son.
But how? I donned the pedlar's pack,
And started on the trackless track,
Day after day, league after league,
Fatigue slow-linked with slow fatigue,
But ever getting nearer back
Unto the larch-log fire where she
Sat patiently, awaiting me.
And there was yet another sight
Behind, to spur my flagging tread:
The foe, the fiend, I felled in fight,
And gloated over, dead!
Could I have borne his hated head,
And laid it at my mother's feet!
The very thought fresh vigour gave,
And made my final footsteps fleet.
I raved. You deem that still I rave.
What think you that they found? Her grave.

`` Back, back across the cruel waste,
Her tomb behind, my life before;-
An ebbing wave that raced and raced,
But ne'er could hope to find a shore,
Not e'en a rock 'gainst which to break:
A vista of unending ache,
Trode and endured for no one's sake!
Rather than live without some end,
Such misery fresh woe will make,
And woo misfortune for a friend.
And I, since it was vain to hope
That I could find, where'er I ran,
Solace or happiness, began
For further wretchedness to grope.
Now other object had I none,
From rise of day to set of sun,
Except to seek my sire;
Though well I knew I should not find,
Or finding, curse the fate unkind
That balked not my desire.
And fate was ruthless to the last.
Five years of bootless search had passed,
And still I sought. But when on fire,
Her roofs delirious Paris saw,
I found him stretched on sordid straw.
He had not fought for crowd or law:
Sooth, had he wished, he could not draw
A sword from scabbard now, nor lift
His body from its borrowed bed.
His brackish life was ebbing swift.
He who had eaten beggar's bread,
And known each sad and sordid shift
That just sustains the exile's tread,
Needed no more the stranger's gift.
I knelt me down beside his head,
And breathed her name into his ear.
There came no start, no word, no tear:
His brain was deaf; he did not know
The difference now 'twixt joy and woe,
'Twixt love and hate, 'twixt friend and foe,
'Twixt me and any other! Vain
My years of search and sought-for pain.
Yet not quite vain. Upon his breast
A silver locket hung; and when
I stretched my hand to it, he pressed
'Gainst it his own, nor loosed again,
Until he passed away to rest.
I took it when his grasp grew cold,
And lo! it was my mother's face!
Not as I knew her, blanched and old,
But in the glow of youth and grace,
With eyes of heaven and hair of gold,

And all the passion of her race.
I wear it and its rusted chain.
I put her cross there in its place:
The iron cross; yes, cross indeed!
And iron, too! the fitting meed
Of those who for wronged Poland bleed,
And ever bleed in vain!

`` Rise quick, ye winds! Race swift, ye waves!
And bear me where blue Danube rolls,
Past Orsova's loud-foaming caves,
On 'twixt armed hosts of rival slaves,
To scatter among Euxine shoals.
Now, do you ask why hence I fly
To join the Moslem camp, and hurl
My poor weak life, foredoomed to die,
On those who Freedom's flag unfurl
For Christian boor and Slavick churl?-
Out on the sacrilegious lie!
Robbers, assassins, liars, slaves!
Whose feet are fresh from outraged graves!
Let those among you, dupes, or worse,
Sucklings of falsehood, or its nurse,
Believe that Russian arms can bear
To others aught except a share
In chains themselves consent to wear!
Let them! But I! Did Tartar swords
Storm hell, and Turkish steel defend,
I would the infernal Cause befriend
Against the worse than demon hordes
Who to the damned would bring fresh curse,
And enter Hell, to make it worse!"

Alfred Austin

Let The Weary World Go Round

Let the weary world go round!
What care I?
Life's a surfeiting of sound:
I would die.
It would be so sweet to lie
Under waving grasses,
Where a maiden's footstep sly,
Tremulous for a lover nigh,
Sometimes passes.

Why, why remain?
Graves are the sovereign simples
Against life's pain;
Graves are the sheltering wimples
Against life's rain;
Graves are a mother's dimples
When we complain.

O Death! beautiful Death!
Why do they thee disfigure?
To me thy touch, thy breath,
Hath nor alarm nor rigour.
Thee do I long await;
I think thee very late;
I pine much to be going.
Others have gone before;
I hunger more and more
To know what they are knowing.

Heart, heart! be thou content!
Accept thy banishment;
Like other sorrows, life will end for thee.
Yet for a little while
Bear with this harsh exile,
And Death will soften and will send for thee.

Alfred Austin

Let Us Fly!

Let us fly! It is long past eleven;
The watch-dogs are silent; the moon
Hath all but abandoned the heaven,
And midnight is sinking in swoon.
Not a chirp to be heard in the thicket;
The kine are asleep in the byre;
All is hushed; here I stand at the wicket,
Alone, with my pulses on fire.

There! silently close you the lattice!
Now daintily drop we the latch!
What is that? O my pretty one! that is
A sparrow that moved in the thatch.
Quick! a hasty foot over the orchard!
The horses are saddled beyond.
To-night 'tis our fate to be tortured,
To-morrow night nothing but fond!

Yet I pause. O my Mabel! my beauty!
If they who sleep tranquil within
But knew how Love wrestles with Duty,
They weakness would call it, not sin!
If they, the calm clients of virtue,
But once on your bosom had throbbled,
They would swear 'twas a crime to desert you,
And pardon the felon that robbed.

No! Sooner the shade of the cypress
Stretch premature over your tomb,
Than the tread of the slanderous vipress,
Should, pitiless, darken your doom!
And in the last Grand Accusation
For selfishness, falsehood, or sloth,
This act of sublime abnegation
Shall, trumpet-tongued, plead for us both

Giacomo! back to the stable;
I shan't want the horses to-night.
And see you be gentle with Mabel;
It is not her temper, but fright.
Soft and warm, deep and broad, be her litter,
And her mane most caressingly curled.

O God! love is sweet, loss is bitter,
And I am alone in the world!

Alfred Austin

Lines Written On Visiting The Chateaux On The Loire

I
` ` River rolling past the grey
Battlements of yesterday,
Palace strongholds reared by hands
Summoned from transalpine lands,
Skilled in wedding strength with grace,
Fort with stately dwelling-place,
Vizored brow with siren tress,
Majesty with loveliness,-

River, that beheld their sway
Dawn and dwindle, then decay,
Linger, loiter, while I sit,
As the sunshine-shadows flit,
Pondering pictures of the vast
Panorama of the Past,
And, with retrospective gaze,
Tell me of the vanished days."

II
Still the river rolled and rolled
'Twixt its banks of green and gold,
Winding, wandering, slowly through
Starwort white and speedwell blue,
Flowing onward, heedless where,
Irresponsive to my prayer.

III
But, as motionless I dreamed
Of dim yesterdays, there seemed
From the plain to reach mine ears
Murmurings of the bygone years,
Till the river's undertone
Blent its musings with my own.

IV
` ` Seaward I meander on,
All unchanged to gaze upon,
As when sceptre, pomp, and power,
Threatening parapet and tower,
Warrior grim and maiden gay
Fought and laughed the hours away:
Captains, Cardinals, and Kings,
Sepulchred with meaner things,
Nothing to distinguish now
Mitred head from minion brow,
Fleshless skull from fleshless skull,
Arrogant from beautiful;
Nameless relics of a name:-
I alone abide the same."

V

Lingering still, I sate and mused,
Thought and feeling interfused
With the Châteaux and the stream
In an intermittent dream,
Till the Future wore at last
Likeness to the shadowy Past,
And I wondered if to-day,
Loftily as yesterday,
Will, departing, leave behind
Monuments of heart and mind,
Love and reverence will restore,
When men dwell in them no more.

Alfred Austin

Longing

The hills slope down to the valley, the streams run down to the sea,
And my heart, my heart, O far one! sets and strains towards thee.
But only the feet of the mountain are felt by the rim of the plain,
And the source and soul of the hurrying stream reach not the calling main.

The dawn is sick for the daylight, the morning yearns for the noon,
And the twilight sighs for the evening star and the rising of the moon.
But the dawn and the daylight never were seen in the self-same skies,
And the gloaming dies of its own desire when the moon and the stars arise.

The Springtime calls to the Summer, ``Oh, mingle your life with mine,"
And Summer to Autumn 'plaineth low, ``Must the harvest be only thine?"
But the nightingale goes when the swallow comes, ere the leaf is the blossom fled;
And when Autumn sits on her golden sheaves, then the reign of the rose is dead.

And hunger and thirst, and wail and want, are lost in the empty air,
And the heavenly spirit vainly pines for the touch of the earthly fair.
And the hills slope down to the valley, the streams run down to the sea,
And my heart, my heart, O far one! sets and strains towards thee.

Alfred Austin

Look Seaward, Sentinel!

I
Look seaward, Sentinel, and tell the land
What you behold.

Sentinel
I see the deep-ploughed furrows of the main
Bristling with harvest; funnel, and keel, and shroud,
Heaving and hurrying hither through gale and cloud,
Winged by their burdens; argosies of grain,
Flocks of strange breed and herds of southern strain,
Fantastic stuffs and fruits of tropic bloom,
Antarctic fleece and equatorial spice,
Cargoes of cotton, and flax, and silk, and rice,
Food for the hearth and staples for the loom:
Huge vats of sugar, casks of wine and oil,
Summoned from every sea to one sole shore
By Empire's sceptre; the converging store
Of Trade's pacific universal spoil.
And heaving and hurrying hitherward to bring
Tribute from every zone, they lift their voices,
And, as a strong man revels and rejoices,
They loudly and lustily chant, and this the song they sing.

Chorus of Home-coming Ships
From the uttermost bound
Of the wind and the foam,
From creek and from sound,
We are hastening home.
We are laden with treasure
From ransacked seas,
To charm your leisure,
To grace your ease.
We have trodden the billows,
And tracked the ford,
To soften your pillows,
To heap your board.
The hills have been shattered,
The forests scattered,
Our white sails tattered,
To swell your hoard.
Is it blossom, or fruit, or
Seed, you crave?
The land is your suitor,
The sea your slave.
We have raced with the swallows,
And threaded the flocs
Where the walrus wallows
Mid melting snows;
Sought regions torrid,
And realms of sleet,
To gem your forehead,
To swathe your feet.

And behold, now we tender,
With pennons unfurled,
For your comfort and splendour,
The wealth of the world.

II

Look landward, Sentinel, and tell the sea
What you behold.

Sentinel

I see a land of liberty and peace,
Ancient in glory and strength, but young in mien,
Like immemorial forest Spring makes green,
And whose boughs broaden as the years increase:
Where ruminating hide and grazing fleece
Dapple lush meadows diapered with flowers,
Lambs bleat, birds carol, rosy children roam,
The glad hind whistles as he wendeth home,
And red roofs nestle under gray church-towers:
Whose sons have in their fearless eyes the light
Of centuries of fame and battles won
And Empire ranging roundward with the sun;
Whose fair frank daughters gleam upon the sight
Fresh as the dawn and florid as the Spring;
And, as from lowly porch and lordly dwelling
They sally forth and meet, with voices swelling
Harmoniously they chant, and this the song they sing.

Chorus of Islanders

Blest be the cliffs and the crags that girdle
Our island home,
And blest, thrice blest, the tempests that scourge and curdle
The sea into foam.
For the nations over the wave eat, sleep, and labour,
In doubt and dread;
The spear is the child at their threshold, the naked sabre
The bride by their bed.
But we behind bulwarks of brine and rampart of breakers,
Year after year,
Drop the seed in the drill and the furrow, and harvest our acres,
And feel no fear.
While they wattle their flocks, and remember the past, and shudder,
And finger the sword,
Our lambs go safe to the ewes, our calves to the udder,
Our fruits to the board.
Welcome the sleet that blinds and the blasts that buffet,
And welcome the roar
Of the storms that swoop on the sea and rend and rough it
Around our shore.
For in safety the yearling fattens, the heifer browses,
The herds increase;
In safety we fondle our babes, in safety our spouses,

In safety, freedom, and peace.

III

Look again seaward, but beyond the sea,
And say what you behold.

Sentinel

I see weeping and wailing, and the bridegroom ruthlessly torn
From the clinging arms of the bride, and I see and I hear
Clanking of steel and clarions clamouring clear,
And suckling mothers, wedded but forlorn,
Cradling their babes amid the half-cut corn;
Whose fathers, as the homely days grew ripe
When fruits are plucked and mellow harvest stored,
Felt the soft curving sickle from their gripe
Timelessly wrenched, and in its place a sword.
And I see the nations, like to restless waves,
Surging against each other, withal afraid
To close and clash, lest blade prove strong as blade,
And even the victor win but worthless graves.
And, wearying of the days and nights that bring
No respite nor reward, they moan and murmur
Under their breath, until with accents firmer
They sadly and surlily chant, and this the song they sing.

Chorus of Armed Nations

How long shall we, we only, bear the burden
And sweat beneath the strain
Of iron Peace, while others gain the guerdon,
And prosper on our pain?
Lo! in their fancied fortress girt with waters
That neither fall nor fail,
They hear of rapine and they read of slaughters,
As of some touching tale.
No more they care to subjugate the billow,
Or dominate the blast;
Supine they lie on the luxurious pillow
Of their resplendent Past.
Lulled into arrogant languor by the glories
Of their adventurous sires,
They tell each other old heroic stories
By comfortable fires.
Why should they pile up wealth who do not labour?
Why, sowing not, should reap?
Let us steal out, and with unslumbering sabre
Assassinate their sleep.

IV

Look again landward, Sentinel, and say
What there you now behold.

Sentinel

I see the sports deserted on the green,
And song and revel hushed within the hall;
And I hear strong voices to strong voices call
To muster round the shore in martial sheen.
And north of Trent and south of Thames are seen
Furnace and forge and factory vomiting fire,
While swarthy faces, labouring through the night,
On giant anvils giant hammers smite,
From molten metal moulding hoop and tire.
In port and arsenal rhythmic thunders ring,
And through their gateways laden tumbrils rattle;
And England's sinewy striplings, trim for battle,
In unison cheer and chant, and this the song they sing.

Chorus of Islanders

Sweet are the ways of peace, and sweet
The gales that fan the foam
That sports with silvery-twinkling feet
Around our island home.
But, should the winds of battle shrill,
And the billows crisp their mane,
Down to the shore, from vale, from hill,
From hamlet, town, and plain!
The ocean our forefathers trod
In many a forest keel,
Shall feel our feet once more, but shod
With ligaments of steel.
Ours is the Sea, to rule, to keep,
Our realm, and, if ye would
Challenge dominion of the deep,
Then make that challenge good.
But ware ye lest your vauntings proud
Be confined in the surge,
Our breakers be for you a shroud,
Our battle-song your dirge.
Peaceful within our peaceful home
We ply the loom and share,
Peaceful above the peaceful foam
Our pennons float and fare;
Bearing, for other peaceful lands,
Through sunshine, storm, and snow,
The harvest of industrious hands
Peacefully to and fro.
But, so ye will it, then our sails
The blasts of war shall swell,
And hold and hulk, now choked with bales,
Be crammed with shot and shell.
The waves impregnable shall bear
Our bulwarks on their breast,
And eyes of steel unsleeping glare
Across each billowy crest;

Along the trenches of the deep
Unflinching faces shine,
And Britain's stalwart sailors keep
The bastions of the brine.
Ocean itself, from strand to strand,
Our citadel shall be,
And, though the world together band,
Not all the legions of the land
Shall ever wrest from England's hand
The Sceptre of the Sea.

Alfred Austin

Look up, desponding hearts! See, Morning sallies

Look up, desponding hearts! See, Morning sallies
From out her tents behind the screening hill,
And speeds her glittering lances on the valleys
Where hostile mists, unconscious, slumber still.
Roused from their vain security, they clamber
Up the far slopes and seek the open sky,
Till hill and dale are tinged with gold and amber,
The spoils of victory from those that fly.
Thus when, as though surrendered to the Night,
Men's spirits sleep, shall wakeful Freedom burst
With piercing ray even here, and flood with light
Each skulking nook by loutish custom curst;
But in the glow of victory will spare,
Turning all ill to good, all foul to fair.

Alfred Austin

Lost

Sweet lark! that, bedded in the tangled grass,
Protractest dewy slumbers, wake, arise!
The brightest moments of the morning pass-
Thou shouldst be up, and carolling in the skies.
Go up! go up! and melt into the blue,
And to heaven's veil on wings of song repair;
But, ere thou dost descend to earth, peep through,
And see if She be there.

Sweet stockdove! cooing in the flushing wood,
On one green bough brooding till morn hath died,
Oh, leave the perch where thou too long hast stood,
And with strong wings flutter the leaves aside!
Fly on, fly on, past feathery copse, nor stay
Till thou hast skimmed o'er all the woodlands fair!
And when thou hast, then speeding back thy way,
Tell me if She be there.

Sweet breeze! that, wearied with the heat of noon,
Upon a bank of daffodils didst die,
Oh, if thou lov'st me, quit thy perfumed swoon,
And, all refreshed, hither and thither hie.
Traverse the glades where browse the dappled deer,
Thrid the deep dells where none but thou mayst dare;
And then, sweet breeze, returning, to my ear
Whisper if She be there.

Sweet rivulet! running far too fast to stay,
Yet hear my plaint, e'en as thou rollest on!
I am alone-alone-both night and day,
For she I love was with me, and is gone.
Oh, shouldst thou find her on the golden beach
Whither thou speedest ocean's joys to share,
Remount thy course, despite what sophists teach,
And tell me She is there.

Not there! Nor there! Not in the far-off sky,
Close-keeping woods, or by the shining sea!
When lark, dove, breeze, and rivulet vainly try
To find my sweet-oh, where then may she be?
Hath she then left me-me she vowed so dear,
And she whose shadow dusks all other charms?
O foolish messengers! Look, look! She's here,
Enfolded in my arms!

Alfred Austin

Love Of Life

Why love life more, the less of it be left,
And what is left be little but the lees,
And Time's subsiding passions have bereft
One's taste for pleasure, and one's power to please?
Is it not better, like the waning year,
Without lament resignedly to fade,
Since by enduring ordinance all things here
Are in their season shattered and decayed?
If you have shared in April's freshest song,
And Summer can without reproach recall,
Yearn not Autumnal harvest to prolong,
Nor shrink from Winter that awaits us all;
But, lightened of the load of earthly ties,
Pursue with homeward step your journey to the skies.

Alfred Austin

Love's Fitfulness

You say that I am fitful. Sweet, 'tis true;
But 'tis that I your fitfulness obey.
If you are April, how can I be May,
Or flaunt bright roses when you wear sad rue?
Shine like the sun, and my sky will be blue;
Sing, and the lark shall envy me my lay:
I do but follow where you point the way,
And what I feel you doing, straight must do.
The wind might just as well reproach the vane,
As you upbraid me for my shiftings, dear:
Blow from the south, and south I shall remain;
If you keep fixed, be sure I shall not veer.
Nay, on your change my changes so depend,
If ends your love, why then my love must end.

Alfred Austin

Love's Harvest

Nay, do not quarrel with the seasons, dear,
Nor make an enemy of friendly Time.
The fruit and foliage of the failing year
Rival the buds and blossoms of its prime.
Is not the harvest moon as round and bright
As that to which the nightingales did sing?
And thou, that call'st thyself my satellite,
Wilt seem in Autumn all thou art in Spring.
When steadfast sunshine follows fitful rain,
And gleams the sickle where once passed the plough,
Since tender green hath grown to mellow grain,
Love then will gather what it scattereth now,
And, like contented reaper, rest its head
Upon the sheaves itself hath harvested.

Alfred Austin

Love's Unity

How can I tell thee when I love thee best?
In rapture or repose? how shall I say?
I only know I love thee every way,
Plumed for love's flight, or folded in love's nest.
See, what is day but night bedewed with rest?
And what the night except the tired-out day?
And 'tis love's difference, not love's decay,
If now I dawn, now fade, upon thy breast.
Self-torturing sweet! Is't not the self-same sun
Wanes in the west that flameth in the east,
His fervour nowise altered nor decreased?
So rounds my love, returning where begun,
And still beginning, never most nor least,
But fixedly various, all love's parts in one.

Alfred Austin

Love's Wisdom

Now on the summit of Love's topmost peak
Kiss we and part; no farther can we go:
And better death than we from high to low
Should dwindle or decline from strong to weak.
We have found all, there is no more to seek;
All have we proved, no more is there to know;
And Time could only tutor us to eke
Out rapture's warmth with custom's afterglow.
We cannot keep at such a height as this;
And even straining souls like ours inhale
But once in life so rarefied a bliss.
What if we lingered till love's breath should fail!
Heaven of my Earth! one more celestial kiss,
Then down by separate pathways to the vale.

Alfred Austin

Love's Blindness

Now do I know that Love is blind, for I
Can see no beauty on this beauteous earth,
No life, no light, no hopefulness, no mirth,
Pleasure nor purpose, when thou art not nigh.
Thy absence exiles sunshine from the sky,
Seres Spring's maturity, checks Summer's birth,
Leaves linnets pipe as sad as plover's cry,
And makes me in abundance find but dearth.
But when thy feet flutter the dark, and thou
With orient eyes dawnest on my distress,
Suddenly sings a bird on every bough,
The heavens expand, the earth grows less and less,
The ground is buoyant as the ether now,
And all looks lovely in thy loveliness.

Alfred Austin

Love's Trinity

SOUL, heart, and body, we thus singly name,
Are not in love divisible and distinct, But each with each inseparably link'd. One is not
honour, and the other shame,
But burn as closely fused as fuel, heat, and flame.

They do not love who give the body and keep
The heart ungiven; nor they who yield the soul, And guard the body. Love doth give
the whole; Its range being high as heaven, as ocean deep,
Wide as the realms of air or planet's curving sweep.

Alfred Austin

Madonna

Let me, calm face, remain
For ever in these sweet sequestered nooks,
Remote from pain,
Where leafy laurustinus overlooks
The blue abounding main.

Ne'er will I crave, I vow,
Your loveliness despite, that we may stand
More nigh than now;
You, with the fresh-plucked roses in your hand,
And I with inclined brow.

With air, and sea, and sky,
And penetrative music on the beach,
All that is high,
And far, and holy, and beyond our reach,
I you identify.

Then, lady, let me stay,
Here where no storm nor surge of discontent
Can find its way;
Hearkening your holy admonitions, blent
With murmurs from the bay.

Alfred Austin

Mafeking

Once again, banners, fly!
Clang again, bells, on high,
Sounding to sea and sky,
Longer and louder,
Mafeking's glory with
Kimberley, Ladysmith,
Of our unconquered kith
Prouder and prouder.

Hemmed in for half a year,
Still with no succour near,
Nor word of hope to cheer
Wounded and dying,
Famished, and foiled of sleep
By the fierce cannon's leap,
They vowed still, still to keep
England's Flag flying.

Nor was their mettle shown
By male and strong alone,
But, as intrepid grown,
Fragile and tender,
Without or tear or sigh,
Echoed the brave old cry,
``We, too, would rather die,
Die than surrender."''

As pressed the foe more near,
Only with naked spear,
Ne'er knowing what to fear,
Parley, or blench meant,
Forward through shot and shell,
While still the foremost fell,
They with resistless yell
Stormed his entrenchment.

Then, when hope dawned at last,
And fled the foe, aghast
At the relieving blast
Heard in the melley,-
O our stout, stubborn kith!
Kimberley, Ladysmith,
Mafeking, wedded with
Lucknow and Delhi!

Sound for them martial lay!
Crown them with battle-bay,
Both those who died, and they
'Gainst death could wrestle:
Powell of endless fame,
All, all with equal claim,
And, of the storied name,

Gallant young Cecil!

Long as the waves shall roll,
Long as Fame guards her scroll,
And men through heart and soul
Thrill to true glory,
Their deed, from age to age,
Shall voice and verse engage,
Swelling the splendid page
Of England's Story.

Alfred Austin

Messalina

The gloss is fading from your hair,
The glamour from your brow;
The light your eyes were wont to wear
Attracts no gazer now.
O'er sunny forehead, smiling lips,
And cheeks of rosy roundness, slips
A cruel, premature eclipse,
Time should not yet allow.

I think of one whose homestead lies
A stone's-throw from your own,
Who, spite of sorrow in her eyes,
Hath but more comely grown;
Who, robbed while scarce a four-year's bride,
Of him, her husband, joy and pride,
Whilst yours still labours at your side,
Is lovely, though alone.

For know, 'tis not from loss of state,
Nor e'en from loved one's death,
Nor any stroke of Time or Fate,
That true grace suffereth:
That virtue hath a secret charm,
Age cannot wither, sorrow harm,
Which keepeth even beauty warm
After surcease of breath.

Know, furthermore, that wants debased,
Void restlessness in crime,
Have almost wholly now defaced
What had been spared by Time;
That, soul shut in, while sense ajar,
Joys which, not mending nature, mar,
Entered, and left you what you are-
A ruin-ere your prime!

Alfred Austin

Mozart's Grave

Where lies Mozart? Tradition shows
A likely spot: so much, no more:
No words of his own time disclose
When crossed He to the Further Shore,
Though later ages, roused to shame,
On tardy tomb have carved his name.

The sexton asked, "What may this be?"
"A Kapellmeister." "Pass it in:
This common grave to all is free,
And for one more is room within.
It fills the fosse. Now tread it down,
With pauper, lunatic, and clown."

Yet had he wizarded with sound
Electors, Cardinals, and Kings,
While there welled forth from source profound
The flow of silvery-sounding springs,
Music of tenderness and mirth,
One with his very soul at birth.

And they? Where are they now? The bust,
The elaborately carven tomb,
Whose scrolls, begrimed by age and dust,
None care to stoop and scan for whom,
Are all remaining to express
Their monumental nothingness.

Mitre, and coronet, and Crown,
Gaze into space that heeds them not,
Unmeaning pomp of dead renown,
Medley of Monarchs long forgot,
Who from the nations' ghastly strife
Won immortality-for life.

Once, on Nile's bank an artist raised
A temple at the King's command,
And on it name august emblazed.
But when a flood submerged the land,
His name was washed away, and lo!
The artist's own stood out below.

Thus vanish ostentatious lives,
But, through all time, belov'd Mozart,
Your magic memory survives,
Part of the universal heart:
In joy a sympathetic strain,
In sorrow, soother of our pain.

The Potentates on whom men gaze,
When once their Rule hath reached its goal,
Die into darkness with their days;

But Monarchs of the mind and soul
With light unfailing and unspent
Illuminate Fame's firmament.

Alfred Austin

My northern blood exults to face

My northern blood exults to face
The rapture of this rough embrace,
Glowing in every vein to feel
The cordial caress of steel
From spear-blue air and sword-blue sea,
Armour of England's liberty.

Alfred Austin

My soul is sunk in all-suffusing shame

My soul is sunk in all-suffusing shame;
Yet not for any individual sin,
But that the world's original fair fame-
My own land's most-is not what it hath been.
Shrieks of intolerable bondage smite,
Without response, its comfortable ears,
Making a craven compromise with Might,
For their own luxury, of others' tears.
Better than this the sanguinary crash
Of fratricidal strokes, and nerveful hate!

So do I hope to hear the sabres clash
And tumbrils rattle when the snows abate.
Love peace who will-I for mankind prefer,
To dungeon or disgrace, a sepulchre.

Alfred Austin

My Winter Rose

Why did you come when the trees were bare?
Why did you come with the wintry air?
When the faint note dies in the robin's throat,
And the gables drip and the white flakes float?

What a strange, strange season to choose to come,
When the heavens are blind and the earth is dumb:
When nought is left living to dirge the dead,
And even the snowdrop keeps its bed!

Could you not come when woods are green?
Could you not come when lambs are seen?
When the primrose laughs from its childlike sleep,
And the violets hide and the bluebells peep?

When the air as your breath is sweet, and skies
Have all but the soul of your limpid eyes,
And the year, growing confident day by day,
Weans lusty June from the breast of May?

Yet had you come then, the lark had lent
In vain his music, the thorn its scent,
In vain the woodbine budded, in vain
The rippling smile of the April rain.

Your voice would have silenced merle and thrush,
And the rose outbloomed would have blushed to blush,
And Summer, seeing you, paused, and known
That the glow of your beauty outshone its own.

So, timely you came, and well you chose,
You came when most needed, my winter rose.
From the snow I pluck you, and fondly press
Your leaves 'twixt the leaves of my leaflessness.

Alfred Austin

Nocturnal Vigils

Why do you chide me that, when mortals yield
To slumber's charm, from sleep I ask no boon,
But from my casement watch the maimed moon
Fainting behind her ineffectual shield:
Unto the chime by stately planets pealed
My song, my soul, my very self attune,
And nightly see, what none can see at noon,
The runic volume of the sky unsealed?
Haply the hour may come when grateful Night
Will these brief vigils endlessly repay,
And, on the dwindling of my earthly day,
Keep, like her stars, my heavenly fancies bright;
And glorious dreamings, shrouded now from sight,
Dawn out of darkness, not to sleep for aye.

Alfred Austin

Nugthingale And Cuckoo

Yes, nightingale and cuckoo! it was meet
That you should come together; for ye twain
Are emblems of the rapture and the pain
That in the April of our life compete,
Until we know not which is the more sweet,
Nor yet have learned that both of them are vain!
Yet wherefore, nightingale! break off thy strain,
While yet the cuckoo doth his call repeat?
Not so with me. To sweet woe did I cling
Long after echoing happiness was dead,
And so found solace. Now, alas! the sting!
Cuckoo and nightingale alike have fled;
Neither for joy nor sorrow do I sing,
And autumn silence gathers in their stead.

Alfred Austin

Off Mesolongi

The lights of Mesolongi gleam
Before me, now the day is gone;
And vague as leaf on drifting stream,
My keel glides on.

No mellow moon, no stars arise;
In other lands they shine and roam:
All I discern are darkening skies
And whitening foam.

So on those lights I gaze that seem
Ghosts of the beacons of my youth,
Ere, rescued from their treacherous gleam,
I steered towards truth.

And you, too, Byron, did awake,
And ransomed from the cheating breath
Of living adulation, stake
Greatness on death!

Alas! the choice was made too late.
You treated Fame as one that begs,
And, having drained the joys that sate,
Offered the dregs.

The lees of life you scornful brought,
Scornful she poured upon the ground:
The honoured doom in shame you sought,
You never found.

``The Spartan borne upon his shield"
Is not the meed of jaded lust;
And, ere your feet could reach the field,
Death claimed your dust.

Upon the pillow, not the rock,
Like meaner things you ebb'd away,
Yearning in vain for instant shock
Of mortal fray.

The futile prayer, the feeble tear,
All that deforms the face of death,
You had to bear, whilst in your ear
Hummed battle's breath.

You begged the vulture, not the worm,
Might feed upon your empty corse.
In vain! Just Nemesis was firm
'Gainst late remorse.

Too much you asked, too little gave,
The crown without the cross of strife.

What is it earns a soldier's grave?
A soldier's life.

Think not I come to taunt the dead.
My earliest master still is dear;
And what few tears I have to shed,
Are gathering here.

Behind me lies Ulysses' isle,
The wanderer wise who pined for home.
But Byron! Neither tear nor smile
Forbade you roam.

Yours was that bitterest mortal fate,
No choice save thirst or swinish trough:
Love's self but offered sensuous bait,
Or virtuous scoff.

Yet was it well to wince, and cry
For anguish, and at wrong to gird?
Best, -like your gladiator, die
Without a word!

There be, who in that fault rejoice,
Since sobs survive as sweetest lays,
And yours remains the strongest voice
Of later days.

For me, I think of you as One
Who vaguely pined for worthier lot
Than to be blinked at like the sun,
But found it not.

Who blindly fought his way from birth,
Nor learned, till 'twas too late to heed,
Not all the noblest songs are worth
One noble deed:

Who, with the doom of glory cursed,
Still played the athlete's hollow part,
And 'neath his bay-green temples nursed
A withered heart.

On, silent keel, through silent sea.
I will not land where He, alas!
Just missed Fame's crown. Enough for me
To gaze, and pass.

Alfred Austin

On Returning To England

There! once again I stand on home,
Though round me still there swirls the foam,
Leaping athwart the vessel's track
To bid a wanderer welcome back,
And though as yet through softening haze
White cliffs but vaguely greet my gaze.
For, England! yours the waves, the spray,
And, be one's foothold what it may,
Wherever billow wafts or wends,
Your soil is trodden, your shore extends.
How stern! how sweet! Though fresh from lands
Where soft seas heave on slumbering strands,
And zephyrs moistened by the south
Seem kisses from an infant's mouth,
My northern blood exults to face
The rapture of this rough embrace,
Glowing in every vein to feel
The cordial caress of steel
From spear-blue air and sword-blue sea,
The armour of your liberty.
Braced by the manly air, I reach
My soul out to the approaching beach,
And own, the instant I arrive,
The dignity of being alive!

And now with forward-faring feet
Eager I leap to land, and greet
The hearty grasp, the honest gaze,
The voice that means the thing it says,
The gait of men by birthright free,
Unceremonial courtesy.
None frown, none cringe, but, fearless-eyed,
Are kindly all; since, side by side,
Authority and Freedom reign
In twin equality, and drain
Their sanction from the self-same breast,
And Law is wise Will manifest.
Yes, this is England, frank and fair:
I tread its turf, I breathe its air,
And catch from every stalwart lung
The music of my mother tongue.

And who are these that cluster round
With hastening feet and silvery sound,
And eyes as liquid as the dawn,
When laughs the dew on Kentish lawn?
These England's daughters, frank yet arch,
Supple as April, strong as March:
Like pink-white windflowers in the grove,
That came while east and west wind strove
For mastery, and Spring seemed late,
Hardy alike and delicate.

How well their faces fit the scene,
The copses gray, the hedgerows green,
The white-veiled blackthorn, gorse afire,
The cottage yew, the village spire;
The pastures flecked with frisking lambs
Around their gravely grazing dams;
The children loitering home from school,
Their hands and pinafores all full
Of cuckoo-pint and bluebell spike,
Gathered in dingle, dell, and dyke;
The comely homes one just can see
Through flowering belts of bush and tree,
That all combine, all, all conspire,
To more than satisfy desire,
To make one love this lovely earth,
And bless Heaven for one's British birth.

Bewitching climes! where late I sought
In change of scene a change of thought,
Refreshment from familiar ground,
And, what I sought for, more than found,
Where old enchantment haunteth still
Ligurian coast and Tuscan hill,
Climes I have ventured oft and long
To celebrate in faltering song,
Where fearless almond, faery larch,
Smiling, disarm the frown of March,
Snow hath no terrors, frost no sting,
And playful Winter mimics Spring,
Deem me not thankless, nor deny
Fresh welcome from your shore and sky,
Repose from thought so oft implored,
And ne'er refused, if, now restored
By you to health, by you to home,
Glad I return, late glad to roam.
For dear to me though wayside shrine
By silent gorge or murmuring brine;
Dear though the barefoot peasant folk
Who lop the vine and steer the yoke
Of soft-eyed, sleek-skinned, creamy beeves,
Up narrow ways to broad slant eaves;
The stony mule-tracks twisting slow
Up slopes where cherry-blossoms blow
'Mid olive gray and ilex brown,
On to some sun-bronzed mountain town;
The hush and cool of marble domes,
Where, wed to reverie, one roams
Through transept, chancel, cloister, cell,
Where still with far-off faces dwell
Sages and saints devoutly limned
By hands long dust and eyes long dimmed;
Dear though all these, and ne'er forgot,

No southern shore, no sunniest spot,
Not Roccabruna's hamlet crest,
Not Eza's brow, not Taggia's breast,
Not Bellosguardo's sunset hour,
Not Dante's seat nor Giotto's Tower,
Nor even Spiaggiascuro's foam,
Moisten and melt my heart like home.
For here the cuckoo seems more glad,
The nightingale more sweetly sad,
Primroses more akin in gaze
To childlike wonder, childlike ways;
And all things that one sees and hears,
Since rooted in the bygone years,
And blending with their warm caress
A touch of homely tenderness,
Bid the quick instinct in one's blood
Pay tribute unto motherhood.
How should strange lands, it boots not where,
Divorce one from one's native air,
Or in a loyal breast dethrone
Unreasoning reverence for one's own?
Yet love and reason surely blend
To stir this passion and commend?
And who will blame if, though one seeks
In gentler tides, and sterner peaks
That tower above a wider plain,
Contrast to northern hill and main,
I cherish still and hold apart
The fondest feeling in my heart
For where, beneath one's parent sky,
Our dear ones live, our dead ones lie?

And you, dear friend, who linger still
Beside the iris-crested rill
That silvers through your olives gray
From convent-capped Fiesole,
Think not that I forget, forswear,
The scenes we lately vowed so fair.
To these your wandering footsteps bring
The freshness of an English Spring;
And even Florence sunnier glows,
When Phyllis prattles and Ivor crows.
And, though among them still you stray,
Sweet-lengthening-out a Tuscan May,
You too will here return before
Our Northern roses blow once more,
To prove to all of kindred birth,
For winsome grace and sterling worth,
Nothing can match, where'er we roam,
An English wife in English home.

Alfred Austin

Outside The Village Church

`` The old Church doors stand open wide,
Though neither bells nor anthems peal.
Gazing so fondly from outside,
Why do you enter not and kneel?

`` It is the sunset hour when all
Begin to feel the need to pray,
Upon our common Father call
To guard the night, condone the day.

