

Classic Poetry Series

Ada Cambridge
- poems -

Publication Date:

2012

Publisher:

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Ada Cambridge(21 November 1844 – 19 July 1926)

Ada Cambridge, later known as Ada Cross, was an English-born Australian writer.

Overall she wrote more than twenty-five works of fiction, three volumes of poetry and two autobiographical works. Many of her novels were serialised in Australian newspapers, and were never published in book form.

While she was known to friends and family by her married name, Ada Cross, she was known to her newspaper readers as A.C. Later in her career she reverted to her maiden name, Ada Cambridge, and it is thus by this name that she is known.

 Biography

Ada was born at St Germans, Norfolk, the second child of Thomasine and Henry Cambridge, a gentleman farmer. She was educated by governesses, an experience she abhorred. She wrote in a book of reminiscences: "I can truthfully affirm that I never learned anything which would now be considered worth learning until I had done with them all and started foraging for myself. I did have a few months of boarding-school at the end, and a very good school for its day it was, but it left no lasting impression on my mind." (The Retrospect, chap. IV). It was, in fact, an unmarried aunt who most contributed to her intellectual development.

On 25 April 1870 she was married to the Rev. George Frederick Cross and a few weeks later sailed for Australia. She arrived in Melbourne in August and was surprised to find it a well established city. Her husband was sent to Wangaratta, then to Yackandandah (1872), Ballan (1874), Coleraine (1877), Bendigo (1884) and Beechworth (1885), where they remained until 1893. Her *Thirty Years in Australia* (1903) describes their experiences in these parishes. She experienced her share of tragedy, including the loss of children to whooping cough and scarlet fever.

Cross at first was the typical hard-working wife of a country clergyman, taking part in all the activities of the parish and incidentally making her own children's clothes. Her health, however, broke down, for a number of reasons including a near-fatal miscarriage and a serious carriage accident, and her activities had to be reduced, but she continued to write.

In 1893 Cross and her husband moved to their last parish, Williamstown, near Melbourne, and remained there until 1909. Her husband went on the retired

clergy list at the end of 1909 with permission to operate in the diocese until 1912. In 1913 they both returned to England, where they stayed until his death on 27 February 1917. Ada returned to Australia later that year, and died in Melbourne on 19 July 1926. She was survived by a daughter and a son, Dr K. Stuart Cross.

A street in the Canberra suburb of Cook is named in her honour.

 Works

While Cambridge began writing in the 1870s to make money to help support her children, her formal published career spans from 1865 with Hymns on the Litany and The Two Surplices, to 1922 with an article 'Nightfall' in Atlantic Monthly. According to Barton, her early works 'contain the seeds of her lifelong insistence on and pursuit of physical, spiritual and moral integrity as well as the interweaving of poetry and prose which was to typify her writing writes that 'some of her ideas were considered daring and even a little improper for a clergyman's wife. She touches on extramarital affairs and the physical bondage of wives'.

In 1875 her first novel Up the Murray appeared in the Australasian but was not published separately, and it was not until 1890 with the publication of A Marked Man that her fame as a writer was er, despite regular good reviews, there were many who discounted her because she did not write in the literary tradition of the time, one that was largely non-urban and masculine, that focused on survival against the harsh environment.

She was first president of the Women Writers Club and honorary life-member of the Lyceum Club of Melbourne, and had many friends in the literary world including Grace 'Jennings' Carmicheal, Rolf Boldrewood , Ethel Turner and George Robertson.

A Dream Of Venice

NUMB, half asleep, and dazed with whirl of wheels,
And gasp of steam, and measured clank of chains,
I heard a blithe voice break a sudden pause,
Ringing familiarly through the lamp-lit night,
"Wife, here's your Venice!"

 I was lifted down,
And gazed about in stupid wonderment,
Holding my little Katie by the hand—
My yellow-haired step-daughter. And again
Two strong arms led me to the water-brink,
And laid me on soft cushions in a boat,—
A queer boat, by a queerer boatman manned—
Swarthy-faced, ragged, with a scarlet cap—
Whose wild, weird note smote shrilly through the dark.
Oh yes, it was my Venice! Beautiful,
With melancholy, ghostly beauty—old,
And sorrowful, and weary—yet so fair,
So like a queen still, with her royal robes,
Full of harmonious colour, rent and worn!
I only saw her shadow in the stream,
By flickering lamplight,—only saw, as yet,
White, misty palace-portals here and there,
Pillars, and marble steps, and balconies,
Along the broad line of the Grand Canal;
And, in the smaller water-ways, a patch
Of wall, or dim bridge arching overhead.
But I could feel the rest. 'Twas Venice!—ay,
The veritable Venice of my dreams.

I saw the grey dawn shimmer down the stream,
And all the city rise, new bathed in light,
With rose-red blooms on her decaying walls,
And gold tints quivering up her domes and spires—
Sharp-drawn, with delicate pencillings, on a sky
Blue as forget-me-nots in June. I saw
The broad day staring in her palace-fronts,
Pointing to yawning gap and crumbling boss,
And colonnades, time-stained and broken, flecked
With soft, sad, dying colours—sculpture-wreathed,

And gloriously proportioned; saw the glow
Light up her bright, harmonious, fountain'd squares,
And spread out on her marble steps, and pass
Down silent courts and secret passages,
Gathering up motley treasures on its way;—

Groups of rich fruit from the Rialto mart,
Scarlet and brown and purple, with green leaves—
Fragments of exquisite carving, lichen-grown,
Found, 'mid pathetic squalor, in some niche
Where wild, half-naked urchins lived and played—
A bright robe, crowned with a pale, dark-eyed face—
A red-striped awning 'gainst an old grey wall—
A delicate opal gleam upon the tide.

I looked out from my window, and I saw
Venice, my Venice, naked in the sun—
Sad, faded, and unutterably forlorn!—
But still unutterably beautiful.

For days and days I wandered up and down—
Holding my breath in awe and ecstasy,—
Following my husband to familiar haunts,
Making acquaintance with his well-loved friends,
Whose faces I had only seen in dreams
And books and photographs and his careless talk.
For days and days—with sunny hours of rest
And musing chat, in that cool room of ours,
Paved with white marble, on the Grand Canal;
For days and days—with happy nights between,
Half-spent, while little Katie lay asleep
Out on the balcony, with the moon and stars.

O Venice, Venice!—with thy water-streets—
Thy gardens bathed in sunset, flushing red
Behind San Giorgio Maggiore's dome—
Thy glimmering lines of haughty palaces
Shadowing fair arch and column in the stream—
Thy most divine cathedral, and its square,
With vagabonds and loungers daily thronged,
Taking their ice, their coffee, and their ease—
Thy sunny campo's, with their clamorous din,

Their shrieking vendors of fresh fish and fruit—
Thy churches and thy pictures—thy sweet bits
Of colour—thy grand relics of the dead—
Thy gondoliers and water-bearers—girls
With dark, soft eyes, and creamy faces, crowned
With braided locks as bright and black as jet—
Wild ragamuffins, picturesque in rags,
And swarming beggars and old witch-like crones,
And brown-cloaked contadini, hot and tired,
Sleeping, face-downward, on the sunny steps—
Thy fairy islands floating in the sun—
Thy poppy-sprinkled, grave-strewn Lido shore—

Thy poetry and thy pathos—all so strange!—
Thou didst bring many a lump into my throat,
And many a passionate thrill into my heart,
And once a tangled dream into my head.

'Twixt afternoon and evening. I was tired;
The air was hot and golden—not a breath
Of wind until the sunset—hot and still.
Our floor was water-sprinkled; our thick walls
And open doors and windows, shadowed deep
With jalousies and awnings, made a cool
And grateful shadow for my little couch.
A subtle perfume stole about the room
From a small table, piled with purple grapes,
And water-melon slices, pink and wet,
And ripe, sweet figs, and golden apricots,
New-laid on green leaves from our garden—leaves
Wherewith an antique torso had been clothed.
My husband read his novel on the floor,
Propped up on cushions and an Indian shawl;
And little Katie slumbered at his feet,
Her yellow curls alight, and delicate tints
Of colour in the white folds of her frock.
I lay, and mused, in comfort and at ease,
Watching them both and playing with my thoughts;
And then I fell into a long, deep sleep,
And dreamed.

I saw a water-wilderness—
Islands entangled in a net of streams—

Cross-threads of rippling channels, woven through
Bare sands, and shallows glimmering blue and broad—
A line of white sea-breakers far away.
There came a smoke and crying from the land—
Ruin was there, and ashes, and the blood
Of conquered cities, trampled down to death.
But here, methought, amid these lonely gulfs,
There rose up towers and bulwarks, fair and strong,
Lapped in the silver sea-mists;—waxing aye
Fairer and stronger—till they seemed to mock
The broad-based kingdoms on the mainland shore.
I saw a great fleet sailing in the sun,
Sailing anear the sand-slip, whereon broke
The long white wave-crests of the outer sea,—
Pepin of Lombardy, with his warrior hosts—
Following the bloody steps of Attila!
I saw the smoke rise when he touched the towns
That lay, outposted, in his ravenous reach;

Then, in their island of deep waters,* saw
A gallant band defy him to his face,
And drive him out, with his fair vessels wrecked
And charred with flames, into the sea again.
“Ah, this is Venice!” I said proudly—“queen
Whose haughty spirit none shall subjugate.”

It was the night. The great stars hung, like globes
Of gold, in purple skies, and cast their light
In palpitating ripples down the flood
That washed and gurgled through the silent streets—
White-bordered now with marble palaces.
It was the night. I saw a grey-haired man,
Sitting alone in a dark convent-porch—
In beggar's garments, with a kingly face,
And eyes that watched for dawnlight anxiously—
A weary man, who could not rest nor sleep.
I heard him muttering prayers beneath his breath,
And once a malediction—while the air
Hummed with the soft, low psalm-chants from within.
And then, as grey gleams yellowed in the east,
I saw him bend his venerable head,
Creep to the door, and knock.

Again I saw

The long-drawn billows breaking on the land,
And galleys rocking in the summer noon.
The old man, richly retinued, and clad
In princely robes, stood there, and spread his arms,
And cried, to one low-kneeling at his feet,
"Take thou my blessing with thee, O my son!
And let this sword, wherewith I gird thee, smite
The impious tyrant-king, who hath defied,
Dethroned, and exiled him who is as Christ.
The Lord be good to thee, my son, my son,
For thy most righteous dealing!"

And again

'Twas that long slip of land betwixt the sea
And still lagoons of Venice—curling waves
Flinging light, foamy spray upon the sand.
The noon was past, and rose-red shadows fell
Across the waters. Lo! the galleys came
To anchorage again—and lo! the Duke
Yet once more bent his noble head to earth,
And laid a victory at the old man's feet,
Praying a blessing with exulting heart.
"This day, my well-belovèd, thou art blessed,
And Venice with thee, for St. Peter's sake.

And I will give thee, for thy bride and queen,
The sea which thou hast conquered. Take this ring,
As sign of her subjection, and thy right
To be her lord for ever."

Once again

I saw that old man,—in the vestibule
Of St. Mark's fair cathedral,—circled round
With cardinals and priests, ambassadors
And the noblesse of Venice—richly robed
In papal vestments, with the triple crown
Gleaming upon his brows. There was a hush:—
I saw a glittering train come sweeping on,
From the blue water and across the square,
Thronged with an eager multitude,—the Duke,
And with him Barbarossa, humbled now,
And fain to pray for pardon. With bare heads,
They reached the church, and paused. The Emperor knelt,

Casting away his purple mantle—knelt,
And crept along the pavement, as to kiss
Those feet, which had been weary twenty years
With his own persecutions. And the Pope
Lifted his white haired, crowned, majestic head,
And trod upon his neck,—crying out to Christ,
“Upon the lion and adder shalt thou go—
The dragon shalt thou tread beneath thy feet!”
The vision changed. Sweet incense-clouds rose up
From the cathedral altar, mix'd with hymns
And solemn chantings, o'er ten thousand heads;
And ebb'd and died away along the aisles.
I saw a train of nobles—knights of France—
Pass 'neath the glorious arches through the crowd,
And stand, with halo of soft, coloured light
On their fair brows—the while their leader's voice
Rang through the throbbing silence like a bell.
“Signiors, we come to Venice, by the will
Of the most high and puissant lords of France,
To pray you look with your compassionate eyes
Upon the Holy City of our Christ—
Wherein He lived, and suffered, and was lain
Asleep, to wake in glory, for our sakes—
By Paynim dogs dishonoured and defiled!
Signiors, we come to you, for you are strong.
The seas which lie betwixt that land and this
Obey you. O have pity! See, we kneel—
Our Masters bid us kneel—and bid us stay
Here at your feet until you grant our prayers!”
Wherewith the knights fell down upon their knees,

And lifted up their supplicating hands.
Lo! the ten thousand people rose as one,
And shouted with a shout that shook the domes
And gleaming roofs above them—echoing down,
Through marble pavements, to the shrine below,
Where lay the miraculous body of their Saint
(Shed he not heavenly radiance as he heard?—
Perfuming the damp air of his secret crypt),
And cried, with an exceeding mighty cry,
“We do consent! We will be pitiful!”
The thunder of their voices reached the sea,

And thrilled through all the netted water-veins
Of their rich city. Silence fell anon,
Slowly, with fluttering wings, upon the crowd;
And then a veil of darkness.

And again

The filtered sunlight streamed upon those walls,
Marbled and sculptured with divinest grace;
Again I saw a multitude of heads,
Soft-wreathed with cloudy incense, bent in prayer—
The heads of haughty barons, armed knights,
And pilgrims girded with their staff and scrip,
The warriors of the Holy Sepulchre.

The music died away along the roof;
The hush was broken—not by him of France—
By Enrico Dandolo, whose grey head
Venice had circled with the ducal crown.

The old man looked down, with his dim, wise eyes,
Stretching his hands abroad, and spake. "Seigneurs,
My children, see—your vessels lie in port
Freighted for battle. And you, standing here,
Wait but the first fair wind. The bravest hosts
Are with you, and the noblest enterprise
Conceived of man. Behold, I am grey-haired,
And old and feeble. Yet am I your lord.
And, if it be your pleasure, I will trust
My ducal seat in Venice to my son,
And be your guide and leader."

When they heard,

They cried aloud, "In God's name, go with us!"
And the old man, with holy weeping, passed
Adown the tribune to the altar-steps;
And, kneeling, fixed the cross upon his cap.
A ray of sudden sunshine lit his face—
The grand, grey, furrowed face—and lit the cross,
Until it twinkled like a cross of fire.
"We shall be safe with him," the people said,

Straining their wet, bright eyes; "and we shall reap
Harvests of glory from our battle-fields!"

Anon there rose a vapour from the sea—
A dim white mist, that thickened into fog.

The campanile and columns were blurred out,
Cathedral domes and spires, and colonnades
Of marble palaces on the Grand Canal.
Joy-bells rang sadly and softly—far away;
Banners of welcome waved like wind-blown clouds;
Glad shouts were muffled into mournful wails.
A Doge was come to be enthroned and crowned,—
Not in the great Bucentaur—not in pomp;
The water-ways had wandered in the mist,
And he had tracked them, slowly, painfully,
From San Clemente to Venice, in a frail
And humble gondola. A Doge was come;
But he, alas! had missed his landing-place,
And set his foot upon the blood-stained stones
Betwixt the blood-red columns. Ah, the sea—
The bride, the queen—she was the first to turn
Against her passionate, proud, ill-fated lord!

Slowly the sea-fog melted, and I saw
Long, limp dead bodies dangling in the sun.
Two granite pillars towered on either side,
And broad blue waters glittered at their feet.
“These are the traitors,” said the people; “they
Who, with our Lord the Duke, would overthrow
The government of Venice.”

And anon,

The doors about the palace were made fast.
A great crowd gathered round them, with hushed breath
And throbbing pulses. And I knew their lord,
The Duke Faliero, knelt upon his knees,
On the broad landing of the marble stairs
Where he had sworn the oath he could not keep—
Vexed with the tyrannous oligarchic rule
That held his haughty spirit netted in,
And cut so keenly that he writhed and chafed
Until he burst the meshes—could not keep!
I watched and waited, feeling sick at heart;
And then I saw a figure, robed in black—
One of their dark, ubiquitous, supreme
And fearful tribunal of Ten—come forth,
And hold a dripping sword-blade in the air.
“Justice has fallen on the traitor! See,

His blood has paid the forfeit of his crime!"

And all the people, hearing, murmured deep,
Cursing their dead lord, and the council, too,
Whose swift, sure, heavy hand had dealt his death.

Then came the night, all grey and still and sad.
I saw a few red torches flare and flame
Over a little gondola, where lay
The headless body of the traitor Duke,
Stripped of his ducal vestments. Floating down
The quiet waters, it passed out of sight,
Bearing him to unhonoured burial.
And then came mist and darkness.

Lo! I heard

The shrill clang of alarm-bells, and the wails
Of men and women in the wakened streets.
A thousand torches flickered up and down,
Lighting their ghastly faces and bare heads;
The while they crowded to the open doors
Of all the churches—to confess their sins,
To pray for absolution, and a last
Lord's Supper—their viaticum, whose death
Seemed near at hand—ay, nearer than the dawn.
"Chioggia is fall'n!" they cried, "and we are lost!"

Anon I saw them hurrying to and fro,
With eager eyes and hearts and blither feet—
Grave priests, with warlike weapons in their hands,
And delicate women, with their ornaments
Of gold and jewels for the public fund—
Mix'd with the bearded crowd, whose lives were given,
With all they had, to Venice in her need.
No more I heard the wailing of despair,—
But great Pisani's blithe word of command,
The dip of oars, and creak of beams and chains,
And ring of hammers in the arsenal.
"Venice shall ne'er be lost!" her people cried—
Whose names were worthy of the Golden Book—
"Venice shall ne'er be conquered!"

And anon

I saw a scene of triumph—saw the Doge,

In his Bucentaur, sailing to the land—
Chioggia behind him blackened in the smoke,
Venice before, all banners, bells, and shouts
Of passionate rejoicing! Ten long months
Had Genoa waged that war of life and death;
And now—behold the remnant of her host,
Shrunk and hollow-eyed and bound with chains—
Trailing their galleys in the conqueror's wake!

Once more the tremulous waters, flaked with light;
A covered vessel, with an armèd guard—
A yelling mob on fair San Giorgio's isle,
And ominous whisperings in the city squares.
Carrara's noble head bowed down at last,
Beaten by many storms,—his golden spurs
Caught in the meshes of a hidden snare!
"O Venice!" I cried, "where is thy great heart
And honourable soul?"

And yet once more

I saw her—the gay Sybaris of the world—
The rich voluptuous city—sunk in sloth.
I heard Napoleon's cannon at her gates,
And her degenerate nobles cry for fear.
I saw at last the great Republic fall—
Conquered by her own sickness, and with scarce
A noticeable wound—I saw her fall!
And she had stood above a thousand years!
O Carlo Zeno! O Pisani! Sure
Ye turned and groaned for pity in your graves.
I saw the flames devour her Golden Book
Beneath the rootless "Tree of Liberty;"
I saw the Lion's legend blotted out,
For "rights of men"—unutterable wrongs!—
Dandolo's brazen horses borne away—
The venerable Bucentaur, with its wealth
Of glorious recollections, broken up.
I heard the riotous clamour; then the change
To passionate minor cadence—then the sad
And hopeless silence settle down; and then—
I woke. The flickering water-gleam was gone
From off the ceiling, and white snows of light
Fell softly on the marble walls and floors,

And on the yellow head of little Kate
Musingly bent down from the balcony.
The lapping of the tide—the dip of oars—
The sad, sweet songs, and sadder city bells,
Mellowly borne along the water-streets:—
The swirl and ripple around lumbering keels
Of heavy, slow, Rialto market-boats,
Adown the broad and misty highway, lit
With moonbeams and the far-strown light of lamps,
Following the track of vanished gondolas:—
The flutter of a fig-leaf in the wind,
A faded fig-leaf, flapping faded walls,
With faded, crumbling, delicate sculpture-crusts:—
The voice of dreaming Katie crooning out

A snatch of melody that the Austrian band
Played in San Marco's Place some hours ago,
While patriots, neath their shadowy colonnades,
Sauntered, and shut their ears, and ate their hearts:—
A measured footstep, pacing to and fro—
The brush of two strong hands upon my brows—
The tenor-music of dear English lips,
Whispering, between two kisses, cheerily,
“Wake up, my wife; Nina has brought our tea:”—
These were the sounds that called me back to life.

Rialto (Rivo alto)

Ada Cambridge

A Lesson

1.

I know now why the world was sad,
With so much good to make it glad;
Why all things loveliest and best
Have stirred vague sorrows in my breast,
And sweetest days that life has had
Have vexed me with such vast unrest.

2.

I know why I have pined and toiled,
And found all aspirations foiled;
I know why I have gained and spent,
And never learned what riches meant;
I know what lack and loss have spoiled
The treasure of my soul's content.

3.

Like day- dawn on the darkened earth,
Like sun and rain in drought and dearth,
Like spring, that wakens flowers so fast
When barren winter- time is past,
Love, long- deferred, has come to birth —
And I am satisfied at last.

4.

My heart is singing; tears are shed;
I, that was starved, am warmed, and fed —
For love is fire and food and wine,
All comfort earthly and divine.
Now I am living that was dead,
And all that life can give is mine.

Ada Cambridge

A Prayer

Spirit and Breath of Life, whate'er Thy name!
Bear with Thy creature, Man,
That makes his dwelling-place a blot of shame
Upon the Ordered Plan.

Not Thy hand, O Divine Designer, hurled
Athwart the starlit skies
One blood-stained, greed-diseased, hate-eaten world,
To shock celestial eyes.

Not Thy default, O Beautiful, this crust
Of fratricidal crime,
These maggot-breeds of hunger and of lust
That Thy fair work begrime.

But ours, who mock Thee from the highest place,
And in the light of day;
Who claim to lead an upward-struggling race,
And will not seek the way.

Guards of the human birthright, at Thy call -
A city sacked and burned;
Guards of the house that is the home of all,
But whence the weak are spurned.

Brothers, to whom the outcast brothers cry
As with a voice unknown;
Stewards of Nature's bounty, that deny
The lawful heirs their own.

Thou that hast made us men, and earth so fair,
To be so vilely used,
Give space for late repentance and repair
Of sacred trust abused.

Give time, Eternal, that we stanch these tears,
Give time to heal this sore,
That our brief speck amid the shining spheres
Disgrace its birth no more.

But sail ethereal seas, an orb of light,
To bear Thy purpose on
Until it fades into the cosmic night
Where the dead worlds have gone.

Ada Cambridge

A Promise

1.

Should'st thou, in grip of dread disease,
Foresee the day when thou must die,
With no more hope of life or ease,
But only, lingering, to lie
While torturing hours go slowly by;
Thy brain awake, thy nerves alive
To thine extremest agony,
And all in vain to rave or strive: —
O my beloved, if this should be,
Call me — and I will set thee free.

2.

Murder! And thou to judgment hurled —
Cut off from some few days of grace —
Thus will it be to that hard world
Which fits one law to every case,
And dooms all rebels to disgrace.
But to us twain, who stand above
Conventioned rules, unbound, unclassed,
A solemn sacrament of love,
More true than kisses in the past —
Love's costliest tribute, and the last.

3.

Thy grateful hand, unclenched, shall seek
The hand that gave thee thy release;
Thy darkening eyes shall dumbly speak
Of scorching pangs that sink and cease —
Of anguish drowned in rest and peace.
And I that terrible farewell,
Despairing but content, shall take,
Knowing that I have served thee well —
I, that would dare the rack and stake,
The flames of hell, for thy dear sake.

4.

The law may hang me for my crime,
Just or unjust, I'll not complain.
'Twere better than to live my time
Bereaved and broken, and to wane,
Slow inch by inch, in useless pain;
Alone, unhelped, uncomforted,
In mine own last extremity;
No faithful lover by my bed
To do what thou would'st do for me.
And I shall want to die with thee.

Ada Cambridge

A Sermon

Midsummer, 1867.

We have heard many sermons, you and I,
And many more may hear,
When sitting quiet in cathedral nave,
With folded palms and faces meek and grave;—
But few like this one, dear.

We oftentimes watch together 'fore the veil,
With reverent, gleaming eyes,
While priestly hands are busy with the folds,—
And pant to see the holy place, which holds
Life's dreadest mysteries.
We watch weak, foolish fingers straying o'er
The broidered boss, to grasp
Vaguely at some small end of thread, and twist
And shake the glorious pattern into mist,
And leave us nought to clasp.

We watch, with eyes dilated, some strong hand
Of nerve and muscle, trace
The grand, faint outlines, erewhile undefined
To our slow earth-enfolded sense, and find
The great design—the shadow from behind—
Dawning before our face.

But seldom do we see, dear, you and I,
The pattern melt in light,
And all the shine flow out on us, uncheck'd—
With eyes of soul and not of intellect—
As we did see that night.