`` Is it proud scorn, or humble doubt,
That keeps you standing, lingering, there;
Half in the Church, and half without,
Midway betwixt the world and prayer?

`` No meeter moment could there be
For man to talk alone with God.
The careless sexton has, you see,
Shouldered his spade, and homeward trod.

`` The Vicar's daily round is done;
His back just sank below the brow.
He passed the porches, one by one,
That line the hamlet street, and now

`` He, in his garden, cons the page,
And muses on to-morrow's text.
The homebound rustic counts his wage,
The same last week, the same the next.

`` Nor priest nor hind are you, but each
Alike is welcome here within;
Both they who learn, and they who teach,
Have secret sorrow, secret sin.

`` Enter, and bare your inmost sore;
Enter, and weep your stain away;
Leave doubt and darkness at the door;
Come in and kneel, come in and pray."

Such were the words I seemed to hear,
By no one uttered, but alack!
The voice of many a bygone year,
Striking the church, and echoing back.

I entered not, but on a stone
Sate, that recorded some one's loss;
But name and date no more were shown,
The deep-cut lines were smooth with moss.

Below were longsome tags of rhyme,
But what, you could not now surmise.

Alas! alas! that death and time
Should overgrow love's eulogies.

Round me was Death that plainly spoke
The hopes and aims that life denied;
The curious pomp of simple folk,
The pedantry of rustic pride.

Some slept in square sepulchral caves,
Some were stretched flat, and some inurned;
And there were fresh brown baby graves,
Resembling cradles overturned.

From where I sate I still could watch
The old oak pews, the altar white.
Gable and oasthouse, tile and thatch,
Smiled softly in the sunset light.

From here and there a cottage roof,
Spires of blue vapour 'gan to steal;
To eyes of love a heavenly proof
The mother warmed the evening meal.

No more the mill-stream chafed and churned;
The wheel hung still, the meal lay whole;
From marsh and dyke the rooks returned,
And circled round and round the toll.

The lambs were mute, the sheep were couched,
The hop-poles bent 'neath leaf and bine;
Adown the road the vagrant slouched,
And glanced up at the alehouse sign.

Again I heard the unseen voice:
` ` Why do you come not in and rest?
Whether you grieve or you rejoice,
You here will be a welcome guest.

` ` To Heaven it is the half-way house,
Where hope can feed, and anguish may
Recline its limbs and rest its brows,
With simple thanks for ample pay.

` ` Was it not here you got the name
Which is of you so close a part,
That, uttered, it hath magic claim
To flush love's cheek, to flood love's heart?

` ` Here too it was, when youth confessed
The weariness of random ways,
And felt a surging in the breast
For faithful nights and fruitful days,

`` You came with one who, conquering fear
When love surprised first thought to fly,
Acknowledged with a tender tear
The sweetness of captivity.

`` And here 'twill be when you have ta'en
Last look of love, last look of Spring,
When hearts for you will yearn in vain,
And vain for you the birds will sing,

`` That shuffling feet and slow will come,
With cumbrous coffin, gloomy pall,
And, while within you moulder dumb,
That prayers will rise and tears will fall.

`` And should Death haply prove your friend,
And what in life was scorned should save,
Hither it is that feet will wend,
To read the name upon your grave."

I heard the voice no more. The rooks
Had ceased to float, had ceased to caw;
The sunlight lingered but in nooks,
And, gazing toward the west, I saw,

Beyond the pasture's withered bents,
Upstanding hop, recumbent fleece,
And sheaves of wheat, like weathered tents,
A twilight bivouac of peace.

Into itself the voice withdrew.
A something subtle all around
Came floating on the rising dew,
And sweetness took the place of sound.

No word of mine, although my heart
Rebelled, the scented stillness shook;
But silence seemed to take my part,
Thus mildly answering mild rebuke:

`` 'Tis true I have to you not brought
My eager or despondent mood,
But still by wood and stream have sought
The sanctity of solitude.

`` But as a youth who quits his home
To range in tracts of freer fame,
However far or wide he roam,
Dwells fondly on his mother's name;

`` So bear me witness, dear old Church,

Although apart our ritual be,
I ne'er have breathed one word to smirch
The Creed that bore and suckled me.

`` Not mine presumptuous thought to cope
With sage's faith, with saint's belief,
Or proudly mock the humble hope
That solaced the Repentant Thief.

`` I do not let the elms, that shut
My garden in from world without,
Exclude your sacred presence, but
I lop them when they shoot and sprout;

`` That I at eve, that I at dawn,
That I, when noons are warm and still,
Lying or lingering on the lawn,
May see your tower upon the hill.

`` But when Faith grows a sophist's theme,
And chancels ring with doubt and din,
I sometimes think that they who seem
The most without, are most within.

`` The name you gave, that name I bear;
The bond you sealed, I sacred keep;
And, when my brain is dust and air,
Let me within your precincts sleep."

The sexton came and scanned once more
The neat square pit of smooth blue clay,
Then turned the key and locked the door,
And so, like him, I went my way.

I had the summons not obeyed;
I had nor knelt nor uttered word;
But somehow felt that I had prayed,
And somehow felt I had been heard.

Alfred Austin

Pax Britannica

Behind her rolling ramparts England lay,
Impregnable, and girt by cliff-built towers,
Weaving to peace and plenty, day by day,
The long-drawn hours.

In peace Spring freed her flocks and showered her grain,
Summer sate smiling under peaceful leaves,
And Autumn piled on the unwarlike wain
Her sickled sheaves.

And white-winged keels flew fluttering to her shore,
Laden with Eastern bale or Southern fleece,
And from the fields of far-off labour bore
The spoils of Peace.

Then, seeing Her within her waves so blest,
The jealous nations, panoplied alike,
Said, ``Look, She wears no armour on her breast:
What if we strike?"

But She, of their base greed and armed array
Haughtily heedless, moated by her main,
Still across ocean ploughed her peaceful way
In strong disdain.

Then each to other muttered, ``Now at last
Her splendour shall be ours, and we shall slake
Our envy. She is pillowed on her Past,
And will not wake."

Slowly as stirs a lion from his bed,
Lengthens his limbs, and crisps his mane, She rose,
Then shook out all her strength, and, flashing, said,
``Where are my foes?"

Thus to herself She did herself reveal,
Swiftly yet calmly put her armour on,
And, round her Empire sentinelled in steel,
Like morning shone!

From field and forge there thronged embattled hosts,
And that one struck the anvil, this the lyre,
And from the furnaces of war her coasts
Were fringed with fire.

Dazed and dismayed, they veiled their futile vow;
Some fain would be her friend, and some would nurse
Their hate till they could curb the might that now
They could but curse.

But they who watch from where the west wind blows,
Since great themselves, proud that their kith are great,

Said, `` See what comes when England with her foes
Speaks at the gate!"

Then back to loom and share her people poured,
Chanting peace-paeans as they reaped and gleaned,
While, gazing worldward, on her undrawn sword
Watchful She leaned.

Alfred Austin

Poet's Corner

I stand within the Abbey walls,
Where soft the slanting sunlight falls
In gleams of mellow grace:
The organ swells, the anthem soars,
And waves of prayerful music pours
Throughout the solemn space.

Slowly the chanted yearning dies:
Then spoken supplications rise,
Upfloating to the sky;
The organ peals anew, again
Is silent, and there linger then
Only my soul and I.

But what are these mute busts that gaze
On me from out the vanished days,
And bid me pause and scan
Tablet, inscription, title, date,
All that records the vain estate
Of transitory man?

Read I aright? And can it be,
Old Abbey, that dead bards in thee
A resting-place have found?
Is not this consecrated air?
This is the house, the home, of prayer,
This, this is sacred ground.

And who were they? Their fretful life
With heavenly precept was at strife;
No pious peace they knew:
Like thunderstorms, against the wind
They pressed, and from their lurid mind
Alarming lightnings flew.

Creeds were to them but chains to break;
No formulas their thirst could slake,
No faith their hunger feed;
Their prayers were breathed to unscaled crags,
They worshipped where the eagle flags,
And the snow-streams flash and speed.

Their temple was the earth, the air,
The stars that in night's silence share;
Unto the plunging brine
Listening, they heard a sacred hymn,
And deep within the woodlands dim
Found transept, aisle, and shrine.

All shapes of sensuous beauty stole
A pathway to the poet's soul;
An unresisting slave

To smiles that win, to tears that melt,
Whatever hearts can feel, he felt,
Whatever ask for, gave.

His heart to love as quick he lent,
As flower to wandering wind its scent,
Or lark to sun its song;
He spent himself in gusts of joy,
Chased the fair phantoms that decoy
And youth's brief reign prolong.

Yet it was wise as well as just
Not upon his rebellious dust
The Abbey gates to close,
But bid him hither wend, and find,
What life refused his eager mind,
Glory and yet repose.

For should there come that threatened day,
When creeds shall fade, when faith decay,
And worship shall have ceased,
Then, when all formal guides shall fail,
Mankind will in the Poet hail
A prophet and a priest.

He will instruct us still to strain
Towards something to redress our pain,
To elevate our joy;
Something responding to that sense
Of restlessness that calls us hence,
And makes existence cloy.

What though commandment, dogma, rite,
One after one, shall perish quite,
The Poet still will keep
The Sanctuary's lamp alight,
And, in the body's deepest night,
Forbid the soul to sleep.

Then, apprehended right, his lays
Shall seem a hymn of prayer and praise
To purify from stain;
Shall bridge with love the severed years,
Instil the sacredness of tears,
The piety of pain.

Devotion at his touch shall wake,
The fountains of emotion quake
With tenderness divine;
His melody our cravings lift
Upward, and have the saving gift
Of sacramental wine.

Let him then rest where now he lies,
So that if narrower ritual dies,
Devout feet still may come,
Confessing, what his strains impart,
The deep religion of the heart,
That never will be dumb.

Alfred Austin

Primacy Of Mind

Above the glow of molten steel,
The roar of furnace, forge, and shed,
Protectress of the City's weal,
Now, Learning rears her loftier head;

That Progress may at length descry
It lacks the clue to guide aright,
And, conscious of its blindness, cry
Unto the Muse, `` More light! More light!"

That Wealth may fitly yield the throne
To Letters, Science, artist-skill,
And Matter, willing subject, own
Mind must be lord and master still.

Alfred Austin

Primroses

I

Latest, earliest of the year,
Primroses that still were here,
Snugly nestling round the boles
Of the cut-down chestnut poles,
When December's tottering tread
Rustled 'mong the deep leaves dead,
And with confident young faces
Peeped from out the sheltered places
When pale January lay
In its cradle day by day,
Dead or living, hard to say;
Now that mid-March blows and blusters,
Out you steal in tufts and clusters,
Making leafless lane and wood
Vernal with your hardihood.
Other lovely things are rare,
You are prodigal as fair.
First you come by ones and ones,
Lastly in battalions,
Skirmish along hedge and bank,
Turn old Winter's wavering flank,
Round his flying footsteps hover,
Seize on hollow, ridge, and cover,
Leave nor slope nor hill unharried,
Till, his snowy trenches carried,
O'er his sepulchre you laugh,
Winter's joyous epitaph.

II

This, too, be your glory great,
Primroses, you do not wait,
As the other flowers do,
For the Spring to smile on you,
But with coming are content,
Asking no encouragement.
Ere the hardy crocus cleaves
Sunny border 'neath the eaves,
Ere the thrush his song rehearse,
Sweeter than all poets' verse,
Ere the early bleating lambs
Cling like shadows to their dams,
Ere the blackthorn breaks to white,
Snowy-hooded anchorite;
Out from every hedge you look,
You are bright by every brook,
Wearing for your sole defence
Fearlessness of innocence.
While the daffodils still waver,
Ere the jonquil gets its savour,
While the linnets yet but pair,
You are fledged, and everywhere.

Nought can daunt you, nought distress,
Neither cold nor sunlessness.
You, when Lent sleet flies apace,
Look the tempest in the face;
As descend the flakes more slow,
From your eyelids shake the snow,
And when all the clouds have flown,
Meet the sun's smile with your own.
Nothing ever makes you less
Gracious to ungraciousness.
March may bluster up and down,
Pettish April sulk and frown;
Closer to their skirts you cling,
Coaxing Winter to be Spring.

III

Then when your sweet task is done,
And the wild-flowers, one by one,
Here, there, everywhere do blow,
Primroses, you haste to go,
Satisfied with what you bring,
Fading morning-stars of Spring.
You have brightened doubtful days,
You have sweetened long delays,
Fooling our enchanted reason
To miscalculate the season.
But when doubt and fear are fled,
When the kine leave wintry shed,
And 'mid grasses green and tall
Find their fodder, make their stall;
When the wintering swallow flies
Homeward back from southern skies,
To the dear old cottage thatch
Where it loves to build and hatch,
That its young may understand,
Nor forget, this English land;
When the cuckoo, mocking rover,
Laughs that April loves are over;
When the hawthorn, all ablow,
Mimics the defeated snow;
Then you give one last look round,
Stir the sleepers underground,
Call the campion to awake,
Tell the speedwell courage take,
Bid the eyebright have no fear,
Whisper in the bluebell's ear
Time has come for it to flood
With its blue waves all the wood,
Mind the stichwort of its pledge
To replace you in the hedge,
Bid the ladysmocks good-bye,
Close your bonnie lids and die;

And, without one look of blame,
Go as gently as you came.

Alfred Austin

Resignation

Since we the march of Time can not arrest,
Keep you in step with him till Time shall end:
Thus will you journey with more easeful breast,
Nor mar the rhythm that you cannot mend.
Nor ever yearn impatiently to reap
Harvest allotted unto mellow years,
But, having sown the seed, take care to keep
Its growth from tares till soaring stem appears.
Neither, when Summer from your life shall wane,
And Autumn fruit keep dropping from the bough,
Look back and sigh regretfully in vain
For joys no longer seasonable now:
Thus will your hours make music to the end,
And Life, you loved so, become Death your friend.

Alfred Austin

Roses crimson, roses white

` Roses crimson, roses white,
Deadly pale or lovely blushing,
Both in love with May at sight,
And their maiden blood is rushing
To and fro in hope to hide
Tumult it but thus discloses.
Bring the Bridegroom to the Bride!
Everywhere are roses, roses.'

` Every wall is white with roses
` Every wall is white with roses,
Linnets pair in every tree;
Brim your beakers, twine your posies,
Kiss and quaff ere Springtime closes;
Bloom and beauty quickly flee.'

` Nay, let me sleep, or, best, be stone or steel
` Nay, let me sleep, or, best, be stone or steel,
While still endures this infamy of woe.
My one sole bliss is nor to see nor feel:
So, wake me not; and, lest you should, speak low.'

Alfred Austin

Sacred And Profane Love

In the dark shadow of the windless pines
Whose gloomy glory lines the obsequies
Of the gaunt Claudian Aqueduct along
The lone Campagna to sepulchral Rome,
A Northern youth, companionless, reclined,
Pondering on records of the Roman Past,
Kingdom, Republic, Empire, longwhile gone.
Hard-by, through marble tomb revived,
Rippled and bubbled water crystalline,
Inwelling from the far-off Sabine hills.
When lo! upon the tomb's deep-dinted rim
Slowly there broadened on his gaze two shapes,
Material embodiment of those
The great Venetian in resplendent hues
Upon the canvas lastingly portrayed,
Christened by fame Profane and Sacred Love.
One was in rich habiliments arrayed,
With dimpling folds about her rounded limbs,
And heaving corset of embossed brocade,
Compressing beaker for her brimming breasts.
Jewels were in her hair, jewels entwined
Themselves round her columnar throat, and thus
On him she gazed unshrinkingly, and seemed
Sensuous seduction irresistible.
The other in nude innocency clad,
All save veined vineleaf cincture round her waist,
Sate with her gaze averted, and beheld
Only her image trembling in the wave.
Her had he fain accosted, but the dread
Of violating her aloofness checked
The movement of his mind, and held him mute.
So to the One resplendently enrobed,
Familiarly fearless as herself,
He turned, albeit his thought was elsewhere,
As elsewhere his desire, and boldly said:
` ` If with your earthly seeming be conjoined
Gift and capacity of earthly speech,
Speak to me, earthly, as you will, and break
The all too spacious silence with your voice."
Her curving lips, whose fulness seemed to pledge
Intoxicating kisses, drooped apart,
And to her orbs upsurged volcanic fire,
As she with prompt unhesitating voice,
Commanding more than musical, rejoined.
Whereat that Other ever and anon
Would for a moment turn to him her face,
To note the interpretation of his heart
And wavering of his will, and then once more
Her look averted to the Sabine hills,
And cloudless vault of overarching Heaven.

Profane Love speaks

`` I am the Goddess mortals call Profane,
Yet worship me as though I were divine;
Over their lives, unrecognised, I reign,
For all their thoughts are mine.

`` I was coeval with the peopled Earth,
And, while it lasts, I likewise shall endure,
For Destiny endowed me at my birth
With every mundane lure.

`` Men rear no marble temple to my name,
No statues mould in Minster or in mart,
Yet in their longings silently proclaim
My throne is on their heart.

`` Unto the phantom Deities of air
They pay lip homage, carven altars raise,
To these bow down with ceremonial prayer,
And sycophantic praise.

`` With them I kneel, but neither praise nor pray,
While tapers burn, hymns float, and organ rolls,
Because I know that there too can I sway
And stupefy their souls.

`` Their pompous flatteries are not for me,
My panegyric is the secret sigh:
Wherefore should mortals monuments decree
To Me who cannot die?

`` I am the fountain of wealth, titles, power,
'Tis I ordain the pedestal and bust,
When there doth toll the inevitable hour,
The hour of death and dust.

`` Ruby, and pearl, and diamond, and the ore
Torn from the entrails of the Earth, are mine;
Mine are the cargoes shipped from shore to shore,
Spices, and silks, and wine:

`` Wherewith men buy what crafty barter brings,-
Greater the gain, more hazardous the risks,-
Toil from the many, coronets from Kings,
And lust from odalisques.

`` If such content not, since your hopes aspire
On heights of popularity to tower,
I can conduct you on yet swifter tire
To winning-peak of Power.

`` Then without scruple, pity, or restraint,
Cleave you your conquering way; for there is nought,

Of all that worldlings crave and hirelings paint,
But can be seized or bought.

`` Myriads from mine and furrow, quay and loom,
Shall congregate to hear you pledge and prate,
Hailing you heaven-sent warder-off of gloom,
And Saviour of the State.

`` And lissom sirens, temptingly attired,
With heartless hearts, self-seeking as your own,
By your sonorous phrases will be fired,
And gather round your throne.

`` Platform and Senate, Cabinet and Court,
You shall cajole, convert, or overawe;
Whitherso'er you speciously disport,
Your wordy Will be law.

`` But many and many a worshipper have I,
So cannot grant monopoly of power:
Others there be who fain would climb as high
As you, and have their hour.

`` Then their ambition with your own will shock,
And they awhile on foremost seat may reign:
Men's favour is a quicksand, not a rock,
And veers like gust and vane.

`` Then must you with invectives fume and rage
All through the land, denouncing evil times,
With histrionic passion; 'tis a stage
For mountebanks and mimes-

`` Slandering the foes who slander you, and so,
If thousands hate, thousands will hail, your name,
Till you in notoriety shall grow,
The herd confound with Fame.

`` Them that o'erwhelm, vindictiveness o'erwhelms,
So nought shall you from Fortune's wheel entice,
Gambling for Self's predominance with Realms
And Empires for your dice.

`` If with the years male energy should wane,
Orders and honours on you shall be shed:
Thus will you still in man's remembrance reign,
A halo round your head.

`` And when at length the End of all life's ends
Doth with the little lay the mighty down,
And domination finally descends
Graveward without its Crown,

`` Processions populous, bedizened hearse,
And mourners ermined shall your dust convey
To pompous tomb, and vying prose and verse
Protract your little day.

`` What though your name grow faint, as time recedes,
Like scarce-heard wave upon a far-off shore,
And wax the record of your words and deeds
A voice and nothing more,

`` You will have drained all that the world can give,
All boons and blandishments of Love Profane,
Success and homage, for which sane men live,
And all the rest is vain."

She ceased; and, as she ceased, then Sacred Love,
That ever and anon meanwhile had bent
On him her look, and smilingly surmised,
From his vague gaze and inattentive ears,
That he was only waiting for Her voice,
Like to the moon fleeting through fleecy clouds,
Her undissembled beauty on him bared,
And with a voice like sylvan rivulet
That haunts the woodlands, muffled half by leaves,
Serene and slow with silvery clearness spake.

`` In the unseen first-fostering of breath
Whose secret is by Science vainly sought,
Uncertain borderland 'twixt Life and Death,
I share the silence of the Mother's thought.

`` Her love is not more anxious than is mine,
Together we await the human cry,
For even then I, Sacred Love, divine
If it will grow to voice that may not die.

`` And I its foster-mother am, and feed
Its suckling dreams, and watch it waxing strong,
Giving it for its plaything moorland reed,
That it may grow and ripen into Song.

`` For Love Profane doth sleeplessly await
Its coming, to mislead it on its way,
Whispering, 'Become what Greatness deemeth great,
Till mighty Rulers recognise your sway.'

`` I listened tremblingly while Love Profane
Strove to entice you to the worldling's throne,
Along the worldling's way, but strove in vain.
Now hath She gone, and we are here alone."

His gaze that had on Her who thuswise spake
Fastened, since indivisibly intent
Upon the cadence of her voice, quick turned
At these last words, to look for Love Profane.
But lo! its effigy from marble rim
Had vanished, like the face of Roman sway,
Kingship, Republic, Empire; and the flow
Of water welling through the rifled tomb
Was the sole sound he heard, until her voice
Melodiously measured, spake once more.

`` Rise and come near to me, and take my hand,
And lay your cheek against my cheek, for sign
That you henceforth will know and understand
That all the children of the Muse are mine.

`` Your parent am I, though I seem so young,
It is my birthright never to grow old;
Young shall I keep so long as songs are sung,
By such fresh offspring gladdened and consoled.

`` I was beside the font when you were brought
Into the granite-pillared House of Prayer;
Smiled at your loneliness when first you sought
To sing away your load of childish care.

`` Rapture maternal fluttered in my heart
When you yourself disdainfully denied
What worldlings prize, and chose the better part,
Wending where now I find you at my side.

`` I know your present sorrow, since you fear
I have forsaken you and left you lone,
And Rome has silenced what you held so dear.
Wait! from the unseen seed the flower is grown.

`` Rome is the tomb of Heroes, and of Kings,
Consuls, and conquerors, and world-wide sway:
What wonder, should it silence him that sings
Before he learns what he must sing and say?

`` But you may live and die, a Voice unheard:
I promise not what I can not fulfil:
Only, -in the Beginning was the Word,
It was with God, and it is godlike still.

`` But unto you, as unto all my line,
Or strong or weak, resounding or obscure,
I pledge the gifts inalienably mine,
Gifts that content and pleasures that endure:

`` Companionship of woodlands, hills, and streams,

And gentle womenkind, to whom you owe
Youth in your heart, and shaping of your dreams,
And these will teach what more you need to know.

`` Nature's still fresh society will keep
Your feelings young, as you each April follow
Coy maiden Spring, when she awakes from sleep
In windflower dell and primrose pillowed hollow:

`` Watch Autumn wax in splendour day by day,
Then, slowly yielding unto Time's assault,
Her moribund magnificence decay,
To sleep entombed in Winter's icy vault;

`` And when the boughs stretch bare and fallows hoar,
And plovers wheel about the moorland wide,
Hear the pinched wind wailing through chink and door,
With piteous prayer to share the warm fireside.

`` Nature's capriciousness leaves just the same
Her inmost self; she does nor change nor veer;
Just as the seasons lend, with varying name,
Their contrast to the oneness of the year.

`` The Poet's love no base-bred difference knows
Of high and low, the peasant and the peer,
Save that his tenderness more heed bestows
On humble sorrow than luxurious tear.

`` Childhood's keen questioning, Youth's gropings blind,
Manhood's ambition, Age's graver part,
Alike can move his understanding mind,
And rouse his promptly sympathising heart.

`` Here, 'mid the ruins that you now behold,
You will imbibe the meaning of the Past,
Learning to weigh the new by what is old,
The things that perish, and the things that last.

`` Instructed thus, keep severed in your mind
The Passing from the Permanent, and prize
Only the precious heirlooms of Mankind,
Thought that ennobles, Art that vivifies.

`` Vex not your mind with riddles that beguile
The unwise to wrangle over things unknown.
'Tis not for Song to enrage, but reconcile,
So to the Tower of Babel add no stone.

`` But while from futile feuds you dwell apart,
Never forget to render what is due,
In hour of need, from manly hand and heart,

To the male Land whose soil engendered you.

`` Should opulence, and ease, and base desire
Deaden effeminate ears to just alarms,
Sound all the clanging octaves of the lyre,
And rouse a nation's manhood unto arms,

`` Save only then, no clamorous crowds must mar
The musing silence of secluded days,
Whose course should journey quiet as a star,
That moves alone along Heaven's trackless ways.

`` Then will you 'mid deserted Abbey walls
Hear both the matin and the vesper bell,
The girdled Brothers chanting in their stalls,
And see the Prior praying in his cell.

`` The Present and the Past shall seem but one,
Kingdoms, and Creeds, and Sceptres, passed away,
Stand out, in retrospection's noonday sun,
As Kingdoms, Creeds, and Sceptres, of to-day.

`` In the fair hospitable Tuscan Land,
Where Raphael and Donatello wrought,
Sojourn, and ponder till you understand
The masculine restraint themselves were taught-

`` Taught by the disentombed Minervan mind
That, in the days still governing if gone,
Within the rugged Parian block divined
Majestic calmness of the Parthenon.

`` And when, departing hence, you wandering wend
Where the brief Attic splendour dawned and shone,
Pray to Athene she to you will lend
The golden curb she lent Bellerophon.

`` Nor be the Hill Hellenic sculptors trod
Your one sole haunt, but, let who will condemn,
Kneel at all altars `To the Unknown God,'
Alike at Athens or Jerusalem.

`` Siren and seraph, athlete, anchorite,
Saints of the cloister, satyrs of the grove,
In one and all seek meaning and delight,
Reigning Jehovah, abdicated Jove.

`` Deem not the Oracles to-day are dumb;
They from their graves the World's course still forecast,
From things long gone expound the things to come,
And prophesy the Future from the Past.

` ` And not from Gothic shrine and classic urn,
From dome, or spire, or portico alone,
Study the mystery of Art, but learn
From each in turn to apprehend your own.

` ` Not least from its loved twin, melodious sound,
The universal unseen soul of things,
Whose utterance men invoke when words are found
Powerless to frame their vague imaginings.

` ` And, when the riper Youth that men call Age
Welcomes the closing dispensation, death,
Song that soothes sorrow and makes suffering sage,
Shall linger with you till your farewell breath.

` ` Not crowded aisle and ceremonial nave
Claim those that have from me life's lesson learned.
Who best have loved them bear them to their grave,
Where they near home lie ` quietly inurned.'"

Then, like the cadence of a closing song,
Her soft voice sank to silence, and he felt
Her arms fold round him, and so widened his,
Eager to share in privileged embrace:
When, lo! the vision vanished with the voice,
And all he saw were the calm Sabine hills,
And all he heard, the lispings of the wave
Clear-welling through the rifled marble tomb.
But all She had said sank deep into his heart,
And what She said is truly written here.

Alfred Austin

Sadder than lark when lowering

Sadder than lark when lowering
Clouds defend the sky;
Sadder than wild swan pouring
Death-notes ere it die;
Sadder than winds imploring
Shelter when storms are high,-
Couldst thou be less than adoring,
More sad were I.

Happy as streamlet flowing
'Twixt banks of heathery peat;
Happy as murmur going
Through the inclining wheat;
Happy as mother glowing
Over her little one's feet,-
I am happy in knowing,
Thou'rt mine, my sweet!

Alfred Austin

Shelley's Death

What! And it was so! Thou wert then
Death-stricken from behind,
O heart of hearts! and they were men,
That rent thee from mankind!
Greedy hatred chasing love,
As a hawk pursues a dove,
Till the soft feathers float upon the careless wind.

Loathed life! that I might break the chain
Which links my kind with me,
To think that human hands for gain
Should have been turned 'gainst thee, -
Thee that wouldst have given thine all
For the poor, the sick, the thrall,
And weighed thyself as dross, 'gainst their felicity!

We deemed that Nature, jealous grown,
Withdrew the glimpse she gave,
In thy bright genius, of her own,
And, not to slay, but save,
That she timely took back thus
What had been but lent to us,
Shrouding thee in her winds, and lulling 'neath her wave.

For it seemed meet thou shouldst not long
Toss on life's fitful billow,
Nor sleep 'mid mounds of silenced wrong
Under the clay-cold willow:
Rather that thou shouldst recline
Amid waters crystalline,
The sea-shells at thy feet, and sea-weed for thy pillow.

We felt we had no right to keep
What never had been ours;
That thou belongedst to the deep,
And the uncounted hours;
That thou earthly no more wert
Than the rainbow's melting skirt,
The sunset's fading bloom, and midnight's shooting showers.

And, thus resigned, our empty hands
Surrendered thee to thine,
Thinking thee drawn by kindred bands
Under the swirling brine,
Playing there on new-strung shell,
Tuned to Ocean's mystic swell,
Thy lyrical complaints and rhapsodies divine.

But now to hear no sea-nymph fair
Submerged thee with her smile,
And tempests were content to spare
Thee to us yet awhile,

But for ghouls in human mould
Ravaging the seas for gold,-
Oh! this blots out the heavens, and makes mere living vile!

Yet thy brief life presaged such death,
And it was meet that they
Who poisoned, should have quenched, thy breath,
Who slandered thee, should slay;
That thy spirit, long the mark
Of the dagger drawn in dark,
Should by the ruffian's stroke be ravished from the day.

Hush! From the grave where I so oft
Have stood, 'mid ruined Rome,
I seem to hear a whisper soft
Wafted across the foam;
Bidding justest wrath be still,
Good feel lovingly for ill,
As exiles for rough paths that help them to their home.

Alfred Austin

Shepherd swains that feed your flocks

` Shepherd swains that feed your flocks
'Mong the grassy-rooted rocks,
While I still see sun and moon,
Grant to me this simple boon:
As I sit on craggy seat,
And your kids and young lambs bleat,
Let who on the pierced pipe blows
Play the sweetest air he knows.
And, when I no more shall hear
Grasshopper or chanticleer,
Strew green bay and yellow broom
On the silence of my tomb;
And, still giving as you gave,
Milk a she-goat at my grave.
For, though life and joy be fled,
Dear are love-gifts to the dead.'

Alfred Austin

Since We Must Die

Though we must die, I would not die
When fields are brown and bleak,
When wild-geese stream across the sky,
And the cart-lodge timbers creak.
For it would be so lone and drear
To sleep beneath the snow,
When children carol Christmas cheer,
And Christmas rafters glow.

Nor would I die, though we must die,
When yealings blindly bleat,
When the cuckoo laughs, and lovers sigh,
And O, to live is sweet!
When cowslips come again, and Spring
Is winsome with their breath,
And Life's in love with everything-
With everything but Death.

Let me not die, though we must die,
When bowls are brimmed with cream,
When milch-cows in the meadows lie,
Or wade amid the stream;
When dewy-dimpled roses smile
To see the face of June,
And lad and lass meet at the stile,
Or roam beneath the moon.

Since we must die, then let me die
When flows the harvest ale,
When the reaper lays the sickle by,
And taketh down the flail;
When all we prized, and all we planned,
Is ripe and stored at last,
And Autumn looks across the land,
And ponders on the past:
Then let me die.

Alfred Austin

Sisyphus

Midway his upward unavailing course
Sate Sisyphus, his back against his load,
Halting a moment from that task of doom.
Adown his swollen cheeks ran streams of sweat
Dripping from thick-drenched locks; and watery beads
Gathered and stood on his stupendous limbs.
The sinews of his arm, like gnarled knots
On hollow bark of legendary oak,
Credentials of incalculable years,
Bulged up, and in his horny hands outspread
Upon his wrinkled knees, the arching veins
Glittered like tempered steel. His stertorous breath
Moaned like to bellows in cyclopean forge,
Wherewith in smithy subterranean
Against the Gods rebellious demigods
Fashion their molten ineffectual bolts.

But when, asudden, swift on angry flash,
Rumbled imperious thunder overhead,
At the commanding mandate, Sisyphus,
Bulkily rising, straightened limbs relaxed,
And turned him yet again unto his task,
Mumbling the while habitual lament.

`` Why was I chosen for this hateful task,
Fantastically futile, which the Gods
Lay on their victim, for their own disport?
Rather a thousand times upon the wheel
Would I, Ixion-like, be racked, or lift
The tantalising gourd-cup to my lips.
I was no wickeder than they, and I
Founded Ephyra in a stony land,
Raised monolithic temples to the Gods,
And made the name of Corinth glorious from
Peloponnesus unto Attica.
Was it a crime to be Ulysses' sire
By sportive Anticlea ere she wed
Laertes, bringing him a Royal heir?
Yearning for whom, when Circe and her lures
From Ithaca withheld his bark, she died.
If such to me imputed be a crime,
Then all the Gods are bestial criminals,
Lustful, adulterous, meretricious Gods.
What more was my offence? Was it because
I from the clustered sister-Pleiades
Lured Merope to earth to share my love,
Not an ephemeral, but strong-nuptialled love?
Whereat the Gods, envying a mortal's joy,
Darkened her light in Heaven, and vengefully
In me infused her immortality,
That I might strain for ever at the task
Of aiding upward downward-destined world.

`` If mortals were but once by doom allowed
To limit their ambition, and abide
On some material or majestic height!
But onward, upward, ever are they urged
By the half-God within their blood to pass
Beyond the flaming barriers of the world,
Where the inexorable sentries stand
To drive them back, and me, unwilling drudge,
Forced downward by the weight I upward rolled.
When to the very pinnacle of Art,
Majestically lovely, for restrained,
Hellenic minds from barbarous gropings towered,
The beast in mortals sensuously craved
For craft more carnal, Goddesses undraped
In marble, to such use recalcitrant,
Satyrs and fauns, licentious comedy,
Provocative of laughter or of lust,
Dethroning the Ideal for the Real.
When the stern Roman on the world imposed
By forceful dominance the Reign of Law,
Then did the East with tribute undermine
The male-won Empire, and barbarian hordes
Rent the Imperial marble from its limbs,
And revelled in the wreck of its decline.

`` O, but now! now! now!
Heavier the load, weightier than ever yet,
For men, infatuated, now conceive,
Eliminating Spirit, they will find
In matter immaterialised the germ,
Fountain, and origin of all that moves.
But behind Fate there is another Fate,
And yet another, undiscoverable.
Yet Man, again illusioned, presses on,
Fondling the fancy he will shortly pierce
Unto the generating source of things,
The Atom atomless: whereat the Gods
Shake with ironic laughter, since themselves
Know it not, neither do they seek to know,
Aware, above them there are other Gods,
May-be one sole impenetrable God,
Never created, never dying, One
With the unbounded Universe, Himself
The soul and substance of Eternity.
That is my one last hope, that He will free
My body from this pagan servitude,
And with omnipotent mercifulness merge
My Being into His!"

Alfred Austin

Song

Go talk to her, sweet flower,
To whom I fain would talk
Tell her I hour by hour
Pine on my own poor stalk.

Tell her that I should live
Not quite so sore distressed,
If she to you would give
A throne upon her breast.

Tell her that should she hie
To my parched plot to see
If I be dead, that I
No more should withered be.

If I were dead, her feet
My spirit would revive,
As may her bosom sweet
Keep you, sweet flower, alive.

Alfred Austin

Songs From "Prince Lucifer" II - Mother-Song

WHITE little hands!
Pink little feet!
Dimpled all over,
Sweet, sweet, sweet!
What dost thou wail for?
The unknown? the unseen?
The ills that are coming,
The joys that have been?

Cling to me closer,
Closer and closer,
Till the pain that is purer
Hath banish'd the grosser.
Drain, drain at the stream, love,
Thy hunger is freeing,
That was born in a dream, love,
Along with thy being!

Little fingers that feel
For their home on my breast,
Little lips that appeal
For their nurture, their rest!
Why, why dost thou weep, dear?
Nay, stifle thy cries,
Till the dew of thy sleep, dear,
Lies soft on thine eyes.

Alfred Austin

Sorrow's Importunity

When Sorrow first came wailing to my door,
April rehearsed the madrigal of May;
And, as I ne'er had seen her face before,
I kept on singing, and she went her way.

When next came Sorrow, life was winged with scent
Of glistening laurel and full-blossoming bay:
I asked, but understood not, what she meant,
Offered her flowers, and she went her way.

When yet a third time Sorrow came, we met
In the ripe silence of an Autumn day:
I gave her fruit I had gathered, and she ate,
Then seemed to go unwillingly away.

When last came Sorrow, around barn and byre
Wind-carven snow, the Year's white sepulchre, lay.
``Come in," I said, ``and warm you by the fire."
And there she sits, and never goes away.

Alfred Austin

Spartan Mothers

`` One more embrace! Then, o'er the main,
And nobly play the soldier's part!"
Thus sounds, amid the martial strain,
The Spartan Mother's patriot heart.
She hides her woe,
She bids him go,
And tread the path his Fathers trod.
`` Who dies for England, dies for God!"