It was a summer-night—the sun was low,
But overlaid the sea,
And made gold-crystals of the wet sea-sand,
And drew our shadows short upon the strand
That stretched out shallowly.

It was a Sunday night—far off we heard
The solemn vesper-chime

From some grey wind-swept steeple by the shore,
Chanting "For ev-er-more! for ev-er-more!"
While the deep sea beat time.

We wandered far that night, dear, you and I,

We wandered out of reach,—
Until the golden distances grew grey,
And narrowed in the glory, as it lay
'Mid horizon and beach.

We wandered far along the lonely waste,
Where seldom foot had trod;
The world behind us dared not to intrude—
The summer silence and the solitude
Were only filled with God.

We sat down on the sand there, you and I,
We sat down awed and dumb,
And watched the fiery circle fall and fall
Through solemn folds of purple, and the small
Soft ripples go and come.

There was not wind enough to stir the reeds
Around us, nor to curl
The sheeny, dimpled surface of the deep;
The waters murmured low, as half in sleep,
With measured swish and swirl.

Two sea-birds came and dabbled in the pools,
And cried their plaintive cry,
As their strong wings swept o'er us as we sat
(No profanation of the stillness that,
But added sanctity).

They flecked the crimson shallows with black streaks,
Low-wheeling to and fro,
Crying their bold, sweet cry, as knowing well

It was a place where God, not man, did dwell—
A father, not a foe.

* * * * *

Ah, we hear many sermons, you and I—
The poor words fall and drown;
But this, whose speech was silence, this has stirred
The stream of years,—and aye it will be heard
As when that sun went down!

Ada Cambridge

A Sigh In The Night

O sweet darkness, still, and calm, and lonely!
Spread thy downy pinions round about.
Spare me from thy hidden riches only
One dream-face; blot all the others out.

Bring him now, for thou hast power to free him,
From that ugly garb he wears by day;
Bring him now—my darling!—let me see him
Ere the tender kindness pass away.

O sweet night-winds, wandering in the larches!
Sigh, and croon, and whisper as you creep;
Sing my songs through green cathedral arches,
While the weary workers are asleep.

Snarl and fret not of the grief and passion;
Sing in minor cadence, sweet and low;
Sing of peace and rest, in soft wind-fashion—
Of the love and faith I used to know!

Ada Cambridge

A Story At Dusk

An evening all aglow with summer light
And autumn colour—fairest of the year.

The wheat-fields, crowned with shocks of tawny gold,
All interspersed with rough sowthistle roots,
And interlaced with white convolvulus,
Lay, flecked with purple shadows, in the sun.
The shouts of little children, gleaning there
The scattered ears and wild blue-bottle flowers—
Mixed with the corn-crake's crying, and the song
Of lone wood birds whose mother-cares were o'er,
And with the whispering rustle of red leaves—
Scarce stirred the stillness. And the gossamer sheen
Was spread on upland meadows, silver bright
In low red sunshine and soft kissing wind—
Showing where angels in the night had trailed
Their garments on the turf. Tall arrow-heads,
With flag and rush and fringing grasses, dropped
Their seeds and blossoms in the sleepy pool.
The water-lily lay on her green leaf,
White, fair, and stately; while an amorous branch
Of silver willow, drooping in the stream,
Sent soft, low-babbling ripples towards her:
And oh, the woods!—erst haunted with the song
Of nightingales and tender coo of doves—
They stood all flushed and kindling 'neath the touch
Of death—kind death!—fair, fond, reluctant death!—
A dappled mass of glory!

Harvest-time;

With russet wood-fruit thick upon the ground,
'Mid crumpled ferns and delicate blue harebells.
The orchard-apples rolled in seedy grass—
Apples of gold, and violet-velvet plums;
And all the tangled hedgerows bore a crop
Of scarlet hips, blue sloes, and blackberries,
And orange clusters of the mountain ash.
The crimson fungus and soft mosses clung
To old decaying trunks; the summer bine
Drooped, shivering, in the glossy ivy's grasp.

By day the blue air bore upon its wings
Wide-wandering seeds, pale drifts of thistle-down;
By night the fog crept low upon the earth,
All white and cool, and calmed its feverishness,
And veiled it over with a veil of tears.

The curlew and the plover were come back
To still, bleak shores; the little summer birds
Were gone—to Persian gardens, and the groves
Of Greece and Italy, and the palmy lands.

A Norman tower, with moss and lichen clothed,
Wherein old bells, on old worm-eaten frames
And rusty wheels, had swung for centuries,
Chiming the same soft chime—the lullaby
Of cradled rooks and blinking bats and owls;
Setting the same sweet tune, from year to year,
For generations of true hearts to sing.
A wide churchyard, with grassy slopes and nooks,
And shady corners and meandering paths;
With glimpses of dim windows and grey walls
Just caught at here and there amongst the green
Of flowering shrubs and sweet lime-avenues.
An old house standing near—a parsonage-house—
With broad thatched roof and overhanging eaves,
O'errun with banksia roses,—a low house,
With ivied windows and a latticed porch,
Shut in a tiny Paradise, all sweet
With hum of bees and scent of mignonette.

We lay our lazy length upon the grass
In that same Paradise, my friend and I.
And, as we lay, we talked of college days—
Wild, racing, hunting, steeple-chasing days;
Of river reaches, fishing-grounds, and weirs,
Bats, gloves, debates, and in-humanities:
And then of boon-companions of those days,
How lost and scattered, married, changed, and dead;
Until he flung his arm across his face,
And feigned to slumber.

 He was changed, my friend;
Not like the man—the leader of his set—

The favourite of the college—that I knew.
And more than time had changed him. He had been
"A little wild," the Lady Alice said;
"A little gay, as all young men will be
At first, before they settle down to life—
While they have money, health, and no restraint,
Nor any work to do," Ah, yes! But this
Was mystery unexplained—that he was sad
And still and thoughtful, like an aged man;
And scarcely thirty. With a winsome flash,
The old bright heart would shine out here and there;
But aye to be o'ershadowed and hushed down,

As he had hushed it now.

His dog lay near,
With long, sharp muzzle resting on his paws,
And wistful eyes, half shut,—but watching him;
A deerhound of illustrious race, all grey
And grizzled, with soft, wrinkled, velvet ears;
A gaunt, gigantic, wolfish-looking brute,
And worth his weight in gold.

"There, there," said he,
And raised him on his elbow, "you have looked
Enough at me; now look at some one else."

"You could not see him, surely, with your arm
Across your face?"

"No, but I felt his eyes;
They are such sharp, wise eyes—persistent eyes—
Perpetually reproachful. Look at them;
Had ever dog such eyes?"

"Oh yes," I thought;
But, wondering, turned my talk upon his breed.
And was he of the famed Glengarry stock?
And in what season was he entered? Where,
Pray, did he pick him up?

He moved himself
At that last question, with a little writhe
Of sudden pain or restlessness; and sighed.
And then he slowly rose, pushed back the hair
From his broad brows; and, whistling softly, said,
"Come here, old dog, and we will tell him. Come."

“On such a day, and such a time, as this,
Old Tom and I were stalking on the hills,
Near seven years ago. Bad luck was ours;
For we had searched up corrie, glen, and burn,
From earliest daybreak—wading to the waist
Peat-rift and purple heather—all in vain!
We struck a track nigh every hour, to lose
A noble quarry by ignoble chance—
The crowing of a grouse-cock, or the flight
Of startled mallards from a reedy pool,
Or subtle, hair's breadth veering of the wind.
And now 'twas waning sunset—rosy soft

On far grey peaks, and the green valley spread
Beneath us. We had climbed a ridge, and lay
Debating in low whispers of our plans
For night and morning. Golden eagles sailed
Above our heads; the wild ducks swam about

Amid the reeds and rushes of the pools;
A lonely heron stood on one long leg
In shallow water, watching for a meal;
And there, to windward, couching in the grass
That fringed the blue edge of a sleeping loch—
Waiting for dusk to feed and drink—there lay
A herd of deer.

“And as we looked and planned,
A mountain storm of sweeping mist and rain
Came down upon us. It passed by, and left
The burnies swollen that we had to cross;
And left us barely light enough to see
The broad, black, branching antlers, clustering still
Amid the long grass in the valley.

“‘Sir,’
Said Tom, ‘there is a shealing down below,
To leeward. We might bivouac there to-night,
And come again at dawn.’

“And so we crept
Adown the glen, and stumbled in the dark
Against the doorway of the keeper's home,

And over two big deerhounds—ancestors
Of this our old companion. There was light
And warmth, a welcome and a heather bed,
At Colin's cottage; with a meal of eggs
And fresh trout, broiled by dainty little hands,
And sweetest milk and oatcake. There were songs
And Gaelic legends, and long talk of deer—
Mixt with a sweet, low laughter, and the whir
Of spinning-wheel.

“The dogs lay at her feet—

The feet of Colin's daughter—with their soft
Dark velvet ears pricked up for every sound
And movement that she made. Right royal brutes,
Whereon I gazed with envy.

“ ‘What,’ I asked,

‘Would Colin take for these?’

“ ‘Eh, sir,’ said he,

And shook his head, ‘I cannot sell the dogs.
They're priceless, they, and—Jeanie's favourites.
But there's a litter in the shed—five pups,
As like as peas to this one. You may choose
Amongst them, sir—take any that you like.
Get us the lantern, Jeanie. You shall show
The gentleman.’

“Ah, she was fair, that girl!

Not like the other lassies—cottage folk;
For there was subtle trace of gentle blood
Through all her beauty and in all her ways.
(The mother's race was ‘poor and proud,’ they said).
Ay, she was fair, my darling! with her shy,
Brown, innocent face and delicate-shapen limbs.
She had the tenderest mouth you ever saw,
And grey, dark eyes, and broad, straight-pencill'd brows;
Dark hair, sun-dappled with a sheeny gold;
Dark chestnut braids that knotted up the light,
As soft as satin. You could scarcely hear
Her step, or hear the rustling of her gown,
Or the soft hovering motion of her hands
At household work. She seemed to bring a spell
Of tender calm and silence where she came.
You felt her presence—and not by its stir,

But by its restfulness. She was a sight
To be remembered—standing in the straw;
A sleepy pup soft-cradled in her arms
Like any Christian baby; standing still,
The while I handled his ungainly limbs.
And Colin blustered of the sport—of hounds,
Roe, ptarmigan, and trout, and ducal deer—
Ne'er lifting up that sweet, unconscious face,
To see why I was silent. Oh, I would
You could have seen her then. She was so fair,
And oh, so young!—scarce seventeen at most—
So ignorant and so young!

“Tell them, my friend—
Your flock—the restless-hearted—they who scorn
The ordered fashion fitted to our race,
And scoff at laws they may not understand—
Tell them that they are fools. They cannot mate
With other than their kind, but woe will come
In some shape—mostly shame, but always grief
And disappointment. Ah, my love! my love!
But she was different from the common sort;
A peasant, ignorant, simple, undefiled;
The child of rugged peasant-parents, taught
In all their thoughts and ways; yet with that touch
Of tender grace about her, softening all
The rougher evidence of her lowly state—
That undefined, unconscious dignity—
That delicate instinct for the reading right
The riddles of less simple minds than hers—
That sharper, finer, subtler sense of life—
That something which does not possess a name,

Which made her beauty beautiful to me—
The long-lost legacy of forgotten knights.

“I chose amongst the five fat creeping things
This rare old dog. And Jeanie promised kind
And gentle nurture for its infant days;
And promised she would keep it till I came
Another year. And so we went to rest.
And in the morning, ere the sun was up,
We left our rifles, and went out to run

The browsing red-deer with old Colin's hounds.
Through glen and bog, through brawling mountain streams,
Grey, lichened boulders, furze, and juniper,
And purple wilderness of moor, we toiled,
Ere yet the distant snow-peak was alight.
We chased a hart to water; saw him stand
At bay, with sweeping antlers, in the burn.
His large, wild, wistful eyes despairingly
Turned to the deeper eddies; and we saw
The choking struggle and the bitter end,
And cut his gallant throat upon the grass,
And left him. Then we followed a fresh track—
A dozen tracks—and hunted till the noon;
Shot cormorants and wild cats in the cliffs,
And snipe and blackcock on the ferny hills;
And set our floating night-lines at the loch;—
And then came back to Jeanie.

“Well, you know

What follows such commencement:—how I found
The woods and corries round about her home
Fruitful of roe and red-deer; how I found
The grouse lay thickest on adjacent moors;
Discovered ptarmigan on rocky peaks,
And rare small game on birch-besprinkled hills,
O'ershadowing that rude shealing; how the pools
Were full of wild-fowl, and the loch of trout;
How vermin harboured in the underwood,
And rocks, and reedy marshes; how I found
The sport aye best in this charmed neighbourhood.
And then I e'en must wander to the door,
To leave a bird for Colin, or to ask
A lodging for some stormy night, or see
How fared my infant deerhound.

“And I saw

The creeping dawn unfolding; saw the doubt,
And faith, and longing swaying her sweet heart;
And every flow just distancing the ebb.

I saw her try to bar the golden gates
Whence love demanded egress,—calm her eyes,
And still the tender, sensitive, tell-tale lips,
And steal away to corners; saw her face

Grow graver and more wistful, day by day;
And felt the gradual strengthening of my hold.
I did not stay to think of it—to ask
What I was doing!

 “In the early time,
She used to slip away to household work
When I was there, and would not talk to me;
But when I came not, she would climb the glen
In secret, and look out, with shaded brow,
Across the valley. Ay, I caught her once—
Like some young helpless doe, amongst the fern—
I caught her, and I kissed her mouth and eyes;
And with those kisses signed and sealed our fate
For evermore. Then came our happy days—
The bright, brief, shining days without a cloud!
In ferny hollows and deep, rustling woods,
That shut us in and shut out all the world—
The far, forgotten world—we met, and kissed,
And parted, silent, in the balmy dusk.
We haunted still roe-coverts, hand in hand,
And murmured, under our breath, of love and faith,
And swore great oaths for one of us to keep.
We sat for hours, with sealèd lips, and heard
The crossbill chattering in the larches—heard
The sweet wind whispering as it passed us by—
And heard our own hearts' music in the hush.
Ah, blessed days! ah, happy, innocent days!—
I would I had them back.

 “Then came the Duke,
And Lady Alice, with her worldly grace
And artificial beauty—with the gleam
Of jewels, and the dainty shine of silk,
And perfumed softness of white lace and lawn;
With all the glamour of her courtly ways,
Her talk of art and fashion, and the world
We both belonged to. Ah, she hardened me!
I lost the sweetness of the heathery moors
And hills and quiet woodlands, in that scent
Of London clubs and royal drawing-rooms;
I lost the tender chivalry of my love,
The keen sense of its sacredness, the clear
Perception of mine honour, by degrees,

Brought face to face with customs of my kind.

I was no more a "man;" nor she, my love,
A delicate lily of womanhood—ah, no!
I was the heir of an illustrious house,
And she a simple, homespun cottage-girl.

"And now I stole at rarer intervals
To those dim trysting woods; and when I came
I brought my cunning worldly wisdom—talked
Of empty forms and marriages in heaven—
To stain that simple soul, God pardon me!
And she would shiver in the stillness, scared
And shocked, with her pathetic eyes—aye proof
Against the fatal, false philosophy.
But my will was the strongest, and my love
The weakest; and she knew it.

"Well, well, well,

I need not talk of that. There came the day
Of our last parting in the ferny glen—
A bitter parting, parting from my life,
Its light and peace for ever! And I turned
To balls and billiards, politics and wine;
Was wooed by Lady Alice, and half won;
And passed a feverous winter in the world.
Ah, do not frown! You do not understand.
You never knew that hopeless thirst for peace—
That gnawing hunger, gnawing at your life;
The passion, born too late! I tell you, friend,
The ruth, and love, and longing for my child,
It broke my heart at last.

"In the hot days

Of August, I went back; I went alone.
And on old garrulous Margery—relict she
Of some departed seneschal—I rained
My eager questions. 'Had the poaching been
As ruinous and as audacious as of old?
Were the dogs well? and had she felt the heat?
And—I supposed the keeper, Colin, still
Was somewhere on the place?'

" 'Nay, sir, ' said she,

'But he has left the neighbourhood. He ne'er

Has held his head up since he lost his child,
Poor soul, a month ago.'

"I heard—I heard!

His child—he had but one—my little one,
Whom I had meant to marry in a week!

" 'Ah, sir, she turned out badly after all,
The girl we thought a pattern for all girls.
We know not how it happened, for she named
No names. And, sir, it preyed upon her mind,
And weakened it; and she forgot us all,
And seemed as one aye walking in her sleep
She noticed no one—no one but the dog,
A young deerhound that followed her about;
Though him she hugged and kissed in a strange way
When none was by. And Colin, he was hard
Upon the girl; and when she sat so still,
And pale and passive, while he raved and stormed,
Looking beyond him, as it were, he grew
The harder and more harsh. He did not know
That she was not herself. Men are so blind!
But when he saw her floating in the loch,
The moonlight on her face, and her long hair
All tangled in the rushes; saw the hound
Whining and crying, tugging at her plaid—
Ah, sir, it was a death-stroke!'

"This was all.

This was the end of her sweet life—the end
Of all worth having of mine own! At night
I crept across the moors to find her grave,
And kiss the wet earth covering it—and found
The deerhound lying there asleep. Ay me!
It was the bitterest darkness,—nevermore
To break out into dawn and day again!

"And Lady Alice shakes her dainty head,
Lifts her arch eyebrows, smiles, and whispers, "Once
He was a little wild!'

With that he laughed;

Then suddenly flung his face upon the grass,
Crying, "Leave me for a little—let me be!"
And in the dusky stillness hugged his woe,

And wept away his passion by himself.

Ada Cambridge

A Street Riot

Poor, hapless souls! at whom we stand aghast,
As at invading armies sweeping by —
As strange to haggard face and desperate cry —
Did we not know the worm must turn at last?
Poor, hungry men, with hungry children cast
Upon the wintry streets to thief or die —
Suffering your wants and woes so silently -
Patient so long — is all your patience past?

Are there no ears to hear this warning call?
Are there no eyes to see this portent dread?
Must brute force rise and social order fall,
Ere these starved millions can be clothed and fed?
Justice be judge. Let future history say
Which are the greatest criminals to- day.

Ada Cambridge

A Wife's Protest

1.

Like a white snowdrop in the spring
From child to girl I grew,
And thought no thought, and heard no word
That was not pure and true.

2.

And when I came to seventeen,
And life was fair and free,
A suitor, by my father's leave,
Was brought one day to me.

3.

"Make me the happiest man on earth,"
He whispered soft and low.
My mother told me it was right
I was too young to know.

4.

And then they twined my bridal wreath
And placed it on my brow.
It seems like fifty years ago —
And I am twenty now.

5.

My star, that barely rose, is set;
My day of hope is done —
My woman's life of love and joy —
Ere it has scarce begun.

6.

Hourly I die — I do not live —
Though still so young and strong.

No dumb brute from his brother brutes
Endures such wanton wrong.

7.

A smouldering shame consumes me now —
It poisons all my peace;
An inward torment of reproach
That never more will cease.

8.

O how my spirit shrinks and sinks
Ere yet the light is gone!
What creeping terrors chill my blood
As each black night draws on!

9.

I lay me down upon my bed,
A prisoner on the rack,
And suffer dumbly, as I must,
Till the kind day comes back.

10.

Listening from heavy hour to hour
To hear the church- clock toll —
A guiltless prostitute in flesh,
A murderess in soul.

11.

Those church- bells chimed the marriage chimes
When he was wed to me,
And they must knell a funeral knell
Ere I again am free.

12.

I did not hate him then; in faith
I vowed the vow "I will;"

Were I his mate, and not his slave,
I could perform it still.

13.

But, crushed in these relentless bonds
I blindly helped to tie,
With one way only for escape,
I pray that he may die.

14.

O to possess myself once more,
Myself so stained and maimed!
O to make pure these shuddering limbs
That loveless lust has shamed!

15.

But beauty cannot be restored
Where such a blight has been,
And all the rivers in the world
Can never wash me clean.

16.

I go to church; I go to court;
No breath of scandal flaws
The lustre of my fair repute;
For I obey the laws.

17.

My ragged sister of the street,
Marked for the world's disgrace,
Scarce dares to lift her sinful eyes
To the great lady's face.

18.

She hides in shadows as I pass —
On me the sunbeams shine;

Yet, in the sight of God, her stain
May be less black than mine.

19.

Maybe she gave her all for love,
And did not count the cost;
If so, her crown of womanhood
Was not ignobly lost.

20.

Maybe she wears those wretched rags,
And starves from door to door,
To keep her body for her own
Since it may love no more.

21.

If so, in spite of church and law,
She is more pure than I;
The latchet of those broken shoes
I am not fit to tie.

22.

That hungry baby at her breast —
Sign of her fallen state —
Nature, who would but mock at mine,
Has made legitimate.

23.

Poor little "love- child" — spurned and scorned,
Whom church and law disown,
Thou hadst thy birthright when the seed
Of thy small life was sown.

24.

O Nature, give no child to me,
Whom Love must ne'er embrace!

Thou knowest I could not bear to look
On its reproachful face.

Ada Cambridge

Advent Hymn

Another mile—a year
Pass'd by for ever! And the warnings swell
From upper heaven to darkest depths of hell,—
O we are drawing near!

All through the waiting lands
Dim signs and tokens, if unheeded, throng;
We feel them thickening as we pass along,
Holding out fearful hands.

Light! which in love sent down
That tender gleam on Eden's darken'd bowers,
When sin had breathed the blight upon the flowers
Whereof death made his crown:—

Light! which did deign to stamp
The tables on that Arab mountain-crest;—
Light! which, in shrouded glory, once did rest
On Israelitish camp:—

O day! whose dawn was spread,
Golden and clear, on Judaea's terraced hills,—
O shining noon! whose waxèd beauty thrills
Earth and her quick and dead:—

Come to our hearts, we pray!
Through open doors let gracious gleams come in;
Fill us with light and life, and let the sin
And darkness pass away.

Lord, waken us who sleep,
Strengthen the feeble knees and weak hands now;
Teach us, with prayer and work, to measure how
The stealthy minutes creep.

Let not our lamp be dim
When in the night we hear the footsteps fall
Upon our threshold,—let death find us all
Watching in peace for him.

Let us lie down to rest
In surest hope of endless life in store,
With happy reverent hands, that strive no more,
Folded across our breast.

And when the angels come,
And the sharp echo of the herald's cry
Pierces the dark and stillness where we lie
Cold in our sleep, and dumb,—

May we arise, O King!
In bridal garments, beautiful and white;
And do Thou, coming in Thy godly might,
Our crown of glory bring.

Ada Cambridge

Afar Off

1.

Is it a will o' the wisp, or is dawn breaking,
That our horizon wears so strange a hue?
Is it but one more dream, or are we waking
To find at last that dreams are coming true?

2.

Far off and faint, a golden line is streaking
The cloudy night that shrouds the life of man;
It is the sun that dim eyes have been seeking,
Through all blind pathways, since the world began.

3.

The sign to weary heart and waiting nation
That day will come to bring them their release
That, late or soon, through storm and tribulation,
Or with slow change, the earth shall rest in peace.

4.

That One, invoked, with half- despairing passion.
Through years and years of wrong, will right us then;
Will take away, in rude or gentle fashion,
The curse that man has laid on brother- men.

5.

Ah, blessed One! our souls go out to meet thee,
At whose feet Hope will fold her tired wing;
And yet we know not how we ought to greet thee,
And take the gifts thy bounteous arms will bring.

6.

Come not, O friend! with vengeful weapons, borrowed
Of them that warred against thee — sword and flame;

For all alike have suffered and have sorrowed,
And all alike have sinned against thy name.

7.

Come thou to men who groan in sore affliction
A breathing spirit of new life and grace;
Come in thy robes of light and benediction,
That all may recognize thy perfect face.

8.

Yet, as thou must, come soon, for them than need thee —
And thou wilt come — Deliverer great and strong!
Brighten, O tender dawn, though few may heed thee,
And bring the day that we have sought so long!

9.

No class strife then, each man against his neighbour,
No waste, no want, to breed the plague of crime;
No insolent pomp, no hard and sordid labour,
No wars, no famines, in that happier time!

10.

But pleasant homes, and good days growing better;
Contented hearts throughout the tranquil land,
That keep the law, in spirit and in letter,
Which we have been so dull to understand.

11.

And fruitful work, instead of barren duty,
With fruitful rest and leisure interweaved;
And life made bright with plenty and with beauty,
And souls made strong with noble aims achieved.

12.

Great Art, no more the plaything of the idle,
But nurse and handmaid to all human needs;

Great Nature, curbed no more with bit and bridle,
Nor men's religion crushed in bitter creeds.

13.

Nor sacred Love a crime, a jest, an error,
To keep or lose, to give or to suppress,
A secret shame, an anguish and a terror,
A curse to them that it was meant to bless.

14.