In the husht night, she wakes, she weeps,
And listens for the far-off fray.
He scours the gorge, he scales the steeps,
Scatters the Foe,-away! away!
But feigned the flight!
Smite, again smite!
How fleet their steeds, how nimbly shod!
She kneels, she prays- `` Protect him, God!"

Weep, tender souls. The sob, the tear,
The lonely prayer, the stifled wail,
These brace the will, these nerve the spear,
And speed him over veldt and vale.
What is to him
Or life or limb,
Who rends the chain and breaks the rod!
Who strikes for Freedom, strikes for God!

Should Heaven decree that he once more
Unscathed return to home and rest,
She will be standing at the door,
To fold him to her trembling breast.
Or, should he fall
By ridge or wall,
And lie 'neath some green southern sod,-
`` Who dies for England, sleeps with God."

Alfred Austin

Spiritual Love

Could you but give me all that I desire,
I should be richer, and you no more poor,
Companionship beside the household fire,
And common cares that train one to endure.
'Tis not your senses, but your self, I want,
Kinship of vision, sympathy of mind,
That so the bond be based on adamant,
And Love made fast by sanctities that bind.
Yet do not think insensible my gaze
To delicate loveliness of form and face,
But that I covet in the same embrace
The Spirit's yearnings with the body's grace.
Give me all these, and add, with lengthening years,
The sweet sad smile, and piety of tears.

Alfred Austin

Stafford Henry Northcote

Gentle in fibre, but of steadfast nerve
Still to do right though right won blame not praise,
And fallen on evil tongues and evil days
When men from plain straight duty twist and swerve,
And, born to nobly sway, ignobly serve,
Sliming their track to power through tortuous ways,
He felt, with that fine sense that ne'er betrays,
The line of moral beauty's not a curve.
But, proving wisdom folly, virtue vain,
He stretched his hands out to the other shore,
And was by kindred spirits beckoned o'er
Into the gloaming Land where setteth pain,
While we across the silent river strain
Idly our gaze, and find his form no more.

Alfred Austin

Sweet Love Is Dead

Sweet Love is dead:
Where shall we bury him?
In a green bed,
With no stone at his head,
And no tears nor prayers to worry him.

Do you think he will sleep,
Dreamless and quiet?
Yes, if we keep
Silence, nor weep
O'er the grave where the ground-worms riot.

By his tomb let us part.
But hush! he is waking!
He hath winged a dart,
And the mock-cold heart
With the woe of want is aching.

Feign we no more
Sweet Love lies breathless.
All we forswore
Be as before;
Death may die, but Love is deathless.

Alfred Austin

Take not the Gods to task, for they are wise

Take not the Gods to task, for they are wise
When they refuse no less than when they grant.
Thou canst but know, with all thy bursting sighs,
What is thy whim, but never what thy want.
Did they, to smite thine importunity,
Answer each swift unregulated prayer,
Oh, what accursèd trudger wouldst thou be,
And what a world of fardels have to bear!
Check thy lament. The days will surely come,
Thou wilt regard each crossed or shattered hope,
As now thou dost poor Philip's broken drum,
Or little Rosie's tangled skipping-rope.
Confide in Time, who will, as years expire,
Indulge, or else annihilate, desire.

Alfred Austin

The Aquittal Of Phryne

When Athens challenged Phryne to confess
Eleusis' self sufficed not to appal
Her impious tread, and, throned within their Hall,
The awful judges frowned on her distress,
Slowly her lovely limbs she did undress,
Swathe upon swathe, fold after fold, let fall,
Until she stood, absolved, before them all,
Clad in her clear convincing nakedness.
So when the slaves of custom would control
Your range of feeling and your realm of thought,
And close you half the world who claim the whole,
Show them your inmost self, keep back not aught,
By your mind's beauty be their bias bought,
And sway by bare simplicity of soul.

Alfred Austin

The Challenge Answered

So at length the word is uttered which the vain Gaul long hath muttered
'Twixt his teeth, by envy fluttered at another land being great;
And the dogs of war are loosed, and the carnage stream unsluicèd,
That the might of France abusèd may torment the world like Fate.

O thou nation, base, besotted, whose ambition cannons shotted,
And huge mounds of corpses clotted with cold gore alone can sate!
May the God of Battles shiver every arrow in thy quiver,
And the nobly-flowing river thou dost covet drown thy hate!

For 'tis writ on towering steeple, if ye sow ill ye shall reap ill;
And a stern offended people swarm from city, hill, and plain,
And with lips ne'er known to palter, swear by king and hearth and altar,
Not to sheath the sword or falter till they flash it by the Seine!

See! they come in dazzling masses from soft vales and frowning passes,
Dense with blades as now the grass is that the summer sun doth shine,
And proclaim with voice of thunder that French hordes athirst for plunder
Not one single rood shall sunder from their Fatherland and Rhine.

Swabian, Saxon, Frank, and Hessian, lo! they muster, form, and press on,
Pledged to teach the Gaul the lesson he ne'er learns but through the sword,
That the gay light-hearted glitter of the wicked, wanton hither
May be turned to wormwood bitter by the judgment of the Lord.

To their maids no longer fickle, down whose cheeks the fond tears trickle,
Leaving pruning-hook and sickle, yellow corn and purple grape,
Do they vow, as long as shielded behind swords by Germans wielded,
That their soil shall ne'er be yielded to the tiger and the ape.

On, then! on, ye souls undaunted! let the flag of Right be flaunted,
And your late-roused wrath be haunted by the outrages of old,
When for empty Gallic glory were your hearths made black and gory,
And the lone sire's head turned hoary by the slaughter of his fold.

Nor with glorious defending to your ire be there an ending,
But, still onwards ever wending, let your legions never halt,
Till ye show to braggart Paris what at hand the edge of war is,
How it desolates and harries, and then strew its streets with salt.

For its lips are seared with lying, and its crimes to God are crying,
And the Earth oppressed is sighing: Oh how long shall these things be?
And a shout of exultation will go up from every nation,
As your sword, the World's salvation, smites the insulter to his knee.

Alfred Austin

The Dance At Darmstadt

In the city of Darmstadt, the Sabbath morn
Shone over the broad Cathedral Square,
And to nobly, richly, and lowly born,
The belfry carillon'd call to prayer.

Then banker, and burgher, and learn'd in law,
With clean-cut forehead and firm-set jaw,
Master, and prentice, and tradesman trim,
Pikemen stalwart of port and limb,
Pledged to die for their native town,
Scholars stately in cap and gown,
Splendid and simple, halt and hale,
Rosy tapster and student pale,
Stepped from their thresholds, and gravely trod
The streets that lead to the House of God.
And, hurrying after them, maid and dame,
Wives, and daughters, and sweethearts, came,
All in their Sabbath best arrayed,
Delicate ribbon and dainty braid,
Creaseless corset and kirtle clean,
Of sombre homespun or silken sheen,
Rustling by with looks demure,
As bright as posies, and just as pure.
And tight to their kirtles their children clung,
With ambling footstep and nimble tongue,
Prattled and questioned them all the way,
Forgetting quite 'twas the Sabbath Day,
Till they came to the great Cathedral Square,
Where the organ pealed through the House of Prayer.

`` Now why do you waste the summer day?"
Cried a velvete'd stripling with locks of gold,
And eyes like forget-me-nots in May,
When the milch-cows stream from the wintry fold.
`` Week after week you troop in there,
To mutter and mumble the self-same prayer,
Through the self-same psalmody drowse and nod;
And that's what you, sooth, call praising God!
Look! the sun is shining on roof and spire,
And the wings of the swallow never tire,
The stork hovers over her callow nest,
And Spring is folded to Summer's breast.
There's a flutter of love in the lime-tree leaves,
And the starlings flute on the Rathhaus eaves.
Come away, come away where the sycamore swings
Its tassels of gold, and the blackbird sings,
Where the river swirls past a tangled ledge
Of willow-weed, meadow-sweet, thyme, and sedge,
Where the veins of the vine are flushed with juice,
And the trout in the stream past the miller's sluice
Cast wavering shadows on stone and sand;
And, when we have rambled through all the land,

We will halt at the Inn with the Jocund Sign,
And freshen our throats with the Mosel wine.
But, ere ever we go, let us, hand in hand,
Be comrades sworn of a joyous band,
And, while they jabber and wail in there,
Have a dance in the sunny Cathedral Square."

Then tabor and viol began to sound,
And ribald and losel to beat the ground,
Boys who mocked at the Sacred Name,
And wantons brazening out their shame.
With languishing eyes and streaming hair,
They footed it all about the Square,
Footed, and frolicked, and revelled round,
To the viol's twang and the tabor's sound;
Shouted, and clapped their hands for glee;
Was never such madcap company:
Forward, backward, forward once more,
Like ebb and flow on a tidal shore,
Trooped together more near and near,
Like a troop of colts at a sound they fear,
Then scampered away and scattered wide,
Again to draw to each other's side;
Hand within hand, and face to face,
Twirled and circled in lewd embrace,
Hurried, slackened, then swept along,
Trilling and trolling a shameful song,
Hurtful and hateful to godly ears.
Never, I ween, in all the years
Since the Autumn woods waxed sere and brown,
Was danced such a dance in Darmstadt town.

Now the sermon was over, the service done,
And the grave-faced worshippers, one by one,
Poured into the bright Cathedral Square,
And beheld the ungodly dancing there.
Then they cried, "Now, shame on you! Stay! O stay!
Surely ye know 'tis the Sabbath Day,
The day of the merciful mighty Lord:
If ye flaunt His mercy, yet dread His sword!"
Yet never an instant the dancing stayed,
But ribald stripling, and wanton maid,
Gasp'd out, "Don't you see we are nigh to drop
With panting and pain, but we cannot stop.
The demons have entered our limbs, and we
No longer have power to pause or flee.
They force us to hammer the hard hot ground,
And make us pirouette round and round.
Will never some Christian soul advance,
And break the spell of this demon dance!"

Then the sober and godly would fain have heard

Piteous cry and panting word.
But a something stronger than human will
Fettered their feet, and kept them still
Helplessly watching the ghastly crew;
So swiftly they whirled, and so fast they flew,
It made one giddy to see them there.
So, out of the broad Cathedral Square,
Banker and burgher, and learn'd in law,
With clean-cut forehead and firm-set jaw,
Master and prentice, and tradesman trim,
Pikemen stalwart of port and limb,
Sister, and sweetheart, and wife demure,
As fresh as posies, and just as pure,
With children clutching their mother's gown,
Homeward walked through the awestruck town.

But still, when the godly crowd had gone,
The derelict band went dancing on.
The sunlight glittered on roof and spire,
And the wings of the swallow did never tire,
The stork hovered over her callow nest,
And Spring was folded to Summer's breast.
Far away in the woodland the sycamore swung
Its tassels of gold, and the blackbird sung.
The river went swirling past tangled ledge
Of willow-weed, meadow-sweet, thyme, and sedge.
The veins of the vine were flushed with juice,
And the trout poised still by the miller's sluice.
But, though longer and longer the shadows grew,
Still gambolled and anticked the ribald crew,
Wavered and wantoned in broken line,
As though mad-drunk with the Mosel wine,
Reeled and rolled till the sun went down,
And the stars shone over the darkened town,
Golden stars in a dome of blue;
Careered and capered the whole night through,
Till their loose flesh flapped on their creaking bones,
And they staggered and dropped on the hard dry stones.
And when at last in a heap they lay,
Like refuse the scavenger carts away,
They throbbed up still, as at farmyard pyre
The flickering flames of an unfed fire;
Nor yet from their ghastly gambols ceased,
Till the sun ensanguined the pallid East,
And the starlings piped on the Rathhaus eaves.

Never, never since wintry woods waxed brown,
Was danced such a dance in Darmstadt town.

Alfred Austin

The Death Of Huss

In the streets of Constance was heard the shout,
``Masters! bring the arch-heretic out!"
The stake had been planted, the faggots spread,
And the tongues of the torches flickered red.
``Huss to the flames!" they fiercely cried:
Then the gate of the Convent opened wide.

Into the sun from the dark he came,
His face as fixed as a face in a frame.
His arms were pinioned, but you could see,
By the smile round his mouth, that his soul was free;
And his eye with a strange bright glow was lit,
Like a star just before the dawn quencheth it.

To the pyre the crowd a pathway made,
And he walked along it with no man's aid;
Steadily on to the place he trod,
Commending aloud his soul to God.
Aloud he prayed, though they mocked his prayer:
He was the only thing tranquil there.

But, seeing the faggots, he quickened pace,
As we do when we see the loved one's face.
``Now, now, let the torch in the resin flare,
Till my books and body be ashes and air!
But the spirit of both shall return to men,
As dew that rises descends again."

From the back of the crowd where the women wept,
And the children whispered, a peasant stepped.
A goodly faggot was on his back,
Brittle and sere, from last year's stack;
And he placed it carefully where the torch
Was sure to lick and the flame to scorch.

``Why bring you fresh fuel, friend? Here are sticks
To burn up a score of heretics."
Answered the peasant, ``Because this year,
My hearth will be cold, for is firewood dear;
And Heaven be witness I pay my toll,
And burn your body to save my soul."

Huss gazed at the peasant, he gazed at the pile,
Then over his features there stole a smile.
``O Sancta Simplicitas! By God's troth,
This faggot of yours may save us both,
And He who judgeth perchance prefer
To the victim the executioner!"

Then unto the stake was he tightly tied,
And the torches were lowered and thrust inside.
You could hear the twigs crackle and sputter the flesh,

Then `` Sancta Simplicitas!" moaned afresh.
'Twas the last men heard of the words he spoke,
Ere to Heaven his soul went up with the smoke.

Alfred Austin

The Door Of Humility

ENGLAND

We lead the blind by voice and hand,
And not by light they cannot see;
We are not framed to understand
The How and Why of such as He;

But natured only to rejoice
At every sound or sign of hope,
And, guided by the still small voice,
In patience through the darkness grope;

Until our finer sense expands,
And we exchange for holier sight
The earthly help of voice and hands,
And in His light behold the Light.

I

Let there be Light! The self-same Power
That out of formless dark and void
Endued with life's mysterious dower
Planet, and star, and asteroid;

That moved upon the waters' face,
And, breathing on them His intent,
Divided, and assigned their place
To, ocean, air, and firmament;

That bade the land appear, and bring
Forth herb and leaf, both fruit and flower,
Cattle that graze, and birds that sing,
Ordained the sunshine and the shower;

That, moulding man and woman, breathed
In them an active soul at birth
In His own image, and bequeathed
To them dominion over Earth;

That, by whatever is, decreed
His Will and Word shall be obeyed,
From loftiest star to lowliest seed;-
The worm and me He also made.

And when, for nuptials of the Spring
With Summer, on the vestal thorn
The bridal veil hung flowering,
A cry was heard, and I was born.

II

To be by blood and long descent
A member of a mighty State,

Whose greatness, sea-girt, but unpent
By ocean, makes the world more great;

That, ranging limitless, hath won
A Rule more wide than that of Rome,
And, journeying onward with the sun,
In every zone hath found a home;

That, keeping old traditions fast,
Still hails the things that are to be,
And, firmly rooted in the Past,
On Law hath grafted Liberty;-

That is a birthright nobler far
Than princely claim or Right Divine
From far-off rapine, wanton war,
And I could feel this birthright mine.

And not the lowliest hand that drives
Or share or loom, if so it be
Of British strain, but thence derives
A patent of nobility.

III

The guiding of the infant years
Onward to good, away from guile,
A mother's humanising tears,
A father's philosophic smile;

Refining beauty, gentle ways,
The admonitions of the wise,
The love that watches, helps, and prays,
And pities, but doth ne'er despise;

An ancient Faith, abiding hope,
The charity that suffers long,
But flames with sacred zeal to cope
With man's injustice, nature's wrong;

Melodious leisure, learn'd shelf,
Discourse of earnest, temperate mind,
The playful wit that of itself
Flashes, but leaves no wound behind;

The knowledge gleaned from Greece and Rome,
From studious Teuton, sprightly Gaul,
The lettered page, the mellow tome,
And poets' wisdom more than all;-

These, when no lips severe upbraid,
But counsel rather than control,

In budding boyhood lend their aid
To sensibility of soul.

IV

But, more than mentor, mother, sire,
Can lend to shape the future man
With help of learning or of lyre,
Of ancient rule, or modern plan,

Is that which with our breath we bring
Into the world, we know not whence,
That needs nor care nor fostering,
Because an instinct and a sense.

And days and years are all forgot
When Nature's aspect, growth, and grace,
And veering moods, to me were not
The features of the Loved One's face.

The cloud whose shadow skims the lake,
The shimmering haze of summer noon,
The voice of April in the brake,
The silence of the mounting moon,

Swaying of bracken on the hill,
The murmur of the vagrant stream,
These motions of some unseen Will,
These babblings of some heavenly dream,

Seemed tokens of divine desire
To hold discourse with me, and so
To touch my lips with hallowed fire,
And tell me things I ought to know.

I gazed and listened, all intent,
As to the face and voice of Fate,
But what they said, or what they meant,
I could surmise not, nor translate.

They did but lure me to unrest,
Unanswered questioning, longings vain,
As when one scans some palimpsest
No erudition can explain;

But left me with a deep distaste
For common speech, that still did seem
More meaningless than mountain waste,
Less human than the far-off stream.

So that a stranger in the land
Wherein I moved, where'er I went,

I dwelt, whom none could understand,
Or exorcise my discontent.

And I to them, and they to me
Seemed from two different planets come,
And, save to flower and wild-bird's glee,
My heart was deaf, my soul was dumb.

V

But slowly dawned a happier time
When I began to apprehend,
And catch, as in some poet's rhyme,
The intimations of a friend;

When Nature spake no unknown tongue,
But language kindred to my thought,
Till everything She said, I sung,
In notes unforced, in words unsought.

And I to Her so closely drew,
The seasons round, in mind and mood,
I felt at length as if we knew
Self-same affection, self-same feud:

That both alike scorned worldly aim,
Profit, applause, parade, and pride,
Whereby the love of generous fame
And worthy deeds grows petrified.

I did as yet not understand
Nature is far more vast than I,
Deep as the ocean, wide as land,
And overarching as the sky;

And but responded to my call,
And only felt and fed my need,
Because She doth the same for all
Who to her pity turn and plead.

VI

Shall man have mind, and Nature none,
Shall I, not she, have soul and heart?
Nay, rather, if we be not one,
Each is of each the counterpart.

She too may have within her breast
A conscience, if not like to yours,
A sense of rightness ill at rest,
Long as her waywardness endures.

And hence her thunder, earthquakes, hail,
Her levin bolts, her clouds' discharge:
She sins upon a larger scale,
Because She is herself more large.

Hence, too, when She hath pierced with pain
The heart of man, and wrecked his years,
The pity of the April rain,
And late repentance of her tears.

She is no better, worse, than we;
We can but say she seems more great,
That half her will, like ours, is free,
And half of it is locked in Fate.

Nor need we fear that we should err
Beyond our scope in reasoning thus,-
That there must be a God for Her,
If that there be a God for us.

VII

The chiming of the Sabbath bell,
The silence of the Sabbath fields,
Over the hamlet cast a spell
To which the gracious spirit yields.

Sound is there none of wheel or wain,
Husht stands the anvil, husht the forge,
No shout is heard in rustic lane,
No axe resounds in timbered gorge.

No flail beats time on granary floor,
The windmill's rushing wings are stayed,
And children's glee rings out no more
From hedgerow bank or primrose glade.

The big-boned team that firm and slow
Draw yoked, are free to couch or stray;
The basking covey seem to know
None will invade their peace to-day.

And speckless swains, and maidens neat,
Through rustic porch, down cottage stair,
Demurely up the village street
Stream onward to the House of Prayer.

They kneel as they were taught to kneel
In childhood, and demand not why,
But, as they chant or answer, feel
A vague communion with the sky.

VIII

But when the impetuous mind is spurred
To range through epochs great but gone,
And, heedless of dogmatic word,
With fearless ardour presses on,

Confronting pulpit, sceptre, shrine,
With point by Logic beaten out,
And, questioning tenets deemed divine
With human challenge, human doubt,

Hoists Reason's sail, and for the haze
Of ocean quits Tradition's shore,
Awhile he comes, and kneels, and prays,
Then comes and kneels, but prays no more;

And only for the love he bears
To those who love him, and who reared
His frame to genuflexion, shares
In ritual, vain, if still revered.

His Gods are many or are none,
Saturn and Mithra, Christ and Jove,
Consorting, as the Ages run,
With Vestal choir or Pagan drove.

Abiding still by Northern shores,
He sees far off on Grecian coast
Veiled Aphrodite, but adores
Minerva and Apollo most.

Beauty of vision, voice, and mind,
Enthrall him so, that unto him
All Creeds seem true, if he but find
Siren, or saint, or seraphim.

And thus once more he dwells apart,
His inward self enswathed in mist,
Blending with poet's pious heart
The dreams of pagan Hedonist.

IX

If Beauty be the Spirit's quest,
Its adoration, creed, and shrine,
Wherein its restlessness finds rest,
And earthly type of the Divine,

Must there for such not somewhere be
A blending of all beauteous things
In some one form wherein we see

The sum of our imaginings?

The smile on mountain's musing brow,
Sunrise and sunset, moon and star,
Wavelets around the cygnet's prow,
Glamour anear and charm afar;

The silence of the silvery pool,
Autumn's reserve and Summer's fire,
Slow vanishings of Winter's rule
To free full voice of April's choir;-

The worshippers of Beauty find
In maiden form, and face, and tress;
Faint intimations of her mind
And undulating loveliness.

X

Bound, runnels, bound, bound on, and flow!
Sing, merle and mavis, pair and sing!
Gone is the Winter, fled the snow,
And all that lives is flushed with Spring.

Harry the woods, young truant folk,
For flowers to deck your cottage sills,
And, underneath my orchard oak,
Cluster, ye golden daffodils!

Unfettered by domestic vow,
Cuckoo, proclaim your vagrant loves,
And coo upon the self-same bough,
Inseparable turtle-doves.

Soar, laverock, soar on song to sky,
And with the choir of Heaven rejoice!
You cannot be more glad than I,
Who feel Her gaze, and hear Her voice:

Who see Her cheek more crimson glow,
And through Her veins love's current stream,
And feel a fear She doth but know
Is kin to joy and dawning dream.

Bound, rivulets, bound, bound on, and flow!
Sing, merle and mavis, pair and sing!
Gone from the world are want and woe,
And I myself am one with Spring.

XI

They err who say that Love is blind,

Or, if it be, 'tis but in part,
And that, if for fair face it find
No counterpart in mind and heart,

It dwells on that which it beholds,
Fair fleshly vision void of soul,
Deeming, illusioned, this enfolds,
Longing's fulfilment, end, and whole.

Were such my hapless carnal lot,
I too might evanescent bliss
Embrace, fierce-fancied, fast forgot,
Then leave for some fresh loveliness.

But April gaze, and Summer tress,
With something of Autumnal thought,
In Her seem blent to crown and bless
A bond I long in dreams have sought.

She looks as though She came to grace
The earth, from world less soiled than this,
Around her head and virgin face
Halo of heavenly holiness.

XII

He who hath roamed through various lands,
And, wheresoe'er his steps are set,
The kindred meaning understands
Of spire, and dome, and minaret;

By Roman river, Stamboul's sea,
In Peter's or Sophia's shrine,
Acknowledges with reverent knee
The presence of the One Divine;

Who, to the land he loves so well
Returning, towards the sunset hour
Wends homeward, feels yet stronger spell
In lichened roof and grey church-tower;

Round whose foundations, side by side,
Sleep hamlet wit and village sage,
While loud the blackbird cheers his bride
Deep in umbrageous Vicarage.

XIII

Was it that sense which some aver
Foreshadows Fate it doth not see,
That gave unwittingly to Her
The name, for ever dear to me,

Borne by that tearful Mother whom,
Nigh unto Ostia's shelving sand,
Augustine laid in lonely tomb,
Ere sailing for his Afric land?

But I at least should have foreseen,
When Monica to me had grown
Familiar word, that names may mean
More than by word and name is shown;

That nought can keep two lives apart
More than divorce 'twixt mind and mind,
Even though heart be one with heart;-
Alas! Alas! Yes, Love is blind.

XIV

How could I think of jarring Creeds,
And riddles that unread remain,
Or ask if Heaven's indulgence heeds
Broils born of man's polemic brain,

And pause because my venturous mind
Had roamed through tracks of polar thought,
Whence mightiest spirits turn back blind,
Since finding not the thing they sought,

When Love, with luring gifts in hand,
Beauty, refinement, smile, caress,
Heart to surmise and understand,
And crowning grace of holiness,

Stood there before me, and, with gaze
I had been purblind not to see,
Said, ``I to you will, all my days,
Give what you yearn to give to me"?

Must both then sorrow, while we live,
Because, rejoicing, I forgot
Something there was I could not give,
Because, alas! I had it not.

XV

She comes from Vicarage Garden, see!
Radiant as morning, lithe and tall,
Fresh lilies in her hand, but She
The loveliest lily of them all.

The thrushes in their fluting pause,
The bees float humming round her head,

Earth, air, and heaven shine out because
They hear her voice, and feel her tread.

Up in the fretted grey church-tower,
That rustic gaze for miles can see,
The belfry strikes the silvery hour,
Announcing her propinquity.

And I who, fearful to be late,
Passed long since through the deerpark pale,
And loitered by the churchyard gate,
Once more exclaim, ``Hail! loved one! hail!"

We pass within, and up the nave,
Husht, because Heaven seems always there,
Wend choirward, where, devoutly grave,
She kneels, to breathe a silent prayer.

She takes the flowers I too have brought,
Blending them deftly with her own,
And ranges them, as quick as thought,
Around the white-draped altar-throne.

How could she know my gaze was not
On things unseen, but fixed on Her,
That, as She prayed, I all forgot
The worship in the worshipper?-

While She beheld, as in a glass,
The Light Divine, that I but sought
Sight of her soul?-Alas! Alas!
Love is yet blinder than I thought.

XVI

Who hath not seen a little cloud
Up from the clear horizon steal,
And, mounting lurid, mutter loud
Premonitory thunder-peal?

Husht grows the grove, the summer leaf
Trembles and writhes, as if in pain,
And then the sky, o'ercharged with grief,
Bursts into drenching tears of rain.

I through the years had sought to hide
My darkening doubts from simple sight.
'Tis sacrilegious to deride
Faith of unquestioning neophyte.

And what, methought, is Doubt at best?
A sterile wind through seeded sedge

Blowing for nought, an empty nest
That lingers in a leafless hedge.

Pain, too, there is we should not share
With others lest it mar their joy;
There is a quiet bliss in prayer
None but the heartless would destroy.

But just as Love is quick divined
From heightened glow or visage pale,
The meditations of the Mind
Disclose themselves through densest veil.

And 'tis the unloving and least wise
Who through life's inmost precincts press,
And with unsympathetic eyes
Outrage our sacred loneliness.

Then, when their sacrilegious gaze
The mournful void hath half surmised,
To some more tender soul they raise
The veil of ignorance it prized.

XVII

` What though I write farewell I could
Not utter, lest your gaze should chide,
'Twill by your love be understood
My love is still, dear, at your side.

` ` Nor must we meet to speak goodbye,
Lest that my Will should lose its choice,
And conscience waver, for then I
Should see your face and hear your voice.

` ` But, when you find yourself once more,
Come back, come back and look for me,
Beside the little lowly door,
The Doorway of Humility."

XVIII

There! Peace at last! The far-off roar
Of human passion dies away.
` ` Welcome to our broad shade once more,"
The waning woodlands seem to say:

The music of the vagrant wind,
That wandered aimlessly, is stilled;
The songless branches all remind
That Summer's glory is fulfilled.

The fluttering of the falling leaves
Dimples the leaden pool awhile;
So Age impassively receives
Youth's tale of troubles with a smile.

Thus, as the seasons steal away,
How much is schemed, how little done,
What splendid plans at break of day!
What void regrets at set of sun!

The world goes round, for you, for me,
For him who sleeps, for him who strives,
And the cold Fates indifferent see
Crowning or failure of our lives.

Then fall, ye leaves, fade, summer breeze!
Grow, sedges, sere on every pool!
Let each old glowing impulse freeze,
Let each old generous project cool!

It is not wisdom, wit, nor worth,
Self-sacrifice nor friendship true,
Makes venal devotees of earth
Prostrate themselves and worship you.

The consciousness of sovran powers,
The stubborn purpose, steadfast will,
Have ever, in this world of ours,
Achieved success, achieve it still.

Farewell, ye woods! No more I sit;
Great voices in the distance call.
If this be peace, enough of it!
I go. Fall, unseen foliage, fall!

XIX

Nay, but repress rebellious woe!
In grief 'tis not that febrile fool,
Passion, that can but overthrow,
But Resignation, that should rule.

In patient sadness lurks a gift
To purify the life it stings,
And, as the days move onward, lift
The lonely heart to loftier things;

Bringing within one's ripening reach
The sceptre of majestic Thought,
Wherefrom one slowly learns to teach
The Wisdom to oneself it taught.

And unto what can man aspire,
On earth, more worth the striving for,
Than to be Reason's loftier lyre,
And reconciling monitor;

To strike a more resounding string
And deeper notes of joy and pain,
Than such as but lamenting sing,
Or warble but a sensuous strain:

So, when my days are nearly sped,
And my last harvest labours done,
That I may have around my head
The halo of a setting sun.

Yet even if be heard above
Such selfish hope, presumptuous claim,
Better one hour of perfect love
Than an eternity of Fame!

XX

Where then for grief seek out the cure?
What scenes will bid my smart to cease?
High peaks should teach one to endure,
And lakes secluded bring one peace.

Farewell awhile, then, village bells,
Autumnal wood and harvest wain!
And welcome, as it sinks or swells,
The music of the mighty main,

That seems to say, now loud, now low,
Rising or falling, sweet or shrill,
"I pace, a sentry, to and fro,
To guard your Island fortress still."

The roses falter on their stalk,
The late peach reddens on the wall,
The flowers along the garden walk
Unheeded fade, unheeded fall.

My gates unopened drip with rain,
The wolf-hound wends from floor to floor,
And, listening for my voice in vain,
Waileth along the corridor.

Within the old accustomed place
Where we so oft were wont to be,
Kneeling She prays, while down her face
The fruitless tears fall silently.

SWITZERLAND

XXI

Rain, wind, and rain. The writhing lake
Scuds to and fro to scape their stroke:
The mountains veil their heads, and make
Of cloud and mist a wintry cloak.

Through where the arching pinewoods make
Dusk cloisters down the mountain side,
The loosened avalanches take
Valeward their way, with death for guide,

And toss their shaggy manes and fling
To air their foam and tawny froth,
From ledge and precipice bound and spring,
With hungry roar and deepening wrath;

Till, hamlet homes and orchards crushed,
And, rage for further ravin stayed,
They slumber, satiated, husht,
Upon the ruins they have made.

I rise from larch-log hearth, and, lone,
Gaze on the spears of serried rain,
That faster, nigher, still are blown,
Then stream adown the window pane.

The peasant's goatskin garments drip,
As home he wends with lowered head,
Shakes off the drops from lid and lip,
Then slinks within his ch  let shed.

The cattle bells sound dull and hoarse,
The boats rock idly by the shore;
Only the swollen torrents course
With faster feet and fuller roar.

Mournful, I shape a mournful song,
And ask the heavens, but ask in vain,
``How long, how long?" Ah! not so long
As, in my heart, rain, wind, and rain.

XXII

I ask the dark, the dawn, the sun,
The domeward-pointing peaks of snow,
Lofty and low alike, but none
Will tell me what I crave to know.

My mind demands, `` Whence, Whither, Why?"
From mountain slope and green defile,
And wait the answer. The reply-
A far-off irresponsive smile.

I ask the stars, when mortals sleep,
The pensive moon, the lonely winds;
But, haply if they know, they keep
The secret of secluded minds.

Shall I in vain, then, strive to find,
Straining towards merely fancied goal?
Where in the lily lurks the mind,
Where in the rose discern the soul?

More mindless still, stream, pasture, lake,
The mountains yet more heartless seem,
And life's unceasing quest and ache
Only a dream within a dream.

We know no more, though racked with thought
Than he who, in yon chalet born,
Gives not the riddle, Life, a thought,
But lays him down and sleeps till morn.

Sometimes he kneels; I cannot kneel,
So suffer from a wider curse
Than Eden's outcasts, for I feel
An exile in the universe.

The rudeness of his birth enures
His limbs to every season's stings,
And, never probing, so endures
The sadness at the heart of things.

When lauwine growls, and thunder swells,
Their far-off clamour sounds to me
But as the noise of clanging bells
Above a silent sanctuary.

It is their silence that appals,
Their aspect motionless that awes,
When searching spirit vainly calls
On the effect to bare the Cause.

I get no answer, near or far;
The mountains, though they soar so high,
And scale the pathless ether, are
No nearer unto God than I.

There dwells nor mystery nor veil
Round the clear peaks no foot hath trod;

I, gazing on their frontage pale,
See but the waning ghost of God.

Is Faith then but a drug for sleep,
And Hope a fondly soothing friend
That bids us, when it sees us weep,
Wait for the End that hath no end?

Then do I hear voice unforgot
Wailing across the distance dim,
``Think, dear! If God existeth not,
Why are you always seeking Him?"

XXIII

Like glowing furnace of the forge,
How the winds rise and roar, as they
Up twisting valley, craggy gorge,
Seek, and still seek, to storm their way;

Then, baffled, up the open slope
With quickening pulses scale and pant,
Indomitably bent to cope
With bristling fronts of adamant.

All through the day resounds the strife,
Then doth at sunset hour subside:
So the fierce passions of our life
Slowly expire at eventide.

By Nature we are ne'er misled;
We see most truly when we dream.
A singer wise was he who said,
``Follow the gleam! Follow the gleam!"

XXIV

I dreamed, last night, again I stood,
Silent, without the village shrine,
While She in modest maidenhood
Left, fondly clasped, her hand in mine.

And, with a face as cerecloth white,
And tears like those that by the bier
Of loved one lost make dim the sight,
She poured her sorrows in mine ear.

``I love your voice, I love your gaze,
But there is something dearer still,
The faith that kneels, the hope that prays,
And bows before the Heavenly Will.

`` Not where hills rise, or torrents roll,
Seek Him, nor yet alone, apart;
He dwells within the troubled soul,
His home is in the human heart.

`` Withal, the peaceful mountains may
'Twixt doubt and yearning end the strife:
So ponder, though you cannot pray,
And think some meaning into life:

`` Nor like to those that cross the main
To wander witless through strange land,
Hearing unmastered tongues, disdain
The speech they do not understand.

`` Firm stands my faith that they who sound
The depths of doubt Faith yet will save:
They are like children playing round
A still remembered mother's grave;

`` Not knowing, when they wax more old,
And somewhat can her vision share,
She will the winding-sheet unfold,
And beckon them to evening prayer."

Then, with my hand betwixt her hands,
She laid her lips upon my brow,
And, as to one who understands,
Said, `` Take once more my vestal vow.

`` No other gaze makes mine to glow,
No other footstep stirs my heart,
To me you only dearer grow,
Dearer and nearer, more apart.

`` Whene'er you come with humble mind,
The little Door stands open wide,
And, bending low, you still will find
Me waiting on the other side."

Her silence woke me. . . . To your breast
Fold me, O sleep! and seal mine ears;
That She may roam through my unrest
Till all my dreams are drenched with tears!

XXV

Why linger longer, subject, here,
Where Nature sits and reigns alone,
Inspiring love not, only fear,
Upon her autocratic throne?

Her edicts are the rigid snow,
The wayward winds, the swaying branch;
She hath no pity to bestow,
Her law the lawless avalanche.

Though soon cascades will bound and sing,
That now but drip with tears of ice,
And upland meadows touched by Spring
Blue gentian blend with edelweiss,

Hence to the Land of youthful dreams,
The Land that taught me all I know.
Farewell, lone mountain-peaks and streams;
Yet take my thanks before I go.

You gave me shelter when I fled,
But sternly bade me stem my tears,
Nor aimless roam with rustling tread
'Mong fallen leaves of fruitless years.

ITALY

XXVI

Upon the topmost wheel-track steep,
The parting of two nations' ways,
Athwart stone cross engraven deep,
The name ``Italia'' greets the gaze!

I trembled, when I saw it first,
With joy, my boyish longings fed,
The headspring of my constant thirst,
The altar of my pilgrim tread.

Now once again the magic word,
So faintly borne to Northern home,
Sounds like a silvery trumpet heard
Beneath some universal dome.

The forests soften to a smile,
A smile the very mountains wear,
Through mossy gorge and grassed defile
Torrents race glad and debonair.

From casement, balcony and door,
Hang golden gourds, droops tear-tipped vine,
And sun-bronzed faces bask before
Thin straw-swathed flasks of last year's wine.

Unyoked, the patient sleek-skinned steers
Take, like their lords, no heed of time.
Hark! now the evening star appears,

Ave Maria belfries chime.

The maidens knit, and glance, and sing,
With glowing gaze 'neath ebon tress,
And, like to copse-buds sunned by Spring,
Seem burgeoning into tenderness.