All round our narrow lives the tide encroaches,
Distant and dim, but spreading far and fast.
O Liberty, thy longed- for reign approaches
That is to give man's birthright back at last!
vasts;

15.

And must we go, who see the new age dawning,
While yet we suffer in the pangs of birth,
Nor breathe one breath of the divinest morning
That yet has come to bless our waiting earth?

16.

Oh, must we go, just when the day is growing?
Oh, must we waste with vast and vain desires,
Like sparks put out when viewless winds are blowing,
We, lit and quickened with supernal fires

17.

Are we to read no more the wondrous pages
Of this great tale that evermore goes on?
Will suns and stars light up eternal ages
With happier worlds — and we alone be gone?

18.

Never to learn the moral of the story —

Why we have toiled for what we must not keep,
Why we have fought to win no crown of glory,
Why we have sown what unborn hands will reap.

19.

Never to learn wherefore our Maker sent us
With these immortal passions in our breast.
Ah me! Ah me! Wherewith can we content us
To know so much, and not to know the rest!

Ada Cambridge

After Our Likeness.

Before me now a little picture lies—
A little shadow of a childish face,
Childishly sweet, yet with the dawning grace
Of thought and wisdom on her lips and eyes.

Fair, oval, broad-brow'd face—small, delicate head—
Transparent skin, with blue veins shining through—
All the soft outlines, beautiful and true,
Bring me the echo of the words "God said."

Made "in our image"—sure 'tis that we see,
God's likeness, in the fair face of a child,
By the world's sin and passion undefiled—
Ay, as I look, it seems quite plain to me.

The light wherein the little features shine,
Strange, mystic light, so undefined and faint,
So far too pure for any words to paint—
'Tis a reflection of the Face divine.

Some day the earthly shadows will be cast
Across that sunshine—it may be to dim
A while the visible countenance of Him;
But 'twill be there—the likeness—to the last.

Some day the lucid waters, in which lie
Pictured those glorious lineaments, will be
Stirred up and troubled like a stormy sea;—
But they will yet re-settle—by-and-by.

They will re-settle when the soul is still'd,
Its passions, its wild longings, and its pain;
The pure reflection will shine out again
When earth's hopes are relinquish'd, unfulfill'd.

They will re-settle in those after-years
When life's hard lessons have been conned and learn'd;
Then this child's beauty will have all return'd,
More lovely for the trouble and the tears.

They will re-settle in the calm of death,
When the sweet eyes are laid asleep, and when
The heart is hush'd. Truly God's likeness then—
The mirror clear, unsullied by a breath.

Ah! while I look, and trace each tender line,
I think most of the day when I shall see
The dear face in that perfect purity,
Its mortal features clothed with the divine.

This self-same face, but with the image bright,
Nevermore undefined, and faint, and dim;
This self-same face, yet like the face of Him,
In glory and in beauty infinite.

Ada Cambridge

All-Saints' Day (1867)

Blessed are they whose baby-souls are bright,
Whose brows are sealèd with the cross of light,
Whom God Himself has deign'd to robe in white—
Blessed are they!

Blessed are they who follow through the wild
His sacred footprints, as a little child;
Who strive to keep their garments undefiled—
Blessed are they!

Blessed are they who commune with the Christ,
Midst holy angels, at the Eucharist—
Who aye seek sunlight through the rain and mist—
Blessed are they!

Blessed are they—the strong in faith and grace—
Who humbly fill their own appointed place;
They who with steadfast patience run the race—
Blessed are they!

Blessed are they who suffer and endure—
They who through thorns and briars walk safe and sure;
Gold in the fire made beautiful and pure!—
Blessed are they!

Blessed are they on whom the angels wait,
To keep them facing the celestial gate,
To help them keep their vows inviolate—
Blessed are they!

Blessed are they to whom, at dead of night,—
In work, in prayer—though veiled from mortal sight,
The great King's messengers bring love and light—
Blessed are they!

Blessed are they whose labours only cease
When God decrees the quiet, sweet release;
Who lie down calmly in the sleep of peace—
Blessed are they!

Whose dust is angel-guarded, where the flowers
And soft moss cover it, in this earth of ours;
Whose souls are roaming in celestial bowers—
Blessed are they!

Blessed are they—our precious ones—who trod
A pathway for us o'er the rock-strewn sod.
How are they number'd with the saints of God!
Blessed are they!

Blessed are they, elected to sit down
With Christ, in that day of supreme renown,
When His own Bride shall wear her bridal crown—
Blessed are they!

Ada Cambridge

All-Saints' Day (1868)

Never to weary more, nor suffer sorrow,—
Their strife all over, and their work all done:
At peace—and only waiting for the morrow;
Heaven's rest and rapture even now begun.

So tired once! long fetter'd, sorely burden'd,
Ye struggled hard and well for your release;
Ye fought in faith and love—and ye are guerdon'd,
O happy souls! for now ye are at peace.

No more of pain, no more of bitter weeping!
For us a darkness and an empty place,
Somewhere a little dust—in angels' keeping—
A blessed memory of a vanish'd face.

For us the lonely path, the daily toiling,
The din and strife of battle, never still'd;
For us the wounds, the hunger, and the soiling,—
The utter, speechless longing, unfulfill'd.

For us the army camp'd upon the mountains,
Unseen, yet fighting with our Syrian foes,—
The heaven-sent manna and the wayside fountains,
The hope and promise, sweetening our woes.

For them the joyous spirit, freely ranging
Green hills and fields where never mortal trod;
For them the light unfading and unchanging,
The perfect quietness—the peace of God.

For both, a dim, mysterious, distant greeting;
For both, at Jesus' cross, a drawing near;
At Eucharistic gate a blessed meeting,
When angels and archangels worship here.

For both, God grant, an everlasting union,
When sin shall pass away and tears shall cease;
For both the deep and full and true communion,
For both the happy life that is "at peace."

Ada Cambridge

An Anniversary

I.

AS flower to sun its drop of dew
Gives from its crystal cup,
So I, as morning gift to you,
This poor verse offer up.

II.

As flowers upon the summer wind
Their air-born odours shake,
So, in all fragrance you may find,
I give but what I take.

III.

My tree blooms green through snow and heat;
Your love is sap and root,—
And this is but the breathing sweet
Of fairest blossom-shoot.

IV.

An outgrowth of the happy days
In wedded lives begun—
Two lives, in all their work and ways,
Indissolubly one.

V.

The force that was to bind us so
We very dimly knew.
Ah, love! it seems so long ago,
And yet the years are few.

VI.

We did not wait for tides to rise,
Nor cared that winds were rough;
They call'd us foolish—we were wise;
God gave us wealth enough.

VII.

He only knows what precious change
We took of Him for gold;

What blessing such a narrow range
Of circumstance can hold.

VIII.

No troubles now could memory spare,
No lightest touch of pain;
No hard experience of care
Would we unlearn again.

IX.

Such love surrounds, such beauty lies
On our most common needs,
As silver hoar-frost glorifies
The wayside sticks and weeds.

X.

All trials that are overpast,
All cares that are to be,
But make more sacred and more fast
The ties 'twixt you and me.

XI.

They are but clear lights shining through
The mist that round us rolls;
They are but touchstones, fine and true,
For fond and faithful souls.

XII.

They are but fires, to cleanse and clean
Our human love from stain;
For naught of sordid, false, or mean
From those blest fires remain.

XIII.

They are but keys within the wards
Of that last, inmost door,
Where the heart's dearest treasure-hoards
Are garner'd evermore.

XIV.

Ah, dear! our very griefs are glad
Our every cross is crown'd;

We are not able to be sad,
Such comfort wraps us round.

XV.

How calm the haven where we rest,
Now passion's storms are past!
How warm and soft the little nest
Which shelters us at last!

XVI.

How—blue, pellucid, and divine—
Through all our days and nights,
The clear eyes of our children shine
Like heavenly beacon-lights!

XVII.

We listen to the laughter sweet
Whose echoes come and go,
The music of the little feet
That patter to and fro.

XVIII.

And deepest thoughts of God awake,
Who hath reveal'd Him thus,
And, in His goodness, deign'd to make
His own abode with us.

XIX.

To God, in Christ, we kneel to-day
(Whose will on earth be done);
As He hath made us, let us pray
That He will keep us, one.

XX.

Together, may we feel Him stand
About our path and bed;
Together may we, hand in hand,
His royal highway tread.

XXI.

The dear ones He has given, to be
Of His redeem'd the type—

Together, may we live to see
Their budding promise ripe.

XXII.

And, O my dearest! may we lie,
In our last night of rest,
Asleep together, peacefully,
Upon our Father's breast

Ada Cambridge

An Answer

Thy love I am. Thy wife I cannot be,
To wear the yoke of servitude — to take
Strange, unknown fetters that I cannot break
On soul and flesh that should be mine, and free.
Better the woman's old disgrace for me
Than this old sin — this deep and dire mistake;
Better for truth and honour and thy sake —
For the pure faith I give and take from thee.

I know thy love, and love thee all I can —
I fain would love thee only till I die;
But I may some day love a better man,
And thou may'st find a fitter mate than I;
Some want, some chill, may steal 'twixt heart and heart.
And then we must be free to kiss and part.

Ada Cambridge

An Old Doll

Low on her little stool she sits
To make a nursing lap,
And cares for nothing but the form
Her little arms enwrap.

With hairless skull that gapes apart,
A broken plaster ball,
One chipped glass eye that squints askew,
And ne'er a nose at all -

No rattle left on grimy cheek,
No mouth that one can see -
It scarce discloses, at a glance,
What it was meant to be.

But something in the simple scheme
As it extends below
(It is the 'tidy' from my chair
That she is rumpling so) -

A certain folding of the stuff
That winds the thing about
(But still permits the sawdust gore
To trickle down and out) -

The way it curves around her waist,
On little knees outspread -
Implies a body frail and dear,
Whence one infers a head.

She rocks the scarecrow to and fro,
With croonings soft and deep,
A lullaby designed to hush
The bunch of rags to sleep.

I ask what rubbish has she there.
'My dolly,' she replies,
But tone and smile and gesture say,
'My angel from the skies.'

Ineffable the look of love
Cast on the hideous blur
That somehow means a precious face,
Most beautiful, to her.

The deftness and the tenderness
Of her caressing hands
How can she possibly divine
For what the creature stands?

Herself a nurseling, that has seen
The summers and the snows
Of scarce five years of baby life.
And yet she knows - she knows.

Just as a puppy of the pack
Knows unheard huntsman's call,
And knows it is a running hound
Before it learns to crawl.

Just as she knew, when hardly born,
The breast unseen before,
And knew - how well! - before they touched,
What milk and mouth were for.

So! by some mystic extra-sense
Denied to eyes and ears,
Her spirit communes with its own
Beyond the veil of years.

She hears unechoing footsteps run
On floors she never trod,
Sees lineaments invisible
As is the face of God -

Forms she can recognise and greet,
Though wholly hid from me.
Alas! a treasure that is not,
And that may never be.

The majesty of motherhood
Sits on her baby brow;

Before her little three-legged throne
My grizzled head must bow.

That dingy bundle in her arms
Symbols immortal things -
A heritage, by right divine,
Beyond the claims of kings.

Ada Cambridge

An Old Maid's Lament

1.

Every wild she- bird has nest and mate in the warm April weather,
But a captive woman, made for love — nor nest, nor mate has she.
In the spring of young desire, young men and maids are wed together,
And the happy mothers flaunt their bliss for all the world to see.
Life's great sacramental feast for them — an empty board for me.

2.

I, a young maid once, an old maid now, deposed, despised, forgotten —
I, like them, have thrilled with passion and have dreamed of nuptial rest,
Of the trembling life within me of my baby unbegotten,
Of the breathing new- born body to my yearning bosom prest
Of the rapture of its little soft mouth drinking at my breast.

3.

Time, that heals so many sorrows, keeps mine ever freshly aching,
Though my face is growing furrowed and my brown hair turning white.
Still I mourn my irremediable loss, asleep or waking —
Still I hear my child's voice calling "Mother" in the dead of night,
And am haunted by those sweet eyes that will never see the light.

4.

O my baby that I might have had! My darling, lost for ever!
O the goodly years that might have been — now desolate and bare!
O malignant God or Fate, what have I done that I should never
Take my birthright like the others, take the crown that women wear,
And possess the common heritage to which all flesh is heir?

Ada Cambridge

At Liberty

1.

No sight to me like sight of ships.
No wine to me like salt- spray thrown
By morning breezes on my lips;
No music sweeter than the moan
Of solemn surges landward blown.
O world unconquered! O great sea,
Tamed by celestial winds alone!
My spirit is at home with thee,
Panting with thy wild waves for space and liberty.

2.

The land is captive, sold, and bought;
The streets are filled with traffic base;
And I am choked with narrow thought —
The dusty customs that disgrace
Mart, chamber, church, and judgment- place.
But when, upon this lonely shore,
I hear thy voice and see thy face,
I seem to pass a prison door,
And breathe, a free- born man, my native air once more.

3.

The urgent tyrannies of life
Relax their grasp when I am here;
I rise above the fretful strife,
The timid doubt, the trembling fear,
The petty woes that crowd so near;
And, with brain cleansed and pulses stilled,
Stand in the spacious atmosphere,
My inmost being rapt and thrilled,
With unimagined peace and wordless worship filled.

4.

O mystery that no thought can reach!
O language that no tongue can tell!
The whispering surf upon the beach —
The murmuring of the mid- sea swell —
The long boom, like a tolling bell,
That shakes the earth beneath my feet —
The solitude ineffable!
O what new strength, divine and sweet,
Breathes in the mighty gales that round these headlands beat!

5.

Thou, friend, in those wild arms caressed,
My comrade, that hast house and home
On that illimitable breast,
Thy spirit in the wind and foam
Meets mine beneath this starlit dome.
I have no compass and no chart;
I know not where thy bark may roam;
I know not, brother, where thou art;
But I can feel thy courage lifting up my heart.

6.

The shadow of the splendid night
Blots out sea- blue and sunset red.
The glimmering canvas, wide and white,
By sweeping rush of trade- wind spread,
Like sea- birds wings above thy head —
Tall mast, slim spar and cobweb shroud,
And slant deck echoing to thy tread —
The great ship, stately, strong, and proud,
Fades on the darkening deep like some dispersing cloud.

7.

But thou art there, amid the stars
That watch me with those steadfast eyes.
Thy soul, escaped from bolts and bars,
Conventioned fetters and disguise,
As open as these arching skies,
Untrammelled as this boundless sea,

Calm in the awful darkness lies,
Like babe upon its mother's knee,
Humble, but unafraid, as honest soul should be.

8.

Thinking of thee — so small a speck
Amid these myriad worlds around,
But king upon thy quarter- deck —
More king than monarch throned and crowned
That e'er on subject smiled or frowned —
Of what depends upon thy skill,
And thee, by conscience only bound —
I think how nobly we may fill
Our part that looks so hard and hopeless, if we will.

9.

Poor, puny mortals that we are,
Clinging to reeds, and ropes of sand,
'Twere better done, 'twere braver far,
Unsheltered and upright to stand,
The free soul at its own command;
In Him- whate'er He be — to trust
Who holds us in His mighty hand,
And guides each star and grain of dust —
Or to renounce all hope and comfort, if we must.

10.

When mercury sinks and winds are foul,
When mists are thick and skies are black,
And hurricanes that shriek and howl,
And wild seas, leaping like a pack
Of hungry wolves upon thy track,
Smother the deck with spume and spray —
Thou, quiet in the dreadful wrack,
Keeping thy watch, dost stand at bay,
Unshaken by one thought of danger or dismay.

11.

Then why, in life's disastrous hours,
Shall we not face the storm and stress
Of those dark destinies and powers,
Those strong fates, that so hardly press
Upon our lonely littleness?
With timbers sound and thou to guide,
Thy ship will live through her distress.
Shall we not also safely ride,
If hearts be stout and true, whatever may betide?

12.

Or if, indeed, we have to meet
The worst that e'er stout heart befell —
If we must suffer sore defeat,
O'erwhelming, irresistible —
Shall we not bear that test as well?
Shall we not die without disgrace?
No force of anguish can compel
Brave men to turn to mean and base,
And all that fate can bring brave men should dare to face.

13.

If, suddenly, some dire mischance —
Collision, cyclone, fire — should mock
Thy keen and sleepless vigilance;
If there should come, unwarned, the shock
Of shattering hull on sunken rock —
If death, in fog, or flood, or flame,
Upon thy cabin door should knock —
Thy native righteousness would shame
The men who boast most loudly of the Christian name.

14.

“The women first!” thy voice would cry
Above the roar of wind and wave;
And thou, the last, would'st calmly die,
Intrepid, resolute, and brave,
All them that trusted thee to save.
If thou could'st see rewards in store —
A martyr's crown beyond the grave —
If all heaven beckoned thee before,
Or fear of hell-fire drove thee — thou could'st do no more.

15.

Art thou, in thy lone- handed fight,
That fails to serve thee, but succeeds
In victory for the true and right,
Beneath the soul that only heeds
The cry of its own lower needs? —
That shelters, trembling, from the fray
In privilege of pleasant creeds,
That are but systems of a day,
From age to age new- made, outworn, and cast away?

16.

Are we not strong enough to take
The course by conscience marked so plain? —
Faithful till death, for manhood's sake,
Unspurred by coward fear of pain,
Unbribed by hope of selfish gain.
Must soaring progress sink and fall?
And is all history writ in vain?
Is life a thing so poor and small?
And is the great design a muddle after all?

17.

Standing in this tremendous space
Of starlit sky and whispering sea,
With my great Maker face to face,
His countless worlds surrounding me,
Eternity — Infinity —
Humble, but confident, I dare
To let these bitter questions be.
We, too, are creatures of His care.
The voice that called us forth forbids us to despair.

Ada Cambridge

At Long Last

Late, late the prize is drawn, the goal attained,
The Heart's Desire fulfilled, Love's guerdon gained.
Wealth's use is past, Fame's crown of laurel mocks
The downward-drooping head and grizzled locks.
The end is reached - the end of toil and strife -
The end of life.

Love flowers and fades like grass, and flowers again;
The spendthrift lovers waste themselves in vain;
Their fiery passions burn out one by one,
And then, alas! when their best days are done,
Spirit and body find their perfect mate -
So late! So late!

Long-sought, long seeking, through the lonely years,
The wanderers meet to weep their useless tears
For time and chance irrevocably flown,
Dear hopes outlived and happy faiths outgrown,
Children unborn, the myriad joys unseen
That might have been.

Not for the spring and morning-time of youth
The perfect flower of slow-unfolding truth,
The perfect love, that dreams of youth foretell,
But youth knows not and youth could never tell;
That light celestial, as of sunset fires
When day expires.

Late comes the gift that crowns the hungry quest,
Like ripe wheat-harvest in a land at rest,
And comes alone, a consecrated cup,
To those proved worthy to sit down and sup.
To them - aye, aye, despite their treasure lost,
'T'is worth the cost.

'T'is worth the cost to reach the heights at last,
Ere eyes are dim and daylight overpast.
To see one aim achieved, one dream fulfilled,
Ere striving brain and trusting heart are stilled.

To live one glorious hour - its price of pain
Is never paid in vain.

Ada Cambridge

At Sea

When the investing darkness growls,
And deep reverberates to deep;
When keyhole whines and chimney howls,
And all the roofs and windows weep;
Then, through the doorless walls of sleep,
The still-sealed ear and shuttered sight,
Phantoms of memory steal and creep,
The very ghosts of sound and light--
Dream-visions and dream-voices of a bygone night.

I see again, I hear again,
Where lightnings flash and house-eaves drip,
A flying swirl of waves and rain--
That storm-path between Sound and Rip.
I feel the swaying of the ship
In every gust that rocks the trees,
And taste that brine upon my lip
And smell the freshness of the breeze
That sped us through the welter of those racing seas.

I hear the menace of the call
To rope and rivet, wheel and mast,
In the swift onrush of the squall,
The challenge of the thundering blast
To daring men as it sweeps past;
And in my dream I have no dread.
Rivet and rope are firm and fast,
The clear lights shining, green and red,
The quiet eyes of sentry watching overhead.

What epic battles pass unsung!
It was a war of gods befell
On that wild night when we were young.
They rode, like cavalry of hell,
The mighty winds, the monstrous swell,
On their white horses, fierce and fleet;
They stood at bay, invincible,

Where pulsed beneath our sliding feet
The faithful iron heart that never lost a beat.

How the sharp sea-spume lashed and stung!
How the salt sea-wind tugged and tare
And clawed and mauled us where we clung,
With panting breasts and streaming hair,
To our frail eyrie in mid-air!
How we exulted in the fight--
With neither haste nor halt to dare
Those Titans furies in their might,
Undaunted and unswerving in our insect flight!

No lap of exquisite repose!
A mortar wherein souls are brayed;
An anvil ringing to the blows
Whereby true men are shaped, and made
Divinely strong and unafraid.
Such gallant sailor-men there be--
Never unready or dismayed,
Though 't's the face of death they see
In cyclone, fire and fog, and white surf on the lee.

Not only in the sylvan bower,
On dreaming hill, by sleeping mere,

The holy place--the sacred hour.
Beset by every form of fear,
Darkness ahead and danger near,
Sorely hard-driven and hard-prest,
But still unspent and of good cheer--
He finds them who can pass the test,
Who never winks an eye and never stays to rest

Ada Cambridge

Aunt Dorothy's Lecture

Come, go and practise—get your work—
Do something, Nelly, pray.
I hate to see you moon about
In this uncertain way!
Why do you look so vacant, child?
I fear you must be ill.
Surely you are not thinking of
That Captain Cameron still?

Ah, yes—I fear'd so! You may blush;
I blush for you, my dear;
And it is scarce a week ago
Since Gerald brought him here—
The day he fell in the hunting-field,
And his pretty horse was lamed.
O child—and with your bringing up!
You ought to be ashamed.

Last night I saw you watching him,
And you danced with him thrice;
You turn'd quite red when he spoke to you—
Such manners are not nice.
You, Nelly Gray, should not be seen
(I don't wish to be harsh)
Running wild, like the servant-girls,
For a red coat and moustache.

Not that he isn't a gentleman
From spur to shako-brim—
I know good blood when I see it—yes,
I will say that for him.
He does not swagger, nor lisp, nor flirt—
Has none of those vulgar ways;
And he does not talk like a stable-boy,
As the fashion is nowadays.
In fact, I admire him very much—
My dear, you need not fret—
I do; he's very different from
The rest of Gerald's set.

He's very handsome, certainly—
I don't mind saying so.
He reminds me a bit of your uncle, when
I met him long ago.
He had a silky, long moustache
Of just that golden shade;
And broad Greek brows, with a tint of bronze,
That Indian suns had made.
He was a soldier, too, you know—
As big and strong and tall:
He'd just come home when I saw him first
At Lady Talbot's ball.

I remember when we were introduced;
By stealth I look'd him o'er—
Such haughty, indolent, gentle eyes,
I never saw before!
I felt so strange when he look'd at me;
I cannot tell you why—
But I seem'd to feel he was mine, to keep
And love, till I should die.

'Twas very odd—in a moment, too,
Before I knew his name!
But, Nelly—O how the world was changed
And brighten'd, when he came!
I was so restless all that night;—
I did not want to see,
I felt where he moved about the room
While he was away from me.
I was jealous—I could not help it,
Although I struggled hard—
Of the other girls, whose favour'd names
Were written on his card;
They were so rich, and I was poor;
They were so grandly dress'd,
And I so dowdy; and yet, and yet,
I thought he liked me best.

The last long hour he danced with them,
And oh I miss'd him so!
And then I heard our carriage call'd,

And I knew that I must go.
A big lump rose up in my throat
That I could hardly bear;
But, passing through the vestibule,
I saw him standing there.

I knew not where he came from,
But I felt no surprise
When he look'd down from his stately height
With his grave and quiet eyes,
And held his hand for a mute good-night
That said all words could say;—
Ah, love! he made me happy then
For ever and for aye.

Well, well,—but this is nonsense;
How I am running on!—
His golden hair grew thin and grey,
And now he's dead and gone.
There, go and dress for dinner, child;
It's getting late, you see;
And—perhaps I'll ask young Cameron
If he'll come in to tea.

Ada Cambridge

Autumn

So still—so still! Only the endless sighing
Of sad Æolian harp-notes overhead;
Only the soft mass-music for the dying;
Only the requiem for the newly dead!

So strangely dim!—the grey mist on the heather,
The chill cloud-twilight in the wind-stripped bowers,
Where gold and scarlet sunlights lay together
On harvest fruit and summer wealth of flowers.

So empty now!—only the dead leaves sifting
The dead brown berries underneath the trees;
Only my fair dead treasures idly drifting
About my footsteps in the autumn breeze.

All over now! No flowers that must be tended
Are left to grow upon the open plain;
No fruits to ripen; for the harvest's ended—
There's no more need for either sun or rain.

The infinite hope, the boundless, strong endeavour,
The love and joy I never thought to sum,
The precious things that were to last for ever—
All gather'd now, and nothing more to come!

Only the shroud of snow, the white star-tapers,
The passionate storm-winds, wailing in the air;
Only the icy rain and tearful vapours,
Only the winter darkness of despair!

* * * * *

So still, so sweet! with tender breezes blowing
Amongst the hills and o'er the Lowland sod,
And golden drifts of dead leaves softly strowing
The seed-graves hollow'd by the hands of God.

So grey and calm! the crimson glory faded
From this low sky, pale blue and purple-barred—
This placid sea, with steel and silver shaded—

This fair earth, now with autumn furrows scarred.

In the decay such chasten'd beauty blending—
Beauty late-born of peace, and hope, and rest,
As in a saintly life when near the ending,
When all its strife and labour has been blest.
The harvest-time is past. But there remaineth
The well-stored treasure-house—the hidden seed
That dead leaves help to nourish, which containeth
The germ of a new life that's life indeed.

Ada Cambridge

Awake

Calm as that moonbeam on the wall,
Sleep broods on baby's eyes;
Arms, hush'd and still, but pulsing quick,
Enfold him as he lies;
My brain is full of thronging thoughts,
Strange passions thrill my breast,
My heart aches with a load of love
That will not let me rest.

The dim years stand about my bed,
They neither smile nor weep;
Like softest kisses, on my face
The little fingers creep.
I hear slow footfalls, in the night
Of fates upon his track,—
O love, I cannot let you go!
I cannot keep you back!

Lord, let him shelter in my arms,
Or take us both to Thine;
Or, if a troublous life must come,
Make all the trouble mine:
Or let thy sharp swords pierce my heart
To blunt them for the child,—
What care I, Lord, for stain and shame,
So he keep undefiled!

Nay, Lord, I know not what I ask—
I know not how to pray:
Hear Thou the crying mother-soul,
And not the words I say.
Do Thou what seemeth good to Thee,
So he be spared from sin;
And, oh! if love can aught avail,
Let mine be counted in.

Ada Cambridge

By A Norfolk Broad

One hour ago the crimson sun, that seemed so long a-drowning, sank.
The summer day is all but done. Our boat is moored beneath the bank.
I bask in peace, content, replete — my faithful comrade at my feet.

The water-violet shuts its eye; the water-lily petals close;
So in the evening light we lie and dream in undisturbed repose.
How far all petty cares have flown! How calm the fretful world has grown!

We only hear the gentle breeze, in tender sighs and whispers, pass
Through osier beds and alder trees, and rustling flags and bending grass;
The song of blackbird in the hedge, the quack of wild-duck in the sedge.

The distant bark of farmhouse dogs, the piping of a clear-voiced thrush,
The murmurous babble of the frogs, of rippling stream in reed and rush;
The splash of pike and bream that rise to flitting moths and dragon-files.

Far from the haunts of striving men, the toil and moil, the dust and din,
At home, at peace, in this lone fen, with these our dumb and gentler kin;
In Mother Nature's arms at rest, we drink the nectar of her breast.

The fragrance of these dewy hours, the perfume that the rich earth yields,
Sweetbriar and bean and clover-flowers, the incense of the quiet fields;
The new-cut hay, so sweet and fresh . . . what balm to spirit and to flesh!

And those white gulls, inland for food; and that still heron, carved in jet;
That paddling water-hen and brood, those swifts and swallows, hunting yet;
All these soft creatures, wild and free, how lovely and how kind they be!

Kind to that monster of the gun, that ravager of earth and sky,
From whom the fledgelings hide and run — the immemorial enemy!
Ah, but this hand of their dread lord hath sheathed the devastating sword.

Tell them, my comrade, in thy tongue, that I come not to rob and strike.
Tell these shy hearts, so wronged and wrung, that all men's hearts are not alike.
In the Dark Ages of thy race, thou hast foretaste of light and grace.

Thou, love-enfranchised, that canst sleep unharmed, unharried, at my door,
Wolf-brother, taught to guard the sheep, teach them that man is something
more

Than instrument of woe and death to half the creatures that have breath.

* * * * *

The western glories fade and pass. The twilight deepens more and more.
A thin mist, like a breath on glass, veils shining mere and distant shore.
The moor-hen's family is fed. The heron hies him home to bed.

No hum of gnat or bee is heard; no pipe of thrush on hawthorn bough;
No cry of any beast or bird to stir the solemn stillness now,
Though earth and air and stream are rife with latent energies of life.

Silent the otter where he prowls, the gliding polecat and her prey;
Silent the soft-winged mousing owls, the flickering bats, like imps at play.
War, death, the fighters and the fight — all ghostly shadows of the night.

What means that questioning paw of thine? those wistful eyes upon my face?
Ah, hunter! Dost thou sniff and whine? Art still a-quiver for the chase?
Peace — peace! Lie down again, old hound. This place to-night is holy ground.

* * * * *

The clocks strike ten. The last, last gleam of lingering day has disappeared.
On field and marsh and quiet stream a few stars shine. The mist has cleared.
The willows of the further shore stand outlined on the sky once more.

How clear the blackness, leaf and bark, the plumes upon those bulbous stumps!
A pallid fragment of the dark shows fine-etched flag and osier clumps.
Sharper and sharper in the glow the iris and the bulrush grow.
A faint dawn glimmers on the sedge, the grassy banks, the flowery meads;
A bright disc shows its radiant edge, the round moon rises from the reeds;
The sleeping lilies take the light; their steel-dark bed turns silver-white.

That path of glory, widening, streams across the mere to where we sit.
My sight swims in its dazzling beams; spirit and brain are steeped in it
Dost thou not answer to the touch? Listen, my dog, that knows so much: —

There may be lovelier worlds than this, a heavenly country, vast and fair,
Where saints and seraphs dwell in bliss — I do not know — I do not care.
While in my human flesh I live I ask no more than earth can give.

Ethereal essences may roam Elysian Fields beyond the grave,
But we, my dog, will saunter home, to all we love and all we crave.
God sees us thankful for our lot. The Unborn Day concerns us not.

Ada Cambridge

By The Camp Fire

Ah, 'twas but now I saw the sun flush pink on yonder placid tide;
The purple hill-tops, one by one, were strangely lit and glorified;
And yet how sweet the night has grown, with palest starlights dimly sown!

Those mountain ranges, far and near, enclasp me,— sharply pencilled there,
Like blackest sea-waves,—outlined here, like phantoms in the luminous air,
Between that cold and quiet sky, and the calm river running by.

The gum-trees whisper overhead, and, delicately dark and fine,
Their lovely shadow-patterns shed across the paths of white moonshine.
The golden wattles glimmer bright, scenting this cool, transparent night.

What spirits wake when earth is still? I hear wild wood-notes softly swell.
There's the strange clamour, hoarse and shrill, that drowns the bull-frogs' hollow bell;
And there's the plaintive rise and fall of the lone mopoke's cuckoo-call.

And nearer, an opossum flits above the firelight, pauses, peers—
I see a round ball where he sits, with pendant tail and pointed ears;
And two are gruffly snarling now in hollows of yon upper bough.

Hark! that's the curlew's thrilling scream. What mountain echoes it has stirred!
The sound goes crying down the stream, the wildest bird-note ever heard.
And there's a crane, with legs updrawn, gone sailing out to meet the dawn.

It croaks its farewell, like a crow, beating the air with soft, wide wings.
On the white water down below its vague grey shadow-shape it flings,
And, dream-like, passes out of sight, a lonely vision of the night.

Ah me! how weird the undertones that thrill my wake-ful fancy through!
The river softly creeps and moans; the wind seems faintly crying too.
Such whisperings seem to come and pass across the orchis-flower'd grass.

The darkness gather'd all around is full of rustlings, strange and low,
The dead wood crackles on the ground, and shadowy shapes flit to and fro;
I think they are my own dim dreams, wandering amongst the woods and streams.

The tangled trees seem full of eyes,—still eyes that watch me as I sit;

A flame begins to fall and rise, their glances come and go with it.
And on the torn bark, rough and brown, I hear soft scratchings up and down.

Sometimes I hear a sound of feet,—a slow step through the darkness steals;
And then I think of yours, my sweet, in spirit following at my heels;
For leagues before, around, behind, part me from all my human-kind.
Coo-ey!—the long vibration throbs in countless echoes through the hills.
The lonely forest wakes and sobs, and then no sound the silence fills,—
Only the night-frogs' bubbling shriek in every water-hole and creek;

Only a rush of wind in flight, as startled wild-ducks flutter past,
Quivering and twinkling in the light, skimming the shining water fast;
And ripples from a black swan's breast, darting from out its rushy nest.

How is't in England?—Sunday morn, and organ-music, love, with you.
That breath of memory, idly born, like a great storm-wind shakes me through.
Ah, darling! bend your head and pray,—it cannot touch you far away.

Why do I care? My house of God, beyond all thought, is grand and great!
My prayerful knees, upon the sod, its flowers and grasses consecrate.
And I can see Him in the stars, undimmed by walls and window-bars.

Great Nature spreads her wondrous book, and shows me all her pages fair;
To me the language, when I look, seems but a letter here and there—
The very stones beneath me teach a lore beyond my utmost reach.

For all my pain, and toil, and strife, I see so dimly what is true!
O Art! O Science! O great Life! I grasp thee by so faint a clue!
No more of ocean tides I dream than minnows in their shallow stream.

Sea without bottom, without shore, where is the plumb to fathom thee?
O mystery! as I learn thee more, the more thy deeps are dark to me!
But who am I, that I should scan the Divine Maker's mighty plan?

And yet, oh yet, if I could hear that organ-music once again,
My soul, methinks, would lose its fear; and on this troubled heart and brain
Some light of knowledge would be shed, and some few riddles would be read.

Ada Cambridge

Contentment

Is it a virtue, as the sages say,
The 'trivial round and common task' to ply,
And for no wider walk of life to sigh
Than we were born to; sweetly, day by day,
Our meed of lowly reverence to pay
Our high-placed 'betters'; never to defy
The powers that be; never to kick or cry,
Or think, or question - simply to obey?

Then vice be with us, although blood be shed.
No pact with powers partizan and blind;
No peace with Custom that makes right of wrong.
We shall content us when the starved are fed,
When men and brothers are agreed and kind,
And there is fair play between weak and strong.

Ada Cambridge

Craven-Heart

Those anguished voices in the air!
Oh, I could shriek and tear my hair
In rage, rebellion and despair.

But what is one, amid a throng
So vast and merciless and strong,
To make attempt to right the wrong?

What ear would hear me if I cried?
And who would rally to my side?
What could I do to stem the tide?

Though I should plunge in flood and flame,
And suffer every shame and blame,
The world would triumph all the same.

I am not called upon to pay.
So why join in the hopeless fray,
And waste my brief and precious day?

Ada Cambridge

Cui Bono

1.

Why should we care for storms that rave and rend,
Safe at our household hearth?
Unknowing whence we came, or where we wend,
Why should we ache and toil, and waste and spend,
Treading from no beginning to no end,
An uncrowned martyr's path?

2.

Is it worth while to suffer, when we might,
Like happier men, be blest
With that dull blindness that desires no light,
That peaceful soul that feels no need to fight,
Nor thirsts for liberty, and truth, and right,
But lives its life at rest?

3.

Is it worth while to work, and strive, and learn —
To sow where none may reap?
Is it worth while to rage, and fret, and yearn
For nameless treasure that we cannot earn?
Is it worth while in fever- fires to burn,
While wise men eat and sleep?

4.

Is it worth while to care for praise or blame,
This little time we live,
When purest deeds are oftenest put to shame?
To pant for noble strife and lofty fame,
When gold seems better than a stainless name,
Or all the world can give?

5.

Is it worth while for friendship's gift to sue,

For friendship's joys to crave?
When sordid tests, that bring us ruth and rue,
And sorrowful years, alone discern the clue
That tells us what is false and what is true,
And what we lose or save?

6.

To open wide our sanctuary door
Some welcome guest to greet,
To find, perchance, when we have shown our store,
The sacred places rudely trampled o'er,
Bereaved, profaned, and soiled for evermore
With tread of vulgar feet?

7.

Is it worth while to love — though love find grace
In our beloved's sight?
To bear a restless heart from place to place,
Hungry for sight of one transcendent face,
That shines our central sun in azure space,
Or leaves our world in night:

8.

And, after all, to gain no more than this
At such a life- long cost —
A taste, a glimpse, the memory of a kiss,
A speechless sense of what diviner bliss,
That might have been, we have contrived to miss —
To know what love has lost?

9.

Is it worth while — O sadder fate! — to heed
The solemn chime that knells
The death hour of an immemorial creed —
A staff of strength become a broken reed —
And never friendlier help in time of need,
Nor surer guide, foretells?

10.

To heed the spirit- voice that bids us take
A strange new road alone;
From gentle slumber and sweet dreams to wake,
And hear the mighty billows boom and break —
The thunder of immortal seas that shake
The earth's foundation- stone?

11.

Is it worth while, so far away as we,
To long, in hope and dread,
For the great unborn Age that is to be —
To pine for light that we shall never see —
To care what course man's life and destiny
May take when we are dead?

12.

Is it worth while to toil in doubt and fear,
Through thorny ways like these,
When they who turn blind eye and heedless ear
To change and portent, and who see nor hear
The pregnant storm that gathers far and near,
Dwell all their days at ease?

13.

To leave the Good whereof we are possest,
To search, in gloom and grief,
Through pathless trouble, for some unknown Best,
And see no goal, and find no place of rest —
Is it worth while, on such a fruitless quest
To waste a life so brief?

14.

Is it worth while to wear out heart and brain?
Ah me, what must be must!
The maddening Mystery cannot be made plain,
And they who seek to solve it seek in vain,

Yet can but seek, in sleepless hope and pain,
Till heart and brain are dust.

Ada Cambridge

Dead

"ON board the Petrel, in St. Lucia's bay,
Of yellow fever—agèd twenty-nine."

"Who did you say, my lady?" drawled the Earl.

"The duke—what duke?"

"I did not speak of dukes,"

Replied the Countess slowly, white and grim,
Pressing the rustling sheet between her palms,
The while her diamonds heaved upon her breast,
And sank and heaved, and glitter'd like her eyes—
Hungry, pathetic eyes,—"'Tis only Dick,
Only a sailor-lad I used to know."

"Humph! A West Indian friend?" he softly sneer'd,
And bow'd and gave his arm. "The carriage waits—
My lady loses time."

Then pass'd they out,

Through silky servants,—he, the great Earl, stark
In plume and crest and linked mediaeval steel,
The Countess en bergère, in white and red,
With roses, diamond dew-dropped, in her hat
And in her queenly bosom;—pass'd they out,
And, through clear gaslight and the avenue
Of silent Champs-Élysées, to the fête.

Her restless eyes were blind to all the blaze
And motley splendour of the throng'd saloons;
The flowers, the cool cascades, the magic wand
Of Strauss, the vine-draped balustrades, the gaze
Of wistful admiration meeting hers
At every step. The Empress smiled and bow'd,
The Emperor praised the beauty and the taste
Of her mock-rustic costume, princes begged
Her fair hand for the dance, and her grim lord
Scowl'd, wrathful, on her when she pass'd him by.
She cared for none,—she look'd beyond them all.

She saw another night—a hot, bright night—
A night of years ago—danced out in joy

'Neath the low roof-tree of a planter's house
In fair Antigua's bosom;—saw the stars,
Large, liquid, golden, swimming in the blue,
Shining through open doors and jalousies,
And the green sparkles of the fire-flies, thick
About the forest, fringing all the dark;

The crimson creepers swaying in the air
From white verandah pillars—swaying soft;
The small nest of a humming-bird; the stems,
Brown-ring'd, of feathery palm-trees,—plaintains bow'd
With broad, thick leaves, and clustering fruit, and seeds
In scarlet vessels—orange-groves, white-flower'd
And sweet, with hanging balls of green and gold—
All vaguely outlined in the mellow night.

And nearer still a brave, brown English face,
Bent low, with clear grey eyes and faithful lips
That whisper'd, "Reine, I love you," meeting hers.
The drowsy sound of laughter and light feet
Behind them she could hear—but the quick throb
Of poor Dick's English heart upon her breast
She felt to suffocation. "Reine, my sweet,
I love you—Reine, I love you; kiss me, child."
And her soft hands stray'd softly round his neck,
And softer still she kiss'd him.

Then she saw

A morning, hot and stormy—saw the Earl,
Drunk with her wondrous beauty, standing there
Where Dick had stood. She saw his cultured ways,
His high-bred, stately courtesy and grace;
She heard his subtle flatteries, his tales
Of the great world, of court and city life,
With gaping ears and speculating brain.
The voice of the arch-tempter, low and soft,
Spoke in his polished accents, "Reine, 'tis sin,
'Tis sin and shame, that such a face as yours
Should waste its sweetness in these heathen isles.
There's not a fairer face in Europe, Reine;
'Tis worth a coronet. Come back with me
As a great earl's wife; in his diamonds dress'd,
You would have homage like a crownèd queen."
She shudder'd now,—his diamonds gall'd her worse

Than felon's chains.
Anon she saw a bay—
Blue, limpid water, fringed with dipping palms,
A green rock-gateway opening on the sea,
Green cane-fields stretching upward, woods and hills
Lying entangled in the summer clouds;
An English ship at anchor—burning noon—
A thin, brown, fever'd face, with hungry eyes
Roaming from side to side, in dumb appeal,
Which none could understand,—and dying lips
Muttering to vacant air and heedless ears,
“I love you, Reine, I love you!”

“O my love—
O Dick—my Dick—would I could sleep with thee
In thy last happy sleep among the palms,
With my dead hands clasp'd tight about thy neck!
O Dick, I did not mean it—did not think—
And now my heart is broken!
“Take me home.
The rooms are hot, my lord, and I am faint—
The music makes me giddy. Take me home!”

Ada Cambridge

Desire

Bright eyes, sweet lips, with many fevers fill
The young blood, running wildly, as it must;
But lips and eyes beget a strange distrust.
Electric fingers send the sudden thrill
Through senses unsubservient to the will;
The flames die down, and leave a dim disgust;
Unfragrant kisses turn to drouth and dust;
I kiss; I feast; but I am hungry still.

O woman, woman, passionate but strong!
True to thy love as needle to the pole -
True to the truth, and not alone to me -
O mate and friend, elusive in the throng,
With thy clear brows, thy straight and upright soul,
Nameless - unknown - my hunger is for thee!

Ada Cambridge

Drunk

The filthy beast! And is he here again,
With his foul slobbering mouth and shuffling feet,
To taint the atmosphere and shame the street,
And shock the pure and holy that abstain?
Disgusting brute! Disgraceful blot and stain
On social order, civilised and sweet!
Deal with him, Constable, as right and meet
When laws are flouted that we must maintain.

Put him in prison! Confiscate his bowl!
Away with him and the accursèd drink
That wrecks his body and degrades his soul,
And makes him loathsome to clean men! But think -
He had no choice. It was his only share
Of all its pleasures that the world could spare.

Ada Cambridge

Drunk And Disorderly

Poor, staggering brute, whom one and all disdain!
Maybe 'twas outraged Nature bade him slake
His thirst like this — to still the gnawing ache
Of weary bones that else would ache in vain.
Maybe crushed spirit and stagnating brain
Only in this delirious fever wake
To transient joys of fancy that can take
The sting from want, the bitterness from pain.

Punish the drunkard! Confiscate the bowl!
But give fair wage for work, give health and hope
To check the waste that calls for such repair;
Give food to toil- worn body and starved soul,
And give the pinched imagination scope
For sensuous pleasure in a purer air.

Ada Cambridge

Empty

Can this be my poem?—this poor fragment
Of bald thought in meanest language dressed!
Can this string of rhymes be my sweet poem?
All its poetry wholly unexpressed!

Does it tell me of the dreams that wandered,
In the silent night-time, through my brain?
Of the woven web of wondrous fancies,
Half of keenest joy and half of pain?

Does it tell me of the awful beauty
That came down to hide this sordid earth?
Does it tell me of the inward crying?—
Of the glory whence it had its birth?

Only as the lamp, all dull and rusted,
Tells me of the flame that is put out,—
Of the shiny hair and happy faces
Lighted, when its radiance streamed about?

Only as this piece of glass, now lying
In the shade beside me, as I sit,
Tells me of the soft hues of the rainbow,
That the morning sunshine gave to it!

Only as this little flask, now smelling
Of the dust and mould with which 'tis lined,
Tells me of the lovely subtle fragrance
Of the perfume that it once enshrined!

Only as a picture, blurred and faded,
Tells me of the bloom of colour there,
When the painter's soul was with his canvas,
And his paint was bright, and fresh, and fair!

Only as the wires and keys—notes broken,
Odd and scattered—tell me of a strain
That once filled my very soul with rapture,
But can never be spelled out again!

Only as a bare brown flower-stalk tells me
Of the delicate blossom that it wore;
Of the humming bees in silken petals,
And the downy butterflies it bore!

Only as a crazy boat, sun-blistered,
Drawn up high and dry upon the sands,
Tells me of the blue and buoyant billows
Bearing breezy sails to foreign lands!

Only as a little dead lark, lying
With bedraggled wings and withered throat,
Tells me of the songs it heard in heaven—
Trying to teach me, here and there, a note!

Oh no! oh no! this is not my treasure—
This is but the shell where it has lain;
It is gone—the life, and light, and glory,—
And 'twill never come to me again!

Ada Cambridge

Evensong

The sun has set; grey shadows darken slowly
The rose-red cloud-hills that were bathed in light.
O Lord, to Thee, with spirit meek and lowly,
I kneel in prayer to-night.

I thank Thee for my "daily bread"—the sorrow
And the gladness Thou hast given me this day—
The strange rich gifts which, through a long to-morrow,
Deep in my soul will stay.

I thank Thee for the grace that aye restrained
My passionate will when it was bent for wrong—
That fed the soul-lamp when the light had wanèd,
And made the weak hands strong.

I thank Thee that the gentle voice of pleading
Made itself heard amid the whirl and strife—
E'en when I walk'd my wilful way unheeding,
Telling of light and life.

That in the sad hour of my soul's affliction,
When I look'd backward as from parchèd lands,
The "gracious rain" of heavenly benediction
Fell still from outstretch'd hands.

Ay, ay, no earnest hope, no true endeavour,
Has been unanswer'd or unblest'd by Thee:
Thou, Lord, who carest for Thine own for ever,
Hast cared indeed for me.

I think of all the blessing and the sweetness
That made the burden of this day so light,
How my home-ties are still in their completeness
Wound round my heart to-night;

How Thou hast had my treasures in Thy keeping,
And yet hast spared them to be mine—still mine;
How o'er the beds where my loved ones are sleeping
Thy folded wings will shine.

And, O my God! I cannot thank Thee duly—
No word or deed which Jesus' love will take
Can span the measure of one blessing truly.
Forgive—for Jesus' Sake!

Ada Cambridge

Fallen

For want of bread to eat and clothes to wear —
Because work failed and streets were deep in snow,
And this meant food and fire — she fell so low,
Sinning for dear life's sake, in sheer despair.
Or, because life was else so bald and bare,
The natural woman in her craved to know
The warmth of passion — as pale buds to blow
And feel the noonday sun and fertile air.

And who condemns? She who, for vulgar gain
And in cold blood, and not for love or need,
Has sold her body to more vile disgrace —
The prosperous matron, with her comely face —
Wife by the law, but prostitute in deed,
In whose gross wedlock womanhood is slain.

Ada Cambridge

Fashion

See those resplendent creatures, as they glide
O'er scarlet carpet, between footmen tall,
From sumptuous carriage to effulgent hall -
A dazzling vision in their pomp and pride!
See that choice supper - needless - cast aside -
Though worth a thousand fortunes, counting all,
To them for whom no crumb of it will fall -
The starved and homeless in the street outside.

Some day the little great god will decree
That overmuch connotes the underbred,
That pampered body means an empty head,
And wealth displayed the last vulgarity.
When selfish greed becomes a social sin
The world's regeneration may begin.

Ada Cambridge

Good Night

1.

Love, thou hast wandered far and wide,
But here thy wanderings cease;
Thy long- sought mate is by thy side,
And thou canst sleep in peace.

2.

Night moans outside our window- pane,
And weeps from dripping eaves;
The air is thick with falling rain
Upon dead autumn leaves.

3.

The winds of winter rave and chafe
Around thy tranquil nest,
But I am here, and thou art safe —
Thy very soul may rest.

4.

The wild surf- thunder swells and falls
Upon the seething beach —
Thy world within thy chamber- walls
Nor winds nor waves can reach.

5.

Sleep, tired eyes! Sleep well, dear heart,
That ached so long for me!
No sudden hand shall tear apart
These arms that shelter thee

6.

Sleep well, though late- found joys be brief,
And bought with tears and pain;

Shut out the memory of thy grief —
Thou didst not grieve in vain.

7.

Think of our treasure, kept in store,
And not the price it cost —
Those precious years, that come no more,
Which thou and I have lost.