On waveless lake where willows weep,
The Borromean Islands rest
As motionless as babe asleep
Upon a slumbering Mother's breast.

O Land of sunshine, song, and Love!
Whether thy children reap or sow,
Of Love they chant on hills above,
Of Love they sing in vale below.

But what avail the love-linked hands,
And love-lit eyes, to them that roam
Passionless through impassioned lands,
Since they have left their heart at home!

XXVII

Among my dreams, now known as dreams
In this my reawakened life,
I thought that by historic streams,
Apart from stress, aloof from strife,

By rugged paths that twist and twine
Through olive slope and chesnut wood
Upward to mediaeval shrine,
Or high conventual brotherhood,

Along the mountain-curtained track
Round peaceful lake where wintry bands
Halt briefly but to bivouac
Ere blustering on to Northern lands;-

Through these, through all I first did see,
With me to share my raptures none,
That nuptialled Monica would be
My novice and companion:

That we should float from mere to mere,
And sleep within some windless cove,
With nightingales to lull the ear,
From ilex wood and orange grove;

Linger at hamlets lost to fame,
That still wise-wandering feet beguile,
To gaze on frescoed wall or frame

Lit by Luini's gracious smile.

Now, but companioned by my pain,
Among each well-remembered scene
I can but let my Fancy feign
The happiness that might have been;

Imagine that I hear her voice,
Imagine that I feel her hand,
And I, enamoured guide, rejoice
To see her swift to understand.

Alack! Imagination might
As lief with rustic Virgil roam,
Reverent, or, welcomed guest, alight
At Pliny's philosophic home;

Hear one majestically trace
Rome's world-wide sway from wattled wall,
And read upon the other's face
The omens of an Empire's fall.

XXVIII

Like moonlight seen through forest leaves,
She shines upon me from afar,
What time men reap the ripened sheaves,
And Heaven rains many a falling star.

I gaze up to her lofty height,
And feel how far we dwell apart:
O if I could, this night, this night,
Fold her full radiance to my heart!

But She in Heaven, and I on earth,
Still journey on, but each alone;
She, maiden Queen of sacred birth,
Who with no consort shares her throne.

XXIX

What if She ever thought She saw
The self within myself prefer
Communion with the silent awe
Of far-off mountains more than Her;

That Nature hath the mobile grace
To make life with our moods agree,
And so had grown the Loved One's face,
Since it nor checked nor chided me;

Or from the tasks that irk and tire

I sought for comfort from the Muse,
Because it grants the mind's desire
All that familiar things refuse.

How vain such thought! The face, the form,
Of mountain summits but express,
Clouded or clear, in sun or storm,
Feebly Her spirit's loftiness.

Did I explore from pole to pole,
In Nature's aspect I should find
But faint reflections of Her soul,
Dim adumbrations of Her mind.

O come and test with lake, with stream,
With mountain, which the stronger be,
Thou, my divinest dearest dream,
My Muse, and more than Muse, to me!

XXX

They tell me that Jehovah speaks
In silent grove, on lonely strand,
And summit of the mountain peaks;
Yet there I do not understand.

The stars, disdainful of my thought,
Majestic march toward their goal,
And to my nightly watch have brought
No explanation to my soul.

The truth I seek I cannot find,
In air or sky, on land or sea;
If the hills have their secret mind,
They will not yield it up to me:

Like one who lost mid lonely hills
Still seeks but cannot find his way,
Since guide is none save winding rills,
That seem themselves, too, gone astray.

And so from rise to set of sun,
At glimmering dawn, in twilight haze,
I but behold the face of One
Who veils her face, and weeps, and prays.

What know I that She doth not know?
What I know not, She understands:
With heavenly gifts She overflows,
While I have only empty hands.

O weary wanderer! Best forego

This questioning of wind and wave.
For you the sunshine and the snow,
The womb, the cradle, and the grave.

XXXI

How blest, when organ concords swell,
And anthems are intoned, are they
Who neither reason nor rebel,
But meekly bow their heads and pray.

And such the peasants mountain-bred,
Who hail to-day with blithe accord
Her Feast Who to the Angel said,
`` Behold the Handmaid of the Lord!''

Downward they wind from pastoral height,
Or hamlet grouped round shattered towers,
To wend to shrine more richly dight,
And bring their gift of wilding flowers;

Their gifts, their griefs, their daily needs,
And lay these at Her statue's base,
Who never, deem they, intercedes
Vainly before the Throne of Grace.

Shall I, because I stand apart,
A stranger to their pious vows,
Scorn their humility of heart
That pleads before the Virgin Spouse,

Confiding that the Son will ne'er,
If in His justice wroth with them,
Refuse to harken to Her prayer
Who suckled Him in Bethlehem?

Of all the intercessors born
By man's celestial fancy, none
Hath helped the sorrowing, the forlorn,
Lowly and lone, as She hath done.

The maiden faithful to Her shrine
Bids demons of temptation flee,
And mothers fruitful as the vine
Retain their vestal purity.

Too trustful love, by lust betrayed,
And by cold worldlings unforgiven,
Unto Her having wept and prayed,
Faces its fate, consoled and shriven.

The restless, fiercely probing mind
No honey gleans, though still it stings.
What comfort doth the spirit find
In Reason's endless reasonings?

They have no solace for my grief,
Compassion none for all my pain:
They toss me like the fluttering leaf,
And leave me to the wind and rain.

XXXII

If Conscience be God's Law to Man,
Then Conscience must perforce arraign
Whatever falls beneath the ban
Of that allotted Suzerain.

And He, who bids us not to swerve,
Whither the wayward passions draw,
From its stern sanctions, must observe
The limits of the self-same Law.

Yet, if obedient Conscience scan
The sum of wrongs endured and done
Neither by act nor fault of Man,
They rouse it to rebellion.

Life seems of life by life bereft
Through some immitigable curse,
And Man sole moral being left
In a non-moral Universe.

My Conscience would my Will withstand,
Did Will project a world like this:
Better Eternal vacuum still,
Than murder, lust, and heartlessness!

If Man makes Conscience, then being good
Is only being worldly wise,
And universal brotherhood
A comfortable compromise.

O smoke of War! O blood-steeped sod!
O groans of fratricidal strife!
Who will explain the ways of God,
That I may be at peace with life!

The moral riddle 'tis that haunts,
Primeval and unending curse,
Racking the mind when pulpit vaunts
A Heaven-created Universe.

Yet whence came Life, and how begin?
Rolleth the globe by choice or chance?
Dear Lord! Why longer shut me in
This prison-house of ignorance!

FLORENCE

XXXIII

City acclaimed ere Dante's days
Fair, and baptized in field of flowers,
Once more I scan with tender gaze
Your glistening domes, your storied towers.

I feel as if long years had flown
Since first with eager heart I came,
And, girdled by your mountain zone,
Found you yet fairer than your fame.

It was the season purple-sweet
When figs are plump, and grapes are pressed,
And all your sons with following feet
Bore a dead Poet to final rest.

You seemed to fling your gates ajar,
And softly lead me by the hand,
Saying, "Behold! henceforth you are
No stranger in the Tuscan land."

And though no love my love can wean
From native crag and cradling sea,
Yet Florence from that hour hath been
More than a foster-nurse to me.

When mount I terraced slopes arrayed
In bridal bloom of peach and pear,
While under olive's phantom shade
Lupine and beanflower scent the air,

The wild-bees hum round golden bay,
The green frog sings on fig-tree bole,
And, see! down daisy-whitened way
Come the slow steers and swaying pole.

The fresh-pruned vine-stems, curving, bend
Over the peaceful wheaten spears,
And with the glittering sunshine blend
Their transitory April tears.

O'er wall and trellis trailed and wound,
Hang roses blushing, roses pale;
And, hark! what was that silvery sound?
The first note of the nightingale.

Curtained, I close my lids and dream
Of Beauty seen not but surmised,
And, lulled by scent and song, I seem
Immortally imparadised.

When from the deep sweet swoon I wake
And gaze past slopes of grape and grain,
Where Arno, like some lonely lake,
Silters the far-off seaward plain,

I see celestial sunset fires
That lift us from this earthly leaven,
And darkly silent cypress spires
Pointing the way from hill to Heaven.

Then something more than mortal steals
Over the wavering twilight air,
And, messenger of nightfall, peals
From each crowned peak a call to prayer.

And now the last meek prayer is said,
And, in the hallowed hush, there is
Only a starry dome o'erhead,
Propped by columnar cypresses.

XXXIV

Re-roaming through this palaced town,
I suddenly, 'neath grim-barred pile,
Catch sight of Dante's awful frown,
Or Leonardo's mystic smile;

Then, swayed by memory's fancy, stroll
To where from May-day's flaming pyre
Savonarola's austere soul
Went up to Heaven in tongues of fire;

Or Buonarroti's plastic hand
Made marble block from Massa's steep
Dawn into Day at his command,
Then plunged it into Night and Sleep.

No later wanderings can dispel
The glamour of the bygone years;
And, through the streets I know so well,
I scarce can see my way for tears.

XXXV

A sombre shadow seems to fall
On comely altar, transept fair;
The saints are still on frescoed wall,
But who comes thither now for prayer?

Men throng from far-off stranger land,
To stare, to wonder, not to kneel,
With map and guide-book in their hand
To tell them what to think and feel.

They scan, they prate, they marvel why
The figures still expressive glow,
Oblivious they were painted by
Adoring Frà Angelico.

Did Dante from his tomb afar
Return, his wrongs redressed at last,
And see you, Florence, as you are,
Half alien to your gracious Past,

Finding no Donatello now,
No reverent Giotto 'mong the quick,
To glorify ascetic vow
Of Francis or of Dominic;

Self-exiled by yet sterner fate
Than erst, he would from wandering cease,
And, ringing at monastic gate,
Plead, "I am one who craves for peace."

And what he sought but ne'er could find,
Shall I, less worthy, hope to gain,
The freedom of the tranquil mind,
The lordship over loss and pain?

More than such peace I found when I
Did first, in unbound youth, repair
To Tuscan shrine, Ausonian sky.
I found it, for I brought it there.

XXXVI

Yet Art brings peace, itself is Peace,
And, as I on these frescoes gaze,
I feel all fretful tumults cease
And harvest calm of mellow days.

For Soul too hath its seasons. Time,
That leads Spring, Summer, Autumn, round,
Makes our ephemeral passions chime
With something permanent and profound.

And, as in Nature, April oft
Strives to revert to wintry hours,
But shortly upon garth and croft
Re-sheds warm smiles and moistening showers,

Or, for one day, will Autumn wear
The gayer garments of the Spring,
And then athwart the wheatfields bare
Again her graver shadows fling;

So, though the Soul hath moods that veer,
And seem to hold no Rule in awe,
Like the procession of the year,
It too obeys the sovran Law.

Nor Art itself brings settled peace,
Until the mind is schooled to know
That gusts subside and tumults cease
Only in sunset's afterglow.

Life's contradictions vanish then,
Husht thought replacing clashing talk
Among the windy ways of men.
'Tis in the twilight Angels walk.

ROME

XXXVII

The last warm gleams of sunset fade
From cypress spire and stonepine dome,
And, in the twilight's deepening shade,
Lingering, I scan the wrecks of Rome.

Husht the Madonna's Evening Bell;
The steers lie loosed from wain and plough;
The vagrant monk is in his cell,
The meek nun-novice cloistered now.

Pedant's presumptuous voice no more
Vexes the spot where Caesar trod,
And o'er the pavement's soundless floor
Come banished priest and exiled God.

The lank-ribbed she-wolf, couched among

The regal hillside's tangled scrubs,
With dotting gaze and fondling tongue
Suckles the Vestal's twin-born cubs.

Yet once again Evander leads
Æneas to his wattled home,
And, throned on Tiber's fresh-cut reeds,
Talks of burnt Troy and rising Rome.

From out the tawny dusk one hears
The half-feigned scream of Sabine maids,
The rush to arms, then swift the tears
That separate the clashing blades.

The Lictors with their fasces throng
To quell the Commons' rising roar,
As Tullia's chariot flames along,
Splashed with her murdered father's gore.

Her tresses free from band or comb,
Love-dimpled Venus, lithe and tall,
And fresh as Fiumicino's foam,
Mounts her pentelic pedestal.

With languid lids, and lips apart,
And curving limbs like wave half-furled,
Unarmed she dominates the heart,
And without sceptre sways the world.

Nerved by her smile, avenging Mars
Stalks through the Forum's fallen fanes,
Or, changed of mien and healed of scars,
Threads sylvan slopes and vineyard plains.

With waves of song from wakening lyre
Apollo routs the wavering night,
While, parsley-crowned, the white-robed choir
Wind chanting up the Sacred Height,

Where Jove, with thunder-garlands wreathed,
And crisp locks frayed like fretted foam,
Sits with his lightnings half unsheathed,
And frowns against the foes of Rome.

You cannot kill the Gods. They still
Reclaim the thrones where once they reigned,
Rehaunt the grove, remount the rill,
And renovate their rites profaned.

Diana's hounds still lead the chase,
Still Neptune's Trident crests the sea,
And still man's spirit soars through space

On feathered heels of Mercury.

No flood can quench the Vestals' Fire;
The Flamen's robes are still as white
As ere the Salii's armoured choir
Were drowned by droning anchorite.

The saint may seize the siren's seat,
The shaveling frown where frisked the Faun;
Ne'er will, though all beside should fleet,
The Olympian Presence be withdrawn.

Here, even in the noontide glare,
The Gods, recumbent, take their ease;
Go look, and you will find them there,
Slumbering behind some fallen frieze.

But most, when sunset glow hath paled,
And come, as now, the twilight hour,
In vesper vagueness dimly veiled
I feel their presence and their power.

What though their temples strew the ground,
And to the ruin owls repair,
Their home, their haunt, is all around;
They drive the cloud, they ride the air.

And, when the planets wend their way
Along the never-ageing skies,
``Revere the Gods'' I hear them say;
``The Gods are old, the Gods are wise.''

Build as man may, Time gnaws and peers
Through marble fissures, granite rents;
Only Imagination rears
Imperishable monuments.

Let Gaul and Goth pollute the shrine,
Level the altar, fire the fane:
There is no razing the Divine;
The Gods return, the Gods remain.

XXXVIII

Christ is arisen. The place wherein
They laid Him shows but cerements furled,
And belfry answers belfry's din
To ring the tidings round the world.

Grave Hierarchs come, an endless band,
In jewelled mitre, cope embossed,

Who bear Rome's will to every land
In all the tongues of Pentecost.

Majestic, along marble floor,
Walk Cardinals in blood-red robe,
Martyrs for Faith and Christ no more,
Who gaze as though they ruled the globe.

With halberds bare and doublets slashed,
Emblems that war will never cease,
Come martial guardians, unabashed,
And march afront the Prince of Peace.

Then, in his gestatorial Chair
See Christ's vicegerent, bland, benign,
To crowds all prostrate as in prayer
Lean low, and make the Holy Sign.

Then trumpets shrill, and organ peals,
Throughout the mighty marble pile,
Whileas a myriad concourse kneels
In dense-packed nave and crowded aisle.

Hark to the sudden hush! Aloft
From unseen source in empty dome
Swells prayerful music silvery-soft,
Borne from far-off celestial Home.

Then, when the solemn rite is done,
The worshippers stream out to where
Dance fountains glittering in the sun,
While expectation fills the air.

Now on high balcony He stands,
And-save for the Colonna curse,-
Blesses with high-uplifted hands
The City and the Universe.

Christ is arisen! But scarce as when,
On the third day of death and gloom,
Came ever-loving Magdalen
With tears and spices to His tomb.

XXXIX

The Tiber winds its sluggish way
Through niggard tracts whence Rome's command
Once cast the shadow of her sway,
O'er Asian city, Afric sand.

Nor even yet doth She resign

Her sceptre. Still the spell is hers,
Though she may seem a rifled shrine
'Mid circumjacent sepulchres.

One after one, they came, they come,
Gaul, Goth, Savoy, to work their will;
She answers, when She most seems dumb,
`` I wore the Crown, I wear it still.

`` From Jove I first received the gift,
I from Jehovah wear it now,
Nor shall profane invader lift
The diadem from off my brow.

`` The Past is mine, and on the Past
The Future builds; and Time will rear
The next strong structure on the last,
Where men behold but shattered tier.

`` The Teuton hither hies to teach,
To prove, disprove, to delve and probe.
Fool! Pedant! Does he think to reach
The deep foundations of the globe?"

For me, I am content to tread
On Sabine dust and Gothic foe.
Leave me to deepening silent dread
Of vanished Empire's afterglow.

In this Imperial wilderness
Why rashly babble and explore?
O, let me know a little less,
So I may feel a little more!

XL

For upward of one thousand years,
Here men and women prayed to Jove,
With smiles and incense, gifts and tears,
In secret shrine, or civic grove;

And, when Jove did not seem to heed,
Sought Juno's mediatorial power,
Or begged fair Venus intercede
And melt him in his amorous hour.

Sages invoked Minerva's might;
The Poet, ere he struck the lyre,
Prayed to the God of Song and Light
To touch the strings with hallowed fire.

With flaming herbs were altars smoked
Sprinkled with blood and perfumed must,
And gods and goddesses invoked
To second love or sanction lust.

And did they hear and heed the prayer,
Or, through that long Olympian reign,
Were they divinities of air
Begot of man's fantastic brain?

In Roman halls their statues still
Serenely stand, but no one now
Ascends the Capitolian Hill,
To render thanks, or urge the vow.

Through now long centuries hath Rome
Throned other God, preached other Creed,
That here still have their central home,
And feed man's hope, content his need.

Against these, too, will Time prevail?
No! Let whatever gestates, be,
Secure will last the tender tale
From Bethlehem to Calvary.

Throughout this world of pain and loss,
Man ne'er will cease to bend his knee
To Crown of Thorns, to Spear, to Cross,
And Doorway of Humility.

XLI

If Reason be the sole safe guide
In man implanted from above,
Why crave we for one only face,
Why consecrate the name of Love?

Faces there are no whit less fair,
Yet ruddier lip, more radiant eye,
Same rippling smile, same auburn hair,
But not for us. Say, Reason, why.

Why bound our hearts when April pied
Comes singing, or when hawthorn blows?
Doth logic in the lily hide,
And where's the reason in the rose?

Why weld our keels and launch our ships,
If Reason urge some wiser part,
Kiss England's Flag with dying lips
And fold its glories to the heart?

In this gross world we touch and see,
If Reason be no trusty guide,
For world unseen why should it be
The sole explorer justified?

The homing swallow knows its nest,
Sure curves the comet to its goal,
Instinct leads Autumn to its rest,
And why not Faith the homing soul?

Is Reason so aloof, aloft,
It doth not 'gainst itself rebel,
And are not Reason's reasonings oft
By Reason proved unreasonable?

He is perplexed no more, who prays,
``Hail, Mary Mother, full of grace!"
O drag me from Doubt's endless maze,
And let me see my Loved One's face!

XLII

``Upon this rock!" Yet even here
Where Christian God ousts Pagan wraith,
Rebellious Reason whets its spear,
And smites upon the shield of Faith.

On sacred mount, down seven-hilled slopes,
Fearless it faces foe and friend,
Saying to man's immortal hopes,
``Whatso began, perforce must end."

Not men alone, but gods too, die;
Fanes are, like hearths, left bare and lone;
This earth will into fragments fly,
And Heaven itself be overthrown.

Why then should Man immortal be?
He is but fleeting form, to fade,
Like momentary cloud, or sea
Of waves dispersed as soon as made.

Yet if 'tis Force, not Form, survives,
Meseems therein that one may find
Some comfort for distressful lives;
For, if Force ends not, why should Mind?

Is Doubt more forceful than Belief?
The doctor's cap than friar's cowl?
O ripeness of the falling leaf!

O wisdom of the moping owl!

Man's Mind will ever stand apart
From Science, save this have for goal
The evolution of the heart,
And sure survival of the Soul.

XLIII

The Umbilicum lonely stands
Where once rose porch and vanished dome;
But he discerns who understands
That every road may lead to Rome.

Enthroned in Peter's peaceful Chair,
The spiritual Caesar sways
A wider Realm of earth and air
Than trembled at Octavian's gaze.

His universal arms embrace
The saint, the sinner, and the sage,
And proffer refuge, comfort, grace
To tribulation's pilgrimage.

Here scientific searchers find
Precursors for two thousand years,
Who in a drouthy world divined
Fresh springs for human doubts and fears.

Here fair chaste Agnes veils her face
From prowlers of the sensual den,
And pity, pardon, and embrace
Await repentant Magdalen.

Princess and peasant-mother wend
To self-same altar, self-same shrine,
And Cardinal and Patriarch bend
Where lepers kneel, and beggars whine.

And is there then, in my distress,
No road, no gate, no shrine, for me?
The answer comes, ``Yes, surely, yes!
The Doorway of Humility."''

O rival Faiths! O clamorous Creeds!
Would you but hush your strife in prayer,
And raise one Temple for our needs,
Then, then, we all might worship there.

But dogma new with dogma old
Clashes to soothe the spirit's grief,

And offer to the unconsoled
Polyglot Babel of Belief!

XLIV

The billows roll, and rise, and break,
Around me; fixedly shine the stars
In clear dome overhead, and take
Their course, unheeding earthly jars.

Yet if one's upward gaze could be
But stationed where the planets are,
The star were restless as the sea,
The sea be tranquil as the star.

Hollowed like cradle, then like grave,
Now smoothly curved, now shapeless spray,
Withal the undirected wave
Forms, and reforms, and knows its way.

Then, waters, bear me on where He,
Ere death absolved at Christian font,
Removed Rome's menaced majesty
Eastward beyond the Hellespont.

Foreseeing not what Fate concealed,
But Time's caprice would there beget,
That Cross would unto Crescent yield,
Caesar and Christ to Mahomet.

Is it then man's predestined state
To search for, ne'er to find, the Light?
Arise, my Star, illuminate
These empty spaces of the Night!

XLV

Last night I heard the cuckoo call
Among the moist green glades of home,
And in the Chase around the Hall
Saw the May hawthorn flower and foam.

Deep in the wood where primrose stars
Paled before bluebell's dazzling reign,
The nightingale's sad sobbing bars
Rebuked the merle's too joyful strain.

The kine streamed forth from stall and byre,
The foal frisked round its mother staid,
The meads, by sunshine warmed, took fire,

And lambs in pasture, bleating, played.

The uncurbed rivulets raced to where
The statelier river curled and wound,
And trout, of human step aware,
Shot through the wave without a sound.

Adown the village street, as clear
As in one's wakeful mid-day hours,
Beheld I Monica drawing near,
Her vestal lap one crib of flowers.

Lending no look to me, she passed
By the stone path, as oft before,
Between old mounds Spring newly grassed,
And entered through the Little Door.

Led by her feet, I hastened on,
But, ere my feverish steps could get
To the low porch, lo! Morning shone
On Moslem dome and minaret!

CONSTANTINOPLE

XLVI

Now Vesper brings the sunset hour,
And, where crusading Knighthood trod,
Muezzin from his minaret tower
Proclaims, ``There is no God but God!''

Male God who shares his godhead with
No Virgin Mother's sacred tear,
But finds on earth congenial kith
In wielders of the sword and spear:

Male God who on male lust bestows
The ruddy lip, the rounded limb,
And promises, at battle's close,
Houri, not saint nor seraphim.

Swift through the doubly-guarded stream,
Shoots the caïque 'neath oarsmen brisk,
While from its cushioned cradle gleam
The eyes of yashmaked odalisque.

Unchanged adown the changing years,
Here where the Judas blossoms blaze,
Against Sophia's marble piers
The scowling Muslim lean and gaze;

And still at sunset's solemn hour,
Where Christ's devout Crusader trod,
Defiant from the minaret's tower
Proclaim, ``There is no God but God!"

XLVII

Three rival Rituals. One revered
In that loved English hamlet where,
With flowers in Vicarage garden reared,
She decks the altar set for prayer:

Another, where majestic Rome,
With fearless Faith and flag unfurled
'Gainst Doubt's ephemeral wave and foam,
Demands obedience from the world.

The third, where now I stand, and where
Two hoary Continents have met,
And Islam guards from taint and tare
Monistic Creed of Mahomet.

Yet older than all three, but banned
To suffer still the exile's doom
From shrine where Turkish sentries stand,
And Christians wrangle round Christ's tomb.

Where then find Creed, divine or dead,
All may embrace, and none contemn?-
Remember Who it was that said,
``Not here, nor at Jerusalem!"

ATHENS

XLVIII

To Acrocorinth's brow I climb,
And, lulled in retrospective bliss,
Descry, as through the mists of time,
Faintly the far Acropolis.

Below me, rivers, mountains, vales,
Wide stretch of ancient Hellas lies:
Symbol of Song that never fails,
Parnassus communes with the skies.

I linger, dream-bound by the Past,
Till sundown joins time's deep abyss,
Then skirt, through shadows moonlight-cast,

Lone strand of sailless Salamis,

Until Eleusis gleams through dawn,
Where, though a suppliant soul I come,
The veil remains still unwithdrawn,
And all the Oracles are dumb.

So onward to the clear white Light,
Where, though the worshippers be gone,
Abides on unmysterious height
The calm unquestioning Parthenon.

Find I, now there I stand at last,
That naked Beauty, undraped Truth,
Can satisfy our yearnings vast,
The doubts of age, the dreams of youth;

That, while we ask, in futile strife,
From altar, tripod, fount, or well,
Form is the secret soul of life,
And Art the only Oracle;

That Hera and Athena, linked
With Aphrodite, hush distress,
And, in their several gifts distinct,
Withal are Triune Goddesses?

That mortal wiser then was He
Who gave the prize to Beauty's smile,
Divides his gifts among the Three,
And thuswise baffles Discord's guile?

But who is wise? The nobler twain,
Who the restraining girdle wear,
Contend too often all in vain
With sinuous curve and frolic hair.

Just as one sees in marble, still,
Pan o'er Apollo's shoulder lean,
Suggesting to the poet's quill
The sensual note, the hint obscene.

Doth then the pure white Light grow dim,
And must it be for ever thus?
Listen! I hear a far-off Hymn,
Veni, Creator, Spiritus!

XLIX

The harvest of Hymettus drips
As sweet as when the Attic bees

Swarmed round the honey-laden lips
Of heavenly-human Sophocles.

The olives are as green in grove
As in the days the poets bless,
When Pallas with Poseidon strove
To be the City's Patroness.

The wine-hued main, white marble frieze,
Dome of blue ether over all,
One still beholds, but nowhere sees
Panathenaic Festival.

O'erhead, no Zeus or frowns or nods,
Olympus none in air or skies;
Below, a sepulchre of Gods,
And tombs of dead Divinities.

Yet, are they dead? Still stricken blind,
Tiresiaslike, are they that see,
With bold uncompromising mind,
Wisdom in utter nudity;

Experiencing a kindred fate
With the First Parents of us all,
Jehovah thrust through Eden's Gate,
When Knowledge brought about their Fall.

Hath Aphrodite into foam,
Whence She first flowered, sunk back once more,
And doth She nowhere find a home,
Or worship, upon Christian shore?

Her shrine is in the human breast,
To find her none need soar or dive.
Goodness or Loveliness our quest,
The ever-helpful Gods survive.

Hellas retorts, when Hebrew gibes
At Gods of levity and lust,
"God of Judaea's wandering tribes
Was jealous, cruel, and unjust."

Godhead, withal, remains the same,
And Art embalms its symbols still;
As Poets, when athirst for Fame,
Still dream of Aganippe's rill.

L

Why still pursue a bootless quest,

And wander heartsore farther East,
Because unanswered, south or west,
By Pagan seer or Christian priest?

Brahma and Buddha, what have they
To offer to my shoreless search?
``Let Contemplation be," they say,
``Your ritual, Nothingness your Church.

``Passion and purpose both forsake,
Echoes from non-existent wall;
We do but dream we are awake,
Ourselves the deepest dream of all.

``We dream we think, feel, touch, and see,
And what these are, still dreaming, guess,
Though there is no Reality
Behind their fleeting semblances."

Thus the East answers my appeal,
Denies, and so illudes, my want.
Alas! Could I but cease to feel,
Brahma should be my Hierophant.

But, hampered by my Western mind,
I cannot set the Spirit free
From Matter, but Illusion find,
Of all, the most illusory.

DELPHI

LI

The morning mists that hid the bay
And curtained mountains fast asleep,
Begin to feel the touch of day,
And roll from off both wave and steep.

In floating folds they curve and rise,
Then slowly melt and merge in air,
Till high above me glow the skies,
And cloudless sunshine everywhere.

Parnassus wears nor veil nor frown,
Windless the eagle wings his way,
As I from Delphi gaze adown
On Salona and Amphissa.

It was the sovran Sun that drew
Aloft and scattered morning haze,

And now fills all the spacious blue
With its own glorifying rays.

And, no less sovran than the sun,
Imagination brings relief
Of morning light to shadows dun,
To heart's distress, and spirit's grief.

Parnassus boasts no loftier peak
Than Poet's heavenward song; which, though
Harbouring among the sad and weak,
Lifteth aloft man's griefs below.

Though sun-bronzed Phocian maidens lave
Their kerchiefs in Castalia's spring,
The Muses linger round its wave,
And aid the pilgrim sent to sing.

And, listening there, I seem to hear
The unseen Oracle say, `` Be strong:
Subdue the sigh, repress the tear,
And let not sorrow silence Song.

`` You now have learnt enough from pain;
And, if worse anguish lurk behind,
Breathe in it some unselfish strain,
And with grief's wisdom aid your kind.

`` Who but of his own suffering sings,
Is like an eagle, robbed, distressed,
That vainly shrieks and beats its wings,
Because it cannot find its nest.

`` Let male Imagination wed
The orphan, Sorrow, to console
Its virgin liveness, whence are bred
Serenity and self-control.

`` Hence let the classic breezes blow
You to your Land beyond the sea,
That you may make, for others' woe,
Your own a healing melody;

`` To wintry woe no more a slave,
But, having dried your April tears,
Behold a helpful harvest wave
From ridges of the fallow years."

LII

Rebuked thus by the stately Past,

Whose solemn choruses endure
Through voices new and visions vast,
And centuries of sepulture,

Because, serene, it never blinked
At sheen or shadow of the sun,
But Hades and Olympus linked
With Salamis and Marathon;

Which held despondency at bay
And, while revering Fate's decree,
Reconciled with majestic lay
Man to the Human Tragedy;

To Gods of every land I vowed,
Judaea, Hellas, Mecca, Rome,
No more to live by sorrow bowed,
But, wending backward to my home,

Thenceforth to muse on woe more wide
Than individual distress,
The loftier Muses for my guide,
Minerva for my monitress;

Nor yet to scorn the tender aid
Of Christian martyr, virgin, sage,
And, meekly pondering in the shade,
Proffer ripe counsel to my Age.

And, haply, since 'tis Song alone
Can baffle death, and conquer time,
Maiden unborn in days unknown,
Under the leaves of fragrant lime,

Scanning the verse that here is writ,
While cherishing some secret smart
Of love or loss, may glean from it
Some comfort for her weary heart;

And, gently warned, grave minds may own
The world hath more to bear than they,
And, while I dream 'neath mossy stone,
Repeat my name, and love my lay.

LIII

Scarce to the all-indwelling Power
That vow was uttered, ere there came
A messenger in boyhood's flower,
Winged with his search, his face aflame.

From Amphissa he straight had clomb,
Thridding that devious mountain land,
With letter from my far-off home,
And written by my Loved One's hand.

`` Come to me where I drooping lie.
None yet have died of Love, they say:
Withal, I sometimes think that I
Have prayed and sighed my life away.

`` I want your absolution, dear,
For whatso wrong I may have done;
My conscience waneth less severe,
In softness of the setting sun.

`` 'Twas I, 'twas I, far more than you,
That stood in need, as now I see,
Stooping, to enter meekly through
The Doorway of Humility.

`` In vain I turn to Throne of Grace,
Where sorrows cease, and tears are dry;
I fain once more would see your face,
And hear your voice, before I die."

ENGLAND

LIV

The oak logs smoulder on my hearth,
Though round them hums no household talk;
The roses in the garden-garth
Hang mournfully on curving stalk.

My wolf-hound round me leaps and bays,
That wailed lost footsteps when I went:
He little knows the grief that weighs
On my return from banishment.

Half Autumn now, half Summer yet,
For Nature hath a human heart,
It seems as though they, having met,
To take farewell, are loth to part.

The splendour of the Year's decline
Hath not yet come. One still can see
Late honeysuckle intertwine
With Maiden's-Bower and briony.

The bracken-fronds, fast yellowing, tower

From out sere needles of the pine;
Now hawkweed blooms where foxgloves flower,
And bramble where once eglantine.

And, as I wend with hurrying feet
Across the park, along the lane
That leads unto the hamlet street,
And cradle of my bliss and bane,

In cottage plots on either side,
O'er mignonette and fragrant stock
Soar tiger-lilies lithe and tall,
And homely-sheltered hollyhock.

And when I reach the low grey wall
That skirts God's-acre on the hill,
I see, awaiting my recall,
The Little Door stand open still.

A dip, a slight descent, and then
Into the Vicarage Walk I passed;
It seemed as though the tongues of men
Had left it since I saw it last.

Round garden-plot, in westering sun,
Her aged parents slowly stepped:
Her Mother had the face of one
Who oft hath prayed, and oft hath wept.

She wore the silent plaintive grace
Of Autumn just before its close,
And on her slowly fading face
The pathos of November rose.

With pitying gaze and accents kind,
"Go in," she said, "and mount the stair;
And you through open door will find
That Monica awaits you there."

LV

I mounted. At half-open door
Pausing, I softly called her name,
As one would pause and halt before
Heaven's Gateway. But no answer came.

She lies, methought, in Sleep's caress,
So, passing in, I seemed to see,
So saintly white the vision, less
A chamber than a Sanctuary.

Vestured in white, on snow-white bed,
She lay, as dreaming something sweet,
Madonna lilies at her head,
Madonna lilies at her feet.

A thought, I did not dare to speak,-
``Is this the sleep of life or death?"
And, with my cheek against her cheek,
Listening, I seemed to hear her breath.

'Twas Love's last blindness not to see
Her sinless soul had taken wing
Unto the Land, if such there be,
Where saints adore, and Seraphs sing.

And yet I felt within my heart,
Though lids were closed and lips were dumb,
That, for Love's sake, her soul in part
Had lingered here, till I should come.

I kissed her irresponsive hand,
I laid my lips on her cold brow,
That She, like me, should understand
'Twas thus I sealed our nuptial vow.

And then I saw upon her breast
A something writ, she fain had said
Had I been near, to me addressed,
Which, kneeling down, I took and read.

LVI

``I prayed I might prolong my years
Till you could come and hush my sighs,
And dry my penitential tears;
But Heaven hath willed it otherwise:

``That I may expiate the wrong
By me inflicted on us both,
When, yet Love's novice, feebly strong,
I sinned against Love's sovran troth.

``Now Death, the mirror unto Life,
Shows me that nought should keep apart
Those who, though sore perplexed by strife
'Twixt Faith and Doubt, are one in heart.

``For Doubt is one with Faith when they,
Who doubt, for Truth's sake suffering live;
And Faith meanwhile should hope and pray,
Withholding not what Love can give.

`` We lead the blind by voice and hand,
And not by light they cannot see;
We are not framed to understand
The How and Why of such as He,

`` But natured only to rejoice
At every sound or sign of hope,
And, guided by the still small voice,
In patience through the darkness grope;

`` Until our finer sense expands,
And we exchange for holier sight
The earthly help of voice and hands,
And in His light behold the Light.

`` Had my poor Love but been more wise,
I should have ta'en you to my breast,
Striving to hush your plaintive cries,
And rock your Reason back to rest.

`` But, though alone you now must tread
Where we together should have trod,
In loneliness you may be led,
Through faith in me, to Faith in God.

`` With tranquil purpose, fervent mind,
Foster, while you abide on earth,
And humbly proffer to your kind,
The gift assigned to you at birth.

`` As in the far-off boyish year
When did your singing voice awake,
Disinterestedly revere
And love it for its own great sake.

`` And when life takes autumnal hues,
With fervent reminiscence woo
All the affections of the Muse,
And write the poem lived by you.

`` And should, until your days shall end,
You still the lyric voice retain,
With its seductive music blend
A graver note, a loftier strain.

`` While buoyant youth and manhood strong
Follow where Siren sounds entice,
The Deities of Love and Song,
Rapture and loveliness, suffice.

`` But when decay, and pain, and loss,

Remind one of the Goal forgot,
And we in turn must bear the Cross,
The Pagan Gods can help us not.

`` Nor need you then seek, far and near,
More sumptuous shrines on alien strand,
But with domestic mind revere
The Ritual of your native Land.

`` The Little Door stands open wide,
And, if you meekly pass therethrough,
Though I no longer kneel inside,
I shall be hovering near to you.

`` Farewell! till you shall learn the whole
Of what we here but see in part.
Now I to God commend my soul,
And unto you I leave my heart."

LVII

I wended up the slope once more
To where the Church stands lone and still,
And passed beneath the Little Door,
My will the subject of Her will.