8.

O, wasted years, that lie behind
Hush — what is past is past.
Enough that we have lived to find
What life is worth at last.

9.

Though Fate has robbed us of so much,
We know not what we miss;
All ills are recompensed in such
A priceless good as this.

10.

Sleep, dear! The hours are passing on —
The midnight bells have tolled;
Think not how much of life is gone,
But how much more we hold.

11.

Yes, more — as wise men reckon life —
Though no wise man can tell
How soon, for husband and for wife,
The stroke of doom will knell.

12.

No echo of that solemn chime
Break through thy perfect peace!

No forecast of that awful time
When time for us will cease:

13.

When happier worlds shall shine in space,
For other eyes to see,
And none have any more a place
For thy true love and thee.

14.

Be blind to all, and deaf, and dumb,
In thy quick heart's despite!
Content thee — though the end must come,
It will not come to- night.

15.

This night let never thought of ill
Disturb thy slumber deep;
To- morrow I shall have thee still,
So thou canst safely sleep:

16.

Reprieved from that appalling fear,
As from thy long regret —
Be our last parting far or near,
We have not reached it yet.

17.

Thy head lies pillowed on my breast —
My cheek upon thy brow —
Dear love, good night! Thou art at rest
From Past and Future now.

Ada Cambridge

Granny

Here, in her elbow chair, she sits
A soul alert, alive,
A poor old body shrunk and bent -
The queen-bee of the hive.

But hives of bees and hives of men
Obey their several laws;
No fiercely-loving filial throng
This mother-head adores.

This bringer of world-wealth, whereof
None may compute the worth,
Is possibly of no account
To anyone on earth.

Her cap and spectacles, that mean
Dim eyes and scanty hairs,
The humble symbols of her state -
The only crown she wears.

Lacking a kingdom and a court,
A relic of the past,
Almost a cumberer of the ground -
That is our queen at last.

But still not wholly without place,
Nor quite bereft of power;
A useful stopgap - a resource
In many a troubled hour.

She darns the stockings, keeps the house,
The nurseless infant tends,
While the young matrons and the men
Pursue their various ends -

Too keen-set on their great affairs,
Or little plays and pranks,
The things and people of their world,
To give her thought or thanks -

The children on whom all her thought
And time and love were spent
Through half a century of years!
Yet is she well content.

The schooling of those fiery years,
It has not been for nought;
A large philosophy of life
Has self-less service taught.

The outlook from the heights attained
By climbings sore and slow
Discovers worlds of wisdom, hid
From clearest eyes below.

So calmly, in her elbow chair,
Forgotten and alone,
She knits and dreams, and sometimes sighs
But never makes a moan.

Still dwelling with her brood unseen -
Ghosts of a bygone day -
The precious daughter in her grave,
The dear son gone astray -

And others, to whom once she stood
As only light and law,
The near and living, and yet lost,
That need her love no more.

Watching their joyous setting forth
To mingle with their kind,
With scarce a pang, with ne'er a grudge,
At being left behind.

'Let them be young, as I was young,
And happy while they may'
A dog that waits the night in peace
Since it has had its day.

Grey

Is the morning dim and cloudy? Does the wind drift up the leaves?
Is there mist upon the mountains, where the sun shone yesterday?
Are the little song-birds silent? Is the sky all blurred and grey?
Does the rain fall, patter, patter, from the eaves?

Does your glass go down? And does your heart sink in the dreary lull?
Are the strings relax'd and limp, and do the soft notes whine and cry?
Has the damp got in and jarred the chords and spoil'd the melody?
Are you out of tune, belovèd? are you dull?

Has the chill wind found an entrance? Does it sigh and rustle there?
Is it drifting, not the dead leaves, but your dead hopes, all about?
Is it waking up your sorrow while your light is blotted out?
Does your heart seem sad and cold and full of care?

Are you listless and discouraged, dear? and does your life look grey?
Does there seem no use in trying? Does your work fall from your hand?
Would you give up the great riddle that's so hard to understand?
Oh, then, go you to your chamber straight, and pray.

Go and pray, and God will give you peace and comfort for your pain—
All the misty, dull confusion He will tenderly reform—
And the fire of His own Spirit, that shall make you dry and warm;
And your harp-strings shall be strung and tuned again.

Ay, the Lord will put the melody in your heart and soul anew;
So that, howsoe'er unskilled and rude the hands that touch the wires,
There shall come forth beautiful chords of faith and hope and high desires,
Only music that is deep and sweet and true.

Go and work,—the clouds will show the silver lining that's behind.
Go to squalid lanes and alleys, where grim want and sickness lurk;
Feed the hungry, soothe the suffering, tell the poor of Christ,—oh, work,
And you'll no more hear the rustling of the wind.

Then you'll no more hear the restless, hopeless sobbing over sin,
No more hear the earthly troubles crying, crying from the ground;
For the wings of guardian angels, they shall compass you around,
That the wind shall have no place to enter in.

Then, as wither'd leaves lie browning on the quiet grassy slopes,
As they sink in peaceful earth, and moulder with it as they die,
To help nurture precious seeds for coming summers— so shall lie,
Calm and still, your sorrowful memories and dead hopes.

O belovèd, work and wait! The sun will shine another day,
On a heart refresh'd, and strong, and green, and cool. The rain and gloom
Are to make the sap run quicker, give the flowers a deeper bloom—
We have need for both the golden and the grey.

Ada Cambridge

Holy Communion

Father, for Jesus' sake,
Low at the footstool of Thy throne, I pray
That Thou, into Thine arms of love, to-day
My trembling soul wilt take.

Thine eyes can see, I know,
How many a dark and fearful spot of sin
Stains the white garment Thou didst clothe it in,
Once undefiled as snow.

I dare not come alone
Into Thy presence for that sin to plead;
But there is One who waits to intercede—
Whose merits will atone.

Into the holy place
He takes the incense of our common prayer,
Which, mingling with His own, ascendeth there
Up to Thy throne of grace.

All too unclean it is,
Too cold and weak, above this earth to rise,
Save He, in love eternal, sanctifies
And hallows it with His.

Therefore accept from me,
Through His hands, now, my weak and wavering will;
And deign my heart's deep longing to fulfil,
As it seems best to Thee.

Pour down Thy healing light
Into the dark depths of my soul this day;
Dissolve the mists and shadows—oh, I pray,
Let it no more be night!

Spirit of love, reveal
All hidden sins against Thy blessed name,
That I may weep for them in utter shame
As in Thy, church I kneel.

And now, oh cleanse them out!
Make fair again Thine olden dwelling-place;
And let the fruitful streams of love and grace
Compass it round about.

Lord, with repentance, give
Faith, deep and strong, that naught may undermine
Of all that's evil in this world of Thine—
Faith that shall breathe and live.

Pour from the hallow'd cup
Our dear Lord's stainless life into mine own;
Put it to my soul's lips—so thirsty grown—
And let them drink it up.

Ada Cambridge

Home-Sick

O time, great Healer! canst thou still
The crying hearts that feel the knife?
O great Restorer, canst thou fill
The wide gaps broken out of life
By love and duty's bitter strife?
O Friend, and canst thou, as they say,
Soothe all our troubles on thy breast,
Till, calm in death, they pass away,
And, one by one, are laid to rest
In unknown graves, beyond our quest?

Nay, there's a wound thou canst not ease;
Nay, there's a sickness past thine art.
Ah me! while I'm beyond the seas,
There'll be a sore place in my heart
That, at a touch, will throb and smart.
Nay, nay, with all thy skill—with all
The care and cunning thou mayst spend,
Thou canst but weakly patch the wall
That wrench of parting came to rend,
That gap no mason's hand can mend.

And as for buried sorrows—one
Hears every sound above its head;
Joys and prosperities may run
With happy footsteps o'er the dead,—
This grief of absence feels the tread.
O Time, thy graveyard is a street—
Thy graves no sculptured records crown;
Yet this one, trod of many feet,
Still shows the heap'd earth, fresh and brown,—
No foot of joy can press it down.

There velvet mosses soon will creep,
And grey and golden lichens grow;
There sweet white snowdrops soon will peep,
And purple violets bud and blow,
From winter's bosom, cloak'd in snow;
There summer lights and shades will fall,

And soft rains patter through the trees;
There slender grasses, frail and tall,
Will weave and whisper in the breeze—
'Twill be a grave in spite of these.

Ada Cambridge

I Dare Not

1.

I hear strange voices in the air.
My pulses leap, I tear my hair
In rage, rebellion, and despair;
Yet dare not speak.

2.

I am for right, my foes for wrong,
But they are legion, they are strong,
And I am one amid the throng,
Alone and weak.

3.

What ear would hear me if I cried?
What comrades rally to my side?
What force have I to stem the tide?
What right have I?

4.

Though I should plunge in flood and flame,
Though I should suffer shame and blame,
The world would triumph all the same —
And I should die.

5.

Why should I join the hopeless fray?
Why should I waste my little day?
Oh, why should I be called to pay
So vast a price?

* * * *

6.

Have courage, craven soul of mine!

The light within thee is divine,
And others need to see it shine,
Let that suffice.

7.

Others beside thee quake and quail
Before the terrors that prevail;
Thy captive kindred faint and fail
As well as thou.

8.

But when thy lifted front they see,
They will take heart and soar with thee;
It is thy help to set them free
They wait for now.

9.

Give to those silent sufferers each
What inspiration he can reach;
Give righteous treason honest speech,
That all may hear.

10.

This god of custom that we dread,
This social code that weighs like lead,
What is it worth, when all is said?
What is't to fear?

11.

When with a faithful eye one sees
That they whose will we live to please,
Crush right with might for love of ease,
And selfish greed.

12.

When infinite night and silence lower

O'er such brief span of human power,
These poor conventions of an hour
Seem poor indeed.

13.

Be brave, my soul! The world may frown,
And its brute fashions bear thee down,
But Truth will swim, whate'er may drown,
And Truth will live.

14.

Be bold to speak at Truth's behest,
And, though thou suffer without rest,
Yet still thy gain shall be the best
That life can give.

Ada Cambridge

In Memoriam

"He asked life of thee, and thou gavest him a long life, even for ever and ever."

Life—length of days—the time to work and strive
In his Lord's vineyard; to bring heavenly light
Into the drear, dark places of the earth,
And make them fair and fruitful in His sight.

Life—it seem'd all so bright and beautiful once!
It lay spread out before his kindling eyes,
A land of sunny hills, in white mist veil'd,
Of sweet green valleys under summer skies.

Such tender light and tender shadows there!
No dazzling blaze, no savage blots of gloom,
No keen-cut outline of the barren cliff,
No glaring waste,—but all one gentle bloom

Of happy, innocent hope,—a morning tint
Of pearly grey and gold, with just a shade
Of bright cloud-colour, giving life to it,—
He saw not then the havoc death had made.

But soon the white mist melted in the heat
Of noonday, and the wasted fields lay bare—
Vineyard of Eden—like a bright face, scarred
With sin and shame and weariness and care.

And his vague aspiration took a shape.
"Grant me, dear Lord, if it seem good to Thee,
To labour here, with manhood's utter strength,—
O Lord, good Lord, intrust this work to me!

"Let me have time to toil—a long, long day—
To dig and delve and root out wasteful weeds,
To cut down briars and thorns, and help to plough
Furrows where angels may sow heavenly seeds.

"Give me to foster, with my faith and love,
Frail, early flowers, that fear to droop and fade!

Father, I will not shrink for bleeding hands,
For heat nor cold—I do not feel afraid!”

His voice was heard—his will accepted. God
Gave deep and true fulfilment to his prayer,—
Life—life eternal, which should nevermore
The taint of death, or sin, or sorrow bear!

Oh pray, ye blind ones, as the beggar pray'd
When He of Nazareth pass'd by! Oh pray
With simple faith and worship,—fear ye not
God's gracious ear will deafly turn away.

Ye know He bids us to tell out our wants,
Knowing them all; give up to Him your will,
And trust Him—trust Him. In his wondrous love
He deigns the lowliest longing to fulfil.

Ay, and with that fulfilment which we ne'er
Shall grasp or fathom—till we come to see
Our strange, mysterious human life unveil'd
In the clear daylight of eternity.

The beggar ask'd for sight—Christ answer'd him,
For his faith's sake, and gave him sight indeed.
Just so his silent hands and darken'd eyes
Were lifted once, for grace of “life” to plead.

And God fulfilled his prayer as utterly!
He gave him life—the life of saints above,
Beyond all earthly dreaming sweet and glad—
An endless life in His eternal love!

Ada Cambridge

Individuality

Phew! 'T'is a stuffy and a stupid place,
This social edifice by Custom wrought -
This fenced enclosure wherein all are caught,
The great and small, the noble and the base,
And squeezed and flattened to one common face.
Air, air for springing fancy, errant thought!
Scope to make something of the seeming nought!
Room for the fleet foot and the open race!

Break out, O brother, braver than the rest,
Lover of Liberty, whose arm is strong!
Buttress our independence with thy breast,
And fight a passage through the stagnant throng.
Many will press behind thee, but they need
The stalwart captain, not afraid to lead.

Ada Cambridge

Influence

As in the deeps of embryonic night,
Out of unfathomable obscurities
Of Nature's womb, the little life-germs rise,
Pushing and pulsing upward to the light;
As, when the first day dawns on waking sight,
They leap to liberty and recognize
The golden sunshine and the morning skies
Their home and goal and heritage and right -

So do our brooding thoughts and deep desires
Grow in our souls, we know not how or why;
Grope for we know not what, all blind and dumb.
So, when the time is ripe, and one aspires
To free his thought in speech, ours hear the cry,
And to full birth and instant knowledge come.

Ada Cambridge

Learn

Learn, learn, learn,—
Our beautiful world is not a field for sheep;
Not just a place wherein to laugh and weep,
To eat and drink, to dance and sigh and sleep,
And then to moulder into senseless dust.

Learn, learn, learn,—
Look up and learn—you cannot look too high!
Not for the earthly wealth which brains can buy,
Not for the sake of gold and luxury—
Treasures corrupted by the moth and rust.

Learn, learn, learn,—
As one in whom the Lord has breathed His breath,
And aye redeemed from the power of death—
Not as the dumb brute-beast that perisheth,
Not as a soulless, thoughtless, thankless clod.

Learn, learn, learn,—
With love and awe and patience—not in haste;
Drink deeply,—do not pass by with a taste;
O make your land a garden, not a waste!—
Your mind bright, to reflect the face of God.

Learn, learn, learn,—
The mystic beauty and the truth of life;
Search out the treasures whereof earth is rife,
Search on all sides, with pain and prayer and strife;
Search even into darkness. Do not fear.

Learn, learn, learn,—
With a true, steadfast heart, lay up your hoard;
God will sort out the treasures you have stored,
And set them in His bright light, afterward.
He will make all your difficulties clear.

Learn, learn, learn,—
Death is no breaking at a certain place;
We only pause there for a little space.

And then—you would not shame Him to His face?—
You, in His Image and own Likeness made!

Learn, learn, learn,—
Walk with wide-open eyes and reverent heart.
Worship as God the beautiful in art.
Though you see now but dimly, and in part,
All shall be clear in time. Be not afraid.

Ada Cambridge

Listening

1.

When earth's winter bareness
Feels the April rain,
All her summer fairness
Comes to life again.
So my spirit quickens to that magic strain.

2.

Fancy, warmed and brightened,
Spreads her folded wings —
Passion, stirred, enlightened,
From its slumber springs —
When that bow is laid upon those trembling strings.

3.

Visions, past all telling,
Sweet and strange, I see;
Mystic voices, swelling —
Melting — cry to me
From celestial realms of hope and memory.

4.

Tender thoughts caress me,
Like a summer's day;
Stern moods possess me,
As the rough winds play
With an autumn leaf untimely cast away.

5.

Fierce desires come creeping
From their secret lair;
Wild regrets, upleaping,
At my heartstrings tear —
Wildest aspirations, more than I can bear.

6.

Like a leaf I quiver
With responsive thrills —
Ache, and burn, and shiver,
As the Master wills
Whose mysterious message all my being fills.

7.

Dreams of grace and glory,
Always out of reach —
Truths untold in story,
That no book can teach,
Past all human language, find their native speech.

8.

O what wailing sadness
That no tongue may tell,
What enraptured gladness,
In those wild notes swell —
Bliss and anguish both — divine, ineffable!

9.

Joys and woes unspoken,
Whereof earth is rife,
Dear hopes blest and broken,
Futile pain and strife,
Birth and death and love, the tragedy of life.

10.

And my soul, attending,
Through my listening ears
In those strains heartrending
Its own history hears —
All too sweet for words, too terrible for tears.

London

The gorgeous stream of England's wealth goes by,
Mixed with the mud and refuse, as of old —
The hungry, homeless, naked, sick and cold;
Want mocked by waste and greedy luxury.
There, in their downy carriage- cushions, lie
Proud women whose fair bodies have been sold
And bought for coronet or merchant gold —
For whose base splendours envious maidens sigh.

Some day the social ban will fall on them —
On wanton rich who taunt their starving kin;
Some day the social judgment will condemn
These "wedded harlots" in their shame and sin.
A juster world shall separate them then
From all pure women and all honoured men.

Ada Cambridge

Looking In The Fire

The snow falls soft and thick. My cedar bough
Sways up and down, and scratches on the glass.
The wind sighs in the chimney, as I sit,
With elbows on my knees, before the fire,
Resting a crumpled chin in hollow'd palms.

There is great trouble in the cold and dark;
And other girls shrink off and steal away,
To crouch in lonely rooms and look at fires,
And look at their dead joys and living griefs,—
But they are pitied. None would pity me.

Friends come to seek them, and lay tender hands
On their bow'd heads and sore and restless hearts.
They find the wound, and drop the healing oil;
They lift the burden off, or make it light.
But they would smile, unless they laugh'd, at mine.

O still, warm fire, you will not bubble up
In mocking flames,—your heart will soon be cold!
O wind—for you have seen the roses bloom,
And the shrunk petals fall and drift away—
You hear, and sob and sigh as you go past!

Is unrequited love so sad a thing?
Ay, ay,—but this is even sadder still;
To want to love, and not to have the power—
To meet your king at last with empty hands—
To be so young, and to have squander'd all!

Alas, alas! to know your wine is sour—
To have loved wrong, with love despoil'd of trust,
Dishonour'd love, that mix'd itself with hate,—
To see the pearl of price laid at your feet,
And know your wealth is gone for dross and lies!

Ay, 'tis the saddest thing to want to love,
To want to cling, when you have lost your strength—
To feel the ashes choking up the hearth,

And think how bright a fire there might have been,—
To know when you are loved, too late—too late!

Ada Cambridge

Lord Nevil's Advice

"Friend," quoth Lord Nevil, "thou art young
To face the world, and thou art blind
To subtle ways of womankind;
The meshes thou wilt fall among.

"Take an old married man's advice;
Use the experience I have earned;
Watch well where women are concerned,—
They're not all birds of paradise!

"Be circumspect, or thou mayst fall;
Abjure a blind faith—nay, trust none—
Till thou hast chosen, proven one;
Then trust her truly—trust in all.

"Keep a calm brain and quiet eye,
And watch. The doll of powder and paint,
The flirt, the artificial saint,
The loud man-woman—pass them by.

"The innocent one, who craves thy cares
To shield her from life's fret and fray;
Lad, watch her—maybe she'll betray
Some doubtful knowledge, unawares.

"The pensive one, who droops and sighs—
Wait till her dreaming comes to test;
Be gentle, yet be wary, lest
'Tis but a graceful grey disguise.

"The world-wise husband-hunter—she
Who knows no love but love of gold,
And lands and titles—empty, cold,—
Pity her, lad, and let her be.

"And the rich heiress—let her pass.
Belike she's stupid, drugged with wealth,
And just enjoys her life and health
As some fat cow in clover grass.

“Or insolent with prosperity,
Unsharpened, shallow, unrefined;—
And thou art poor, and thou wilt mind
That proud blood cometh down to thee.

“The gushing gossip—she who rains
Incessant chatter in thine ears;—

She may be worth thy keenest fears,
She may be simply lacking brains,

“And lacking grace and modesty.
She will make mischief, at the best;
She may be wily, like the rest;
Keep thy tongue still when she is by.

“They that would master thee, if they could,
In brain and muscle—flaring lights—
The clamorous for false woman's rights;—
Snub them, my friend—it does them good—

“And do not think of them for wives.
Fit mates for such seem somewhat rare;
But when two odd ones make a pair,
They spoil at least four precious lives.

“But shouldst thou chance to meet a girl
With brave, bright eyes, that front thee straight,
A kindly tongue that does not prate,
And quiet lips that cannot curl;

“With fine sense, quick to understand;
With dignity that is not cold,
Sweet, sunny mirth that is not bold,
A ready ear, a willing hand;

“One skilled in household arts, and skilled
In little courteous, graceful ways,
That make no show and win no praise—
Wherewith discordant jars are stilled:

“One who will never touch a sore;

One who sheds sunshine round about,
And draws life's hidden comfort out;
One whom the boys and babes adore:

“One with an intellect to reach
The highest range that thou canst rise;
Who will aye help thee, woman-wise,
And yet not set herself to teach:

“One of whom women love to speak,
In honest kindness, and whose name
Men let alone; whose chiefest fame
Lies hidden where men may not seek;—

“Friend, woo her, as a good knight can,
And win her. Lay thou at her feet
Faith, love, and honour, true and sweet;
And count thyself a happy man.”

Ada Cambridge

Mates

It boots not to retrace the path
To ages dim and hoar,
When Man, at the domestic hearth,
First learned the art of war,
And - since in battle one must fall -
Held his defeated spouse in thrall,
That she should fight no more;
And thereby doomed to sleep and sloth
Strength that in action strengthened both.

It boots not when the better day
First showed a glint of morn,
Nor whose the eye that, in its ray,
Saw Woman's chains outworn;
Nor which was first and which was last
When savage rivalry was past
And chivalry was born;
Enough for us that, free or pent,
Her primal treasure was misspent.

The waxing noontide sees them now
Joint sovereigns of the land,
No trace upon the gentler brow
Of the old helot brand.
Consenting that the right is right,
They walk as comrades - or they might -
For ever hand in hand.
Yet still a stronger leads and drags,
And still a weaker leans and lags.

Because we reap what we have sown,
And are as we were bred;
Because one passion, overgrown,
Since so long overfed,
Still works confusion to the scheme
Whereof both man and woman dream.
'T'is the unnumbered dead
That laid it on him for a curse,
And her, its immemorial nurse.

But, with these tyrants in the dust,
Why should their ghosts hold sway?
Cut the long entail of their lust,
Heirs of a cleaner day!
Lift the dead hand from living mind,
Break the old spells that bind and blind,
O Woman, far astray!
And march with Man the open road
Without a fetter or a load.

Our pioneer brothers can discern
The sunlit heights around;
We, that should likewise look and learn,
Keep eyes upon the ground;
And drug our feebleness with sweets
When needing tonic of strong meats;
And all our ways surround
With tangling trifles, gaud and toy,
That mock us with the name of joy.

What brains these fragile webs enmesh!
What soaring thought they tie!
What energies of soul and flesh
They still or stultify!
What wasted riches of the mind,
What wealth of genius, dumb and blind,
In shop and workroom lie,
While the great realms of life are stored
With such vast mystery unexplored!

Where were the sciences and arts
When men went plumed and curled?
Where were the brains, the hands, the hearts,
That now subdue the world -
The March of Progress, straight and true -
When men wore coats of every hue?
In childish swaddlings furled,
Their strength lay latent and unknown,
As ineffectual as our own.
Freed from this complicated coil
By mere vainglory spun,

Uprooted from this fruitless soil,
Unfed by rain or sun,
Where sleep the germs of noble deeds
In still unfructifying seeds,
Or leafage scarce begun -
This ash-heap of the poor and small
That chokes the greatness in us all -

Uplifted to the light - the place
Where Man his manhood found
When tyranny of silk and lace
No longer held him bound;
With eyes, from Fashion's witchcraft clear,
For Beauty, simple and sincere,
And, unbeguiled by sound
Of siren wooings, quiet ears
For the high message that he hears:

The swelling call to loftier life
That, like a distant bell,
Chimes through the traffic and the strife
Of those who buy and sell;
Through camp and temple, field and street,
The market where we game and cheat,
The home wherein we dwell: -
Here should we stand, as strong, as free,
For splendid enterprise as he.

To him no flowering parasite
That only sucks and clings
To drain and enervate and blight,
But impulse to his wings;
His mate in passion, mate in power,
His soul's wife, that for marriage dower
Exhaustless treasure brings -
The daily bread, the daily spur,
The day's reward for him - and her.

Like woodland creatures, that have willed
To pair by Nature's plan,
A woman finished and fulfilled
And a completed man;

To run together and abreast,
And side by side to fight or rest,
As when the world began;
Each bound to other, yet both free
It is not, but it ought to be.

Ada Cambridge

Midnight

1.

The night is clear and still. The moon rides high.
The green leaves whisper where the soft winds blow.
Above, the stars shine in a sapphire sky —
The city sleeps below.

2.

Sleeps? Nay. The million- fibred heart is wrung
With wild desire and ceaseless pain and fear.
Could its dumb anguish find a fitting tongue,
The very dead would hear.

3.

Under these quiet roofs, this silvery haze,
How many a captive spirit wakes and weeps!
How many a sorrow, hid from human gaze,
Each shadowy dwelling keeps!

4.

The struggling men, the lonely maids unwed,
The desolate mothers and the martyred wives,
The starving little ones that cry for bread,
Still live their suffering lives.

5.

Though moon shines fair and winds are breathing low —

Though the great dream-like city lies in light —
The smoke of all that seething human woe
Darkens my mind to- night.

6.

Brothers, for whom the world can find no place —
Brothers and sisters, born to want and wrong —
Born weak and maimed, to run a hopeless race
Against the hale and strong —

7.

How can I rest while they are racked with pain?
While they toil on with toil that cannot cease?
While hungry children wail for bread in vain,
How can I sleep in peace?

8.

Ah, hapless fate! To hope, to fail, to spend,
From chilling dawn till midnight shadows fall;
Perchance to gain no haven at the end —
No new world — after all!

9.

When poor, brief hopes and joys have passed away —
When the long toil is done and pain is past —
To reach the limit of life's little day,
And find naught else, at last

10.

When strength is spent, when soul and spirit sink —
With helpless hands outstretched and nerveless brain —
To stand alone upon that dreadful brink
And cry for light in vain!

11.

Poor mortal wanderers in immortal realms,
For whom no staff avails, no beacons shine!
My kindred soul their burden overwhelms —

My brothers' woes are mine.

12.

For me the night has come — the day is done —
A wall of darkness hides both sea and shore;
My little lamps have failed me, one by one —
I grope and crawl no more.

13.

Where am I? — oh, where am I? I can feel —
To feel my pain — but neither hear nor see;
My heart is faint, my brain begins to reel —
O God, speak Thou to me!

14.

Help me! Or, in Thy pity, take me hence
While feeling heart and thinking brain are whole —
Or give me any rag of carnal sense
To wrap my naked soul.

15.

Some common cloak of vulgar hopes and fears,
Some earth- spun veil, that shall be warm and stout
To keep this infinite Silence from mine ears —
To shut this Darkness out!

16.

The mocking moon shines on. The flowers are sweet.
The night is still. The winds are breathing balm.
The silver city clustered at my feet
Seems bathed in light and calm.

17.

But I? — I choke in this grief- laden air.
I turn and weep — I close my window now.
One voice breaks forth from my profound despair —
Beloved, where art thou?

18.

She sleeps. She stirs. She hears the lightest fall
Of my hushed footsteps on her chamber floor.
Her spirit answers to my spirit's call,
And I take heart once more.

19.

She draws me down upon that faithful breast;
I clasp her close — those sweetest lips I kiss —
And soul and body, in her arms at rest,

Swim in deep seas of bliss.

20.

She makes me strong with stronger Fate to cope —
Fresh fire to mine her beating pulses give.
O my true mate, in thee alone I hope!
In thee alone I live!

21.

O love, till blood is cold and brain is dust,
I can fight on — if thou wilt fight with me —
If I can shelter in thy truth and trust,
And bear life's woes with thee!

Ada Cambridge

Mirage

Is it a will-o'-the-wisp, or is dawn breaking,
That our horizon wears so strange a hue?
Is it but one more dream, or are we waking
To find that dreams, at last, are coming true?

Aye, surely, in that golden glimmer streaking
The cloudy sky-line of the life of man,
We see the blessed day he has been seeking
In all directions since the world began.

Sign to each struggling and exhausted nation
Of hope fulfilled, redemption and release;
Sign of the end of needless tribulation,
And the beginning of the reign of Peace.

Country with country, brother with his brother,
Content to share, and not to grab and steal;
Ceasing the wild-beast battle, each with other,
To work in concert for the common weal.

No class-strife more, neighbour with differing neighbour;
No waste or want, to breed the plague of crime;
No soul-debasing pomp and sordid labour,
No wars, no famines, in the coming time!

But swords of slaughter - valour and brains and money -
Turned into ploughshares for the lands redeemed,
To fill men's homes, as full as hives of honey,
With wealth unknown and happiness undreamed.

Great Art no more the plaything of the idle,
But nurse and minister to every need;
Nature no longer cowed with bit and bridle;
Conscience enfranchised and Religion freed.

All round our darksome isle the tide encroaches,
Distant and dim as yet, but spreading fast.
The reign of Love and Liberty approaches!
The heirs are coming to their own at last!

.
Hark! What was that? The vanquished devil howling,
With guns and bombs, for brother devil's blood?
The primal savage out again - befouling
All this fair promise with his primal mud?

Alas! So soon to see our lovely morning
Back in the hopeless night whence it arose,
And have no time to wait another dawning!
O Lord, how long - how long

Ada Cambridge

Nightfall In The Fens

1.

One hour ago the red- hot sun below the bright horizon sank.
The long midsummer day is done. Our boat is moored beneath the bank.
The glory of the crimson west dies slowly on the river's breast.

2.

The water- violet shuts its eye; the water- lily petals close;
So in the evening light we lie and dream in undisturbed repose.
How far all petty cares have flown! How calm the fretful world has grown!

3.

We only hear the gentle breeze, in soft, delicious whispers, pass
Through osier beds and alder trees, and rustling flags and bending grass;
The song of blackbird in the hedge, the quack of wild duck in the sedge.

4.

The distant bark of farmhouse dogs, the piping of a clear- voiced thrush;
The murmurous babble of the frogs, of rippling stream in reed and rush;
The splash of hungry trout that rise to passing gnats and dragon- flies.

5.

Sounds that make silence eloquent, but cannot break it, nor dispel
The tranquil sense of still content that holds us like enchanter's spell —
At rest and free, in this lone fen, from noise of streets and striving men.

6.

What perfume in these dewy hours the rich earth to the soft air yields!
Sweetbriar and bean and clover flowers breathe incense from the quiet fields;
And every whiff that comes this way brings fragrant scent of new- mown hay.

7.

A long- legged heron stalks about that marshy meadow, seeking food;
A little water- hen creeps out close by us, with her paddling brood;
A water- rat, in blank surprise, stares at us with his beady eyes.

8.

The swallow lingers, and the swift, like arrow from a bow, darts by;
Light clouds of little midges drift between us and the tender sky;
Cockchafers hum as they whir past. But the hushed twilight gathers fast.

9.

All Nature takes her happy ease, and we no more can fume and fret.
No inward questions taunt and tease. All life's disasters we forget —
All life's injustice we forgive. To- night it is enough to live.

10.

No time is this to talk of books — no time vexed problems to discuss
Through all the upward spirit looks, and sees that God is meant for us —
Sees more in these transparent skies than in all wise philosophies.

* * * * *

11.

The western glories fade and pass. The twilight deepens more and more.
A thin mist, like a breath on glass, veils shining stream and distant shore;
And night is falling, still and cool, on each broad marsh and silent pool.

12.

The moor- hen paddles in the weeds no longer, for her chicks are fed;
The heron, rising from the reeds, goes slowly sailing home to bed;
Just now, from off that mossy bank, the little brown rat slipped and sank.

13.

Night comes at length. The last pale gleam of lingering day has disappeared.
On silent fields and quiet stream a few stars shine; the mist has cleared;
The willows of the further shore stand outlined on the sky once more.

14.

No hum of gnat or bee is heard; no pipe of thrush on hawthorn bough;
No cry of any beast or bird to stir the solemn stillness now,
Though all the soundless air is rife with latent energies of life

15.

Only a vagrant bat we see on silken pinion flitting by;
Only a white owl, roaming free, with downy wings and steadfast eye;
Two ghostly visions in their flight — two noiseless shadows of the night.

16.

How clear the darkness, and how fine the plumes upon those bulbous stumps!
A luminous greyness seems to shine behind those serried osier clumps;
And sharper in the pallid glow the stems of flag and bulrush grow.

17.

A faint dawn breaks on yonder sedge, and broadens in that bed of weeds;
A bright disc shows its radiant edge, the round moon rises from the reeds;
Its level rays of silver glide across the steel- dark river tide.

18.

They burnish steel to silver bright — a mirror for an angel meet;
They bridge it with a bridge of light — fit pathway for an angel's feet;
If angel feet and angel face haunt mortal creatures' dwelling place.

19.

The widening track of glory streams to this low margin where we sit;
My sight swims in its dazzling beams, and heart and brain are steeped in it —
Are washed from all the dust and grime, the smears and tears, of working time.

20.

Like waves when stormy winds are past, my toils and turmoils sink and cease;
Like long- bound captive free at last, I bask in ecstasies of peace;
Like tired child I lie at rest upon my unknown parent's breast.

21.

There may be happier worlds than this — a heavenly country, vast and fair,
Where saints and seraphs dwell in bliss — but I pray not for entrance there.
While in my human flesh I live I ask no more than earth can give.

22.

Ethereal essences may roam Elysian fields beyond the grave,
But I, a man, am in my home, with all I love and all I crave.
How is it, faithful friend, with thee? This sweet world is enough for me.

Ada Cambridge

On Australian Hills

Earth, outward tuning on her path in space
This pensive southern face,
Swathing its smile and shine
In that soft veil that day and darkness twine,
The silver-threaded twilight thin and fine,
With April dews impearled,
Looms like another and diviner world.

Here April brings her garnered harvest-sheaf,
Her withered autumn leaf,
Tintings of bronze and brass;
Her full-plumed reeds, her mushroom in the grass,
Her furrowed fields, where plough and sower pass,
Her laden apple bough.
All are transfigured and transmuted now.

The eastward ranges, so unearthly blue,
Bloom with their richest hue;
Slowly each rose-flushed crest
Deepens to violet where the shadows rest,
Darkens and darkens to the paling west;
The waning sun-fires die;
The first star swims in the pellucid sky.

Soundless to listening ear, on grass and flowers,
The footfall of the hours;
Formless and void to sight
The evolutions of invading night,
The creeping onslaught and the gradual flight,
Until the field is won,
And we look forth to see that day is done.

Then, from their grave of darkness, wood and lawn
Wake to a second dawn.
From unseen wells below

The pearly moon-tides rise and overflow,
Till vale and peak and wide air-spaces glow
 In the transfiguring stream,
And earth and life are but a heavenly dream.

And now we hear the fairy-echoes fall
 Where distant curlews call,
 And how the silence thrills
With the night-voices of the glens and hills,
Rustling in reeds and tinkling in the rills,
 Bubbling in creek and pool
Where frogs are wooing in the shallows cool.

And more than these, in this delicious time,
 The melody sublime
 That inward spirit hears--
The faint and far-off music of the spheres,
Immortal harmonies, too fine for ears
 Dulled in the dusty ways,
Deaf with the din of the laborious days.

Whereto, responsive as the vibrant wire
 Of some aeolian lyre
 Fanned by celestial wings,
The summoned soul in mystic concord brings
The deep notes latent in its trembling strings,
 Joining the choir divine
Of all the worlds that in the ether shine.

O sacred hour! O sweet night, calm and fair!
 Thou dost rebuke despair;
 Thou dost assuage the pain
Of passionate spirit and distempered brain,
And with thy balms, distilled like gentle rain,
 Dost heal the fret and smart
And nerve the courage of this coward's heart.

And lift me up, a Moses on the Mount
To the pure source and fount
Of law transcending law,
Of life that hallows life. I know no more
Of life's great Giver than I knew before,
But these His creatures tell
That He is living, and that all is well.

Oh, to be there to-night!
To see that rose of sunset flame and fade
On ghostly mountain height,
The soft dusk gathering each leaf and blade
From the departing light,
Each tree-fern feather of the wildwood glade.

From arid streets to pass
Down those green aisles where golden wattles bloom,
Over the fragrant grass,
And smell the eucalyptus in a gloom
That is as clear as glass,
The dew-fresh scents of bracken and of broom . . .

These city clamours mute,
To hear the woodland necromancers play
Each his enchanted lute;
That dear bird-laugh, so exquisitely gay,
The magpie's silver flute
In vesper carol to the dying day.

To hear the live wind blow,
The delicate stir and whisper of the trees
As light breaths come and go,
The brooklet murmuring to the vagrant breeze,
The bull-frog twanging low
His deep-toned mandolin to chime with these.

And then the whispering rills,
The hushed lone wheel, or hoof, or axeman's tool;
The brooding dark that stills
The sweet Pan-piping of the grove and pool;
The dimly glimmering hills;
The sleeping night, so heavenly clean and cool.

Oh, for that mother-breast
That takes the broken spirit for repair,
The worn-out brain for rest--
That healing silence, that untainted air,
That Peace of God Blest, blest
The very memory that I once was there.

The thought that someday yet,
In flesh, not dreams, I may return again,
And at those altars, set

In the pure skies, above the smoky plain,
Remember and forget
The joy of living and its price of pain

That sullied earth reserves
Such spacious refuge virgin and apart,
That wasting life preserves
Such sweet retreat for the distracted heart,
Such fount of strength for nerves
Torn in the ruthless struggle of the mart

That Government divine
O'er all this reek of blunders and of woes
Keeps an unravaged shrine
Not here, not there, but in the souls of those
Who neither weep nor whine,
But trust the guidance of the One Who Knows.

Ordained

1.

THROUGH jewelled windows in the walls
The tempered daylight smiles,
And solemn music swells and falls
Adown these stately aisles;
Beneath that carven chancel- rood
Low murmurs, hushed to silence, brood;
One voice in prayer appeals
For Holy Spirit's quickening grace
To light his now anointed face
Who at the altar kneels.

2.

One hour ago, like us, he trod
Along these cloisters dim —
Now we are bid to reverence God
Made manifest in him;
To mock at our enlightened sense
And dearly won experience,
So far beyond his own;
To take him for our heaven- sent guide
Upon these seas, so wild and wide,
To him as yet unknown.

3.

Unconscious of the coming strife,
Unformed in mind and thought,
Without one ripe idea of life
Save what his school books taught,
An ignorant boy, he vows a vow
To think and feel as he does now
Till his gold locks are grey;
Pledges his word to learn no more —
To add no wisdom to the store
His young mind holds to- day.

4.

How shall he keep this senseless oath
When once a full- grown man?
How shall he check his upward growth
To fit this meagre plan?
Only by ruthless pinching out
Of all the fairest shoots that sprout,
As on a healthy tree,
From his expanding brain and heart —
Defrauding his diviner part
Of its virility.

5.

And thus shall youthful passion pale
In native force and fire;
And thus shall soaring pinions fail,
Bedraggled in the mire;
This tender conscience, now so bright,
Lose its fine sense of wrong and right —
Dulled with a moral rust;
This ardent intellect be damped,
This eager spirit starved and cramped -
Choked in mediaeval dust.

6.

Thus shall the fettered arm grow numb,
And blind the bandaged eye;
Thus shall the silenced voice grow dumb,
As year by year goes by;
Until at last, from long abuse
And lack of free and wholesome use,
All manhood's powers decline;
And, like a lamp unfed, untrimmed,
Intelligence, once bright, is dimmed,
No more to burn and shine.

7.

Then may we see this sanguine youth —

Born for a nobler lot —
Turn traitor to the highest truth
Because he knows it not;
Serving for Mammon, veiled as God,
Cringing for high- born patron's nod,
For social place and gain,
While he mechanically yields
The produce of his fallow fields —
Husks of long- garnered grain.

8.

No more a brave and honest man,
Whose conscience is his own,
But worse than thief and courtesan
To degradation grown;
A cheat and hypocrite, content,
In shelter of base precedent,
The downward path to tread,
Lest he should lose his Esau's bowl,
That bought the birthright of his soul,
And have to earn his bread.

9.

Or, if remorsefully aware
Of his ignoble case,
Owning himself too weak to dare
A brother's hostile face,
Too weak to stand alone and fight
Against the strong world's might with right —
A leader's part to take;
Dying a daily death in life,
At outward peace and inward strife,
For poor convention's sake.

10.

Let organ music swell and peal,
And priests and people pray,
Let those who can at altar kneel —
I have no heart to stay.

I cannot bear to see it done —
This fresh young life, scarce yet begun,
Closed by that iron door;
A free- born spirit gagged and bound,
Tethered to one small plot of ground,
While all the great world spreads around,
And doomed to fly no more.

Ada Cambridge

Outcast

Perchance for dear Life's sake - and life is sweet -
When work had failed and roads were deep in snow,
And this meant food and fire, she fell so low -
That painted creature of the midnight street.
Perchance that other, with the shoeless feet,
Was Nature's victim, too untaught to know
That all live buds are not allowed to blow -
Too starved and passion-blind to be discreet.

And their accuser? She within the fold
That walks in light, bejewelled and belaced,
Who in cold blood, and not for love or need,
Sold the white flower of womanhood for gold;
The wedded harlot, rich and undisgraced,
The viler prostitute in mind and deed.

Ada Cambridge

Peace

The red-rose flush fades slowly in the west.
The golden water, basking in the light,
Pales to clear amber and to silver white.
The velvet shadow of a flame-crowned crest
Lies dark and darker on its shining breast,
Till lonely mere and isle and mountain-height
Grow dim as dreams in tender mist of night,
And all is tranquil as a babe at rest.

So still! So calm! Will our life's eve come thus?
No sound of strife, of labour or of pain,
No ring of woodman's axe, no dip of oar.
Will work be done, and night's rest earned, for us?
And shall we wake to see sunrise again?
Or shall we sleep, to see and know no more?

Ada Cambridge

Possibilities

There are who fear the loosing of the knot
That ties our labouring brother to the oar.
Release him, say they, and he will not soar;
Full-fed and idle, he will fall and rot.
Give him his share — let sharp need scourge him not —
Let cruel spur of hunger prick no more,
But all have bounty of the rich world's store —
And wreck and ruin is our certain lot!

But ease the toil-worn arm, the anxious brain,
And Reason, set more firmly on her throne,
Should guide more truly the enfranchised will.
Though want depart, divine desires remain;
Man, born of God, lives not by bread alone,
And realms of Knowledge are to conquer still.

Ada Cambridge

Practising The Anthem

A summer wind blows through the open porch,
And, 'neath the rustling eaves,
A summer light of moonrise, calm and pale,
Shines through a vale of leaves.

The soft gusts bring a scent of summer flowers,
Fresh with the falling dew,
And round the doorway, glimmering white as snow,
The tender petals strew.

Clear through the silence, from a reedy pool
The curlew's whistle thrills;
A lonely mopoke sorrowfully cries
From the far-folding hills.

O lovely night, and yet so sad and strange!
My fingers touch the key;
And down the empty church my Christmas song
Goes ringing, glad and free.

Each sweet note knocks at dreaming memory's door,
And memory wakes in pain;
The spectral faces she had turn'd away
Come crowding in again.

The air seems full of music all around—
I know not what I hear,
The multitudinous echoes of the past,
Or these few voices near.

Ah me! the dim aisle vaguely widens out,
I see me stand therein;
A glory of grey sculpture takes the light
A winter morn brings in.

No more I smell the fragrant jessamine flowers
That flake a moonlit floor;
The rustling night-breeze and the open porch
I hear and see no more.

Great solemn windows, down a long, long nave
Their shadow'd rainbows fling;
Dark Purbeck shafts, with hoary capitals,
In carven archways spring.

And overhead the throbbing organ waves
Roll in one mighty sea,

Bearing the song the herald angels sang
Of Christ's nativity.

Dear hands touch mine beneath the open book,
Sweet eyes look in my face,—
They smile, they melt in darkness; I am snatch'd
From my familiar place.

The summer night-wind blows upon my tears;
Its flowery scent is pain.
O cold, white day! O noble minster—when
May I come back again!

To hear the angels' anthem shake the air,
Where never discord jars,—
The Christmas carols in the windy street,
Under the frosty stars;

The dream-like falling from the still, grey skies,
With falling flakes of snow,
Of mellow chimes from old cathedral bells,
Solemn and sweet and slow.

To hear loved footsteps beating time with mine
Along the churchyard path,—
To see that ring of faces once again
Drawn round the blazing hearth.

When may I come? O Lord, when may I go?
Nay, I must wait Thy will.
Give patience, Lord, and in Thine own best way
My hopes and prayers fulfil.

Profit And Loss

Each day a new sword flashes in the van;
Another leader, brave to do or die,
Comes forth, full- furnished for the strife whereby
He gains his growth and stature as a man.
Each day our world, that under the black ban
Of ignorant custom for so long did lie,
Grows bright and brighter, like a clearing sky,
More good and lovely in its wondrous plan.

Yet oh! how few the saved, how small the gain,
How poor the profit as against the cost —
The waste of life, divinely vast and fair,
Potential in starved soul and unfed brain —
The powers that might have been and might be — lost
Only for want of common food and air!

Ada Cambridge

Reaction

Let us, dear friend, in mutual strength arise
Against our tyrant Custom, and demand
Free souls and bodies at our own command.
Let us defy the vulgar world's surprise,
Scorn brute convention and soft compromise,
And, bold in proud revolt, and hand in hand,
Cast in our lot and take our fearless stand
With the unsafe, improper, and unwise.

Let us abjure the comfortable creeds
Approved by prudent minds, and revel free
In foolish thoughts and inexpedient deeds; —
For thus alone can life for you and me
Out of this suffocating sloth revive,
And our small spark of good be kept alive.

Ada Cambridge

Recollection

Awake-worn boulder, with green sea-moss wrapping
A silken mantle o'er its jagged sides;
And silvery, seething waters softly lapping
Through gulfs and channels hollow'd by the tides:

A lime-cliff overhead, o'erhanging grimly,
A dash of sunlight on its breast of snow;
The white line of the breakers, stretching dimly
Along the narrow sea-beach down below:

The grey waste of the waters, with one slender,
Glimmering, golden ripple far away;
The haze of summer twilight, sweet and tender,
Veiling the fair face of the dying day:

The measured splash of surf upon the shingle,
The ceaseless gurgle through the rocks and stones;
No sound of struggling human life, to mingle
With those mysterious and eternal tones!

No sound—no sound,—a hungry sea-mew only
Breaking the stillness with her little cry;
And the low whisper, when 'tis all so lonely,
Of soft south breezes as they wander by:—

I see it all; sweet dreams of it are thronging
In full floods back upon my weary brain;
To-night, in my dark chamber, the old longing
Almost fulfils its very self again.

The dying sunbeams, on the far waves glinting,
Come like warm kisses to my lips and brow,
Soothing my spirit—all its grey thoughts tinting
With tender shades of golden colour now.

Alone and still, I sit, and think, and listen,
Looking out westward o'er the darkening sea;
My seat the boulder, where the spray-drops glisten;
The tall, white cliffs my regal canopy.

And, as I sit, the fretting cares and sorrows,
Weighing so heavy when the work is done,
The gloomy yesterdays and dim to-morrows,
They slip away and vanish one by one,—

Slip backward to the world that lies behind me,
Ever by sinful footsteps overtrod;
And in this unstain'd world leave nought to bind me,
This sweet world, fillèd with the peace of God!

Ada Cambridge

Responsibility

Why are our ideals hid from hostile eyes
As boys in school hide toys from master's view?
Let them be real as we believe them true —
Real as our chartered laws and liberties.
All precious rights that we possess and prize
Were ideals once, unshaped, unripe, and new,
The wild delusions of the crack- brained few,
The trifles mocked at by the worldly- wise.

Some must be first; and every coward blights
His brother's hope, and spreading Truth arrests;
While every brave man helps the world, and lights
The flame of courage in a thousand breasts.
So let us bear our meed of vulgar scorn,
And wait the judgment of the years unborn.

Ada Cambridge

Seed-Time And Harvest

“Thou waterest her furrows, thou sendest rain into the little valleys thereof; thou makest it soft with the drops of rain, and blessest the increase of it.”

Fret not thyself so sorely, heart of mine,
For that the pain hath roughly broke thy rest,—
That thy wild flowers lie dead upon thy breast,
Whereon the cloud-veiled sun hath ceased to shine.

Fret not that thou art seam'd and scarr'd and torn;
That clods are piled where tinted vetches were;
That long worms crawl to light, and brown rifts, bare
Of green and tender grasses, widely yawn.

God's hand is on the plough—so be thou still.
Thou canst not see Him, for thine eyes are dim;
But wait in patience, put thy trust in Him;
Give thanks for love, and leave thee to His will.

Ah! in due time the lowering clouds shall rain
Soft drops on my parch'd furrows; I shall sow
In tears and prayers, and green corn-blades will grow;
I shall not wish the wild flowers back again.

I shall be glad that I did work and weep—
Be glad, O God! my slumbering soul did wake—
Be glad my stubborn heart did heave and break
Beneath the plough—when angels come to reap.

Be glad, O Father! that my land was till'd
And sown and water'd, in the harvest-day
When Thou wilt cast the weeds and tares away,
And when with ripen'd fruit Thy barns are fill'd.