The sunset rays through pictured pane
Fell, fretted into weft and woof,
On transept, nave, and aisle, to wane
On column cold and vaulted roof.

Within the carven altar screen
Were lilies tall, and white, and fair,
So like to those I late had seen,
It seemed She must be sleeping there.

Mutely I knelt, with bended brow
And shaded eyes, but heart intent,
To learn, should any teach me now,
What Life, and Love, and Sorrow meant.

And there remained until the shroud
Of dusk foretold the coming night;
And then I rose, and prayed aloud,
`` Let there be Light! Let there be Light!"

Alfred Austin

The Dregs Of Love

Think you that I will drain the dregs of Love,
I who have quaffed the sweetness on its brink?
Now by the steadfast burning stars above,
Better to faint of thirst than thuswise drink.
What! shall we twain who saw love's glorious fires
Flame toward the sky and flush Heaven's self with light,
Crouch by the embers as the glow expires,
And huddle closer from mere dread of night?
No! cast love's goblet in oblivion's well,
Scatter love's ashes o'er the field of time!
Yet, ere we part, one kiss whereon to dwell
When life sounds senseless as some feeble rhyme.
Lo! as lips touch, anew Love's cresset glows,
And Love's sweet cup refills and overflows.

Alfred Austin

The Evening Light

I

Angels their silvery trumpets blow,
At dawn, to greet the Morning Glow,
And mortals lift adoring eyes
To see the glorious sun arise.
Then, winged by Faith, and spurred by Hope
Youth scans the hill, youth scales the slope.
Its pulses bound, its thoughts exult,
It finds no danger difficult,
Quickens its pace, disdainng ease
Victor before it comes and sees,
Feeling the Universe its own,
The Sovereign of a Self-made Throne.

II

Each hope fulfilled, obtained each prayer,
We glory in the Noonday Glare.
Welcome the blinding heat of strife,
Deeming resistance part of life.
We deal the blow, return the stroke,
Fighting our way through dust and smoke,
Until, our battle-banner furled,
We tower above a conquered World;
Whether one leads mankind along
By gift of speech or grace of song,
Seizes by forceful hand the helm,
Or adds an Empire to the Realm,
Confronts the sun with forehead bare,
Exulting in the Noonday Glare.

III

But, as the lengthening shadows glide
Silent towards the eventide,
And dew baptizes leaf and flower
In twilight's sanctuary hour,
A sacred Something haunts the air,
Tender as love, devout as prayer,
And in the lofty dome afar
Glimmers one bright outriding star,
Announcing to the watchful sight
Coming battalions of the Night.
Then Noonday Glare and Morning Glow
Fade into shadowy Long-ago.
One feels Earth's vain ambitions fade
Into the vanished dust they made.

All that the glow of dawn foretold,
And all the glare of noon unrolled,
Seem nothing to the quiet joy
No clamour mars, no cares destroy,
'Twixt restless day and restful night,
That cometh with the Evening Light.

Alfred Austin

The Fallen Elm

The popinjay screamed from tree to tree,
Then was lost in the burnished leaves;
The sky was as blue as a southern sea,
And the swallow came back to the eaves.

So I followed the sound of pipe and bleat
To the glade where my dear old Elm,
With head majestic and massive feet,
Rules over a grassy realm.

When lo! where it once rose, robed and crowned,
Was naught but the leafless air:
Its limbs were low on the dinted ground,
And its body lay stripped and bare.

Then I sate on the prostrate trunk, and thought
Of the times that I there had strayed
From the clamour and strife of tongues, and sought
The peace of its silent shade;

And, with none anear save the browsing beeves,
Had lain and refreshed my soul
With the maiden grace of its waving leaves,
And the strength of its manly bole.

And I said, ` Never more will the truant wind
Sit and swing in your lissom boughs;
Never more in your branches the ringdove find
A nook for its nuptial vows.

` Ne'er again will the thrifty squirrel store
In your hollows its wintry food,
And, unseen, in your rotted gnarls no more
Will the woodpecker hatch its brood.

` When the cuckoo and nightingale voice in parts
May's madrigal loud and clear,
And the kingfisher dives and the dragonfly darts,
You will neither feel nor hear.

` Nor will swain and his sweet, when the wain's in the shed,
And the shadows stretch long and dark,
Make tender tryst at your foot, and wed
Their names on your fluted bark.

` The seasons laugh at the seasons dead,
But never, when new Springs bleat,
Will you feel the sunshine around your head,
Or the moisture about your feet.

` And when Autumn's flail on the granary floor
Falls muffled by mellow sheaves,

Old elm, you will mirror yourself no more
In the lake of your littered leaves.'

Then in silence sadder than speech I sat,
When a tremor began to shake
The ribs of the elm as it lay there flat,
And a voice in the branches spake:

`Nay, pity me not, I am living still,
Though prone on the ploughed-up earth,
Though the woodreeve will lop me with hook and bill,
And the shroudmaker take my girth.

`'Twas pleasant, when sap began to stir,
And branch, spray, and bud to shoot,
To hearken the newly-paired partridge whirr,
And the croak of the pairing coot;

`When the broodmare suckled her long-limbed foal,
To watch lovers meet and part,
And to feel, as they nestled against my bole,
The beat of each trusting heart.

`But full as oft as on loving kiss
I gazed upon lonely tear;
And when drenched kine huddle and slant winds hiss,
Then living seemed long and drear.

`Now, when jackdaws starve and the blizzard bites,
And the furrows are flecked with sleet,
And the owl keeps snug in the thatch o'nights,
And the waggoner chafes his feet;

`When the empty nest in the leafless hedge
Sits sad where the sweet birds sang,
And the mallard croaks in the frozen sedge,
And the wings of the wildgeese twang;

`When the lean hare nibbles the birch-tree bark,
And the stoat grows lank and thin,
And the cubs of the vixen prowl the dark,
And the gossips sit and spin;

`They will carry me in from the well-walled garth,
Where the logs are split and stored,
And lay me down where the blazing hearth
Glints warm on the beakered board.

`I shall roar my stave through the chimney's throat,
When the husky hindmen troll,
And flicker low when to children's note
The graybeard nods his poll:

` Watch the ploughboy duck for the crab and miss,
While the bedesmen munch their dole,
And the buxom wench leaves a lickerish kiss
On the rim of the rounding bowl:

` See the children troop, ere they dint their beds,
And, hushing their pagan glee,
Raise dimpled hands, bow flaxen heads,
And pray at their mother's knee.

` Or, perched perchance at the windmill top,
I shall gaze upon gray-roofed farms,
When the clouds are still and the hurricanes drop;
Or up in my brawny arms

` Catch the idle winds as they lag at play,
That in toil they may take their share,
And round and round dip my foamless way
Through the sea of the shoreless air.

` I shall listen, hushed, to the stars at night,
Shall abide betwixt earth and sky:
While one lives and works at a lofty height,
One may change, but one does not die.

` In the stream you love, I may find a home,
Where the quince by the miller's door
Floats flowers as white as his unsluiced foam,
Or the meal on his powdered floor.

` And there I shall live in the mill-wheel's chase,
And sweat in the mid-day heat;
But the spray of my making will cool my face,
And the water-drip bathe my feet.

` I shall whirl till the wheat be ground and fanned
To meal for the cottager's pan:
O, 'tis merry and wise to go hand-in-hand
With Nature, to profit Man.

` Or my boughs may be curved to the river-boat's keel,
And I, as the currents swing
And ripple about my ribs, shall feel
As if stirred with the sap of Spring.

` My crew will be only Youth and Grace,
She lissom, he steel, of limb;
His bronzed brow bent on her wildrose face,
And her wildrose face on him.

` His voice will repeat some poet's song

To the stroke of the rhythmic oar,
Till her maiden pulses quicken and long
For the gleam of the syren shore.

`And when banks grow shady and oars at rest,
And we rudderless float and glide,
I shall feel their love-throbs within my breast,
And the grayling against my side.

`O, I am not dead, though my head droops low,
That used in the Spring to soar
To the sky half-way, and the friendless crow
Will nest in my fork no more.

`'Twas a cheery and wild-wood life I led,
But as pagan as bird or beast;
For I never was christened, or churched, or wed,
Or tithed by the village priest.

`Now I should not wonder if they who fell
My timber and lop my bark,
Were to want a beam for the sexton's bell,
Or a desk for the limping clerk.

`I shall hear the chorister voices soar,
And the organ rise and roll;
And I, who had only sense before,
Shall awaken and find my soul.

`And when limbs, that oft through the driving sleet
Have staggered to sty and shed,
Are seen no more on the rustic seat,
But are stark on the hempen bed,

`My planks will make them both wall and roof,
As snug as the ling-thatched fold,
Where they never will hear a harsh reproof,
Nor ever feel cramp or cold.

`So sorrow you not if I cease to soar,
And am sundered by saw and bill:
Rather hope that, like me, when you're green no more,
You may comfort your kindred still.'

Then the woodcutters came from their mid-day meal,
And I wandered, and felt no pang,
Though riving beetle and splintering steel
All day through the copses rang.

Alfred Austin

The flower, full blown, now bends the stalk, now breaks

The flower, full blown, now bends the stalk, now breaks;
The mellow fruit inclines the bough to earth;
The brow which thought impregnates oft times aches;
Death-stricken is the womb in giving birth.
Cracked is the vase by heat which doth illumine,
The driest logs the swiftest burn to nought,
Sweet flowers are stifled by their own perfume,
And bees when honey-clogged are easy caught.
Snapped are true chords e'en by the note they give,
The largest wave is broken by its weight,
Choked by its sheer sufficiency the sieve,
And blunted soon the shaft which flieth straight.
And so the largest mind and richest soul
Are always most amenable to dole.

Alfred Austin

The Golden Age

Long ere the Muse the strenuous chords had swept,
And the first lay as yet in silence slept,
A Time there was which since has stirred the lyre
To notes of wail and accents warm with fire;
Moved the soft Mantuan to his silvery strain,
And him who sobbed in pentametric pain;
To which the World, waxed desolate and old,
Fondly reverts, and calls the Age of Gold.

Then, without toil, by vale and mountain side,
Men found their few and simple wants supplied;
Plenty, like dew, dropped subtle from the air,
And Earth's fair gifts rose prodigal as prayer.
Love, with no charms except its own to lure,
Was swiftly answered by a love as pure.
No need for wealth; each glittering fruit and flower,
Each star, each streamlet, made the maiden's dower.
Far in the future lurked maternal throes,
And children blossomed painless as the rose.
No harrowing question `why,' no torturing `how,'
Bent the lithe frame or knit the youthful brow.
The growing mind had naught to seek or shun;
Like the plump fig it ripened in the sun.
From dawn to dark Man's life was steeped in joy,
And the gray sire was happy as the boy.
Nature with Man yet waged no troublous strife,
And Death was almost easier than Life.
Safe on its native mountains throve the oak,
Nor ever groaned 'neath greed's relentless stroke.
No fear of loss, no restlessness for more,
Drove the poor mariner from shore to shore.
No distant mines, by penury divined,
Made him the sport of fickle wave or wind.
Rich for secure, he checked each wish to roam,
And hugged the safe felicity of home.

Those days are long gone by; but who shall say
Why, like a dream, passed Saturn's Reign away?
Over its rise, its ruin, hangs a veil,
And naught remains except a Golden Tale.
Whether 'twas sin or hazard that dissolved
That happy scheme by kindly Gods evolved;
Whether Man fell by lucklessness or pride,-
Let jarring sects, and not the Muse, decide.
But when that cruel Fiat smote the earth,
Primeval Joy was poisoned at its birth.
In sorrow stole the infant from the womb,
The agèd crept in sorrow to the tomb.
The ground, so bounteous once, refused to bear
More than was wrung by sower, seed, and share.
Ofttimes would ruthless winds or torrents raze
The ripening fruit of toilsome nights and days.

Each one in turn grew jealous of his own,
And fenced his patch with ditch and churlish stone.
As greed uprose, and greed engendered strife,
Contention raged coincident with life.
Man against man, maid against maiden turned,
And the soft breast with envious passions burned.
The loss of one was hailed as others' gain,
And pleasure took unnatural birth from pain.
Goaded by woe, and through tradition's lore
Mindful of all the blissfulness of yore,
The Human Race, its sorrows to assuage,
Dreamed afar off a second Golden Age;
Not in the dim irrevocable Past,
But in a Future just as vague and vast.
The prophet's lips, the poet's flattering pen,
Revelled in forecasts of that golden Then.
The days should come when grief would be no more,
And Peace and Plenty rule from shore to shore;
All men alike enjoy what none did earn,
And even more than Saturn's Reign return.

As years rolled on, as centuries went by,
And still that Promised Time seemed no more nigh,
Mankind at length, outwearied with delays,
Gave up all hope of those seductive days.
Then other prophets, other scribes arose,
A nearer, surer Eden to disclose.
'O, long-befooled!' they said, 'awake, and deem
The Past a tale, the Future but a dream.
Here, in the living Present, act your part,
Straining its vulgar blessings to your heart.
Let hand with hand and brain with brain contend,
And each one labour to some selfish end.
In wealth and riot, luxury and power,
Baffle the mockery of the transient hour.
If thousands fall, if tens of thousands bleed,
Will not a hundred, or a score, succeed?
Let those who cannot yield to those who can-
Fate has its piles of victims; why not Man?
Better a furious fight where some one wins,
Than sluggish life which ends as it begins.
Vain was the bard who, whilst the World was new,
'Twixt men and beasts the fond distinction drew,
That these confine their downward gaze to earth,
Whilst man looks up, enamoured of his birth.
Not in the skies, but deep beneath the soil,
There will you find your happiness and spoil.
Enough for brutes its simple face to know,
But godlike man must pierce and delve below.
Deep in its bowels seek the shining ore,
And at its touch shall Saturn reign once more.
For him whose thews are sound, whose vision clear,

Whose purpose firm, the Golden Age is here.'

Never from cave or tripod, mount or glade,
Issued a voice so welcomed, so obeyed.
From zone to zone the Golden Gospel flew,
And in its train mankind obedient drew.
See from their seats the ancient Gods dethroned,
Altars upset, and oracles disown'd.
The Muses, scared, conceal the smothered lyre;
No longer prized, the Graces swift retire;
Virtue, a butt for ribalds, seeks her shroud,
And even Venus veils herself in cloud.
Religion, Ethics, all men erst adored,
Hymned on the harp, or fought for with the sword,
All lofty scopes, all ends esteemed of old,
Dissolve like mist before the rage for gold.
The priest for gold makes traffic of his robe;
For gold the soldier desolates the globe;
The poet shapes for gold his venal lays;
Through gold Vice stalks caparisoned with praise.
Tempted by gold, the virgin sells her charms,
Though no Immortal slips into her arms.
Saddled with gold, the adventurer can buy
Titles, precedence, place, and dignity.
High, middle, low, the young, the ripe, the old,
Man, woman, child, live, die, are damned for Gold.

Soon as the youthful mind begins to ope,
It searches Life's significance and scope;
And, fed by generous impulse year by year,
Dreams for itself some glorious career.
Its shall it be, instructed by the Muse,
Truth to abet, and beauty to diffuse;
With full-blown sail, and genius at the helm,
To steer men's thoughts to a serener realm.
Perhaps the ingenuous boy would fain recall
Tintoret's canvas, Memmi's fresco'd wall;
With godlike pencil purify the mart,
And life ennoble with the breath of Art.
Maybe he burns, by Plato's failure fired,
To scale the heights which every wing have tired,
Seize first each part, then comprehend the whole,
And solve the eternal problem of the Soul.
Be these his aims, or, nobler still, to train
His kind to mutiny till Virtue reign,
Soon doth he learn to count his lovely schemes
A host of bubbles in a world of dreams.
Experience whispers early, Have a care!
Who with the Muse would live must live on air.
The tempting maid is but a poet's lie,
'Who gave to song what gold could never buy.'
Confront the world, take counsel with the throng;

Their verdict what? `The thing's not worth a song.'
Are you content you now have learnt your price?
Come, sink the Muse, and don't be quite so nice.
Start a new Company, and float the shares,
Then lunch with Ministers and dine with Mayors.
Pimp for a Party, praise a Premier's heart,
Head a subscription, and then shine-a Bart.
Return your income fifty thousand clear-
The devil's in it, or you'll die a peer.
Success so great is never done by halves-
'Tis only virtue, when 'tis greatest, starves.

Perhaps his breast, untutored yet to serve,
Spurns the base counsel with a proud reserve;
For Youth is stubborn, and when Nature draws,
In vain a parent's warning, wisdom's saws.
Let cravens straight their impotence confess,
And sell their birthright for a filthy mess;
In flowers see, bee-like, nought but stuff for hives,
And for foul lucre prostitute their lives;
They have not failed who never once have tried,
Or, if they failed, they failed for want of pride.
He, he at least his soul will ne'er demean,
But 'mong the foul will keep his honour clean.

O touching sight, to witness day by day
His splendid generous day-dreams fade away!
His sire reproaches, and his brothers scoff,
His mother doubts, his sisters e'en fall off.
The neighbours pity, strangers deem him mad;
Girls, smiling, whisper, What a foolish lad!
Meanwhile his compeers, started in the race,
Are swiftly marching on to power and place.
One makes a coup, and weds a wife of rank;
Another's junior partner in a bank.
A third in sugar with unscriptural hand,
Traffics, and builds a lasting house on sand.
A fourth, for beer and piety renowned,
Owns all the publics in the country round;
Its drink adulterates with face demure,
But burns with zeal to keep opinion pure;
Cares not one jot for bodies drunk or sick,
But scans your soul like a new Dominick.
The fifth, the patron of a new balloon,
Projects a Company to reach the moon;
Baits his prospectus with a batch of peers,
And vows nought pays like money in the Spheres.
Shares in the moon advanced-advancing still.
Then comes a crash-stock guaranteed at nil.
But sure, the man is ruined? Not at all;
He scarce can tumble who has sense to crawl.
Your modern Icarus is much too wise

On his own pinions to attempt the skies-
On others' soaring follies doth he rise.
Long ere the bubble burst his shares were sold;
Just at that moment he had need of gold.
Singed wings, you know, are but for simple folk;
He, with his peers, 'scapes safe from flame and smoke,
And buys a borough with the happy stroke.

Few are the souls who die for Cato's creed:
To fail seems base, when all around succeed.
Foiled in his purpose, both by foe and friend,
Through noble means to reach a noble end,
The baffled boy forswears his cherished dream,
And learns to swim, like others, with the stream.
Keen to recover precious moments lost,
And taught by bitter tasks what Virtue cost,
He midst the rush, whilst others rise and fall,
Swims on, the most unscrupulous of all.
Let others chouse with care, he cheats with pluck,
And millions stake their all upon his luck.
His daring overawes the small, the great,
And whilst he plunders they but peculate.
He lures the easy, makes the fat his spoil,
Pares the lean wage of proletarian toil;
Swindles the widow of her hoarded mite,
Drags the poor pensioner once more to fight;
Robs age of rest, and youth of prospects fair,
Plunges the sanguine bridegroom in despair;
Severs the ties made sacred long by home,
And sends the son from sire across the foam;
Dashes the faith of plighted swain and maid,
And helps alone the cynic sexton's spade:
Does all that well beseems a Fallen Star-
It needs a Lucifer to fall so far!

Sometimes will Fortune on the traitor scowl,
And e'en with gold not pay a deed so foul.
He who was born a glittering child of light,
Trenchant as Raphael, as Ithuriel bright,
Yet sells his soul a vulgar prize to reap,
And for brute guerdons holds his honour cheap,
Too often finds that he who, grovelling, flies
From unrewarded reverie in the skies,
And seeks in venal efforts to employ
The gifts God formed for beauty and for joy,
Makes but a barren barter of his birth,
And Heaven foregoes, without securing earth.
See how he sinks! The more he strains to clutch
Terrestrial spoil, unworthy of his touch,
It seems, for him, to take elusive shapes,
And like a shadow from his grasp escapes.
As baser wax his aims, more mean his scope,

More and still more he sprawls-the sport of Hope.
Still as he tries to suffocate his soul,
Farther beyond him seems the carnal goal.
In vain he turns to catch the favouring gale;
Becalmed he lies-he labours but to fail.
Poor and despised, he now would fain retrace
His erring steps to his first dwelling-place,
But finds, alas! baseness hath borne its fruit;
Wings long unused have withered at the root.
He who in vain has crawled in vain would fly,
And rots abandoned both by earth and sky.
Meaner his end than that poor tradesman's doom,
Who, asked what words of honour on his tomb
His friends should place, with cynic touch replied,
'Here lies who, born a man, a grocer died!'

Whom doth this foe of human virtue spare?
Look round! More sweet its victims, the more fair.
Its natural slaves, who, spawned from wealth, are born
To Traffic's tricks they lack the soul to scorn,
Whose lust for lucre is their proper lot,
It just as oft impoverishes as not.
'Tis those in whom the Unseen God inspires
The restless leaven of divine desires;
Who, from the moment that they lisp, betray
An alien spirit housed within their clay;
Whose fretful youth life's narrow limits chafe,
And yearns for worlds more spacious, if less safe;
Striving to reach, despite its fleshly thrall,
That larger Something which surrounds us all;-
These, these the souls-and not that baser band-
To whom Gold loves to stretch a helping hand;
With early smiles their generous aims to bless,
And lead them, blind, to ruinous success.
When Lelius chanted first his fragrant lays,
Men praised, and he was amply paid with praise.
Not salons' sycophant, nor Fashion's bard,
No glittering heaps did his sweet notes reward.
He was content with audience fit, though few,
When to his side the cunning demon drew.
'Your pen's worth gold; you need but blunt its point;
Come, cut the Muse; the times are out of joint.
Fame's well enough, but comfort has its laws;
You'll make a damned poor supper off applause.
Sing, be select, and starve. Prose is the thing-
The thing that pays. The Million now is King.
Write gossip, scandal, slander-what you will;
A well-filled purse awaits a ready quill.'
The curst insidious demon has his way,
And Grub-street swallows Lelius for aye.

Turn from the pen, and for a while survey

The wide domains which brush and canvas sway.
Enter those realms, and what do we behold?
Art, heavenly Art, the slave and pimp of gold!
Time was when its poor votaries were too proud
To sate the itch of a vain-glorious crowd,
Serve the mean aims of narrow personal pelf,
And swell the ignoble retinue of Self.
Only the State, which merges private ends,
Or sacred Church, which lifts them and extends,
Might then presume the artist's craft to claim,
And paid him, happy, with immortal Fame.
Here, Friendship's guest, where fairest Florence lies,
A dream in stone, stretched out before mine eyes,
I think of all the treasures there enshrined,
And what small dole nurtured each master mind;
Or led by memory o'er the classic chain
Which Umbrian slope divides from Tuscan plain,
I all the priceless unbought gems recall
That link with heaven Assisi's frescoed wall;
Then, borne on wings of weakness, I repair
To mine own land, and groan to think that there,
Debased by Fashion to a venal trade,
Art counts its triumphs by its fortunes made;
Spurned by the State, and by the Church unsought,
Works but for wealth, and by the base is bought;
Stranger to altars, palaces, or domes,
Pampers the pomp of ostentatious homes.
How changed the days since Duccio's hand of old
On Saints and Virgins lavished costly gold;
But for himself asked but a few poor crowns,
Less than we give to harlequins and clowns.
Now do our mercenary tricksters grudge
Almost the very canvas that they smudge;
Yet scan with greedy eyes the glittering heap
That opulent folly holds, for once, so cheap.
See, too, how Genius, when its touch was true,
On humble walls its lasting fancies drew;
Whose modern apes, ridiculously bold,
Hang their ephemeral daubs in frames of gold.

In vain doth Heaven, while Gold thus rules the earth,
With generous instincts sow the soul at birth.
Swift in the genial soil the seed takes root,
Then seeks the sun with many a venturous shoot.
But, ah, how soon the cruel outer air
Checks the brave growth and nips its promise fair!
Warmed by the glow of Tasso's splendid lay,
Or borne by Dante to the gates of Day;
Softly seduced by Scott's romantic strain
To deem all ends, excepting honour, vain;
Or nobly trained by Shelley's burning song
To cherish an eternal feud with wrong,-

The simple girl constructs a future fair,
Rears a whole world of castles in the air,
And nowhere warned, or deaf to warning, deems
That life will clothe and justify her dreams.
As year by year the maiden grows apace,
And half the woman mantles in her face,
With sickening sense, sad eye, and sinking heart,
She sees her forecasts one by one depart.
Slowly, but, ah, too surely doth she find
That poets' tales no longer rule mankind;
That Peace is homeless as the hunted hare,
And Love far less a shelter than a snare;
That godlike Valour meets a demon's doom,
Whilst Prudence prospers even from the tomb;
That Youth, save schooled in Mammon's miry ways,
Groans o'er the lapse of unrequited days;
That Beauty, Genius, all are vain and cold,
Till foully touched and fertilised by Gold.

Soon as the time so dear to mother's vows
Draws nigh, to find the maid some fitting spouse,
Then most of all she learns what leading part
Is played by Gold in dramas of the heart.
Chance to young Hylas, beautiful as Dawn,
And sweet as fair, she feels her fancy drawn.
Are you a nymph? one whispers. Let him pass.
He doth but gather daisies in the grass.
Where your cool wave, hidden from human eyes,
In which to lure and love him till he dies?
Bid him rejoin his Hercules, and seize
The golden apples of the Hesperides;
And then perchance, should none more rich than he
Engage your love, you may his Hera be.
Alas, poor Hylas! worse than Mysian fate
Doth his meandering flowery feet await.
If that a Solon, versed in every art
Of song and science, touch the maiden's heart,
The neighbours softly whisper, Have a care;
Can Erudition keep a chaise and pair?
Pundits, alas, like fools, must pay their bills,
And Knowledge figures sorrily in wills.
For single life learning is well enough,
But marriage should be made of sterner stuff.
Should Cato's fame her pious soul attract,
The whole world cries, The woman must be cracked.
What! wed with Virtue! Is the girl awake?
Sure, she confounds the altar with the stake.
Send for the doctor. Try a change of air.
Swear Cato drinks. In war and love all's fair.
Bring Croesus to the front. At four he's free-
There's no one left to swindle after three.
In one brief hour behold him curled and drest,

And borne on wings of fashion to the West!
What though to regions fondly deemed refined,
He brings his City manners, City mind,
And cynics titter?-he laughs best who wins,-
A Greenwich dinner covers many sins.
What! dine with Croesus? Surely. Is a feast
One jot the worse because the host's a beast?
He's worse than that-a snob-a cad. Agreed;
But then his goblets smack of Ganymede?
Do some strange freaks his conversation mar?
He stops your censure with a prime cigar.
A Norway stream, a shooting-lodge in Perth,
In practice look uncommonly like worth.
The Town to hear some new soprano flocks.
You long to go? Well, Croesus has a box.
How at this hour are tickets to be got
For the Regatta? Croesus has a yacht.
Goodwood is here. Your hopes begin to flag.
One chance awaits you: Croesus has a drag.
You doat on Flower-shows: Croesus has a bone.
Be friends with Croesus, and the World's your own.
Who could resist seductions such as these?
Or what could charm, if Croesus failed to please?
Blinded and bribed, the critical are cured,
And loud extol whom late they scarce endured.
Caressed and courted, Croesus grows the rage,
The type and glory of our Golden Age;
And Cato, Hylas, Solon, shoved aside,
Our heavenly maid is hailed as Croesus' bride.

Shade of Lucretius! if thy lyre waxed wild
With sacred rage for Clytemnestra's child,
And nought could hold thee as thy soul surveyed
The cursèd ills Religion can persuade,
How would thy verse impetuously shower
Sonorous scorn on Gold's atrocious power;
Embalm its victims with a touch divine,
And damn the monster in one sounding line!

Can honeyed forms or stereotyped applause
Alter the scope of Heaven's eternal laws?
What though with gifts should massive sideboards groan,
And every heart be glad except her own,
And troops of blooming girls behold with pride,
Perchance with envy, this resplendent bride;
Though vieing voices hail her Fashion's queen,
And even a Bishop's blessing crown the scene,
No rites, no rings, no altars, can avail
To make a sacred contract of a sale,
Stir the far depths of the reluctant mind,
Or join the hearts which love hath failed to bind.
If soul stands passive whilst the flesh is sold,

Is there no foul aroma in the gold?
Is the base barter covered by the price,
And do huge figures make the nasty nice?
The nameless outcast, prowling for her prey,
Renews her filthy bargain day by day;
Let Croesus give her what he gave his wife,
She's virtuous too—at least, she's his for life.
Croesus—but hold! Let Charity presume
That Croesus' wife but dimly knew her doom.

The luckless maid, since knowledge comes too late,
In splendour seeks oblivion of her fate;
Of every tender pious aim bereft,
Hugs in despair the only idol left;
In alien worship seeks to be consoled,
And builds her hopes of happiness on Gold.
Gold rules her steps, determines her desires—
Mere puppet she, whilst Mammon jerks the wires.
Futile to ask if London suits her health—
Would you consult her doctor, not her wealth?
You soon are answered: Whether ill or well,
A house in Town is indispensable.
Where shall it be? On gravel or on clay?
Wherever tenants have the most to pay.
Price is the thing, not soil. If Fashion's camp
Be pitched just here, what matter dry or damp?
But, health apart, 'tis known that Croesus' wife,
If left to choose, prefers a country life.
Well, she shall have it when the Parks are brown,
And Fashion, wearied, hath dispersed the Town.
But whilst the woods are leafy, and the lanes
With lush wild-flowers rob life of half its pains;
While sweetest scents and softest sounds combine
To make existence, did they last, divine;
Not for the world must Croesus' wife be missed
From fetid streets, foul rooms, and Fashion's list;
And only thence to rural refuge flies
As, self-exhausted, pleasant Summer dies.

Say, shall we marvel, amid scenes like these,
With all to dazzle, but with nought to please,
If links of simple gold should fail to cleave,
And tempters prompt their webs not vainly weave?
See, Plutus, first in each ignoble strife,
Battered and bored, bethinks him of a wife.
The happy tidings, spreading through the West,
Fires each maternal mercenary breast.
The soaring dames parade their daughters' charms,
To lure the hug of Plutus' palsied arms;
And as brave Eld for one fair woman fought,
For one foul man our world to rage is wrought.
At last, opining he might chance do worse,

Plutus to proud Olympia flings his purse.
Olympia lifts it with triumphant smile,
Whilst round her crowds congratulating guile,
Escorts her to the altar, decks her brows
With orange-buds, then leaves her with her spouse,
Who, though his suit by golden showers throve,
Can grasp his Danaë with no thews of Jove.
O, who shall tell Olympia's tale aright,
Each splendid day, each miserable night;
Her thirst divine by human draughts but slaked,
Her smiling face whilst the heart sorely ached,
Or note the edge whence one we loved so well
To sweet, seductive, base perdition fell?
I cast no stone, but half by rage consoled,
I snatch the lyre and curse this fiendish Gold.

Though Beauty's fame oft spreads through all the land,
Splendour is far more curiously scanned;
And they who once upon Olympia threw
A passing glance, since she was fair to view,
Now gilded pomp and Ostentation's choir
Attend her path, of gazing never tire;
Suck up her speech, translate her silent eyes,
Each movement, look, and posture scrutinise,
Stalk all her steps, as matron, friend, and wife,
And feed in greedy gossip on her life.
Not mine to follow to the noisome den
Where woman's frailty stands the gaze of men,
And well-coached menials, limed with gold, detail
The piteous scenes that pass behind the veil.
Enough to know that, thanks to wealth, once more
Plutus can woo, e'en richer than before.
The tottering cuckold leaves the court consoled;
Considerate juries tip his horns with Gold!

Sure some malicious demon in the brain
It needs must be, drives men reputed sane
To spurn the joys adjacent to their feet,
In the fond chase of this receding cheat?
Say, when the Stoic on his tranquil height,
And swinish crowd, sweating in miry fight,
In every age a like conclusion reach,
And sage and simple one same sermon preach-
That whether Heaven hath made one serf or king,
Reason alone true happiness can bring-
Can we but stand astounded as we scan
This race untaught, unteachable, called Man?
Would you be truly rich, how small the heap
Your aims require, the price how passing cheap!
A modest house, from urban jars removed,
By thirst selected, yet by taste approved;
Whose walls are gay with every sweet that blows,

Whose windows scented by the blushing rose;
Whose chambers few to no fine airs pretend,
Yet never are too full to greet a friend;
A garden plot, whither unbidden come
Bird's idle pipe and bee's laborious hum;
Smooth-shaven lawn, whereon in pastime's hours
The mallet rings within a belt of flowers;
A leafy nook where to enjoy at will
Gibbon's rich prose or Shakespeare's wizard quill;
A neighbouring copse wherein the stock-doves coo,
And a wild stream unchecked sings all day through;
Two clean bright stalls, where midday, night, and morn,
Two good stout roadsters champ their well-earned corn;
A few learned shelves from modern rubbish free,
Yet always, Mill, with just a place for Thee;
Head ne'er at dawn by clownish bouts obscured,
And limbs by temperate exercise inured;
A few firm friendships made in early life,
Yet doubly fastened by a pleasant wife;
A wholesome board, a draught of honest wine;-
This is true wealth; and this, thank Heaven, is mine!
And though you ransacked worlds from shore to shore,
From sea to sky, you could not give me more.
And if, all these beyond, I still should crave
Something impossible this side the grave,
Let humbler souls my soaring hopes forgive-
After my life still in my verse to live.

Well would it be if Mammon's feverish rage
Did but the vulgar and the base engage;
If those alone whose undistinguished name,
Haply if fouled, would shed no slur on Fame,
Sought in this sordid, despicable strife,
To find the good and snatch the crown of life.
But in the mire of venal fight embroiled,
Have we not seen the noblest scutcheons soiled?
Not the proud thought that many a splendid fray,
When crowns obeyed the fortunes of the day,
To stalwart arms its pregnant issue owed,
Whose glorious blood in their own body flowed;
Not the remembrance that their sires did share
The toils that made this England great and fair;
Not their resplendent pedigree, nor all
The line of haught fierce faces on the wall,
That tells the tale of their ancestral hall,
Have yet availed, in days like these, to hold
Men, thus seduced, from the coarse race for Gold.
Have we not seen the generous beast, whose sires
Once bore their fathers into battle's fires,
By titled gamblers' mercenary taste
His once stout loins to nimble flanks debased,
Made for curst gold to sweat through all his pores,

The panting pet of blacklegs, lords, and whores?

On such a course what dismal woes await,
Let the world learn by young Lucullus' fate.
Whilst yet the bloom of boyhood matched his cheek,
And all his duty was to master Greek.
Make a long score, bound o'er the running brook,
Cleave the clear wave, Lucullus had a book.
No glorious volume was't, whose subtle page
The wisdom breathed of many a studious age.
No wealth of wit, no Learning's garnered sheaves
Lay, like a treasure, lurking in its leaves.
But, in their place, crabbed Calculation scrawled
Symbols which shocked and figures that appalled.
Not for sweet Fancy, nor the simple stake
Of generous sports, did he his tasks forsake.
Ere sentiment could move, or sense control,
Adventurous Greed had swallowed up his soul.
If Gold Acrisius' Tower of Brass could flout,
How will the playground shut the monster out?
Thus by his own base instincts first betrayed,
The race of harpies lend their shameful aid,
With evil eye his smiling lands behold,
And smooth his path to infamy with gold.

At length behold him grown to man's estate,
Rich, noble, noted, lord of his own fate.
Here Duty beckons, Honour there incites,
And Love entices to its saving rites.
He heeds them not; he joins the madding crowd,
King of the base, the vulgar, and the loud;
Builds his most precious friendships on a bet,
And through the gutter trails his coronet.
Vain fool! inflamed by flattery and conceit,
He marks no pitfalls yawning at his feet;
But, winning, deems the cunning snare his luck,
And losing, pays, to plume him on his pluck;
Accepts each challenge, doubles every stake,
While tipsy plaudits follow in his wake.
But what avails, if Fortune quits his side?
Curse on the jade, he cries, she always lied!
Well, now's an end! . . . A comrade plucks his gown:
An end as yet, man! cut the timber down.
The luck will turn; you lost for want of skill;
Come, play again-you'll win. . . . By G-, I will!
Done soon as said. The swift sure axe resounds
Through the green stretch of his ancestral grounds.
The soaring elm, whose topmost boughs defied
The scaling valour of his boyish pride;
The umbrageous beech, beneath whose courtly shade
The loves that issued in his life were made;
The lordly oak, young when his line was young,

To which with pride inherited had clung
His sires and they from whom his sires were sprung;
Behold them now, around the naked hall,
One after one in fell succession fall.
Lo, the wide woods which centuries had seen
By frosts unmoved, mid thunder-fugues serene,
By thousand suns, by tens of thousand showers,
Fostered and fed, one greedy day devours.
And all in vain! Lured by the severed spoil,
The foul fierce harpies fasten on the soil.
'My lands on luck.' We take you. Clear the course;
Twenty to one upon Lucullus' horse!
One minute more, and poor Lucullus flies,
The beggared heir of all the centuries.

Then scoffed, and scourged, and stripped of all his wealth,
His last friends leave him-energy and health.
Anxiety and fierce Excitement's flame
Have scorched his blood and shrivelled up his frame.
'Plum to a pony!' hear the cripple call;
'Ere six months pass, the grave will end it all.'
Lucky at last, he wins his bootless bet,
And dies of drink, debauchery, and debt.

Gone are the times indeed when savage Might
Usurped the throne and claimed the wage of Right.
No longer now the tiller of the soil
Sees his fair fields the lusty robber's spoil;
No timid burgher now grows rich by stealth,
Lest some rude noble swoop upon his wealth;
The quiet citizen no longer fears
A raid upon his money or his ears,
That local turmoil or imperial strife
Will wreck his home or leave him bare for life.
But say, is Force the only fearful foe,
Or the keen Sword worst source of human woe?
Wielding base weapons Violence disdained,
Cunning prevails where once Compulsion reigned.
The tyrant's lance, Oppression's piercing shaft,
Torment no more, but abdicate to Craft.
Could feudal despot swooping on his prey,
Could bandit burning for the unequal fray,
Could fire, sword, famine, spread more wreck abroad,
Than marks the path of Greed allied with Fraud;
Or waits on life, where no rude signs portend
When the dread bolt of Ruin will descend?

See the poor father, who for years has toiled,
At one fell stroke of all his store despoiled.
His was the pious wish, by daily care
And safe degrees to make his hearth more fair;
His the ambition-far too meek to roam-

To swell the simple luxuries of home;
 By loving thrift to deck his comely spouse
 With some poor gem, the summit of her vows;
 To instruct his boys in every generous art
 Which trains the man to act a shining part;
 By culture's aid to see his daughters armed
 With each fair grace that in their mother charmed;
 Year after year, as strength and vigour waned,
 To find his fondest forecasts all attained;
 And then, since faithful to the final stage,
 Doff the hard harness from the back of age.
 But watchful Greed with jealous eye beheld
 Day after day his little earnings swelled;
 Studied the tender workings of his mind,
 Marked the fond aims to which his heart inclined;
 With specious lips his trusting senses stole,
 And with false visions fired his prudent soul.
 Poor wretch! but yesterday in modest state
 He lived, secure from every bolt of Fate.
 To-day, he wanders feverish and depressed,
 As though whole Andes weighed upon his breast.
 To-morrow, back unto his home he crawls,
 A beggared man, and at the threshold falls.
 Now will no more his trustful wife behold
 The gladsome face returning as of old,
 And read in sparkling eye and smiling cheek
 The day's good tidings e'en before he speak;
 Never again in hastening footsteps guess
 Some pretty love-gift, token of success.
 Their blooming boys, for whom parental hope
 So oft had cast the fairest horoscope,
 And seen with fond anticipating eyes
 Each proud successive civic honour rise,
 Torn from their noble studies, have to crave
 From base pursuits the pittance of a slave,
 Pour the soul's wine into the body's sieve,
 And grand life lose in mean attempts to live.
 Perchance, at home their humble wants denied,
 Gaunt Hunger drives them from their mother's side;
 Leaves her to weep alone o'er what hath been,
 And places ocean, pitiless, between.
 The tender girls, their father's pride and joy,
 Whose dreams a fiend had scrupled to destroy;
 From childhood's earliest days whose only care
 Was to be gracious, virtuous, and fair,
 And who from Heaven could nothing else implore
 Save to be all their mother was before;
 Who pictured as their perfect scheme of life
 A clinging daughter and a helpful wife,-
 At one rude flash behold the world enlarge,
 And stand, pale victims, trembling on the marge.
 Little, alas, now boots it where they roam,

Since they must leave the tranquil shores of home.
Whether, poor slaves, they crawl with aching feet
Hour after hour from dreary street to street,
Or, as in mockery of home, alas!
Beneath the stranger's icy portal pass,
And thankless task and miserable wage
Their exiled cheerless energies engage,
Their youth, their life, is blasted at the core,
And Hope's sweet sap will mount their veins no more.
Should every door their humble prayers repel,
Scorning to buy what Hunger kneels to sell,
And they, half thankful that the strangers spurn,
To their own roof be driven to return,
How strange the scene that meets their wearied gaze!
How changed the hearth, the home, of other days!
Contracting Care usurps the mother's face,
Whose smiles of old spread sunshine through the place.
Alone she weeps; but should she chance to hear
Her husband's steps, she hides the furtive tear;
Follows his movements with an anxious dread,
Studies his brow, and scans his restless tread;
Assails his woe with every female wile,
Prattles of hope, and simulates a smile.
He, broken man, wrapt in perpetual gloom,
Wanders anon from vacant room to room;
Then, creeping back, the image of despair,
With a deep sigh he sinks into his chair.

He seldom speaks; and when his voice is heard,
Peevish its tone, and querulous his word;
And vain laments and childish tears attest
The lamp of life is dying in his breast.
Perhaps his death some timely pittance frees,
Secured by prudence in their days of ease;
And, O the pity! posthumous relief
Stanches love's wounds, and blunts the edge of grief.
Unless, indeed—for this too hath been known—
All-grasping Greed hath made that mite its own,
Filched from the widow her last hopes of bread,
And whom it ruined living, plunders dead!

These are thy triumphs, Gold! thy trophies these,
To nurture fraud, and rob the world of ease,
Faith to befool, young genius to seduce,
And blight at once its beauty and its use.
Thine is the bait, as loveless hearths avouch,
Which drags fresh victims to the venal couch;
Thine the foul traps wherewith our ways are rife,
That lure them first, then close upon their life;
Thine, thine the springes, set in regions fair,
Whose unseen nooses strangle whom they snare;
The cynic glory thine to lie in wait

To make men little who had else been great,
Frustrate our plenty, aggravate our dearth,
And keep eternal feud 'twixt Heaven and Earth!

Lo, where huge London, huger day by day,
O'er six fair counties spreads its hideous sway,
A tract there lies by Fortune's favours blest,
And at Fame's font yclept the happy West.
There, as by wizard touch, for miles on miles,
Rise squares, streets, crescents of palatial piles.
In the brave days when England's trusty voice
Made grappling rivals tremble or rejoice;
When, foremost shield of Weakness or of Right,
She scorned to warn unless resolved to smite;
When, few but firm, her stalwart children bore
The terror of her Flag from shore to shore,
Purged Christ's dear tomb from sacrilege and shame,
And made the Moslem quake at Richard's name;
Taught the vain Gaul, though gallant, still to kneel,
And Spain's proud sons the weight of northern steel;-
Then were her best in no such splendour nursed
As now awaits her basest and her worst.
No kingly Harry glittering with renown,
No Edward radiant in a peaceful crown,
Was housed as now, at turn of Fortune's wrist,
Some lucky navvy turned capitalist,
Some convict's bastard who a-sudden shines
In the bright splendour of Australian mines,
Or subtle Greek, who, skilled in Eastern ways,
Exposes all Golconda to our gaze.
These, as to Pomp's pretentious peaks they rush,
Heed not the crowds their sordid conquests crush:
Secure in glaring opulence, they scan
With placid eyes the miseries of man;
Fat units, watch the leanness of the whole,
And gag remonstrance with a paltry dole:
Mid harrowing want, with conscience unafraid,
Die on the golden dirt-heaps they have made.
Here Plenty gorges gifts from every zone,
There thankful Hunger gnaws its meagre bone;
Profusion here melts more than pearls in wine,
There craves gaunt Penury some shucks from swine;
And whilst rich rogues quaff deep round roaring fires,
At Dives' portal Lazarus expires!

Betwixt these fierce extremes of wealth and woe,
A crowd of strugglers hustles to and fro,
Whose one sole aim and only hope in life
Are just to wrench subsistence from the strife.
To what base shifts these hideous straits compel
The straining wretches, let our records tell.
Victims of greedy Competition's craft,

We drain cheap poison in each sparkling draught,
Purchase a lie in every vaunted ware,
And swallow filth in the most frugal fare.
Building a refuge for our age, we find
The crumbling mortar lets in wet and wind;
Face the rude waves, by science freed from awe,
To sink, poor dupes, on life-belts made of straw!

Nor this the worst! When ripened Shame would hide
Fruits of that hour when Passion conquered Pride,
There are not wanting in this Christian land
The breast remorseless and the Thuggish hand,
To advertise the dens where Death is sold,
And quench the breath of baby-life for gold!

Nor man alone, case-hardened man, surveys
These shocking contrasts with a careless gaze.
Fair melting woman of the tender breast
Here finds no room for pity as her guest.
Unsexed, she strains to Ostentation's goal,
While Splendour's dreams demoralise her soul;
Drains, like a goddess, hecatombs of lives,
Nor heeds who lags, provided she arrives.
See Claribel, by every gift designed
Mid anguish keen to be an angel kind,
Once plunged in rival factions' golden fight,
Turned to a demon in her own despite.
Behold, to-morrow in the Royal smile
Will bask the birth and wealth of all the Isle.
She, long abroad, received the summons late.
What's to be done? Nor time nor tide will wait.
She turns her wardrobe over, racks her brain;
Nothing will do. She wants a dress and train.
Drive to the modiste's. Not a finger free.
There's only Clara. Clara let it be.
But Clara's sick and sorry. Give her gold;
Her aches will cease, her sorrows be consoled.
It must be done. Sure Lilian there will glow
In gorgeous newness decked from top to toe;
Shall it be said that Claribel did less?
To-morrow, then, in time the train and dress.

So Clara drags her weary limbs from bed,
O'er the brave finery hangs her throbbing head;
Still as her senses swim sews on and on,
Till day dies out and twilight pale is gone.
Then, by the taper's soft and silent light,
Like a pale flower that opens most by night,
Her pace she quickens, and the needle moves
Subtler and swifter through the gauzy grooves;
But as the dawn on guttering sockets gains,
Her tired lids drop, and sleep arrests her pains.

But sleep how short! She feels her shoulder clutched:
`Clara, awake! the train's not even touched!
Day strides apace. See, there's the morning sun,
And ere again he sinks, 't must all be done.'
Again, again, the shooting thread she plies,
In silent agony of smothered sighs.
She seems to breathe her breath into the gown,
To give it life the while she lays hers down.
Fast as the task advances set by pride,
So fast within her ebbs the vital tide.
The daylight goes, and softly comes the moon's,
And then poor Clara over the last stitch swoons.

Meanwhile, the panting Claribel awaits
The precious gown within her golden gates.
It comes-it comes. Now who shall shine her down?
Not Lilian, surely? No, not the entire Town.
She not for worlds had lost this courtly chance;
And Clara dies that Claribel may dance!

If private worth, thus languishing, expires,
Will public Virtue keep alive her fires?
The slaves of wealth, in Britain as in Rome,
Bring to the Forum vices formed at home.
First the community, and then the State,
Falls to their fangs, which naught can satiate.
Not born nor bred to rule, of culture void,
And by no wave of young ambition buoyed,
Anxious on heights conspicuous to flaunt
Nought but the tawdry trophies they can vaunt,
They woo the grasping crowd with golden guile,
And spread Corruption's canker through the Isle.
You want a seat? Then boldly sate your itch.
Be very radical, and very rich.
Sell your opinions first to please the pure,
Then buy the sordid, and your triumph's sure.
Do all, in brief, that honest men abhor,
And England hails another Senator.

See the vain Tribune who, in lust of power,
Bows to the base exactions of the hour,
And, fooled by sycophants, stands forth at last
A devotee turned sworn iconoclast!
Behind him sit dense rows of golden mutes,
Deaf to whate'er demonstrates or refutes,
Ready to vote, rescind, obey in all
The whip demands, as hounds the huntsman's call.
They neither know nor reck what helpful deeds
In this grave hour their perilled Country needs.
They want to see their daughters nobly wed,
Their wives at Court, their own names trumpeted,
Their private Bills advanced another stage,

Their schemes of plunder foisted on the age.
Leave them but these, the gamblers come to call,
Nor heed an Empire nodding to its fall!

When Power is built on props like these, how vain
The hope that Law the giddy will restrain!
Spoilt by twin sops, servility and gold,
The headstrong crowd is then but ill controlled.
In vain they now would sway who lately served,
And Riot cows Authority unnerved.
Better that such base compromise should end,
And the dread bolt of Anarchy descend!
Goths of the gutter, Vandals of the slum,
Thieves and Reformers, come! Barbarians, come!
Before your might let rails and rules be hurled,
And sweep Civilisation from the world!

Nor now, alas, do Commoners alone
To private ends the public weal postpone.
Those too, whom worth ancestral plants on seats
High above where all vulgar Clamour beats,
With paltry fear to their clipped ermine cling,
And shrink from right, lest right should ruin bring.
The Peers stand firm; the Commons disagree.
The Peers be-well, it now is close on three.
By five, a world of reasons will be found.
Throw Jonas over, or the ship's aground.
You know the fury of the hand that steers;
And what were Britain with no House of Peers?
Would Primogeniture its fall survive,
Or even Property be kept alive?
Let Herbert fume, or frantic Cecil chafe,
Better a deal to choose the side that's safe;
Bow to the will of Finlen and his hordes,
And still thank Heav'n for a House of Lords!
Thus may the British breast exult to think.
That noble names can sell ignoble ink;
That ill-got gains, if deftly spent, unlock
Birth's choicest circles to the ambitious smock;
That Dives foul mounts fine Aristo's stairs,
If but Aristo Dives' plunder shares;
And half Debrett urbanely flocks to White's,
To back the boor who saves them from the kites.
His son succeeds him. `Make the son a Peer.
Why not? His income's eighty thousand clear.
New blood is wanted. Here's the very stuff.
Besides, he wields the county vote.' Enough.
But hold! there's Cato. `Cato! are you sane?
Why, Cato's means but one small hearth sustain.
Ennoble Cato, you'll have Peers for life,
Or else forbid the man to take a wife.
He can't maintain the necessary state,

And would you have a poor name legislate?
No, Dives' son's the very man we need.
What says the Crown?' The Crown! Of course, Agreed.
And the young fool, enriched by parent knaves,
From Ruin's jaws our Constitution saves!

Is there no path of honour for the great,
No sound and clean salvation for the State?
Must we for ever fly to shifts like this,
And trust to Gold to save us from the abyss?
Must honours old by new-got wealth be vamped,
And Valour's stock by plutocrats be swamped?
Back to your lands, base sons of splendid sires!
From spendthrift squares back to your native shires!
Back, back from Baden, and leave Homburg's shades
To dazzling Jews and mercenary jades.
Leave London's round of vulgar joys to those
Who seek in such from base pursuits repose.
Cease to contend with upstart Wealth's parade,
To wring your lands to vie with tricks of trade;
And, proudly spurning Glitter's transient lies,
At least be honest, if you can't be wise!
Worship your household gods, and spend at home
The solid earnings of the generous loam.
Delve, fence, and drain; the dripping waste reclaim;
With spreading woodlands multiply your fame.
Yours let it be to screen the reverent hind,
Who loves your presence, 'gainst the frost and wind;
Scorning to count the profit, raise his lot;
Lure the shy Graces to his lowly cot;
Be, one and all, acknowledged, far and wide,
Patriarchs and patterns of the country side.
And whether demagogues shall rise or fall,
A Cleon mount, or Boänerges bawl,
True to yourselves and native duty, thus
Save this poor England by being virtuous!

And you, Sir, hope of this once famous isle,
Round whom its halo plays, its favours smile,
Hark to the Muse, which, poised on Candour's wings,
Flouts the base crowd, but scorns to flatter kings.
Hark, while she tells you, nor her counsel spurn,
From giddy Pleasure's gilded toys to turn;
That not from minions opulent or coarse
Do Princes gain their lustre and their force;
That Reverence anchors not in deep carouse,
And that a Crown fits only kingly brows!
Fired by each bright example, shun the shade,
Where Scandal best can ply her noxious trade.
Learn from your pious Father how to share
With hands, too lonely now, a Kingdom's care.
Be by your fair loved Consort's pattern moved,

And like your virtuous Mother, stand approved;
Do for this England all the Sceptre can,
And be at least a stainless gentleman.
Be this too much, you well may live to find
That firmest Thrones can fail the weak and blind,
And, though no Samson, sharing half his fate,
Pull down the pillars of a mighty State!

Whilst our domestic fortunes thus obey
All-searching Gold's demoralising sway,
We hug the limits of our puny shore,
And Glory knows our once great name no more.
First are we still in every bloodless fray,
Where piles of gold adventurous prows repay;
But when flushed Honour sets the world on fire,
We furl our sails and to our coasts retire;
And, basely calm whilst outraged nations bleed,
Invent new doctrines to excuse our greed.
When gallant Denmark, now the spoiler's prey,
Flashed her bright blade, and faced the unequal fray,
And, all abandoned both by men and gods,
Fell, faint with wounds, before accursed odds,-
Where, where was England's vindicating sword,
Her promised arm, to stay the invading horde;
Bid the rude German drop his half-clutched spoil,
And scare the robber from ancestral soil?
The fair young Dane, beloved by every Grace,
And all the Virtues shining in her face,
Who, more an angel than a princess deemed,
Withal was even sweeter than she seemed,
With noisy throats we summoned o'er the foam,
And with cheap cheers escorted to her home.
But when with streaming eye and throbbing breast
She, pious child, her loving fears confessed,
And, leagued with Honour's voice and Valour's ire,
Prayed us to save her country and her sire,
We turned away, and opulently cold,
Put back our swords of steel in sheaths of gold!

And yet what sandy base doth Gold afford,
Though crowned by Law, and fenced round by the Sword,
Learn from that Empire which, a scorn for aye,
Grew in a night and perished in a day!
Helped by a magic name and doubtful hour,
See the Adventurer scale the steps of Power.
Upon him groups of desperate gamesters wait,
To snatch their profit from a sinking State.
Folly, and Fate which Folly still attends,
Conspire to shape and expedite their ends.
The Hour, the Man are here! No pulse? No breath?
Wake, Freedom, wake! In vain! She sleeps like Death.
The impious hands, emboldened by her swoon,

Choke in the night, and slay her in the noon!
Then, when vain crowds with dilatory glaive
Rush to avenge the life they would not save,
The prompt conspirators with lavish hand
Fling their last pieces to a pampered band,
Bribe cut-throat blades Vengeance' choked ways to hold,
And bar the avenues of rage with gold!

Then mark how soon, amid triumphant hymns,
The Imperial purple girds the blood-stained limbs.
The perjured hands a golden sceptre gain,
A crown of gold screens the seared brow of Cain,
And golden eagles, erst of simpler ore,
Assert the Caesar, and his rod restore.
See round his throne Pomp's servile tributes swell,
Not Nero knew, e'er Rome to ruin fell,
Far from his feet the lust of glitter spread,
And the vain herd on Splendour's follies fed!
Nor they alone, the shallow, base, and gay,
Bend to this Idol with the feet of clay:
Statesmen and soldiers kneel with flattering suit,
Kings are his guests, e'en queens his cheeks salute;
Senates extol him, supple priests caress,
And even thou, O Pius, stoop'st to bless!
And the World's verdict, ever blind as base,
Welcomes the `Second Saviour' of the race!

And yet how weak this Empire girt with gold
Did prove to save when Battle's torrents rolled,
Have we not seen in ruin, rout, and shame,
Burnt deep in Gaul's for ever broken fame?
What then availed her courts of pomp and pride,
What her bright camps with glittering shows allied?
What, in that hour, the luxury which passed
To soldiers' lips the sybarite repast?
Did all her gold suffice, when steel withstood
Her stride, to make her rash, vain challenge good?
Behold her Chief, in comfort longwhile slung,
By War's rough couch and random fare unstrung
His vaunted Leaders, who to Power had mown
Their path with swords that propped a venal Throne,
Brandishing rival blades, his brain confound,
While still, but sure, the solid foe press round.
See her soft sons, whom arms enervate lead,
Spurn the long marches which to victory speed,
And, fondly deeming Science served by Wealth
Will snatch the fight at distance and by stealth,
Smitten with fear at Valour's downright face,
And taught swift limbs in Flight's ignoble chase!
See one, see all, before the Victor fleet,
Then lay their swords, submissive, at his feet!

O hapless France! e'en then insurgent ire
Had your soiled scutcheon lifted from the mire,
Placed the bright helm on Honour's front once more,
And laurels reaped more lasting than of yore,
Had not rich ease your manhood's marrow stole,
And gold emollient softened all your soul.
O, what a sight—a sight these eyes beheld—
Her fair green woods by the invader felled;
Her fields and vineyards by the Teuton trod,
Those she once smote encamped upon her sod;
Her homes, in dread, abandoned to the foe,
Or saved from rapine by obsequence low;
Her cities ransomed, provinces o'erawed,
Her iron strongholds wrenched by force or fraud;
Her once proud Paris grovelling in the dust,
And—crowning irony, if lesson just—
The grasping victor, loth to quit his hold,
Coaxed slowly homewards o'er a bridge of gold!

Is there no warning, England, here, for thee?
Or are Heaven's laws balked by a strip of sea?
Are thy foundations, Albion, so approved,
Thou canst behold such downfall all unmoved?
Have we not marked how this Briarean Gold
Doth all our life and energies enfold?
And as our practice, so our doctrines too—
We shape new ethics for our vices new;
Our sires forswear, our splendid Past defame,
And in high places glory in our shame!
Hear our loud-tinkling Tribunes all declare
Once lavish England hath no blood to spare,
No gold to spend; within her watery wall
She needs to roll and wallow in it all.
Doth towering Might some poor faint Cause oppress,
They bid her turn, impartial, from distress;
Indulge her tears, but hide her ire from sight,
Lest a like doom her angry front invite.
And when this craven caution fails to save
Her peaceful fortunes from the braggart glaive,
They bid her still be moral and be meek,
Hug tight her gold, and turn the other cheek.
Her very sons, sprung from her mighty loins,
We aliens make, to save some paltry coins;
With our own hands destroy our Empire old,
And stutter, 'All is lost, except our gold!'
With languid limbs, by comfortable fire,
We see our glories, one by one, expire;
A Nelson's flag, a Churchill's flashing blade,
Debased to menials of rapacious Trade;
Lost by a Cardwell what a Wellesley won,
And by a Gladstone Chatham's world undone!
Pale, gibbering spectres fumbling at the helm,

Whilst dark winds howl, and billowy seas o'erwhelm.
Yet deem you, England, that you thus will save,
Even your wealth from rapine or the grave?
Will your one chain of safety always hold,
Or `silver streak' for ever guard your gold?
If through long slumbrous years the ignoble rust
Of selfish ease your erst bright steel encrust,
When Storm impends, you vainly will implore
The Gods of Ocean to protect your shore.
Bribed by the foe, behold Britannia stand
At Freedom's portals with a traitress hand,
Help the Barbarian to its sacred hold,
Then, like Tarpeia, sink oppressed with Gold!

Perish the thought! O, rather let me see
Conspiring myriads bristling on the sea,
Our tranquil coasts bewildered by alarms,
And Britain, singly, face a World in arms!
What if a treacherous Heaven befriend our foes?
Let us go down in glory, as we rose!
And if that doom-the best that could betide-
Be to our Fame by envious Fate denied,
Then come, primeval clouds and seasons frore,
And wrap in gloom our luckless land once more!
Come, every wind of Heaven that rudely blows,
Plunge back our Isle in never-ending snows!
Rage, Eurus, rage! fierce Boreas, descend!
With glacial mists lost Albion befriend!
E'en of its name be every trace destroyed,
And Dark sit brooding o'er the formless Void!

Alfred Austin

The Golden Year!

When piped the love-warm throstle shrill,
And all the air was laden
With scent of dew and daffodil,
I saw a youth and maiden,
Whose colour, Spring-like, came and fled,
'Mong purple copses straying,
While birchen tassels overhead
Like marriage-bells kept swaying;
Filled with that joy that lingers still,
Which Eve brought out of Aiden,-
With scent of dew and daffodil
When all the air was laden.

When primrose banks turn pale and fade,
And meads wax deep and golden,
And in lush dale and laughing glade
Summer's gay Court is holden,
Them, nestling close, again I saw,
Affianced girl and lover,
She looking up with eyes of awe
To burning gaze above her;
Playing anew the part oft played,
Sung by the poets olden,-
When primrose banks turn pale and fade,
And meads wax deep and golden.

When autumn woods began to glow,
And autumn sprays to shiver,
Once more I saw them walking slow,
By sedgy-rustling river.
The season's flush was on her cheek,
The season's sadness o'er him:
He stroked her hand, and bade her speak
Of all the love she bore him.
That only made her tears to flow,
And chill his heart to quiver,-
While autumn woods began to glow,
And autumn sprays to shiver.

When winter fields stretched stiff and stark,
And wintry winds shrilled eerie,
I saw him creep, alone, at dark,
Into the churchyard dreary.
He laid him down against the stone,
'Neath which she aye lay sleeping,
Kissed its cold face with many a moan,
Then loudly fell a-weeping:
'` Oh! let me in from lonely cark,
Or come thou back, my dearie!'"-
But the wintry fields stretched stiff and stark,
And the wintry winds shrilled eerie!

Alfred Austin

The Haymakers' Song

HERE'S to him that grows it,
Drink, lads, drink!
That lays it in and mows it,
Clink, jugs, clink!
To him that mows and makes it,
That scatters it and shakes it,
That turns, and teds, and rakes it,
Clink, jugs, clink!

Now here 's to him that stacks it,
Drink, lads, drink!
That thrashes and that tacks it,
Clink, jugs, clink!
That cuts it out for eating,
When March-dropp'd lambs are bleating,
And the slate-blue clouds are sleeting,
Drink, lads, drink!

And here 's to thane and yeoman,
Drink, lads, drink!
To horseman and to bowman,
Clink, jugs, clink!
To lofty and to low man,
Who bears a grudge to no man,
But flinches from no foeman,
Drink, lads, drink!

Alfred Austin

The lark confinèd in his cage

The lark confinèd in his cage,
And captive in his wing,
Though fluttering with imprisoned rage,
Forbareth not to sing.

But still the strain, though loud and long,
Is but the mock of mirth,
Not that dawn-dewy nuptial song
That weddeth Heaven with Earth.

Voice that in freedom seems so soft,
Fettered, sounds harsh and rough.
Listen! He shrilleth far too oft,
Nor faltereth half enough.

And I, still feebler it not free,
Do hourly more and more
Grow silent in captivity,
And, if I sing, must soar.

And as the lark's free carol floats
High on a sea of sound,
So let me fling my random notes
To ripple round and round.

Hark! now he shakes the towering skies,
A carillon of light,
Then dwindleth to a faint surmise,
Still singing out of sight.

And, though in clearest light arrayed
The Poet's song should shine,
Sometimes his far-off voice will fade
Into the dim divine.

Then we with following ear and heart
Should listen to the end,
Though we descry may but in part,
And dimly apprehend.

Lo! soon he quits his heavenly quest,
Slow-carolling into sight,
Then, quavering downward, strikes his nest,
Earthward aerolite.

So doubt not, dear, that if I soar
Where none longwhile may dwell,
Though Heaven at times may be my home,
Home is my Heaven as well.

Alfred Austin

The Last Redoubt

Kacelyevo's slope still felt
The cannon's bolt and the rifles' pelt;
For a last redoubt up the hill remained,
By the Russ yet held, by the Turk not gained.

Mehemet Ali stroked his beard;
His lips were clinched and his look was weird;
Round him were ranks of his ragged folk,
Their faces blackened with blood and smoke.

``Clear me the Muscovite out!" he cried,
Then the name of ``Allah!" resounded wide,
And the rifles were clutched and the bayonets lowered,
And on to the last redoubt they poured.

One fell, and a second quickly stopped
The gap that he left when he reeled and dropped;
The second,-a third straight filled his place;
The third,-and a fourth kept up the race.

Many a fez in the mud was crushed,
Many a throat that cheered was hushed,
Many a heart that sought the crest
Found Allah's throne and a houri's breast.

Over their corpses the living sprang,
And the ridge with their musket-rattle rang,
Till the faces that lined the last redoubt
Could see their faces and hear their shout.

In the redoubt a fair form towered,
That cheered up the brave and chid the coward;
Brandishing blade with a gallant air,
His head erect and his temples bare.

``Fly! they are on us!" his men implored;
But he waved them on with his waving sword.
``It cannot be held; 'tis no shame to go!"
But he stood with his face set hard to the foe.

Then clung they about him, and tugged, and knelt.
He drew a pistol out from his belt,
And fired it blank at the first that set
Foot on the edge of the parapet.

Over, that first one toppled; but on
Clambered the rest till their bayonets shone,
As hurriedly fled his men dismayed,
Not a bayonet's length from the length of his blade.

``Yield!" But aloft his steel he flashed,
And down on their steel it ringing clashed;

Then back he reeled with a bladeless hilt,
His honour full, but his life-blood spilt.

Mehemet Ali came and saw
The riddled breast and the tender jaw.
``Make him a bier of your arms," he said,
``And daintily bury this dainty dead!"

They lifted him up from the dabbled ground;
His limbs were shapely, and soft, and round.
No down on his lip, on his cheek no shade:-
``Bismillah!" they cried, ``'tis an Infidel maid!"

``Dig her a grave where she stood and fell,
'Gainst the jackal's scratch and the vulture's smell.
Did the Muscovite men like their maidens fight,
In their lines we had scarcely supped to-night."

So a deeper trench 'mong the trenches there
Was dug, for the form as brave as fair;
And none, till the Judgment trump and shout,
Shall drive her out of the Last Redoubt.

Alfred Austin

The Lover's Song

When Winter hoar no longer holds
The young year in his gripe,
And bleating voices fill the folds,
And blackbirds pair and pipe;
Then coax the maiden where the sap
Awakes the woodlands drear,
And pour sweet wildflowers in her lap,
And sweet words in her ear.
For Springtime is the season, sure,
Since Love's game first was played,
When tender thoughts begin to lure
The heart of April maid,
Of maid,
The heart of April maid.

When June is wreathed with wilding rose,
And all the buds are blown,
And O, 'tis joy to dream and doze
In meadows newly mown;
Then take her where the graylings leap,
And where the dabchick dives,
Or where the bees in clover reap
The harvest for their hives.
For Summer is the season when,
If you but know the way,
A maid that's kissed will kiss again,
Then pelt you with the hay,
The hay,
Then pelt you with the hay.

When sickles ply among the wheat,
Then trundle home the sheaves,
And there's a rustling of the feet
Through early-fallen leaves;
Entice her where the orchard glows
With apples plump and tart,
And tell her plain the thing she knows,
And ask her for her heart.
For Autumn is the season, boy,
To gather what we sow:
If you be bold, she won't be coy,
Nor ever say you no,
Say no,
Nor ever say you no.

When woodmen clear the coppice lands,
And arch the hornbeam drive,
And stamp their feet, and chafe their hands,
To keep their blood alive;
Then lead her where, when vows are heard,
The church-bells peal and swing,
And, as the parson speaks the word,

Then on her clap the ring.
For Winter is a cheerless time
To live and lie alone;
But what to him is snow or rime,
Who calls his love his own,
His own,
Who calls his love his own?

Alfred Austin

The Mountains

The Mountains

What ails you, Ocean, that nor near nor far,
Find you a bourne to ease your burdened breast,
But throughout time inexorable are
Never at rest?

With foaming mouth and fluttering crest you leap
Impatiently towards never-shifting beach,
Then wheel, and hurry to some distant deep
Beyond your reach.

Nor golden sands nor sheltering combs can slake
Your fretful longing for some shore unknown,
And through your shrineless pilgrimage you make
Unending moan.

The Sea

Nimbused by sunlight or enwreathed in snow,
Lonely you stand, and loftily you soar,
While I immeasurably ebb and flow
From shore to shore.

I see the palm-dates mellowing in the sun,
I hear the snow-fed torrents bound and brawl,
And if, where'er I range, content with none,
I know them all.

Inward the ice-floes where the walrus whet
Their pendent tusks, I sweep and swirl my way,
Or dally where 'neath dome and minaret
The dolphins play.

Beneath or bountiful or bitter sky
If I myself can never be at rest,
I lullaby the winds until they lie
Husht on my breast.

The Mountains

Till they awake, and from your feeble lap
Whirl through the air, and in their rage rejoice:
Then you with levin-bolt and thunderclap
Mingle your voice.

But I their vain insanity survey,
And on my silent brow I let them beat.
What is there it is worth my while to say
To storm or sleet?

I hear the thunder rumbling through the rain,
I feel the lightning flicker round my head;
The blizzards buffet me, but I remain
Dumb as the dead!

Urged by the goad of stern taskmaster Time,
The Seasons come and go, the years roll round.
I watch them from my solitude sublime,
Uttering no sound.

For hate and love I have nor love nor hate;
To be alone is not to be forlorn:
The only armour against pitiless Fate
Is pitying scorn.

The Sea
Yet do I sometimes seem to hear afar
A tumult in your dark ravines as though
You weary of your loneliness, and are
Wrestling with woe.

The Mountains
When the white wolves of Winter to their lair
Throng, and yet deep and deeper sleeps the snow,
I loose the avalanche, to shake and scare
The vale below.

And, when its sprouting hopes and brimming glee
Are bound and buried in a death-white shroud,
Then at the thought that I entombed can be,
I laugh aloud.

The Sea
I grieve with grief, at anguish I repine,
I dirge the keel the hurricane destroys:
For all the sorrows of the world are mine,
And all its joys.

And when there is no space 'twixt surf and sky,
And all the universe seems cloud and wave,
It is the immitigable wind, not I,
That scoops men's grave.

I wonder how the blast can hear them moan
For pity, yet keep deaf unto their prayers.
I have too many sorrows of my own,
Not to feel theirs.

And when the season of sweet joy comes round,
My bosom to their rapture heaves and swells;
And closer still I creep to catch the sound
Of wedding bells.

I see the children digging in the sand,
I hear the sinewy mariners carouse,
And lovers in the moonlight, hand-in-hand,

Whispering their vows.

You in your lofty loneliness disdain
Suffering below and comfort from above.
The sweetest thing in all the world is pain
Consoled by Love.

Alfred Austin

The Old Land And The Young Land

The Young Land said, `` I have borne it long,
But can suffer it now no more;
I must end this endless inhuman wrong
Within hail of my own free shore.
So fling out the war-flag's folds, and let the righteous cannons roar!"

'Twas a quick, rash word, for the strong Young Land
Is a Land whose ways are peace;
It weareth no mail, and its keels are manned
With cotton, and corn, and fleece,
While lands there are that live cased in steel, and whose war-hammers never cease.

And these, when they saw the Young Land gird
Its loins to redress the wrong,
Whispered one to the other, `` Its heart is stirred,
But its hosts are an undrilled throng,
And its bolts yet to forge, so quick let us strike before that it grows too strong."

And they said to the Old Land, `` Surely you
Will help us to foil its claim?
It waxeth in strength, as striplings do,
And it girds at its parent's name.
Take heed lest its overweening growth overshadow your fading fame."

Then the Old Land said, `` Youth is strong and quick,
And Wisdom is strong but mild;
And blood than water is yet more thick,
And this Young Land is my child.
I am proud, not jealous, to watch it grow."
Thus the Old Land spake and smiled.

`` And look you," it said, `` at the strong Young Land
Strike for Freedom and Freedom's growth;
Which makes 'twixt us twain, though unsigned by hand,
A bond strong as lovers' troth.
So 'ware what you do, for, if you strike, you will strike not one, but both."

Then they fretted and chafed; for, though shod in steel,
Their war-tread stops at the shore,
While the Old Land's breath is the breath of the gale,
And its music the wave-wind's roar.
Then they hated the Young Land's youth and strength, but they hated the Old Land more.

Now the Old Land, in turn, for Freedom's Cause
Speeds her sons to the Southern zone,
They snarl, `` Let us clip the Lion's claws,
The Lion that stands alone;
And harry her lair, and spear her cubs, and sit on the Lion's throne."

And the Young Land laughs: `` With her foamsteeds fleet,
I guess she's a match for you all.

She hath saddled the sea, and more firm her seat
Than yours, that would ride for a fall,
If you put all your fighting force afield, and charged at her watery wall.

`` But if ever, hemmed in by a world of foes,
Her sinews were sorely tried,
By the self-same blood in our veins that flows,
You would find me at her side,
So long as she strikes for the Cause for which her sons and my sons have died."

And thus let it be until wrong shall end,
This bond strong as lovers' troth,
'Twixt Old Land and Young Land, to defend
Man's freedom and freedom's growth,
So if any should band against either now, they must meet, not one, but both!

Alfred Austin

The Owl And The Lark

A grizzled owl at midnight moped
Where thick the ivy glistened;
So I, who long have vainly groped
For wisdom, leaned and listened.

Its perch was firm, its aspect staid,
Its big eyes gleamed and brightened;
Now, now at last, will doubt be laid,
Now yearning be enlightened.

``Tu-whit! Tu-whoo!" the bird discoursed,
``Tu-whoo! Tu-whit!" repeated:
Showing how matter was, when forced
Through space, condensed and heated;

How rent, but spinning still, 'twas sphered
In star, and orb, and planet,
Where, as it cooled, live germs appeared
In lias, sand, and granite:

And, last, since nothing 'neath the sun
Avoids material tether,
How life must end, when once begun,
In scale, and hoof, and feather.

Then, flapping from the ivy-tod,
It slouched around the gable,
And, perching there, discussed if God
Be God, or but a fable.

In pompous scales Free Will and Fate
Were placed, and poised, and dangled,
And riddles small from riddles great
Expertly disentangled.