Keep me my faith, I pray. I cannot see,
And fear to intermeddle with Thy work.
Oh, though I wince and fret, I would not shirk
The discipline that is so good for me!

I know that Thou wilt make my grief to cease,
Wilt send the cool, soft drops of healing rain,
And make my scarred heart green with springing grain,
That after patient waiting cometh peace;

That after beautiful labour I shall rest,
And after weeping have my fill of joy.
Thou breakest down to build up, not destroy;
Thou doest right, O Lord! Thou knowest best.

Ada Cambridge

Seeking

Bright eyes, sweet lips, with sudden fevers fill
My strong blood, running wildly, as it must;
But lips and eyes too soon beget distrust.
A soft touch sends a momentary thrill
Through sense unsubservient to the will;
But warm caresses leave a dim disgust;
Like Dead- Sea apples, kisses turn to dust.
I kiss; I feast; but I am hungry still.

O, where is She — that straight and upright soul —
True friend, true mate, true woman — where is She?
True heart — as true as needle to the pole —
True to the truth, not only true to me —
Worth all I have to give — the best — the whole.
When shall these eyes Her unknown beauty see?

Ada Cambridge

Shadow And Substance

What have we lost with our lost Heaven and Hell?
Have sacred faith and worship come to naught?
Is life no more with noble meaning fraught?
Is it not still a thing ineffable,
Beyond what mind can grasp or tongue may tell —
Beyond all mystery by sages taught,
All greatest wonders by Messiah wrought —
The one first, last, divinest miracle!

Let selfish hopes, with old myths, pass away.
Though creeds must go, the God of all remains,
And more and more His might upholds and awes.
Revealed in Nature's universal laws;
And more and more true love its crown attains,
And our good world grows better day by day.

Ada Cambridge

Sic Vos Non Vobis

Ye, that the untrod paths have braved,
With heart and brain unbound;
Who ask not that your souls be saved,
But that the Truth be found;
Whose fiery cross is borne unseen,
Whose meek brows, bleeding but serene
With only thorns are crowned;
Who, still and steadfast, stand for Right,
Though none acclaim and none requite:

Who learn how little is the sum
Of all that Truth can teach,
And where the serried boundaries come
That bar your utmost reach;
For whom so sage, no saint, can find
A clue to aught that lies behind;
For whom the preachers preach
Only to leave ye at the door
That opens to their knock no more:

Who, listening in the trackless night,
Hearing no bugle-call,
Still fight, undaunted, the good fight,
And never fail or fall;
Who, standing on an inch of ground,
Feel the Infinities around,
Yet dare to face it all,
And keep the life ye hold in trust
Safe from besetting moth and rust.

Life - tragic mystery of Man -
Strange tale of joy and grief!
Chaff for the errant winds to fan,
A bubble bright and brief,
That floats and shines and bursts unseen,
And leaves no trace where it has been;
Like thistle-down and leaf,
That in soft airs of autumn dance,
The helpless sport of Fate and Chance.

Ye, who can see the case so clear,
And scorn to cringe and moan,
Who follow humbly, without fear,
The soul's behest alone;
Content to suffer for the sake
Of faithful manhood, and to make
A loftier stepping-stone,
A straighter way, a smoother street,
For tread of unborn children's feet.

Ye, whom the children's sorrows rend,
And who despise the smart,
Who walk uprightly to the end
With an undoubting heart,
To take the guerdon of your pain -
Death, with no hope to live again -
Ye have the better part,
Salt of the world, that keeps it sound!
Kings that shall yet be throned and crowned.

Ada Cambridge

The Baptistry

One winter eve, at twilight, when the sound
Of sorrowful winds scarce troubled Nature's rest,
As she lay sleeping, with her hair unbound,
Holding her grey robe to her shivering breast,

I enter'd through a low-arch'd oaken door,
Circl'd with curious sculpture; and I crept
With slow, hush'd footsteps, o'er the shadow'd floor,
Where organ notes in sudden silence slept;

Far down the aisle, where darkness seem'd to brood
With such wide-spreading wings, and where the sigh
Of murmur'd prayer scarce came,—until I stood
In the deep stillness of the Baptistry.

There, in the dim side-chapel, no bright glow
From jewell'd windows on the wall was shed;
No sunbeams rested on the font below,
Or kiss'd those mighty arches overhead.

Soft lines and curves went upward, and were lost
In solemn shadow and in dreamy space;
Only the level floor was faintly crost
With glimmering brightness from the holy place.

And, as I listen'd, I heard music sweet
Trembling and swelling through the soundless air,
Threading dark aisles, as if an angel's feet
Were bidden bring God's message to me there.

Ah! and the echo of those anthem notes
Wanders and whispers in my heart for aye:
In all my life the mystic language floats,
Fitful and faint, as in my ears that day.

One whom we knew had enter'd into rest—
Calm on the pillow lay his hoary head;
And through that music spoke, in accents blest,
Our holy Mother's voice, hallowing the dead,

Telling of perfect peace, of labours done,
Of long years' sorrow turned to joy at last—
The quiet sleep, when battles all are won—
The hush of evening when the day is past.

I look'd upon the font, and mused of all
Its wondrous meaning, till my thoughts grew dim
And vast and shadowy as those columns tall;—
Morning of life for me—death's night for him!

How fancy tried to span that awful space
Between the two—between the here and there!
To bridge the nave—up to that blessed Place
Where light and song stream'd on the chancel-stair!

Dim recollections drifted through my brain—
Echoing footfalls of past childish years,
When the baptismal robe had less of stain,
E'en though unwash'd by penitential tears.

I saw the gloomy shadows o'er my head,
And sigh'd to think how I had suffer'd loss;
I saw the soft light, and was comforted,—
I knew it shone straight from the chancel-cross.

A few more steps, and then I stood below
The towering minster coronet again;
Down on my face that pure and gentle glow
Fell, like a pitying kiss in time of pain.

Down to my feet it stream'd; a passage dim,
With hosts of phantom-shapes on either side,
It drifted through;—as songs of seraphim
Drift through our mourning hearts at Easter-tide.

Looking up then, I seem'd to see my life,—
A long, dim vista, where the rays descend—
Where light and darkness wage continual strife;
But only light—the full light—at the end.

Ada Cambridge

The Candle Of The Lord

"The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord."

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

Our spirit—ay, our own!—the tree whose fruits
Have never fail'd—the sign upon the door
'Twixt us and God's intelligent dumb brutes,
That parts us evermore!

Our spirit—last, best gift—still unbereft
Of treasures stored in Eden's happy land;
One fragment of the human, as it left
The Divine Maker's hand.

That seal of our high birth He did allow
Toea unharm'd the sin and woe and strife;
That remnant of our godhead—wanting now
Only the "breath of life."

Only the breath of life, whereby the Lord
Made us to be His equals, fit to fill
His throne—our free wills brought into accord
With His own sovereign will.

Our spirit—not the feeble soul which came
With our dishonour'd state and its new needs;
And not the feebler heart of sin and shame,
That daily breaks and bleeds.

Our spirit—our unshatter'd lamp—still ours—
Fill'd with the heavenly essence, as of yore,—
To bear a light, to light the midnight hours,
And light the wreck to shore.

Ay, 'tis the same—the same! It hath not shared
The mutilation and the curse and blight;
When the destruction fell, the lamp was spared—
Only deprived of Light.

O God! and hath it ever ceased to grope
For light, and yearn and cry for light to come?
In blackest gloom, ere revelation spoke,
While yet the Christ was dumb,

Thou knowest it search'd for every wandering ray,
And never wearied of the weary quest;
And fed and fenced and treasured, day by day,
A glimmer in its breast.

O holy Dove! O Grace! O Love! come down—
Our spirit with Thy perfect light inspire!
Circle each candle with its flaming crown,
Its cloven tongue of fire!

Ada Cambridge

The Coo Of The Cushat

Over the smooth lawns, broider'd with violets,
Over the hedges of snow-white thorn,
Over the billowy, pink apple-blossoms,
The musical coo of the cushat is borne.

In the still depths of the dim old plantations,
Where the sweet whispering night-wind stirs
The delicate scent from the dew-sprinkled flowers,
It sings by its nest in the tall green firs.

So peaceful, so pure, so divinely contented,
The world out of sight and its true love nigh
Their little grey wings softly folded together,—
What dreams I have set to that melody!

I listen at dawn, and I listen at even;
I hear the notes bubbling all day long
Through the woodpecker's laugh and the chirp of the titmouse,—
Little dove, yours is the sweetest song!

'Tis not a sad song, though it sets me a-crying—
But gladness too deep to be spoken aloud;
Nor forlorn, though 'tis sung in the loneliest places—
But only too sacred to sing to a crowd.

I envy you, though you're so small and so humble;
I wish I were like you, you shy little dove—
So far from the world and so free from its passion,
Yet sure of your white eggs and sure of your love.

I wish I were pure from low earthly ambitions,
As quiet and calm and contented as you;
I wish my heart held such a well-spring of music,
That I were as gentle and trustful and true.

Little dove, you were worthy to carry the olive
Over the waters to Noah's host,
To die for the mother of Christ in the Temple,
To be chosen for shrine of the Holy Ghost.

And now you have only to live and be happy,
To rear up your young ones and teach them to coo;
O sing on, and teach me the heavenly lessons,
To be faithful and worthy of God's work too.

Teach me so humbly to take what He gives me,
The manifold duties, the great and the small;
Teach me so simply to do what He bids me,
Loving and trustful, and thankful for all.

Ada Cambridge

The Crown Of Thorns

“And unto Adam He said cursed is the ground for thy sake. Thorns . . . shall it bring forth.”

“And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head.”

In bitterest sorrow did the ground bring forth
Its fatal seed. Thine eyes beheld the birth—
Beheld the travail of accursèd earth;
E'en then, O Lord! in greater love than wrath!

Thou sawest the sin that none could gather out—
The vineyard cover'd with the thorn and briar;
Thou sawest the fair land ready for the fire—
And still Thy pity compass'd it about.

Thou, O most merciful! didst spare the brand;
Thou didst redeem the Paradise of God;
The thorns were rooted from the stubborn sod,
In pain and toil, by Thine own blessèd hand.

How was our path to heaven o'ergrown with sin—
Bramble, and thistle, and the poisonous weed!
Though hearts should break, and patient feet should bleed,
And strive and struggle, none could walk therein.

And Thou didst call us when we went astray—
Didst make our high road straight for evermore;
And, for our guidance, passèd on before,
Leaving Thy shining footprints in the way.

Still do the wild thorns hedge us round about;
Still grow the thistles from the ancient stock;
Still trails the bramble on the blasted rock—
But we can dig, and Thou wilt pull them out.

Ay, we can work—oh, help us in the strife!
Labour is sweet, for Thou dost share it now.
And we shall eat, in sweat of furrow'd brow,
Not earthly food, but Thine own Bread of Life.

And there are thorns of suffering left behind—
Sorrow and loss—that weigh our courage down;
But, ah! we know Thy sacramental crown
Was made of sin and sorrow, intertwined.

Give us of Thy sweet patience, Lord, we pray.
We would not spurn them with rebellious kicks,
Nor fret and strive, for Thou canst feel the pricks;
We too would wear them as a crown for aye.

We would put on Thy likeness—we, the least
And most unworthy. Ay, each piercing thorn,
In Thy name patiently and meekly worn,
Shall bear a blossom for the bridal feast.

Look down, O Brother with the yearning eyes!
Behold us kneeling at Thy bitter cross!
Grant us a share in all Thine earthly loss,
That we may share Thy gain in Paradise.

O weary Head! we see Thee drooping now
Beneath that diadem of mortal pain:
We see Thee sprinkled with the scarlet stain;—
Drop down the chrism on our polluted brow!

O sacred Head!—pale, beautiful, benign—
On our heads be Thy precious blood, we cry!
Lo, the destroying angel, passing by,
Shall spare to smite us—reverencing the sign.

Ada Cambridge

The Dawn

All the wild waves rock'd in shadow,
And the world was dim and grey,
Dark and silent, hush'd and breathless,
Waiting calmly for the day.

And the golden light came stealing
O'er the mountain-tops at last—
Flooding vale and wood and upland,—
It was morning—night was past.

There they lay—the silvery waters,
Fruitful forests, glade and lawn,—
All in beauty, new-created
By the angel of the dawn.

* * * * *

So my spirit slept in twilight;—
All was quiet, grey, and still,
Till the dawn of Love came stealing,
Over Hope's snow-crested hill.

Then the dim world woke in glory,
And the iris-dyes grew bright
On the waves and woods and valleys,
In a morning flood of light.

Ah! the vineyards and the gardens!—
Ah! the treasures, rich and rare,
Full of endless life and beauty,
Which that dawn created there!

Ada Cambridge

The Dawn Of God's Sabbath

The dawn of God's dear Sabbath
Breaks o'er the earth again,
As some sweet summer morning
After a night of pain;
It comes as cooling showers
To some exhausted land,
As shade of clustered palm trees
'Mid weary wastes of sand.

Lord, we would bring for offering
Though marred with earthly soil,
Our week of earnest labor,
Of useful daily toil;
Fair fruits of self denial,
Of strong, deep love to Thee,
Fostered by Thine own Spirit
In our humility.

And, we would bring our burden
Of sinful thought and deed,
In Thy pure presence kneeling,
From bondage to be freed;
Our heart's most bitter sorrow
For all Thy work undone;
So many talents wasted!
So few bright laurels won!

And with that sorrow mingling,
A steadfast faith, and sure,
And love so deep and fervent,
That tries to make it pure;
In His dear presence finding
The pardon that we need;
And then the peace so lasting,
Celestial peace indeed!

Ada Cambridge

The Easter Decorations

O take away your dried and painted garlands!
The snow-cloth's fallen from each quicken'd brow,
The stone's rolled off the sepulchre of winter,
And risen leaves and flowers are wanted now.

Send out the little ones, that they may gather
With their pure hands the firstlings of the birth,—
Green-golden tufts and delicate half-blown blossoms,
Sweet with the fragrance of the Easter earth;

Great primrose bunches, with soft, damp moss clinging
To their brown fibres, nursed in hazel roots;
And violets from the shady banks and copses,
And wood-anemones, and white hawthorn shoots;

And tender curling fronds of fern, and grasses
And crumpled leaves from brink of babbling rills,
With cottage-garden treasures—pale narcissi
And lilac plumes and yellow daffodils.

Open the doors, and let the Easter sunshine
Flow warmly in and out, in amber waves,
And let the perfume floating round our altar
Meet the new perfume from the outer graves.

And let the Easter "Alleluia!" mingle
With the sweet silver rain-notes of the lark;
Let us all sing together!—Lent is over,
Captivity and winter, death and dark

Ada Cambridge

The Future Verdict

How will our unborn children scoff at us
In the good years to come,
The happier ears to come,
Because, like driven sheep, we yielded thus,
Before the shearers dumb.

What are the words their wiser lips will say?
'These men had gained the light;
'These women knew the right;
'They had their chance, and let it slip away.
'They did not, when they might.

'They were the first to hear the gospel preached,
'And to believe therein;
'Yet they remained in sin.
'They saw the promised land they might have reached,
'And dared not enter in.

'They might have won their freedom, had they tried;
'No savage laws forbade;
'For them the way was made.
'They might have had the joys for which they cried
'And yet they shrank, afraid.

'Afraid to face - the martyr's rack and flame?
'The traitor's dungeon? Nay -
'Of what their world would say -
'The smile, the joke, the thinnest ghost of blame!
'Lord! Lord! What fools were they!'

And we - no longer actors of the stage
We cumber now - maybe
With other eyes shall see
This wasted chance, and with celestial rage
Cry 'O what fools were we!'

Ada Cambridge

The Hand In The Dark

How calm the spangled city spread below!
How cool the night! How fair the starry skies!
How sweet the dewy breezes! But I know
What, under all their seeming beauty, lies.

That million-fibred heart, alive, is wrung
With every grief that human creatures fear.
Could its dumb anguish find a fitting tongue
The very dead within their graves would hear.

It calls me from my rest, that voiceless wail
Of Lazarus at the gate — my kith and kin
Whose cruise and cake, and staff and beacon, fail —
The famished crowd, that cannot enter in.

How can I take my ease amid this pain,
These pangs, these tears, these crimes, that never cease?
While homeless children cry for bread in vain
How can I eat? How can I sleep in peace?

Poor comrades of the fight, that have no place!
Brothers and sisters, born to want and wrong.
Born weak and maimed, to run a hopeless race,
Lost at the start, against the hale and strong!

Poor scapegoats of the wilderness, that fast
For those who feast! And, ah, poor feasters too!
They also thirst and hunger at the last.
And this is Life — and all the Race can do.

Vain, vain the listening ear, the questioning gaze.
Shoreless, unplumbed, the ether-ocean lies
Above these roofs, beyond the smoke and haze —
The Infinite — alive with watching eyes.

To see our orb of sorrow whirling there —
The tiny swarm of struggling things, that curse
Their subject province, and yet calmly dare
To claim the kingship of the Universe.

Dread cloud of witnesses to earth's disgrace!
Earth is my trust — I am afraid to look
Those still and stern accusers in the face,
And haste to hide in my familiar nook.

My little nook — where is it? Have I none?
I grow confused betwixt the sea and shore.
I had some lamps to guide me — one by one
They flashed and failed, and now I have no more.

Where am I? Oh, where am I? I can feel —
To feel my torment — but I cannot see,
I cannot hear. My brain begins to reel,
My heart to faint. Almighty, speak to me!

Help me! Or, in Thy pity, take me hence
While feeling heart and thinking brain are whole,
Or give me any rag of carnal sense,
So it suffice to wrap my naked soul!

* * * * *

No word. No sign. Yet something in the air
Soothes, like a cool hand on a fevered brow.
Replenished, from the ashes of despair
I rise renewed. Belovèd, where art thou?

She sleeps. She stirs. She hears the lightest fall
Of foot familiar with her chamber floor.
Her spirit answers to my spirit's call:
Come home! Come home! And I am saved once more.

Bringing no leaf of hope, alone and late,
Spent and wing-weary, famished for a crumb,
The wandering dove heads back to nest and mate.
My Love and Comforter, I come! I come!

Here is the welcome threshold of my ark,
My island-home amid the trackless flood.
Her hand shuts out the Silence and the Dark;
Her pulse thrills life into my fainting blood.

She draws me down upon that couch of bliss,

Her faithful arms, her tender mother-breast;
I clasp her close, those sweetest lips I kiss,
And, at long last, I have my hour of rest.

* * * * *

Thou, too, my love, hast wandered far and wide,
And hast come home, where all thy wanderings cease.
The door is shut. Thy mate is at thy side.
Here is thy long-sought pillow. Sleep in peace.

Heed not the patter of the weeping eaves,
The groan of branches bending to the rain,
The sad tap-tapping of dead autumn leaves,
Like ghostly fingers, on the window-pane.
The wind-borne echoings, from east and west,
Of weeping woe and wailing agony;
All night they cry round thy beleaguered nest,
But fear them not, for thou art safe with me.

Let the sad world spin on, a trail of shame
Amongst the myriad worlds. Whate'er befalls,
The great God knows that we are not to blame.
Our world is here, within our chamber walls.

In this asylum, secret and apart,
Whereof we keep the one and only key,
Rest thee, poor tired heart, upon my heart,
As all my weary being rests in thee.

Good-night! Good-night! Sleep deep and well, my bride.
The fight goes on, but we have won release.
Our wounds are healed, our tears are shed and dried.
Let the storms rage — they cannot break our peace.

* * * * *

Peace — is it peace? What is that form of fear
That looms ahead? What distillation sours
The joy of life when thou, alive, art near,
And nought seems wanting to the perfect hours?

What chills my passion when I love thee most,
And dims my eyes, and veils thy face, and slips,

An unseen shadow, like a creeping ghost,
Betwixt my hungering kisses and thy lips?

What, amid richest plenty, starves me thus?
What is it steals my soul's content, and thine —
That sits a guest at marriage-feast with us,
And mixes poison with the food and wine?

* * * * *

A vision comes. A graveyard, all alone,
A small green mound, a withered funeral wreath;
Love's last drear symbol of a graven stone,
And Life and I but worthless dust beneath.

There weep the dews, and winds of winter blow;
The soft breeze rustles in the bending grass;
The cold rain falls there, and the drifting snow.
But tears fall not, nor lover's footsteps pass.

Bees hum all day amid the young spring leaves;
The rooks call loudly from the elm-tree bough;
The sparrows twitter in the old church eaves;
But no voice cries for me, or calls me, now.

Bright beams of morning compass me about;
The stars shine o'er me, and the pale moonlight;
But I, that lit and warmed thee, am gone out
Like a burnt candle, in eternal night.

Earth to the earth upon this churchyard slope,
Ashes to ashes, nothing to the nought;
No tryst between us, and no star of hope
To light the path so passionately sought.

And still the sands between thy fingers run —
Desires, delights, ambitions, days and years,
Rich hours of life for thee, though mine are done —
Too full for vain regrets, too brief for tears.

I have lost all, but thou dost hold and save,
Adding new treasure to thy rifled store;
While weeds grow long on the deserted grave

Where sleeps thy mate who may be thine no more.

* * * * *

This is the fate I fear, the ghost I see,
The dream I dream at night, the thought I dread —
That thus 't'will be someday with thee and me,
Thou fain to live while I am doubly dead.

Thou still defiant of our common foe,
I vanquished quite — the once-resplendent crown
Of all thy joys become a dragging woe,
To be lopped off lest it should weigh thee down.

I, once thy sap of life, a wasteful drain
On thy green vigour, like a rotten branch;
I, once thy health, a paralysing pain,
A bleeding wound, that thou must haste to stanch.

Because the dead are dead — the past is gone;
Because dear life is sweet and time is brief,
And some must fall, and some must still press on,
Nor waste scant strength in unavailing grief.

* * * * *

I blame thee not. I know what must be must.
Nor shall I suffer when apart from thee.
I shall not care, when I am mouldering dust,
That once quick love is in the grave with me.
Cast me away — thou knowest I shall not fret;
Take thy due joys — I shall not bear the cost.
I, that am thus forgotten, shall forget,
Nor shed one tear for all that I have lost.

Not then the sting of death, the day of dole,
When corpse of love lies under funeral pall;
'Tis now I wear the sackcloth on my soul,
Bereaved and lonely, while possessed of all.

* * * * *

If thou wert dead, belovèd, should I turn
Deaf heart to memory when of thee she spake?
Should I, when this pure fire had ceased to burn,

Seek other hearths for sordid comfort's sake?

No, no! Yet I am mortal, I am weak,
And any fire is warm in wintry cold.
Alas! alas! The fateful years will wreak
Their own stern will on ours, when all is told.

Tell us, O Thou that canst behold us grope,
Whole-souled, incessant, through these realms unknown
For but one touch of a substantial hope,
How can we keep our dear selves for our own?

Whence did we come? And is it there we go?
We look behind — night hides our place of birth;
The blank ahead hides Heaven, for aught we know;
But what is Heaven to us, whose home is Earth?

Flesh may be gross — the husk that holds the seed;
Jewels of gold worth more than common bread;
But we are flesh, and common bread our need.
Angels in glory, we should still be dead.

What is the infinite Universe to him
Who has no home? Eternal Future seems,
Like the eternal Past, unreal and dim,
The airy region of a poet's dreams.

What spirit-essence, howsoe'er divine,
Can our lost selves restore from dusty grave?
Her mortal mind and body — hers and mine —
Make all the joys I know, and all I crave.

No fair romance of transcendental bliss,
No tale of palms and crowns, my dull heart stirs,
That only hungers for a woman's kiss,
And asks no life that is not one with hers.
No such Hereafter do I ask to see;
No such pale hope my sinking soul exalts;
I want no sexless angel — only thee,
My human love, with all thy human faults.

Just as thou art — not beautiful or wise,

But prone to simple sins and sad unrest —
With thy warm lips and arms, and thy sweet eyes,
Sweeter for tears they weep upon my breast.

Just as thou art, with thy soft household ways,
Thy noble failures and thy poor success,
Thy love that fits me for my strenuous days;
A mortal woman — neither more nor less.

* * * * *

And thou must pass, with these too rapid hours,
To that great deep wherefrom we both were brought;
Thy sentient flesh must turn to grass and flowers,
To birds and beasts, to dust — to air — to nought.

I know the parable. The great oaks grow
To their vast stature from an acorn grain,
And mightiest man was once an embryo.
But how can nothing bring thee forth again?

And is the new oak tree the old oak tree?
And is the son the father? And would'st thou,
If thou could'st rise from nothing, be to me
The precious self that satisfies me now?

Words! Words! A tale — a fairy legend, drawn
From lore of babes, that men must cast away;
Faith of the primal dreamer and the dawn,
Eluding vision in the light of day.

Here in our little island-home we bide
Our few brief years — the years that we possess.
Beyond, the Infinite on every side
Holds what no man may know, though all may guess.