It drew betwixt ``Tu-whit," ``Tu-whoo,"
Distinctions nice and nicer:
The bird was very wise, I knew,
But I grew no whit wiser.

Then, letting metaphysics slip,
It mumbled moral thunder;
Showing how Virtue's self will trip
If Reason chance to blunder.

Its pleated wings adown its breast
Were like a surplice folded;
And, if the truth must be confessed,
It threatened me and scolded.

I thought the lecture somewhat long,
Impatient for its ending;

When, sudden, came a burst of song!
It was the lark ascending.

Dew gleamed in many a jewelled cup,
The air was bright and gracious;
And away the wings and the song went up,
Up through the ether spacious.

They bubbled, rippled, up the dome,
In sprays of silvery trilling;
Like endless fountain's lyric foam,
Still falling, still refilling.

And when I could no more descry
The bird, I still could hear it;
For sight, but not for soul, too high,
Unseen but certain Spirit.

All that the perched owl's puckered brow
Had vainly bid me ponder,
The lark's light wings were solving now
In the roofless dome up yonder.

Then brief as lightning-flash,-no more,-
I passed beyond the Finite;
And, borne past Heaven's wide-open door,
Saw everything within it.

Slow showering down from cloudless sphere,
The wanderer Elysian
Dropped nearer, clearer, to the ear,
Then back into the vision.

On his own song he seemed to swim;
Diving through song, descended:
Since I had been to Heaven with him,
Earth now was apprehended.

O souls perplexed by hood and cowl,
Fain would you find a teacher,
Consult the lark and not the owl,
The poet, not the preacher.

While brains mechanic vainly weave
The web and woof of thinking,
Go, mount up with the lark, and leave
The bird of wisdom blinking.

Alfred Austin

The Passing Of Spring

Spring came out of the woodland chase,
With her violet eyes and her primrose face,
With an iris scarf for her sole apparel,
And a voice as blithe as a blackbird's carol.

As she flitted by garth and slipped through glade,
Her light limbs winnowed the wind, and made
The gold of the pollened palm to float
On her budding bosom and dimpled throat.

Then, brushing the nut-sweet gorse, she sped
Where the runnel lisps in its reedy bed,
O'er shepherded pasture and crested fallow,
And buskined her thigh with strips of sallow.

By the marigold marsh she paused to twist
The gold-green coils round her blue-veined wrist,
And out of the water-bed scooped the cresses,
And frolicked them round her braidless tresses.

She passed by the hazel dell, and lifted
The coverlet fern where the snow had drifted,
To see if it there still lingered on,
Then shook the catkins, and laughed, 'Tis gone!

Through the crimson tips of the wintry brake
She peeped, and shouted, 'Awake! Awake!'
And over the hill and down the hollow
She called, 'I have come. So follow, follow!'

Then the windflower looked through the crumbling mould,
And the celandine opened its eyes of gold,
And the primrose sallied from chestnut shade,
And carried the common and stormed the glade.

In sheltered orchard and windy heath
The dauntless daffodils slipped their sheath,
And, glittering close in clump and cluster,
Dared norland tempests to blow and bluster.

Round crouching cottage and soaring castle
The larch unravelled its bright-green tassel;
In scrub and hedgerow the blackthorn flowered,
And laughed at the May for a lagging coward.

Then, tenderly ringing old Winter's knell,
The hyacinth swung its soundless bell,
And over and under and through and through
The copses there shimmered a sea of blue.

Like a sunny shadow of cloudlet fleeting,
Spring skimmed the pastures where lambs were bleating;

Along with them gambolled by bole and mound,
And raced and chased with them round and round.

To the cuckoo she called, `Why lag you now?
The woodpecker nests in the rotten bough;
The song-thrush pipes to his brooding mate,
And the thistledfinch pairs: you alone are late.'

Then over the seasonless sea he came,
And jocundly answered her, name for name,
And, falsely flitting from copse to cover,
Made musical mock of the jilted lover.

But with him there came the faithful bird
That lives with the stars, and is nightly heard
When the husht babe dimples the mother's breast,
And Spring said, sighing, `I love you best.

`For sweet is the sorrow that sobs in song
When Love is stronger than Death is strong,
And the vanished Past a more living thing
Than the fleeting voice and the fickle wing.'

Then the meadows grew golden, the lawns grew white,
And the poet-lark sang himself out of sight;
And English maidens and English lanes
Were serenaded by endless strains.

The hawthorn put on her bridal veil,
And milk splashed foaming in pan and pail;
The swain and his sweetening met and kissed,
And the air and the sky were amethyst.

`Now scythes are whetted and roses blow,'
Spring, carolling, said; `It is time to go.'
And though we called to her, `Stay! O stay!'
She smiled through a rainbow, and passed away.

Alfred Austin

The Passing Of The Century

How shall we comfort the Dying Year?
Beg him to linger, or bid him go?
The light in his eyes burns dim and low,
His hands are clammy, his pulse beats slow,
He wanders and mumbles, but doth not hear.
The lanes are sodden, the leaf-drifts sere,
And the wrack is weaving his shroud of white.
Do you not see he is weary quite
Of the languor of living, and longs for night?
Lo! He is gone! Now lower him down
In the snug-warm earth, 'neath the clods of brown
And the buds of the winter aconite.

How shall we part with the bygone Year?
Cover with cypress, or wreath with bay?
He will not heed what you do or say,
He is deaf to to-morrow as yesterday.
Why do you linger about his bier?
He has gone to the Ghostland, he is not here.
We may go on our way, we may live and laugh,
Round the banqueting blaze can feast and quaff.
The purple catafalque, stately staff,
The dirges of sorrow, the songs of praise,
And the costliest monument man can raise,
Are but for the Spirit's cenotaph.

Dust unto dust, He is dead, though he
Was the last of the centuried years that flow,
We know not wherefore, we never shall know,
With the tide unebbing of Time, and go
To the phantom shore of Eternity.
Shadows to shadows, they flit and flee
Across the face of the flaming sun,
The vague generations, one by one,
That never are ended, never begun.
Where is the dome or the vault so vast,
As to coffin the bones of the perished Past,
Save the limitless tomb of Oblivion?

What tale would he tell, could the dead but speak?
` ` I was born, as I died, amid wrath and smoke,
When the war-wains rolled, and the cannons spoke,
When the vulture's cry and the raven's croak
Flapped hungrily over the dying shriek,
And nothing was seen but a blood-red streak
Betwixt lowering sky and leaden main;
When slanted and slashed the rifles' rain
Upon furrows whose harvest were sheaves of slain;
When the levin's glare by the thunder's crash
Was bellowed, and ever 'twixt flash and flash
The howl of the unspent hurricane."

Let the dead discourse with the dead. So ask
How best now to welcome the new-born Year.
She is coming, is coming, and, lo! is here,
With forehead and footstep that know not fear.
She will shrink from no pleasure, evade no task,
But there never was worn or veil or mask
Like her frank fair face and her candid soul.
Do you fathom her thoughts, can you guess her goal,
Her waywardness chasten, her fate control?
She will wend with her doom, and that doom be ours;
So greet her with carol and snow-white flowers,
And crown her with Hope's own aureole.

Yet mind her dawn of the dark, for she,
She too must pass 'neath the lych-gate porch;
And give to her keeping the vestal Torch,
That may ofttime smoulder, and sometimes scorch,
But rebrightens and burns eternally:
The beacon on land and the planet at sea,
When the night is murk, and the mist is dense,
To guide us Whither, remind us Whence,
The Soul's sure lamp through the shades of sense.
She must tread the Unknown the dead years trod;
Though rugged the road, yet the goal is God,
And the will of all-wise Omnipotence.

Alfred Austin

The Passing Of The Primroses

Primroses, why do you pass away?

Primroses
Nay, rather, why should we longer stay?
We are not needed, now stooping showers
Have sandalled the feet of May with flowers.

Surely, surely, 'tis time to go,
Now that the splendid bluebells blow,
Scattering a bridal peal, to hail
June blushing under her hawthorn veil.

We abode with you all the long winter through:
You may not have seen us, but we saw you,
Chafing your hands in the beaded haze,
And shivering home to your Yuletide blaze.

Why should we linger, when all things pass?
We have buried old Winter beneath the grass,
Seen the first larch break, heard the first lamb bleat,
Watched the first foal stoop to its mother's teat:

The crocus prick with its spears aglow
'Gainst the rallying flakes of the routed snow,
The isle-keeping titmouse wed and hatch,
And the swallow come home to its native thatch:

Fresh emeralds jewel the bare-brown mould,
And the blond sallow tassel herself with gold,
The hive of the broom brim with honeyed dew,
And Springtime swarm in the gorse anew.

When breastplated March his trumpets blew,
We laughed in his face, till he laughed too;
Then, drying our lids when the sleet was done,
Smiled back to the smile of the April sun.

We were first to hear, in the hazel moat,
The nut-brown bird with the poet's note,
That sings, ``Love is neither false nor fleet,"
Makes passion tender, and sorrow sweet.

We were stretched on the grass when the cuckoo's voice
Bade the old grow young, and the young rejoice;
The half-fledged singer who flouts and rails,
So forces the note when his first note fails:

Who scorns, understanding but in part,
The sweet solitudes of the heart,
But might learn, from the all-year-cooing dove,
That joy hath a briefer life than love.

We would rather go ere the sweet Spring dies.
We have seen the violet droop its eyes,
The sorrel grow green where the celandine shone,
And the windflower fade ere you knew 'twas gone.

The campion comes to take our place,
And you will not miss us in brake or chase,
Now the fragile frond of the fern uncurls,
And the hawthorns necklace themselves with pearls.

When June's love crimsons the cheek of the rose,
And the meadow-swathes sweep in rhythmic rows,
And foxgloves gleam in the darkest glen,
You will not recall nor regret us then.

Leave us our heavenly lot, to cheer
Your lives in the midnight of the year;
And 'tis meet that our light should be withdrawn,
Being stars of winter, with summer's dawn.

For we do not sink into death's dank cave;
The earth is our cradle, and not our grave:
The tides and the stars sway it low and high,
And the sycamore bees hum lullaby.

But when winds roam lonely and dun clouds drift,
Let Winter, the white-haired nurse, but lift
The snowy coverlet softly, then
We will open our eyelids, and smile again.

How oft have you longed that your little ones would
Outgrow not the charm of babyhood,
Keep the soft round arms and the warm moist kiss,
And the magic of April sinlessness!

Then chide us not, now we look good-bye:
We are the children for whom you sigh.
We slip 'neath the sod before summer's prime,
And so keep young to the end of time.

Alfred Austin

The Poet And The Muse

Whither, and whence, and why hast fled?
Thou art dumb, my muse; thou art dumb, thou art dead,
As a waterless stream, as a leafless tree.
What have I done to banish thee?

But a moon ago, the whole day long
My ears were full of the sound of song;
And still through my darkly silent dreams
Plashed the fitful music of far-off streams.

When the night turned pale and the stars grew dim,
The morning chanted a dewy hymn.
The fragrant languor of cradled noon
Was lulled by the hum of a self-sung tune.

Joy came on the wings of a jocund lay,
And sorrow in harmony passed away;
And the sunny hours of tideless time
Were buoyed on the surges of rolling rhyme.

The moon went up in a cloudless sky,
Silently but melodiously;
And the glitter of stars and the patter of rain
Were notes and chords of an endless strain.

And vision, and feeling, and sound, and scent,
Were the strings of a sensitive instrument,
That silently, patiently, watched and waited,
And unto my soul reverberated.

In the orchard reddens the rounded fruit
'Mid the yellowing leaves, but my voice is mute.
The thinned copse sighs like a heart forsaken,
But not one chord of my soul is shaken.

Through the gloaming broadens the harvest moon;
The fagged hind whistles his homeward tune;
The last load creaks up the hamlet hill;
'Tis only my voice, my voice that is still.

(The Muse answers)
Poet, look in your poet's heart.
It will tell you what keepeth us twain apart.
I have not left you; I still am near.
But a music not mine enchants your ear.

Another hath entered and nestles deep
In the lap of your love, like a babe asleep.
You watch her breathing from morn till night;
She is all your hearing and all your sight.

Yet fear not, poet, to do me wrong.
She is sweeter far than the sweetest song.
One looks and listens the way she went,
As towards lark that is lost in the firmament.

So gladly to her I you resign,
Her caress is tenderer much than mine;
I hover round you, and hear her kiss
With wonder at its melodiousness.

When you gaze on the moon, you see but her.
You hear her feet when the branches stir;
And sunrise and sunset and starlight only
Make their beauty, without her, feel more lonely.

So how should you, poet, hope to sing?
The lute of Love hath a single string.
Its note is sweet as the coo of the dove;
But 'tis only one note, and the note is Love.

But when once you have paired and built your nest,
And can brood therein with a settled breast,
You will sing once more, and your voice will stir
All hearts with the sweetness gained from her.

Alfred Austin

The Reply Of Q. Horatius Flaccus To A Roman

Good friends, you urge my Odes grow trite,
And that of worthless station,
Of fleeting youth and joy, I write
With endless iteration.

But say, in mortals, base or great,
Have you a change detected?
Are they, when victors, less elate,
When vanquished, less dejected?

Do they no more in mundane mire
For golden garbage scramble?
Or, but companioned with the lyre,
Up twisting Anio ramble?

Hath fortune ceased to prove a jade?
Hath favour waxed less fickle?
Hath shamed Bellona dropped her blade,
Or Death put up his sickle?

Doth age no longer rime the hair?
Finds Virtue always supper?
Or, when cit. rides a Knight, doth Care
No more bestride the crupper?

Do not the rosy hours wax pale,
New loves old loves disherit;
And sleight of golden showers prevail
'Gainst Danae's brazen turret?

Sooth, verbum sap. But then, Jove knows!
Men are not wise, but foolish,
Whether they scan Soracte's snows,
Or those near Ballachulish.

Still, still they hug the bestial sty,
And have not changed one wee bit;
Unpleasing truth, which `` Repeti-
Ta decies (non) placebit."

Ask such to share my Sabine meal!
To twine the parsley classic!
For such to break the Manlian seal,
And liberate my Massic!

A pretty tale! Why, ken you not,
Good friends, as lately showed I,
In verse already you've forgot,-
Profanum vulgus odi?

Fair maid or Minister I dine,
Toast Rome or Alma Venus:

When Lydia will not kiss my wine,
Why, then, I ask Maecenas.

For such and self the chords I strike
Of wisdom, love, and scorning;
And if the world my themes dislike,
Well,-gentlemen, Good morning!

Alfred Austin

The Silent Muse

``Why have you silent been so long?"
In tones of mild rebuke you ask.
Know you not, kindly friend, that Song
Is the ``Gay Science," not a task?

It is but when it pleaseth God
The blackthorn blows, the acorns fall;
The Muse ignores a mortal's nod,
And will not come to beck and call.

If I, to catch the ear of men,
Should go on singing day by day,
What other, better, were I then,
Than screeching chough or scolding jay?

But save the unseen source be stirred,
The happy numbers will not flow:
Then one is like a songless bird
That crouches in the drifted snow.

Say, did you ever sit and dream,
When summer clouds are white and still,
Beside a slow unsounding stream
That winds below some rustic mill?

The languid current scarcely moves;
At times you almost doubt it flows;
Loitering in shallow sandy grooves,
It makes no music as it goes.

The sluice is down, the mill-race still,
Nor in mid-stream nor water's edge
Comes faintest ripple, tiniest rill,
To stir the flag, or sway the sedge.

Beside the dozing stream you doze,
For nothing wakes in air or sky:
It feels as if Time's eyelids close,
And 'tis the same to live or die;

To be a passive part of all
That rounds Heaven's universal plan,
Of things that soar, of things that crawl,
Of mindless matter, as of man.

When slowly through the noonday sleep
A phantom something seems to stir,
Like waves of dewy light that creep
Along gray chords of gossamer.

At first it is nor sight nor sound,
But feeling only, inward sense

Of motion slowly rising round,
You know not where, you know not whence.

Then, noiseless still, but plain to see,
The languid waters wake and wind;
The wave before now fears to be
O'ertaken by the wave behind.

The race, long pent, from out the mill
Comes rushing, rippling, gleam on gleam;
The runnels rise, the shallows fill,
And deep and happy flows the stream.

The lazy sedges sway and swerve,
The reedmace rocks its heavy head;
Past many a bend, and bay, and curve,
The river revels through its bed.

And as it twists, and curls, and sweels,
From out its leaping heart there come
Sounds sweet as far-off village bells,
Or swarming bee-hive's honeyed hum.

Through quaking grass and waving weed
Rises and falls the river-theme;
Vibrating rush and trembling reed
Are but the harpstrings of the stream.

Once more the gold-ribbed gravel trills
With quavering trebles clear and cool,
Blent with the deeper note that fills
The plunging weir and swirling pool.

Bed, bank and channel, chant and chime,
And fall and freshet, as they run,
Though ignorant of tune and time,
Sing in melodious unison.

And so, if I be shaped to sing
What kindly hearts are pleased to hear,
And blissful were did Nature bring
A rush of music all the year;

Seasons there are it doth not flow,
When Fancy's freshets will not come,
The springs of song seem shrunk and low,
And all my being dry and dumb.

When suddenly from far-off source,
Unseen, unsounding, deep, immense,
Something, with swift resistless force,
Flushes the heart and floods the sense;

And as though Heaven and Earth did drain
Into that deep mysterious spring,
Brims all the windings of the brain;
Then like replenished stream I sing.

The will can not the stream control,
Its currents are divinely sent,
And thought and feeling, mind and soul,
Are rapt in rhythmic ravishment.

And on they flow, when once they start,
To some ordained but unguessed goal,
Through all the channels of the heart,
And all the reaches of the soul.

Then come the winged words that skim
The surface of earth's discontent
To soar up to the ether dim,
Faint heard from far-off firmament.

But, till the music stirs and swells
Within my breast, forbearing be;
Nor lightly waken slumbering bells
Above a silent sanctuary!

Alfred Austin

The smiling slopes with olive groves bedecked

`The smiling slopes with olive groves bedecked,
Now darkly green, now, as the breeze did stir,
Spectral and white, as though the air were flecked
With elfin branches laced with gossamer;

And then so faint, the eye could scarce detect
Which the gray hillside, which the foliage fair;
Until once more it dense and sombre grew,
To shift again just as the zephyr blew.

Alfred Austin

The Spring—Time, O The Spring--Time

The Spring-time, O the Spring-time!
Who does not know it well?
When the little birds begin to build,
And the buds begin to swell.
When the sun with the clouds plays hide-and-peek,
And the lambs are bucking and bleating,
And the colour mounts to the maiden's cheek,
And the cuckoo scatters greeting;
In the Spring-time, joyous Spring-time!

The Summer, O the Summer!
Who does not know it well?
When the ringdoves coo the long day through,
And the bee refills his cell.
When the swish of the mower is heard at morn,
And we all in the woods go roaming,
And waiting is over, and love is born,
And shy lips meet in the gloaming;
In the Summer, ripening Summer!

The Autumn, O the Autumn!
Who does not know it well?
When the leaf turns brown, and the mast drops down,
And the chestnut splits its shell.
When we muse o'er the days that have gone before,
And the days that will follow after,
When the grain lies deep on the winnowing-floor,
And the plump gourd hangs from the rafter;
In the Autumn, thoughtful Autumn!

The Winter, O the Winter!
Who does not know it well?
When, day after day, the fields stretch gray,
And the peewit wails on the fell.
When we close up the crannies and shut out the cold,
And the wind sounds hoarse and hollow,
And our dead loves sleep in the churchyard mould,
And we feel that we soon shall follow;
In the Winter, mournful Winter!

Alfred Austin

The White Pall Of Peace

Over the peaceful veldt,
Silently, snowflakes fall!
Silently, slow, unfelt,
Cover the Past with a pall!

Brave brother Boers, let us hie
To your and our brothers dead;
Over the spot where they lie
Tears, yours and ours, be shed!

Underneath turf, cross, and stone
Combat and discord be husht!
Blest be the heroes unknown,
Blest be their deeds and dust.

Now that the war-clamours cease,
And silently snowflakes fall,
Give we the kiss of Peace,
And one Flag be the Flag of us all!

Alfred Austin

The Wind Speaks

`` In the depth of Night, on the heights of Day,
Would you know where I rest or roam?
In vain will you search, for I nowhere stay,
And the Universe is my home.

`` When you think to descry on the craggy steep
My skirts as I mount and flee
From the wrecks I have wrought, I am sound asleep
In the cradles rocked by the sea.

`` There is never an eye that hath seen my helm,
Though I traverse the ocean's face;
There is never a foot that hath trod my Realm,
Or can guide to my dwelling-place.

`` Then how will you challenge my Will and me,
Or, how what I do, arraign?
Bewail as you may, I alone am free,
You can neither imprison nor chain.

`` Your dungeons clang on the blood-red hand,
And fetter the monster's claw.
If I merge 'neath the wave, if I level on land,
It is that my will is law.

`` You have cleared the main of the corsair's keel,
And the forest of outlaws' tread;
Your hounds follow swift on the felon's heel,
And the trail of the ravisher fled.

`` But when I harry the woods, or scour
The furrows of foam for prey,
The blushing bloom of the Spring deflower,
Or outrage the buds of May,

`` Where, where are they that can hunt me down,
Or catch up my tacking sail,
Can bridle my lust with scourge or frown,
As I speed me away on the gale?

`` I heed no menace, I hark no prayer
And, if I desire, I sate:
'Tis but when I want not that I spare,
But neither from love nor hate.

`` Let the feeble falter in their intent,
Or, slaking it, feel remorse.
Though I never refrain, I never repent
I am nothing but Will and Force.

`` The flocks of the wandering waves I hold
In the hollow of my hand,

And I let them loose, like a huddled fold,
And with them I flood the land;

``Till they swirl round villages, hamlets, thorpes,
As the cottagers flee for life:
Then I fling the fisherman's flaccid corpse
At the feet of the fisherman's wife.

``I blow from the shore as the surges swell,
And the drenched barque strains for port,
But heareth in vain the lighthouse bell
And the guns of the hailing fort.

``Where speedeth the horseman o'er sand or veldt
That boasteth a seat like mine?
I ride without stirrup, or bit, or belt,
On the back of the bounding brine.

``And it rears and plunges, it chafes and foams,
But I am its master still,
And its mettle I tame till it halts or roams
At whatever pace I will.

``I shatter the stubborn oak, and blanch
The leaves of the poplar tree,
And sweep all the chords of bough and branch,
Till I make them sound like the sea.

``O, where is there music like to mine,
When I muster my breath and roll
Through the organ pipes of the mountain pine,
Till they fill and affright the soul?

``Then smoothly and softly, 'twixt shore and shore,
I float on the dreaming mere;
And motionless then you suspend your oar,
And listen, but cannot hear.

``For I have crept to the water's edge,
And deep under reed-mace crest
Am faintly fanning the seeded sedge,
Or rocking the cygnet's nest.

``If I strip the maidenly birches bare
Of their dainty transparent dress,
It is that their limbs may look more fair
In their innocent nakedness.

``I weave from the leaves of the beech-capped steep
A coverlet gold and red,
And under its quiet warmth I creep,
And sleep till the snows are fled.

` ` Then I wake, and around the maiden's feet
I flutter each fringe and fold,
And playfully ripple the vestal pleat
That hints of her perfect mould.

` ` I linger round dimpled throat and mouth,
Till her warm lips fall apart,
And with the breath of the scented south
Keep thawing her chaste cold heart.

` ` Then she harks to the note of the nightingale
And the coo of the mated dove,
And murmurs the words of the poet's tale,
Till the whole of her life is Love.

` ` I unlimber the thunder, I aim the bolt,
Till the forest ranks waver and quail,
Then hurl down the hill and over the holt
My squadrons of glittering hail.

` ` I soar where no skylark mounts and sings,
But the heavenly anthems swell,
And fan with the force of my demon wings
The furnace of nethermost Hell.

` ` Like the Soul of Man, like God's Word and Will,
Whence I come and whither I go,
And where I abide when my voice is still,
You know not, and never shall know."

Alfred Austin

Though All The World

Though all the world should stand aside,
And leave you to your sorrow,
And you from none, or near, or wide,
A smile or tear could borrow;
I still would stand with arms outspread,
In love and trust unshaken,
To make a nest for that dear head,
By all the rest forsaken.

Come, let me crouch beside your knees,
And we will talk together-
You who have passed o'er stormy seas,
And I through tranquil weather.
What is to me the shallow scoff
Of pert or pious sneerer?
Let the base crowd move further off,
I only creep the nearer.

Sweet child! 'tis not your deep blue eyes,
Nor yet your raven tresses,
Nor that strange mystic look, more wise
Than all your mouth expresses:
'Tis not your face, 'tis not your form,
Your accents bright and clever,
Which bind me with a strength enorm,
And make me yours for ever.

And yet, and yet, 'tis all of these,
But oh! 'tis something rarer,
Makes every pleasing grace more please,
And each fair charm the fairer.
It is because your soul is high,
If your affections lowly,
That I prostrate myself and sigh
Before a shrine too holy.

And if fell clouds quenched girlhood's beam,
And cast their shadow o'er it,
Your lustre now doth brighter seem
For those dark days before it.
Like those fair lamps that change by night
Their radiance with their motion-
Burn low, then fling a flood of light
Athwart the murky ocean.

Alfred Austin

Three Sonnets Written In Mid-Channel

I

Now upon English soil I soon shall stand,
Homeward from climes that fancy deems more fair;
And well I know that there will greet me there
No soft foam fawning upon smiling strand,
No scent of orange-groves, no zephyrs bland,
But Amazonian March, with breast half bare
And sleety arrows whistling through the air,
Will be my welcome from that burly land.
Yet he who boasts his birthplace yonder lies,
Owns in his heart a mood akin to scorn
For sensuous slopes that bask 'neath Southern skies,
Teeming with wine and prodigal of corn,
And, gazing through the mist with misty eyes,
Blesses the brave bleak land where he was born.

II

And wherefore feels he thus? Because its shore
Nor conqueror's foot nor despot's may defile,
But Freedom walks unarmed about the isle,
And Peace sits musing beside each man's door.
Beyond these straits, the wild-beast mob may roar,
Elsewhere the veering demagogue beguile:
We, hand in hand with the Past, look on and smile,
And tread the ways our fathers trod before.
What though some wretch, whose glory you may trace
Past lonely hearths and unrecorded graves,
Round his Sword-sceptre summoning swarms of slaves,
Menace our shores with conflict or disgrace,-
We laugh behind the bulwark of the waves,
And fling the foam defiant in his face.

III

And can it be,-when Heaven this deep moat made,
And filled it with the ungovernable seas,
Gave us the winds for rampart, waves for frise,
Behind which Freedom, elsewhere if betrayed,
Might shelter find, and flourish unafraid,-
That men who learned to lisp at English knees
Of English fame, to pamper womanish ease
And swell the surfeits of voracious trade
Shall the impregnable breakers undermine,
Take ocean in reverse, and, basely bold,
Burrow beneath the bastions of the brine?-
Nay, England, if the citadel be sold
For lucre thus, Tarpeia's doom be thine,
And perish smothered in a grave of gold!

Alfred Austin

Through Liberty To Light

Fixed is my Faith, the lingering dawn despite,
That still we move through Liberty to Light.
The Human Tragedy.

When God out of chaos primeval divided the day from the night,
And moved on the face of the waters, ordaining,
``Let there be Light!"
And commanded the creatures that perish to people wave, wood, and wind,
Then fashioned Man after His image, and gave him the godlike mind,
He said, ``I, the Lord, now make you lord of the earth, and the air, and sea,
And I lend you My will to work My will, and now behold! you are free!

``Free to be strong or feeble, free to be false or true,
To withhold you from evil-doing, or, what I shall ban, to do;
Free to be crooked and craven, or fearless, and frank, and brave,
To love as yourself your brother, or make him your bond and slave;
To hallow the world with freedom, or fetter your fellow-men;
But, as you shall do, at the Judgment Day My
Justice will judge you then."

Then the sons of men multiplied gladly, and, proud of the boon of birth,
They teemed over main and mountain to the uttermost bounds of earth:
They built up cities and Empires, Common-wealth, Throne, and State,
And some were pillared on force and fraud, and some upon fear and hate.
For the strong cared but to enjoy their strength, the mighty to use their might,
And the vanquished were lashed to the victor's car, wherever his sword could smite.

But out of the mist of the Northern Sea a blended race arose,
Whose blood was warmed by the wind and the wave, and braced by the Winter snows;
A race with the wisdom of long-linked years, yet the hopeful heart of youth,
Who hated the lie and the liar, and dared both to speak and hear the truth;
Who loved the Light for the Light's own sake, and, as none but who love it can,
Kept the Torch of Liberty still aflame, and passed it from man to man.

And they circled the sea, and they girded the earth, and they spread round the
rounded world,
And the sound of their clarions never ceased, and never their flag was furled,
And, wherever those shrilled, or this was seen, men sprang to their feet, and cried,
``Now the Tyrant shall quake on his throne for fear, and the lash no more be plied;
For the winds of Justice propel their sails, and
Liberty steers their keel,
And none but the lawless shall tremble now, and none but the haughty kneel.

``At home in their white-cliffed, green-grassed
Isle, where the woods and the waters meet,
The King is honoured upon his throne, and the
Judge revered in his seat,
And each man's own is his own to keep, and safe from the robber's clutch,
And the lowliest hearth hath sacred rights nor sceptre nor sword dare touch;
And, as it doth on the Northern strand, so it doth in the Southern sea,
And it says, as God said to Man at birth, `And now behold! you are free.'"

But apart in the Southern sea there dwelt a race, though of Northern strain,
With narrow foreheads and narrower hearts, who cherished the thong and chain,
So long as these left their own limbs free to do as their brute wills list,
To fetter and flog the sons of Ham, and to tether the stranger's wrist,
Boasting, `` Rather than not be free to make these hew for us, delve, and drudge,
Let the hellhounds of War be all unleashed, and the battle-bolts be judge!"

Then the Land of the Northern mist waxed wroth, and said, `` Now their hour has
come.
Too long to their deeds have mine ears been deaf, too long my voice been dumb.
I will wrench the rod from their boorish grasp, their lash will I snatch and seize,
Till low on their knees they grovel down, and for mercy clasp my knees.
They have called on the sword, they shall bide by the sword, and mine will I never
sheathe,
Till to dwellers in darkness it bring the Light, and Freedom to all who breathe."

Then manly to tender kissed farewell, but never a tear was shed,
And over the wave, and along with the wind, to the Southern zone they sped,
The roughly-nurtured, the gently-bred, all bound on the self-same track,
To storm the steeps and defiles of death, but never to turn them back;
And their sons that on Austral or Western shores exult in their sires' renown,
Shouted, `` Barrel and blade, we'll come to you, and gallop the despots down."

Shame, shame on you, Gaul and Teuton! that, seeing this noble deed,
You have hardened your hearts for envy, and been false to your vaunted Creed;
Should juggle with truth, should welcome the lie, should garble and gird for spite,
Pray Heaven to favour the tyrants' cause, pray
Heaven to hinder the Light.
Hark, hark to the greeting of free-born men from the Land of the Setting Sun,
`` God prosper you, dear old England! It is rightly and nobly done."

Wherever our sails have quivered, wherever our keels have ploughed,
We have carried the Flag of Freedom, unfurled it from mast and shroud.
It hath weathered the storm of battle, it guardeth the paths of peace,
And will watch over Right both day and night, till the day and the night shall cease;
And, while there's a chain to shatter, and, while there's a wrong to right,
Its watchword shall be God's gift to man,
`` Through Liberty, on to Light!"

Alfred Austin

Time's Defence

`` Why am I deemed an enemy of men
Who would beyond Life's limit life prolong?
If they believe that they will live again,
How can it be that I have done them wrong?
Is it not I who rout the Winter snows,
And Spring's melodious symphonies renew,
Bring back the blush unto the budding rose,
And christen Summer's birth with morning dew?
'Tis I that ring the silvery nuptial peal,
When streams the Bridal up the rustic nave,
And if around the bier where mourners kneel
I toll the passing-bell and dig the grave,
From death and grief I half dispel the gloom,
Inscribing words of hope upon the loved one's tomb."

Alfred Austin

Time's Weariness

Slow Time, that carrieth such a monstrous load
From every stage and hostel of the Past,
Do you not weary of the endless road,
And ask how long Life's journeying will last?
Still growing burden on your patient back,
Piled are the medley miseries of mankind,
No bourne in sight along the lengthening track,
No comfort seen, before you or behind.
Should you but swerve or stagger in your pace,
Hope with strained halter tuggeth you along,
And where old sores still leave their smarting trace,
Hard on your heels Fate plies its knotted thong.
So must you on, though panting and distressed,
Not even death for solace or for rest.

Alfred Austin

'Tis because, though in dusky bower

'Tis because, though in dusky bower,
With love delighted still thou art;
Nor hath the deepening twilight power
To lay a curfew on thy heart.
Thou lovest; and, loving, dost prolong
The sense of sunlight with thy song.

Alfred Austin

To Alfred Tennyson

Poet! in other lands, when Spring no more
Gleams o'er the grass, nor in the thicket-side
Plays at being lost and laughs to be descried,
And blooms lie wilted on the orchard floor,
Then the sweet birds that from Ægean shore
Across Ausonian breakers thither hied,
Own April's music in their breast hath died,
And croft and copse resound not as before.
But, in this privileged Isle, this brave, this blest,
This deathless England, it seems always Spring.
Though graver wax the days, Song takes not wing.
In Autumn boughs it builds another nest:
Even from the snow we lift our hearts and sing,
And still your voice is heard above the rest.

Alfred Austin

To Arms!

World! to arms!
Do you shrink?
What! shrink when the hoofs of the Cossack are crushing
The bosom of mother, the tonsure of priest,
And the youth of a nation, pain-maddened, is rushing
On visible doom, as to tourney or feast?
When the savagest hell-hounds that ever existed
Are hunting the tender and brave of our race,
And the lash of the insolent Tartar is twisted
With mock of defiance, and cracked in your face-
Do you shrink?

World! to arms!
Do you shrink, gallant France, when the blood of a nation,
Ne'er stinted for you, for itself flows in vain?
Aroused by the might of a grand inspiration,
Avenge with your war-clang the souls of the slain.
If you shrink, may you never know ending or respite
To strife internecine and factional hate,
Except when the hand of liberticide despot
Imposes on all one opprobrious fate!
France! to arms!

Do you shrink?
You! politic Austria! now that you only,
If feebly you hesitate, hasten your doom-
Have you yet not discovered that, selfish and lonely,
An Empire but marches blindfold to the tomb?
Let a penitent sword in sublime vindication
Of Freedom its manifold mischiefs undo:
If you shrink, may the multiplied wrongs of each nation
You ever have outraged be hurled back on you!
Do you shrink?

World! to arms!
O my beautiful Italy! nought of misgiving
Doth trouble the summons that touches your pride;
The graves of your slaughtered are fresh, but your living
Are throbbing to conquer, or sleep at their side.
By your maidens equipped, in whose beauty exult you,
Your sons must make ready with pennon and sheen
To go straight. If you shrink-but I will not insult you,
Who, often unfortunate, never were mean.
Then, to arms!

World! to arms!
Do you shrink?
Shrink! England! what! shrink when intoxicate Tartar,
Deriding your wrath, rides in blood to the waist?
When the flesh of the virgin, the bones of the martyr,
The breast of the matron, are bared and defaced?
Do you deem diplomatic frivolities ample

To save you your title of moral and just,
When a horde of ensanguined barbarians trample
Mankind and remonstrance alike in the dust?
England shrink?
No! to arms!

All! to arms!
Will you wait till behind the impassable rampart
Of winter they laugh at your impotent rage,
And your war-nostrils frozen, your ironclads hampered,
Destruction-then ``Order''-shall swoop on the stage?
Yes! the spring will come back, and unbar you the ocean,
But will not the sinews relax of the slain:
Swift! to arms! Set the vengeance-charged tumbrils in motion,
As dread as God's thunder, as blest as His rain!

Alfred Austin

To Arms! (II)

Now let the cry, ``To Arms! To Arms!"
Go ringing round the world;
And swift a wave-wide Empire swarms
Round Battleflag unfurled!
Wherever glitters Britain's might,
Or Britain's banner flies,
Leap up mailed myriads with the light
Of manhood in their eyes;
Calling from farmstead, mart, and strand,
``We come! And we! And we!
That British steel may hold the land,
And British keels the sea!"

From English hamlet, Irish hill,
Welsh hearths, and Scottish byres,
They throng to show that they are still
Sons worthy of their sires:
That what these did, we still can do,
That what they were, we are,
Whose fathers fought at Waterloo,
And died at Trafalgar!
Shoulder to shoulder see them stand,
Wherever menace be,
To guard the lordship of the land
And the Trident of the sea.

Nor in the parent Isle alone
Spring squadrons from the ground;
Canadian shore and Austral zone
With kindred cry resound:
``From shimmering plain and snow-fed stream,
Across the deep we come,
Seeing the British bayonets gleam,
Hearing the British drum.
Foot in the stirrup, hilt in hand,
Free men, to keep men free,
All, all will help to hold the land
While England guards the sea!"

Comrades in arms, from every shore
Where thundereth the main,
On to the front they press and pour
To face the rifles' rain;
To force the foe from covert crag,
And chase them till they fall,
Then plant for ever England's Flag
Upon the rebel wall!
What! Wrench the Sceptre from her hand,
And bid her bow the knee!
Not while her Yeomen guard the land,
And her ironclads the sea!

Alfred Austin

To Beatrice Stuart--Wortley Ætat

Patter, patter, little feet,
Making music quaint and sweet,
Up the passage, down the stair;
Patter, patter everywhere.

Ripple, ripple, little voice;
When I hear you, I rejoice.
When you cease to crow and coo,
Then my heart grows silent too.

Frolic, frolic, little form,
While the day is young and warm.
When the shadows shun the west,
Climb up to my knee, and rest.

Slumber, slumber, little head,
Gambols o'er and night-prayers said.
I will give you in your cot
Kisses that awake you not.

Open, open, little lids!
Lambs are frisking in the meads;
Blackcaps flit from stem to stem;
Come and chirp along with them.

Change not, change not, little fay;
Still be as you are to-day.
What a loss is growth of sense,
With decrease of innocence!

Something in your little ways
Wins me more than love or praise.
You have gone, and I feel still
Void I somehow cannot fill.

Yes, you leave, when you depart,
Empty cradle in my heart,
Where I sit and rock my pain,
Singing lullaby in vain.

Come back, come back, little feet!
Bring again the music sweet
To the garden, to the stair;
Patter, chatter everywhere.

Alfred Austin

To Ellen Terry

Nay, bring forth none but daughters: daughters young,
The doubles of yourself; with face as fair,
Bearing as candid, gait as debonair,
And voice as deeply, musically strung:
That the less fortunate age, from this age sprung,
In those transmitted gleams of what you were,
May hear your laughter, gaze on your despair,
And all but know the witchery of your tongue.
Thus shall the unsteadfast dagger of Macbeth
Be nerved by his male spouse; thus Shylock's knife,
Glittering to smite, be dulled by Portia's breath;
Thus saucy Beatrice be won for life,
Juliet in loving warble out her life,
And true Ophelia madden unto death.

Alfred Austin

To England

Men deemed thee fallen, did they? fallen like Rome,
Coiled into self to foil a Vandal throng:
Not wholly shorn of strength, but vainly strong;
Weaned from thy fame by a too happy home,
Scanning the ridges of thy teeming loam,
Counting thy flocks, humming thy harvest song,
Callous, because thyself secure, 'gainst wrong,
Behind the impassable fences of the foam!
The dupes! Thou dost but stand erect, and lo!
The nations cluster round; and while the horde
Of wolfish backs slouch homeward to their snow,
Thou, 'mid thy sheaves in peaceful seasons stored,
Towerest supreme, victor without a blow,
Smilingly leaning on thy undrawn sword!

Alfred Austin

To Ireland

`` What ails you, Sister Erin, that your face
Is, like your mountains, still bedewed with tears?
As though some ancient sorrow or disgrace,
Some unforgettable wrong from far-off years,
Done to your name or wreaked upon your race,
Broods in your heart and shadows all your mind;
So that no change of Season, nor the voice
Of hopeful Time, who bids the sad rejoice,
Can lift your gloom, but you, to kind unkind,
Keep moaning with the wave, and wailing with the wind.

`` Come let us sit upon yon cliff, we twain,
Whence we may gaze across your soft green Isle,
Girt by the strong immeasurable main,
That, see! looks up, and sweetens to a smile;
And you shall talk to me of all your pain,
Through deep blue eyes and dark unbraided tresses
Hooded by wimple that your own hands weaved
When you and Winter last together grieved,
While far beneath our feet the fast foam presses
Round bluff, and creek, and bay, and seabird-sung-to nesses."

Then half withholding, yielding half, her gaze,
She smoothed her kirtle under her, and clasped
Her hands about her knees, as one who prays,
Watching the clambering billows as they grasped
At slippery rocks where wild-goats may not graze,
Then fell back foiled, shivered to spray and smoke.
And I could see the warm blood of her race
Crimson beneath her weather-beaten face:
As though her heart would break, her voice would choke,
In accents harsh with hate, and brimmed with sobs, she spoke.

`` They came across the sea with greed of spoil,
And drove me hither and thither from fen to foam,
Reaving and burning, till the blackened soil
Waxed bitter-barren as the brine they clomb,
Sterile to seed and thankless unto toil.
Harried and hunted, fleeing through the land,
I hid among the caves, the woods, the hills,
Where the mist curdles and the blind gust shrills,
Suckling my hate and sharpening my brand,
My heart against their heart, my hand against their hand.

`` And ever as I fled, they ever pursued.
They drove away my cattle and my flocks,
And left me, me a Mother! to claw for food
'Mong ocean-boulders and the brackish rocks
Where sea-hogs wallow and gorged cormorants brood;
Unroofed my hut, set the sere thatch aflame,
Scattered my hearth-fire to the wintry air,
Made what was bare before stretch yet more bare,

I waxing wilder more they strove to tame,
To force and guile alike implacably the same.

`` They would not suffer me to weep or pray:
Upon the altar of my Saints they trod;
They banned my Faith, they took my Heaven away,
And tried to rob me of my very God!
And, when I sued them leave me where I lay,
And get them hence, still, still they would not go.
They reft the spindle from my famished hands,
My kith and kin they drove to other lands,
Widowed and orphaned me! And now you know
Why all my face is wet, and all my voice is woe!"

I crept a little nearer, and I laid
My hand on hers, and fondled it with mine;
And, `` Listen, dear Sister Erin," soft I said,
`` Not to the moaning of the salt-sea brine,
Nor to the melancholy crooning made
By thoughts attuned to Sorrow's ancient song,
But to the music of a mellower day.
Forgive! Forget! lest harsher lips should say,
Like your turf fire, your rancour smoulders long.
Now let Oblivion strew Time's ashes o'er this wrong.

`` The robber bands that filled the Isle with groans
Were long since clamped and prisoned in their graves:
The flesh hath dried and shrivelled from their bones,
Their wild war-standards rotted from their staves;
Their name is nought. 'Tis thus that Time atones
For all the griefs man fastens on his kind.
The days were dire, his passions swift and fell:
His very Heaven was but a sterner Hell.
His love was thralldom, hatred black and blind,
As headstrong as the wave, as wayward as the wind.

`` Nor did alone you suffer. You too dealt
Full many a stroke, too fierce to be subdued
Till you had made the fangs of vengeance felt.
Mercy and truce you spurned, and fed the feud
Of Celt with Saxon, Saxon against Celt,
Till lust enforced whatever law forbade.
Nay! do not linger on that painful dream,
But turn and smile! as when a silvery gleam
Dimples your loughs that whilom seemed so sad,
And runs along the wave, and glistens and is glad!

`` We own our fault the greater, so we now
For balance of that wrong would make amends.
Lift the low wimple from your clouded brow,
Give me your gaze, and say that we are friends;
And be your mountains witness of that vow,

Your dewy dingles white with blossoming sloe,
Your tawny torrents tumbling to the sea:
For You are far the fairest of the Three,
And we can never, never, let you go,
Long as your warm heart beats, long as your bright eyes glow.

`` The Triune Flag, none now save Tyrants dread,
That with Imperial peace protects the world,
Hath by the sinewy sons you bore and bred
Round the wide globe been carried and unfurled.
Where danger greatest, they it was who led,
And stormed death rather than be backward driven.
Now, gaze no more across the western main,
Whose barren furrows hope still ploughs in vain.
Turn Eastward, where, through clouds by sunrise riven,
England holds out her hand, and craves to be forgiven.

`` Live your own life, but ever at our side!
Have your own Heaven, but blend your prayer with ours!
Remain your own fair self, to bridegroom bride,
Veiled in your mist and diamonded with showers,
We twain love-linked whom nothing can divide!
Look up! From Slievemore's brow to Dingle's shore,
From Inagh's lake to Innisfallen's Isle
And Garriffe's glen, the land is one green smile!
The dolphins gambol and the laverocks soar:
Lift up your heart and live, enthralled to grief no more!"

Alfred Austin

To Robert Louis Stevenson

I never saw you, never grasped your hand,
Nor wrote nor read lines absence loves to trace,
Ne'er with you sate in your accustomed place,
Nor waited for your coming on sea or land.
But this I know, if along unseen strand,
Or anywhere in God's eternal space,
You heard my voice, or I beheld your face,
That we should greet, and both would understand.
So, till that hour, wherever you abide,
On circling star, or interstellar sea,
Or where, from man's imagination free,
There moves no planet and there sounds no tide,
Welcome, as though from friend long known and tried,
This gift of loving fellowship from me.

Alfred Austin

To The Autumn Wind

O envious Autumn wind, to blow
From covert vale and woodland crest
The mellow leaves, just as they glow
Brightest and loveliest;
To strip the maples black and bare,
To rob the beeches' russet gold,
And make what was of late so fair
But rustling drift and dripping mould.

Yet if, as you have done with them,
With me you will but timely do,
I will no more your rage condemn,
But, rather, make my peace with you.
Let me not linger on, to know
The mournfulness of feelings lost,
But waft me, while as yet they glow,
Wise Autumn wind, from winter frost!

Alfred Austin

Too Late

Had you but shown me living what you show,
Now I am gone, to keep my grave-plot green,
And I but known what vainly now I know,
Lying here alone, how happy had I been!
If you with smiles had gladdened our joint home,
As now you drench my tenement with tears,
Up life's ascent together had we clomb,
And traversed hand-in-hand the slope of years.
Still is it solacing to feel you lay
Upon my sepulchre devoted flowers,
When hitherward you wend your widowed way
'Neath scorching sunshine or through drifting showers.
Pity that love is oftentimes forced by Fate,
In this unpunctual World, to come-too late!

Alfred Austin

Two Visions

The curtains of the Night were folded
Over suspended sense;
So that the things I saw were moulded
I know not how nor whence.

Straight I beheld a marble city,
Built upon wayward slopes,
Along whose paths, as if for pity,
Ran tight-drawn golden ropes.

Withal, of many who ascended,
No one appeared to use
This help, allowed in days since mended,
When folks had frailer thews.

The men, all animal in vigour,
Strode stalwart and erect;
But on their brows, in placid rigour,
Watched sovereign Intellect.

Women brave-limbed, sound-lunged, full-breasted,
Walked at a rhythmic pace;
Yet not for that the less invested
With every female grace.

Unveiled and wholly unattended,
Strolled maidens to and fro:
Youths looked respect, but never bended
Obsequiously low.

And each with other, sans condition,
Held parley brief or long,
Without provoking rash suspicion
Of marriage or of wrong.

Distinction none of wooed or winning,
And no one made remark,
Till came they where the old were spinning,
As it was growing dark,

And saying-hushed untimely laughter-
`Henceforward we are one,
Went homewards. Nor could ever after
Such Sanction be undone.

All were well clad, but none were better,
And gems beheld I none,
Save where there hung a jewelled fetter,
Symbolic, in the sun.

I found Cathedral none nor steeple,
Nor loud defiant choirs;

No martyr worshipped by the people,
On half-extinguished pyres.

But oft exclaimed they one to other,
Or as they passed or stood,
'Let us coöperate, my brother;
For God is very good.'

I saw a noble-looking maiden
Close Dante's solemn book,
Go, and return with linen laden,
And wash it in the brook.

Anon, a broad-browed poet dragging
Logs for his hearth along,
Without one single moment flagging
In shaping of his song.

Each one some handicraft attempted,
Or holp the willing soil:
None but the agèd were exempted
From communistic toil.

Yet 'twas nor long nor unremitting,
Since shared in by the whole;
But left to each one, as is fitting,
Full leisure for the Soul.

Was many a group in allocution
On problems that delight,
And lift, when e'en beyond solution,
Man to a nobler height.

And oftentimes was brave contention,
Such as beseems the wise;
But always courteous abstention
From over-swift replies.

And-I remarked-though whilst debating,
'Twas settled what they sought,
There was completest vindicating
Of unrestricted thought.

Age lorded not, nor rose the hectic
Up to the cheek of Youth;
But reigned throughout their dialectic
Sobriety of truth.

And if a long-held contest tended
To ill-defined result,
It was by calm consent suspended
As over-difficult:

And verse or music was demanded;
Then solitude of night:
By which all-potent Three expanded
Waxeth the Inner Sight.

So far the city. All around it
Olive or vine or corn;
Those having pressed or trod or ground it,
By these 'twas townwards borne,

And placed in halls unbarred and splendid,
With none to overlook,
But whither each at leisure wended,
And what he wanted took.

I saw no crippled forms nor meagre,
None smitten by disease:
Only the old, nor loth nor eager,
Dying by sweet degrees.

And when, without or pain or trouble,
These sank as sinks the sun,
'This is the sole Inevitable,'
All said; 'His will be done!'

And went, with music ever swelling,
Where slopes o'erlook the sea,
Piled up the corse with herbs sweet-smelling,
Consumed, and so set free.

O'er ocean wave and mountain daisy
As curled the perfumed smoke,
The notes grew faint, the vision hazy-
Straining my sense, I woke.

Swift I arose. Soft winds were stirring
The curtains of the Morn,
Auguring day, by signs unerring,
Lovely as e'er was born.

No bluer, calmer sky surmounted
The city of my dream,
And what few trees could then be counted
Did full as gracious seem.

But here the pleasant likeness ended
Between the cities twain:
Level and straight these streets extended
Over an easy plain.

Withal, the people who thus early

Began the ways to throng,
With curving back and visage surly,
Toiled painfully along.

Groups of them met at yet closed portals,
And huddled round the gate,
Patient, as smit by the Immortals,
And helots as by Fate.

Right many a cross-crowned front and steeple
Clave the cerulean air:
As grew the concourse of the people,
They rang to rival prayer.

On their confronting walls were posted
Placards in glaring type,
Whereof there was not one but boasted
Truth full-grown, round, and ripe.

And, with this self-congratulation,
Each one the other banned,
With threats of durable damnation
From the Eternal Hand.

Hard by, were challenges to wrangle
On any themes, or all-
From the trisection of the angle
To what they termed the Fall.

Surmounting these were Forms forbidding
Some strife about the Flood;
Since in such points divine unthridding
Shed had been human blood.

From arch and alley sodden wretches
Crept out in half attire,
And groped for fetid husks and vetches
In heaps of tossed-out mire;

Until disturbed by horses' trample,
Bearing the homeward gay,
Who, sleek and warm, with ermines ample,
And glittering diamond spray.

That lightly flecked the classic ripple
Of their full-flowing hair-
For shivering child and leprous cripple
Had not a look to spare.

With garments which the morn ill mated,
Anon came youths along;
From side to side they oscillated,

And trolled a shameful song.

Fair as is fair a cankered lily,
A girl who late did lie
Beneath my window slumbrous-stilly,
Rose as these youths came nigh.

She seized the comeliest, and stroked him,
And plied each foul device;
And having to her flesh provoked him,
Then haggled for the price.

Hereat my heart-this long while throbbing,
And brimming by degrees-
O'erflowed; and, passionately sobbing,
I dropped upon my knees.

And made forgetful by the fluster
Of trouble's fierce extreme,
I cried, `O Thou, the great Adjuster,
God, realise my dream!'

Up came the sun, and straight were shining
Steeple and sill and roof:
To such rash prayer and bold repining
A visible reproof.

Rebuked, I rose from genuflexion,
And did no more blaspheme,
Closing mine eyes for retrospection
Of the departed dream,

Where men saluted one the other,
Or as they passed or stood,
`Let us coöperate, my brother;
For God is very good.'

And I resolved, by contrast smitten,
To live and strive by Law;
And first to write, as here are written,
The Visions Twain I saw.

Alfred Austin

Unseasonable Snows

The leaves have not yet gone; then why do ye come,
O white flakes falling from a dusky cloud?
But yesterday my garden-plot was proud
With uncut sheaves of ripe chrysanthemum.
Some trees the winds have stripped; but look on some,
'Neath double load of snow and foliage bowed,
Unnatural winter fashioning a shroud
For Autumn's burial ere its pulse be numb.
Yet Nature plays not an inhuman part:
In her, our own, vicissitudes we trace.
Do we not cling to our accustomed place,
Though journeying Death have beckoned us to start?
And faded smiles oft linger in the face,
While grief's first flakes fall silent on the heart!

Alfred Austin

Victoria

The lark went up, the mower whet his scythe,
On golden meads kine ruminating lay,
And all the world felt young again and blithe,
Just as to-day.

The partridge shook her covey from her wings,
And limped along the grass; on leaf and lawn
Shimmered the dew, and every throat that sings
Chanted the dawn.

The doe was followed by her new-dropped fawn,
And, folding all her feathers on her breast,
The swan within the reed-mace deep withdrawn
Dreamed on her nest.

In the green wheat the poppy burst aflame,
Wildrose and woodbine garlanded the glade,
And, twin with maiden Summer, forth there came
A summer Maid.

Her face was as the face of mid-June when
Blossoms the meadowsweet, the bindweed blows:
Pale as a lily first She blenched, and then
Blushed like a rose.

They placed a Crown upon her fair young brow,
They put a Sceptre in her girlish hand,
Saying, ``Behold! You are Sovereign Lady now
Of this great Land!"

Silent She gazed, as one who doth not know
The meaning of a message. When She broke
The hush of awe around her, 'twas as though
Her soul that spoke.

``With this dread summons, since 'tis Heaven's decree,
I would not palter, even if I could;
But, being a woman only, I can be
Not great, but good.

``I cannot don the breastplate and the helm,
To my weak waist the sword I cannot gird,
Nor in the discords that distract a Realm
Be seen or heard.

``But in my People's wisdom will I share,
And in their valour play a helpful part,
Lending them still, in all they do or dare,
My woman's heart.

``And haply it may be that, by God's grace,
And unarmed Love's invulnerable might,

I may, though woman, lead a manly race
To higher height;

`` If wise will curb disorderly desire,
The Present hold the parent Past in awe,
Religion hallowing with its sacred fire
Freedom and Law.

`` Never be broken, long as I shall reign,
The solemn covenant 'twixt them and me,
To keep this Kingdom, moated by the main,
Loyal yet free."

Thus with grave utterance and majestic mien
She with her eighteen summers filled the Throne
Where Alfred sate: a girl, withal a Queen,
Aloft, alone!

But Love that hath the power to force apart
The bolts and baulk the sentinels of Kings,
Came o'er the sea, and in her April heart
Folded his wings.

Thenceforth more dear than diadem She owned
A princely helpmate, sharer in her trust,
If not her Sceptre: -since, withal, enthroned
By Time the just.

Scorner of wrong, and lover of the right,
Compounded all of nobleness he seemed,
And was indeed the perfect gentle Knight
The poet dreamed.

So when the storm of wrath arose that drove
Scared Rulers from their realms, Her Throne, deep laid
In liberty and trust, calm shelter gave
To Kings dismayed.

And stronger grew the bond of love and grace
Betwixt Her and her People, while that She
Reigned the glad Mother of a Royal race,
Rulers to be.

But Death that deepens love in darkening life
Turned to a pall the purple of her Throne.
Then, more than once the maid, the widowed wife
Reigned all alone!

`` Leave me awhile to linger with the dead,"
Weeping, She sued. `` But doubt not that I still
Am nuptialled to my People, and have wed
Their deathless will.

`` Their thoughts shall be my thoughts, their aim my aim,
Their free-lent loyalty my right divine;
Mine will I make their triumphs, mine their fame,
Their sorrows mine.

`` And I will be the bond to link them all
In patriot purpose till my days be done,
So that, in mind and might, whate'er befall,
They still keep One."

Then to the winds yet wider was unfurled
The Flag that tyrants never could enslave,
Till its strong wisdom governed half the world,
And all the wave!

And, panoplied alike for War or Peace,
Victoria's England furroweth still the foam
To harvest Empire, wiser than was Greece,
Wider than Rome!

Therefore with glowing hearts and proud glad tears,
The children of her Island Realm to-day
Recall her sixty venerable years
Of virtuous sway.

Now too from where Saint-Lawrence winds, adown
'Twixt forests felled and plains that feel the plough,
And Ganges jewels the Imperial Crown
That girds her brow;

From Afric's Cape, where loyal watchdogs bark,
And Britain's Sceptre ne'er shall be withdrawn,
And that young Continent that greets the dark
When we the dawn;

From steel-capped promontories stern and strong,
And lone isles mounting guard upon the main,
Hither her subjects wend to hail her long
Resplendent Reign.

And ever when mid-June's musk-roses blow,
Our Race will celebrate Victoria's name,
And even England's greatness gain a glow
From Her pure fame.

Alfred Austin

Vis Medicatrix Naturae

When Faith turns false and Fancy grows unkind,
And Fortune, more from fickleness than spite,
Takes the keen savour out of all delight,
And of sweet pulp leaves only bitter rind,
Then I the load of living leave behind,
Fleeing where, far from human sound and sight,
Over brown furrows wheels the lapwing white,
And whistles tunely with the winter wind.
For Nature's frank indifference woundeth less
Than Man's feigned smiles and simulated tears:
She is at least the egoist she appears,
Scorning to proffer or entice caress;
And, through the long reiterated years,
Endures her doom with uncomplainingness.

Alfred Austin

Wardens Of The Wave

Not to exult in braggart vein
Over a gallant foe,
Or boast of triumphs on the main,
The Gods alone bestow;
Vainglorious clarion, clamorous drum,
For which the vulgar crave,
Not these, not any such, become
The Wardens of the Wave.

No, but when slumbering war-dogs wake,
To the last gasp of breath
Face combat for one's Country's sake,
With male disdain of death;
For this did Nelson live and die,
Far from his Land and home,
Making his roof-tree of the sky,
His pillow on the foam.

And if our race to-day recall
His last triumphant doom,
Place wreaths on his unfading pall,
And flowers upon his tomb,
'Tis to remind us still to keep
Aggression's lust in awe,
And with dominion of the deep
Guard Freedom, Peace, and Law.

And not alone upon the waves
That sentinel our shore,
Service that disciplines, not enslaves,
Should rule us, as of yore;
So that our Island Citadel
May tranquilly respond
With the calm signal, ``All is well,"
To every Sea Beyond.

Alfred Austin

Were I a Poet, I would dwell

` Were I a Poet, I would dwell,
Not upon lonely height,
Nor cloistered in disdainful cell
From human sound and sight.
I would live nestled near my kind,
Deep in a garden garth,
That they who loved my verse might find
A pathway to my hearth.

` I would not sing of sceptred Kings,
The Tyrant and his thrall,
But everyday pathetic things,
That happen to us all:
The love that lasts through joy, through grief,
The faith that never wanes,
And every wilding bird and leaf
That gladdens English lanes.

` Nor would I shape for Fame my lay,
But only for the sake
Of singing, and to charm away
My own or other's ache;
To close the wound, to soothe the smart,
To heal the feud of years,
And move the misbelieving heart
To tenderness and tears.

` And when to me should come the night,
And I could sing no more,
And faithful lips could but recite
What I had sung before,
I would not have a pompous strain
Resound about my shroud,
Nor sepulchre in sumptuous fane,
Near to the great and proud.

` But only they who loved me best
Should bear me and my lyre,
And lay us, with my kin, at rest
Under the hamlet spire,
Where everything around still breathes
Of prayer that soothes and saves,
And widowed hands bear cottage wreaths
To unforgotten graves.

` And they might raise another cross
Within that hallowed ground,
And tend the flowers and trim the moss
About my grassy mound;
But, honouring me, would carve above
No impious boast of Fame,
And, not for Glory, but for Love,

Would keep alive my name.'

Alfred Austin

When Acorns Fall

When acorns fall and swallows troop for flight,
And hope matured slow mellows to regret,
And Autumn, pressed by Winter for his debt,
Drops leaf on leaf till she be beggared quite;
Should then the crescent moon's unselfish light
Gleam up the sky, just as the sun doth set,
Her brightening gaze, though day and dark have met,
Prolongs the gloaming and retards the night.
So, fair young life, new risen upon mine
Just as it owns the edict of decay
And Fancy's fires should pale and pass away,
My menaced glory takes a glow from thine,
And, in the deepening sundown of my day,
Thou with thy dawn delayest my decline.

Alfred Austin

When I Am Gone

When I am gone, I pray you shed
No tears upon the grassy bed
Where that which you have loved is laid
Under the wind-warped yew-tree's shade.
And let no sombre pomp prepare
My unreturning journey there,
Nor wailing words nor dirges deep
Disturb the quiet of my sleep;
But tender maidens, robed in white,
Who have not yet forgotten quite
The love I sought, the love I gave,
Be the sole mourners round my grave.
And neither then, nor after, raise
The bust of pride, the slab of praise,
To him who, having sinned and striven,
Now only asks to be forgiven,
That he is gone.

When I am gone, you must not deem
That I am severed, as I seem,
From all that still enchains you here,
Throughout the long revolving year.
When, as to Winter's barren shore
The tides of Spring return once more,
And, wakened by their flashing showers,
The woodland foams afresh with flowers,
You sally forth and ramble wide,
I shall walk silent at your side,
Shall watch your mirth, shall catch your smile,
Shall wander with you all the while,
And, as in many a bygone Spring,
Hear cuckoo call and ousel sing.
And, when you homeward wend, along
A land all blithe with bleat and song,
Where lambs that skip and larks that soar
Make this old world seem young once more,
And with the wildwood flowers that fill
Your April laps deck shelf and sill,
I shall be there to guide your hand,
And you will surely understand
I am not gone.

When Summer leans on Autumn's arm,
And warm round grange and red-roofed farm
Is piled the wain and thatched the stack,
And swallows troop and fieldfares pack;
When round rough trunk and knotted root
Lies thick the freshly-fallen fruit,
And 'mong the orchard aisles you muse
On what we gain, on what we lose,
Now vernal cares no more annoy,
And wisdom takes the place of joy,

I shall be there, as in past years,
To share your steps, to dry your tears,
To note how Autumn days have brought
Feelings mature and mellow thought,
The fruitful grief for others' smart,
The ripeness of a human heart.
And, when the winds wax rude and loud,
And Winter weaves the stark year's shroud,
As round the flickering household blaze
You sit and talk of vanished days,
Of parent, friend, no longer nigh,
And loves that in the churchyard lie,
And lips grow weak, and lids grow wet,
Then, then, I shall be with you yet,
Though I seem gone.

Alfred Austin

When in the long-drawn avenues of Thought

When in the long-drawn avenues of Thought
I halt, and look before me and behind,
And seek what erst I all too little sought,
Some spot secure of rest, I do not find.
Retrace my steps I dare not, lest each nook
I late rejected should reject me now,
And sweetest arbours, restlessly forsook,
No more be prone their leafage to allow.
So to the untrod distance do I strain,
Which seemeth ever further to extend;
Desiring oft, in irritable pain,
Premature sleep would bring that settled End,
When I shall know it all, or else forget
This far too little which for more doth fret.

Alfred Austin

When Runnels Began To Leap And Sing

When runnels began to leap and sing,
And daffodil sheaths to blow,
Then out of the thicket came blue-eyed Spring,
And laughed at the melting snow.
`` It is time, old Winter, you went," she said,
And flitted across the plain,
With an iris scarf around her head,
And diamonded with rain.

When the hawthorn put off her bridal veil,
And the nightingale's nocturn died,
Then Summer came forth with her milking-pail,
And hunted the Spring, and cried,
`` It is time you went; you have had your share,"
And she carolled a love-song sweet,
With eglantine ravelled about her hair,
And butter-cup dust on her feet.

When the pears swelled juicy, the apples sweet,
And thatched was the new-ricked hay,
And August was bronzing the stripling wheat,
Then Summer besought to stay.
But Autumn came from the red-roofed farm,
And `` 'Tis time that you went," replied,
With an amber sheaf on her nut-brown arm,
And her sickle athwart her side.

When the farmer railed at the hireling slut,
And fingered his fatted beeves,
And Autumn groped for the last stray nut
In the drift of her littered leaves,
`` It is time you went from the lifeless land,"
Bawled Winter, then whistled weird,
With a log for his hearth in his chilblained hand,
And sleet in his grizzled beard.

Alfred Austin

When the reaper lays the sickle by,

When the reaper lays the sickle by,
And taketh down the flail:
When all we prized, and all we planned,
Is ripe and stored at last,
And Autumn looks across the land,
And ponders on the Past.

Alfred Austin

Who Would Not Die For England!

Who would not die for England!

This great thought,
Through centuries of Glory handed down
By storied vault in monumental fane,
And homeless grave in lone barbaric lands,
Homeless but not forgotten, so can thrill
With its imperious call the hearts of men,
That suddenly from dwarf ignoble lives
They rise to heights of nobleness, and spurn
The languid couch of safety, to embrace
Duty and Death that evermore were twin.

`` Who would not die for England!"

Thus He said,
Who at the holiest of all English hearths,
The holiest and the highest, had been given
A seat, an English Princess for his Bride,-
Now at that hearth weeping her widowed tears,
Bitter and barren as the winter rain.
`` It is not meet that I, whom this famed Isle,
This generous, mighty, and majestic Land,
Ennobled as her son, should not repay
Her splendid gift of kinship. Let me go,
Go where they go, Her world-researching race,
That slumber pillowed on the half-drawn sword,
And wake at whisper of her will, to greet
Duty and Death that evermore were twin."

Who would not die for England!

And for Her
He dies, who, whether in the fateful fight,
Or in the marish jungle, where She bids,
Far from encircling fondness, far from kiss
Of clinging babes, hushes his human heart,
And, stern to every voice but Hers, obeys
Duty and Death that evermore were twin.

So across the far-off foam,
Bring him hither, bring him home,
Over avenues of wave,-
English ground,-to English grave;
Where his soldier dust may rest,
England's Flag above his breast,
And, love-tended, long may bloom
English flowers about his tomb.

Who would not die for England, that can give
A sepulture like this, 'mid hamlet crofts,
And comely cottages with old-world flowers,

And rustic seats for labour-palsied limbs,
The pensioners of Peace! I linger here,
Pondering the dark inexplicable Night,
Here by this river-girt sequestered shrine
Whose vanished walls were reared anew by Him,
Of Princes the most princely, if it be
That Wisdom, Love, and Virtue more adorn
Sarcophagus of Kings than dripping spears,
Lone wailing hearths and hecatombs of slain.
And He too died for England, He who lived
Scorning all joy save that great joy of all,
The love of one true woman, She a Queen,
Empress and Queen, yet not the more revered,
Not the more loved, for those resounding names,
Than for the lowlier titles, Gracious, Good,
The Worthiest of Women ever crowned.

Sweetest Consort, sagest Prince!
Snows on snows have melted since
England lost you;-late to learn
Worth that never can return;
Learned to know you as you were,
Known, till then, alone to Her!
Luminous as sun at noon,
Tender as the midnight moon,
Steadfast as the steered-by star,
Wise as Time and Silence are:
Deaf to vain-belittling lie,
Deaf to gibing jealousy;
Thinking only of the goal,
And, like every lofty soul,
Scanning with a far-off smile
The revilings of the vile.

Yes, He too died for England! thence withdrawn
Dim to that undiscoverable land
Where our lost loved ones dwell with wistful eyes,
And lips that look but speak not. . . . But away!
Away from these soft-whispering waves that make
A dulcet dirge around the new-delved grave,
To bluff East-Anglia, where on wind-swept lawns
The sanguine crocus peeps from underground
To feel the sun and only finds the snow;
And, whinnying on the norland blast, the surge
Leaps against iron coast with iron hoof,
As though the hosts of Denmark foamed afresh,
Caparisoned for ravin! And I see
A cradle, not a coffin, and therein
Another Child to England; and, veiled Fate
Over it bent with deep-divining gaze,
And with oracular lips, like nurse inspired,
Foretelling the fair Future.

`` Another Albert shalt Thou be, so known,
So known, so honoured, and His name shall stand
The sponsor to your spotlessness, until
Dawns the full day when, conscious of your soul,
Your soul, your self, and that high mission laid
On all of such begetting, you may seize
The sceptre of your will, and, thus-wise armed
Against the sirens of disloyal sense,
Like to your pure progenitor abide
In God's stern presence, and surrender never
That last prerogative of all your race,
To live and die for England!"

Alfred Austin

Why England Is Conservative

Because of our dear Mother, the fair Past,
On whom twin Hope and Memory safely lean,
And from whose fostering wisdom none shall wean
Their love and faith, while love and faith shall last:
Mother of happy homes and Empire vast,
Of hamlets meek, and many a proud demesne,
Blue spires of cottage smoke 'mong woodlands green,
And comely altars where no stone is cast.
And shall we barter these for gaping Throne,
Dismantled towers, mean plots without a tree,
A herd of hinds too equal to be free,
Greedy of other's, jealous of their own,
And, where sweet Order now breathes cadenced tone,
Envy, and hate, and all uncharity?

Banish the fear! 'Twere infamy to yield
To folly what to force had been denied,
Or in the Senate quail before the tide
We should have stemmed and routed in the field.
What though no more we brandish sword and shield,
Reason's keen blade is ready at our side,
And manly brains, in wisdom panoplied,
Can foil the shafts that treacherous sophists wield.
The spirit of our fathers is not quelled.
With weapons valid even as those they bore,
Domain, Throne, Altar, still may be upheld,
So we disdain, as they disdained of yore,
The foreign froth that foams against our shore,
Only by its white cliffs to be repelled!

Therefore, chime sweet and safely, village bells,
And, rustic chancels, woo to reverent prayer,
And, wise and simple, to the porch repair
Round which Death, slumbering, dreamlike heaves and swells.
Let hound and horn in wintry woods and dells
Make jocund music though the boughs be bare,
And whistling yokel guide his gleaming share
Hard by the homes where gentle lordship dwells.
Therefore sit high enthroned on every hill,
Authority! and loved in every vale;
Nor, old Tradition, falter in the tale
Of lowly valour led by lofty will:
And, though the throats of envy rage and rail,
Be fair proud England proud fair England still!

Alfred Austin

Why should I, from this long and losing strife

Why should I, from this long and losing strife
When summoned to depart, halt half-afraid?
Death is full quittance for the debts of life,
Discharging the account, though still unpaid.
Who is it that can say he still hath met
Friendship's just claim and Duty's punctual call?
How little do we give for what we get,
And but for Death we should be bankrupts all!
For loan of life the richest but compound,
Love's priceless gift we but repay in part;
Beggared and bare our balance would be found,
If all we owe were honoured by the heart.
Die, and the lenders our default forget,
Nay, though defrauded, then deem theirs the debt.

Alfred Austin

Winter Violets

Here are sad flowers, with wintry weeping wet,
Dews of the dark that drench the violet.
Thus over Her, whom death yet more endears,
Nature and Man together blend their tears.

Alfred Austin

Wordsworth At Dove Cottage

Wise Wordsworth, to avert your ken,
From half of human fate.
What is there in the ways of men,
Their struggles, or their state,
To make the calm recluse forswear
The garden path, the fire-side chair,
To journey with the Great?

The narrowest hamlet lends the heart
A realm as rich and wide
As kingdoms do, to play its part;
Who reaps not, that hath tried,
More rapture from the wayside flower
Than all the stairs and robes of power
And avenues of pride?

Whether we scan it from below,
Or bask in it above,
We weary of life's glittering show;
We tire of all save Love.
As, when fatigued with wood-notes shrill,
We listen with contentment still
To cooings of the dove.

In this low cottage nested near
Mountain and lake, you dwelt;
'Twas here you tilled the ground, 'twas here
You loved, and wrote, and knelt.
Hence, wheresoe'er your kindred dwell,
Your songs sincere our hearts compel
To feel the thing you felt.

Glory there is that lives entombed
In spacious-soaring shrine;
A tenement more narrow-roomed
Sufficient is for thine.
A homely temple haply found
Where peasants toil and streamlets sound,
Adorned not, but divine.

Your sacred music still is heard,
When notes profane have died;
Like some familiar home-bred word,
You in our lives abide.
And when with trackless feet we rove
By meadow, mountain, mere, or grove,
We feel you at our side.

Thrice-happy bard! who found at home
All joys that needful be;
Whose longings were not forced to roam
Beyond your household Three:-

Your own proud genius, steadfast, calm,
A wife whose faith was household balm,
And heavenly Dorothy.

What is it sweetens tasteless Fame?
Makes shadowy Glory bliss?
What is the guerdon poets claim?
What should it be but this?-
A heart attuned to understand,
A listening ear, a loving hand,
A smile, a tear, a kiss!

Leave them but these, and let who will
Crave plaudits from the crowd,
Its vapid incense, aves shrill,
And favour of the proud.
The sweetest minister of Fame
Is she who broods upon one's name,
But calls it not aloud.

And this at least, in full, you had,
From sister, and from wife:
They made your gravest moments glad,
They havened you from strife;
Hallowed your verse, revered your tread,
Maintained a nimbus round your head,
And deified your life.

Hence, long as gentle brows shall bend
Over your rustic page,
Their pious love shall still befriend
The poet and the sage;
For, when we cross your cottage sill,
Virtue, no less than Genius, will
Invite the Pilgrimage.

The tallest tower that ever rose
Hath but a span to soar;
Palace and fane are passing shows,
But Time will be no more,
When Wordsworth's home no longer leads
Men's far-off feet to Grasmere's meads,
And sanctifies its shore.

Alfred Austin