We may remain — a lasting miracle. Ay, well we may. Our island-home is rife
With marvels greater than the tongue can tell,
And all things teem and travail with new life.

We may awake, ineffably alive,
Divinely perfect, in some higher sphere:
But still not we shall wake — the we who strive,

Who love and learn, who joy and suffer, here.
What then our hope, if any hope there be?
A something vague and formless and unknown,
That some strange beings, yet unborn, shall see.
Alas! And all we cry for is our own.

Only to be ourselves — not cast abroad
In space and time, for either bliss or woe;
Only to keep the treasures we have stored.
And they must pass away. And we must go.

How can we bear it? How can we submit?
Like a wild beast imprisoned, in our pain
We rave and rage for some way out of it,
And bruise and bleed against the bars in vain.

All, all is dark. Beyond our birth and death —
At either end — the same unyielding door.
We live, we love, while we draw human breath;
And then we die. And then? We know no more.

* * * * *

Ah, but look up, above these roofs and spires,
To where the stars shine down like watching eyes.
Conceive the tumult of those spinning fires!
Behold the vastness of those midnight skies!

And count the value of this speck of earth
Amid the countless Whole; and measure Man —
That on this speck but yesterday had birth,
And claims all God — with the prodigious plan.

Man, but a phase of planetary change,
That once was not, and will give place anon
To other forms, more beautiful and strange —
To pass in turn — till Earth herself is gone.

Earth, that is next to nothing in the sum
Of things created — a brief mote in space,
With all her aeons past and yet to come.
How we miscalculate our size — our place!

Yet are we men — details of the design,
Set to our course, like circling sun and star;
Mortal, infinitesimal, yet divine
Of that divine which made us what we are.

And yet this world, this microscopic ball,
This cast-up grain of sand upon the shore,
This trivial shred and atom of the ALL,
Is still our Trust, that we must answer for.
A lighthouse in the Infinite, with lamps
That we must trim and feed until we die;
A lonely outpost of the unseen camps
That we must keep, although we know not why.

The workman and the soldier have the word;
Theirs to obey, and not to question. Thus
We stand to orders that we never heard,
Bound to our little part. Enough for us.

The warm sap runs; the tender leaves unfold;
Ant helps his brother ant; birds build and sing;
The patient earthworm aids the pregnant mould
To fruit in autumn and to bud in spring.

Not less am I in wisdom and in will
Than ants and worms. I am full-furnished too
My arduous errand hither to fulfil.
I know my work, and what a man can do.

Maker of all! Enough that Thou hast given
This tempered mind, this brain without a flaw.
Enough for me to strive, as I have striven,
To make them serve their purpose and Thy law.

* * * * *

But, oh, my soul's companion! Thee I seek
For daily courage to support my lot.
In thee hath Nature made me strong or weak.
My human comforter, forsake me not!

My nobler self, in whom I live my best,
Strengthen me! Raise me! Lead me to the last!

Lay thy dear head upon my throbbing breast,
Give me thy hands, that I may hold thee fast!

Come close — come closer! Let me feel thy heart,
Thy pulsing heart, thy breathing lips, on mine.
O love, let only death and graveyard part —
If they must part — my flesh and soul from thine!

Be thou my purer eyes, my keener ears,
My finer conscience, clean and unafraid,
Till these few, swift, inexorable years
Have borne us both beyond the reach of aid.

My rod and staff upon this lonely way,
My beacon-lamp till need of light is past;
Till the great Shadow, lengthening day by day,
Spreads over all and quenches us at last.

Ada Cambridge

The Hands That Hang Down

O lord, I am so tired!
My heart is sick and sore.
I work, and work, and do no good—
And I can try no more!

I lay my treasures up,
And think they're worth such care;
And the next time I go to look,
There's only rubbish there!

I tug hard at the door
Of knowledge—strain and pant;
But, Lord, the more I seem to learn,
The more I'm ignorant!

Sometimes I am so vain
I set myself to teach;
But e'en the first beginnings lie
Utterly out of reach!

I am no use—no use!
I thought I might have been;
But now I know how small I am,
How poor, how false, how mean!

Sunk in the dust and mire
While aiming at the skies,
Only a thing to laugh at, Lord,
To pity and despise!

Ada Cambridge

The Kind Word

Speak kindly, wife; the little ones will grow
Fairest and straightest in the warmest sun.
We talk so often of the seed we sow;
But, maybe, when we think our labour done,
And when we look to gather in the grain,
We'll find these stones, we fling about, again
Strewing the fruitless sod,
Having crush'd down and stunted the sweet life
That bore the likeness of the life of God.
All your hard words of bitterness and strife
Will lie upon their love, as stones would lie;
You think to pick them up, but, by-and-by,
You'll find where they have lain
By the poor, meagre, crooked ears of grain.
You will be sorry then.
Speak kindly, wife; you know not half the wealth
Kind words bring in. Ah! I remember when
I was a little lad, all youth and health,
How I went wrong for want of one, and how
One saved my life—ay, keeps it steady now.

* * * * *

My mother died, you know, when I had seen
Only a few days' light; they say her face
Was fair and young—and so it might have been;
I cannot tell. But she, who took her place,
Was coarse and hard, and had a shrewish tongue
That fretted all the household into strife.
Ah, how that sharp voice rung
Through ear and heart—through all the peace of life!
It drove my father from his home at length,
And drove him to the ale-house, where he learn'd
To drink away the good name he had earn'd,
And drink away his precious health and strength.

I can remember well how he would sigh,
Would sigh, and turn from his own chimney nook;
And how, though wintry winds blew fierce and high,
He fumbled at the door with hands that shook,

And pass'd out slowly, as though caring not
Whither he went. And she, who tempted him,
Was first to see the change—to mark the blot
That made his manhood's beauty blurred and dim—
But had no mercy and no help for him.

I think I see her now!

Standing, with that red flush upon her brow,
Hurling her stinging insults thick and fast,
As he was sadly creeping through the door;
Until he raised his grizzled head, and swore,
And suddenly struck her, growing mad at last.
Was that the way to better him? Ah, no;
She taunted him, and stung his spirit so,
That what was weakness became sin and crime.

Wife, did you ever hear

What happen'd in that dark and dreadful time?

One night, when I was wide awake for fear,
Straining my baby ears to catch the sound
Of the fierce voices that were storming near—
One night, I heard a cry—

So sharp! so shrill! a strange and fearful cry—
And then a heavy fall upon the ground;
And then—and then—in the grey morning light
I saw her lie,

With her hard face so strangely still and white,
With a broad purple stain upon her brow,
And dusky shadows on her lips and eyes.

Ah me! ah me! I think I see her now,
Wrapped in that awful death-sleep, as she lies!

I well remember how I cried and shook
In childish terror, and with what a look
I turn'd to all the living faces there,
Seeking in vain,

With the first dreary thrill of my despair,
The one face that I never saw again!

* * * * *

I was so young—a little lad, a child—
And it was hard, ay, very hard, to be
So helpless and so ignorant and wild,
With not a soul to love and care for me.
She, when she storm'd about,

Had roughly used me, and had turn'd me out
Into the streets, to gather what I could
And what I liked of all the evil there;
But he, my father, at odd times he would
Sit, with his arms flung round me, in his chair,
And tell me, as he stroked my curly head,
How he could see the mother that was dead
In my blue eyes and in my golden hair.

And now I was alone—quite, quite alone.
Ah, you can never know how I was toss'd
From place to place; how like a thing of stone,
Frozen for want of just a kindly tone,
My heart became—all its good instincts cross'd!
And how like some distorted tree I grew,
Barren of all things beautiful and true.
Sullen, and hard, and reckless, I was fit
And ready, when the devil laid his snare—
Quite ready—to rush headlong into it.
And who was there to care?
In a wild night—a well-remember'd night,
When I was prowling in a darken'd street,
Trying to hush the echo of my feet,
Trying to hide me out of sound and sight—
Just as I heard the bells begin to call
From a church-tower—as I caught a gleam
Of marble pillars, standing white and tall,
And saw the stream
Of tender, mellow light make, as it were,
A shining pathway in the misty air,
Whither soft footsteps trod
Out of the world into the courts of God—
Just then they found me out—
They who had watch'd and follow'd me so long—
They found me as I idly hung about
That stately doorway; and I felt the strong
Relentless grip upon my arm—I saw
The quiet, cruel, smiling eyes, and saw
That I was bound.
That night I lay awake upon the ground
Of a dark cell. The moonlight quiver'd in,
Tender, and pure, and sweet, and hover'd round—

Trying to cool the raging fire within
My eyes and heart; like tender mother's touch,
It wander'd over lips, and hands, and hair.
I think I feel it now—it came with such
An unexpected pity to me there!
It was so dark—and I was all alone.
No gentle tone
To comfort and to keep me from despair!
A blessing had been sent—ah, now I know,
Just by that little moonbeam; its white glow
Lay on my heart, till the tears fell like rain.
The long-endured, sullen sense of pain,
So dark and deep,
Was stirred and touch'd, and almost lighten'd, when

I plunged my face into my hands to weep.
Somehow the boyish spirit came again,
With just a little of its softness, then;
The burning fever cool'd, and I could sleep.
Ah, I remember, as I lay there, she
I never knew came gliding through my dream,
As through the shadows that encompass'd me
Glided the tender moonshine; I could see,
Dim and yet purely bright—just in the gleam
That cross'd the prison-floor—a girlish face,
Divinely beautiful—an angel's face;
And long robes, fair and white,
Shadow'd with wings that shone like living light.
I seem'd to feel, e'en in that gloomy place,
The soft, sweet kisses stray
Over my feverish forehead as I lay;
But when I woke, and look'd with glistening eyes
Up through the grating, I could only see
The pale rose-colour dawning in the skies
From whence that message had come down to me.

I was so lonely! Yet more lonely far
In the bright day-time, when my sight was bound
By cold, hard, scornful faces all around,
Instead of prison-wall and iron bar.
More lonely—ay, so much more lonely! They,
My judges and accusers, and the crowd

That witness'd all my misery that day,
They knew not that my spirit was as proud,
As sensitive to suffering, as theirs.
They knew the sweet hearth-love, that makes the cares
And storms of life so light!
And the great safeguard against sin and crime
Stood round about their homes by day and night.
But I had no one in that bitter time,
No one, I thought—no one to stand by me,
No one to teach me or to care for me!
I pass'd through fire as I stood waiting—stood
In that great, dreary, dreadful, crowded place;
A fire that scorch'd out even the faintest trace
My tearful dream had left, of good and true.

* * * * *

Wearily, wearily, I laid me down
Within my little prison-cell that night;
And then I long'd for death to come, and drown
The sinful, lonely, sorrowful earthly life
That always seem'd at strife
With God and man. I know it was not right—
I know it, dear; but it is hard to be
Shut out from all the pleasant, genial life
That makes life worth!—and it was hard for me.
And so I lay, and fix'd a vacant stare
Upon my grated bars, now dimly drawn
Across a grey-blue thunder-cloud; for there
The moonlight came, and there the rosy dawn
Peep'd in—a kind and friendly face to see;
One thing, at least, of peace and purity.
And dark thoughts brooded in my heart and brain,
Such wicked, reckless thoughts! I wonder'd why
I had been born to so much misery,
Born to so large a heritage of pain!
Sure it was wrong, I murmur'd bitterly,
Setting my teeth again.
And then there slowly drifted through my mind—
Vaguely and darkly, gaining shape at length—
A thought whose likeness it were hard to find
In any common words. I felt the strength
Of stern endurance and resolve die out,

And felt a fierce new strength creep round about
My smouldering heart. Eager I turn'd to gaze
At my new vision—and the warning doubt
Died in the passion that was set ablaze.
What was the vision? Wife, I scarcely dare
Paint it again.

It's very memory enfolds such pain!

A river, dark, and deep, and dreadful, where
The moaning eddies swirl'd about the piers
Of a high bridge; lights twinkling in the air;
Unnumber'd voices thrilling in my ears;
And one—one only—speaking to me there—
Calling from out the deep,
Dark water, in its slow, reluctant sweep
An awful space of shadows; then the gleam
Of steely ripples, lying far below,
Like bright snakes coil'd together on the stream;—
Ah, wife, you know! you know!

I saw—but did not see—the grey-blue cloud
Change into black; the thunder roar'd aloud;
And shining arrows glanced across the floor,
Striking a blaze upon my staring eyes;—
Darling, these are such painful memories,
I cannot tell you more.

* * * * *

But in the day that follow'd—when the sun
Was high in heaven, and the crimson flame
Danced on the bleak white wall above me—one
Bearing a sweet and holy message, came.
He found me lying motionless, alone,
Passionately quiet, and as hard as stone;
And he stepped softly, and bent over me
Until I saw his face—
Fair as an angel's, with a shining crown
Of wavy golden hair—a boyish face,
But shadow'd with a wondrous dignity.
As he bent down,
His grave eyes looking deeply into mine,
The dignity seem'd born of the divine.
Ah me, he was so good! so true! so kind!
He melted that black shadow on my mind
With his sweet, earnest tones; I sat and wept

Just like a child; and a new life and light
Once more, as he sat by me, gently crept
Into my spirit, that was dark as night.
He did not talk as if he were above
The sins and follies of his fellow-men;
But all his words were sympathy and love—
Or I had never listen'd to them then.
He did not once reproach me, though he heard—
Because he would not ask it—every word
I had to tell him; but he counselled me,
Framing his lips in that humility
Which seems the stamp of a good man and true.
Saying not, "I know this," but "God has said;"
Saying not, with the solemn warning, "you,"
But mostly "we;" yet over all he shed
The high and special dignity he bore.
One felt he was a priest, as if he wore
His surplice—standing in the church, instead
Of on a prison-floor.

* * * * *

And those kind words—they brought a blessed morn
Unto my soul; I never wish'd again
That I might die; I never felt forlorn,
As if my life were given me in vain.
But I went out into the world, and fought
Against its legions, with an arm of strength!
Wife, though I often falter'd, what he taught
Nerved me to courage, and I won at length.

Ada Cambridge

The Last Battle Of The Cid

Low he lay upon his dying couch, the knight without a stain,
The unconquered Cid Campeador, the bright breast-plate of Spain,
The incarnate honour of Castille, of Aragon and Navarre,
Very crown of Spanish chivalry, Rodrigo of Bivar!

Sick he lay, and grieved in spirit, for that Paynim dogs should dare
Camp around his knightly citadel, Valencia the fair!
For that he no more should face them, in his beauteous armour dight,
To whom God and Santiago aye gave victory in the fight.

Faintly rising o'er the ramparts came the murmur of the siege,
And he could but pray for Christendom, his country and his liege;
For his well-belovèd city, granite-girdled, pennon-starred,
And the royal wealth of treasure that its stately portals barred.

"Santiago, at whose altar I did watch mine armour bright,
And was girt with golden spur and brand, a consecrated knight!—
Santiago, by my vow redeemed at Compostela's shrine,
Let the Paynim life-blood only touch these blessed walls of mine!

"Santiago, warrior saintly, who with Don Fernando's host
Stormed and won the gates of Coimbra, guard my fortress on the coast!
Keep the holy leper's blessing, though the snow is on my hair;—
Strike the base-born unbelievers!—save Valencia the fair!"

Lo, a sudden cloud of glory filled his chamber as he prayed!
Lo, San Pedro stood beside him, all in shining robes arrayed!
"For thy love, Rodrigo Diaz, to Cardeña's house," said he,
"I have offered intercessions, and the Lord hath answered me.

"Thou must die, O well-beloved!—thirty days, and thou must die!
Yet in death shall Santiago grant thee still a victory.
Thou shalt ride forth to the battle—Santiago shall be there—
For the Faith and Don Alfonso and Valencia the fair."

Silence reigned within the chamber; none stood near the hero's bed;
All that dazzling flood of glory slowly, softly vanishèd.
He could only hear the murmur from the ramparts rise and fall;
He could only see the cross-bars stretching dimly on the wall.

In San Pedro's chapel lay the Cid, his eyes with rapture dim,
And proclaimed the wondrous favour that the Lord had granted him.
Then he parted from his vassals, and went humbly to confess;
And the warrior-bishop clothed his soul in its baptismal dress.

'Twas the holy day of Pentecost that saw Ruy Diaz die—
Evermore the spotless mirror of Castillian chivalry!

They, in whom his will was shrinèd, Alvar Fanez and his knights,
Stood to watch the hero vanquished who had won a thousand fights.

DoXimena, the faithful, with her tears bedewed his feet,
And anointed all his body with pure incense, rich and sweet.
Then in silence and in sorrow the twelve days of waiting fled;
And the warders on the ramparts dared not whisper, "He is dead."

In the midnight, dark and quiet, fell the torches' lurid glare
On the palaces and portals of Valencia the fair;
And a solemn, slow procession, mounted all in royal state,
Like the spectre of an army, passed beneath the city gate.

In the van was borne the ensign, known and dreaded far and wide,
With four hundred noblest knights ranged proudly by its side.
Toward Castille and Cardeña were those haughty faces set,—
And that banner never more did crown Valencia's parapet.

Then came mules, with treasure laden, stepping softly on before,
Compassed round with knights in armour—to the full four hundred more.
Then a band of belted nobles, stern and silent; and amid
Their levelled lances, he of Bivar—the Campeador—the Cid.

On his milk-white steed, Babieca, whom none else did e'er bestride,
Clad in all his princely trappings, did the lifeless warrior ride;
Girt with helm and spur and blazoned shield, and grasping in his hand
The bright crosslet of Tizona, his thrice-consecrated brand.

Geronymo and Gil Diaz held the slackened bridlerein—
His true bishop and true vassal—as they moved on to the plain;
And Ximena and her maidens, 'mid the torchlight weird and dim,
With six hundred knights in harness, followed slowly after him.

In the solemn hush and darkness, with no joyful clarion-cry,

And no clash and clank of weapons, riding all so silently;—
Thus they passed out from the city e'er the summer morning broke,
And were found arrayed for battle when the infidels awoke.

Great and mighty was the Moorish host, by thirty monarchs led,
But a greater was the army with Rodrigo at the head;
For, behold! came Santiago to the bloody battle-plain—
Santiago, with a hundred thousand warriors in his train.

Each in robe of shining whiteness, with a red cross on his breast,—
Each with fiery sword uplifted or with golden lance at rest;
Santiago, saintly leader, on a charger white as snow—
Sent to aid the Cid Campeador in vanquishing the foe.

All the Paynims looked amazed on the dreadful beauteous sight,
As the tender light of morning softly crept out from the night;
Then they harnessed them in silence, sternly grasping shield and spear,
And pressed on in serried column, full of wonder, full of fear.

There was one loud shock of battle, then they wildly turned to flee,
And the Cid and Santiago swept their hosts into the sea.
Twenty kings and twenty armies in that bloody fight were slain,
And were left, with upturned faces, stiff and stark upon the plain.

Fair and shining came the daylight, all in liquid summer sheen—
But no more was Santiago, or his white-robed warriors, seen;
Only one small train of nobles, riding on, with stately pace,
To San Pedro de Cardena and the great Cid's resting-place.

By the altar in the chapel, where the monarch's throne doth stand,
Sat the dead Cid, robed in purple, with his good sword in his hand.
And again the Moorish ensign fluttered proudly in the air,
Lifted high above the ramparts of Valencia the fair.

Ada Cambridge

The Legend Of Lady Gertrude

I.

Fallen the lofty halls, where vassal crowds
Drank in the dawn of Gertrude's natal day.
The dungeon roof an Alpine snow-wreath shrouds,
The strong, wild eagle's eyrie in the clouds—
The robber-baron's nest—is swept away.

II.

Bare is the mountain brow of lordly towers;
Only the sunbeams stay, the moon and stars,
The faithful saxifrage and gentian flowers,
The silvery mist, and soft, white, crystal showers,
And torrents rushing through their rocky bars.

III.

More than three hundred years ago, the flag
Charged with that dread device, an Alpine bear—
By many storm-winds rent—a grim, grey rag—
Floated above the castle on the crag,
Above the last whose heads were shelter'd there.

IV.

He was the proudest of an ancient race,
The fiercest of the robber chieftain's band,
That haughty Freiherr, with the iron face:
And she—his lady-sister, by God's grace—
The sweetest, gentlest maiden in the land.

V.

'Twas a rude nest for such a tender bird,
That lonely fortress, with its warrior-lord.
Aye drunken revels the night-stillness stirred;
From morn till eve the battle-cries were heard,
The sound of jingling spur and clanking sword.

VI.

And Lady Gertrude was both young and fair,

A mark for lawless hearts and roving eyes,—

With sweet, grave face, and amber-tinted hair,
And a low voice soft-thrilling through the air,
Filling it full of subtlest melodies.

VII.

But the great baron, proudest of his line,
Fetter'd, with jealous care, his white dove's wing;
Guarded his treasure in an inner shrine,
Till such a day as knightly hands should twine
Her slender fingers with the marriage-ring.

VIII.

From all her household rights was she debarred—
Her chair and place within the castle-hall,
Her palfrey's saddle in the castle-yard,
Her nursing ministries when blows fell hard
In border struggles—she was kept from all.

IX.

A stone-paved chamber, and the parapet
Opening above its winding turret-stair;
The castle-chapel, where few men were met,—
Round these the brother's boundaries were set.
The sweet child-sister was so very fair!

X.

She had her faithful nurse, her doves, her lute,
Her broidery and her distaff, and the hound—
Best prized of all—the grand, half-human brute,
Who aye watched near her, beautiful and mute,
With ears love-quicken'd, listening from the ground.

XI.

But the wild bird, so honourably caged,
Grew sick and sad in its captivity;
Longed—like those hills which time nor storm had aged,
And those deep glens where Danube waters raged—
In God's own wind and sunshine to be free.

XII.

And on a day, when she had seen them ride,
Baron and troopers, on some border raid,

Wooed by the glory of the summer tide,
The hound's soft-slouching footstep at her side,
Adown the valley Lady Gertrude stray'd.

XIII.

Adown the crag, whose shadow, still and black,
Lay like the death-sleep on a mountain pool;
Through rocky glen, by silvery torrent's track,
Through forest glade, 'neath wild vines, fluttering back
From softest zephyr kisses, green and cool.

XIV.

E'en till the woods and hamlets down below,
And summer meadows, were all broad and clear;
The river, moving statelily and slow,
A crimson ribbon in the sunset glow—
The dim, white, distant city strangely near.

XV.

She sat her down, a-weary, on the ground,
With tremulous long-drawn breath and wistful eyes;
Caress'd the velvet muzzle of the hound,
And listen'd vainly for some little sound
To come up from her world of mysteries.

XVI.

She had forgotten of the time and place,
When clank of warrior's harness smote her dream.
A growl, a spring, a shadow on her face,
And one strode up, with slow and stately pace,
And stood before her in the soft sun-gleam.

XVII.

An armèd knight, in noblest knightly guise,
From golden spur to golden dragon-crest;
Through open vizor gazing with surprise
Into the fair, flush'd face and startled eyes,
While horse and hound stood watchfully at rest.

XVIII.

The sun went down, and, with long, stealthy stride,
The shadows came, blurring the summer light;

And there was none the lady's step to guide
Up the lost pathway on the mountain-side—
None to protect her but this stranger knight!

XIX.

He placed her gently on his dappled grey,
Clothed in his mantle—for the air was chill;
He led her all the long and devious way,
Through glens, where starless night held royal sway,
And vine-tressed woodlands, where the leaves were still:

XX.

Through pathless ravines, where swift waters roll'd;
Up dark crag-ramparts, perilously steep,
Where eagles and a she-bear watch'd the fold;—
Facing the mountain breezes, clear and cold—
In shy, sweet silence, eloquent and deep.

XXI.

Holding his charger by the bridle-rein,
He led her through the robber-chieftain's lands;
Led her, unchallenged by the baron's train,
E'en to the low-brow'd castle-gate again,
And there he humbly knelt to kiss her hands.

XXII.

Brave lips, o'er tender palms bent down so low,
Silent and reverent, as it were to bless—
'Twas e'en a knightly love they did bestow,
Love true as steel and undefiled as snow;
No common courtesy, no light caress.

XXIII.

He rode away; and she to turret-lair
Sped, swift and trembling, like a hunted doe.
But wherefore, on the loopholed winding stair
Knelt she till morning, weeping, watching there?—
Because he was her brother's deadliest foe.

XXIV.

Because the golden dragon's blood had mixt
In all those mountain streams, had dyed the grass

Now trodden for her sake; because betwixt
Those two proud barons such a gulf was fixt
As never bridge of peace might overpass.

XXV.

A bitter, passionate feud, that was begun
In ages long forgotten, and bequeath'd
With those rich baronies by sire to son—
A sacred charge, a great work never done,
A sharp and fiery weapon never sheath'd.

XXVI.

Yet, e'er a month slipped by, as summer slips
On noiseless wings, another kiss was laid,
Not on white palms or rosy finger-tips,
But softly on shut eyes and quivering lips;
And vows were sealèd in the forest glade.

XXVII.

The robber baron, who had hedged about
That fairest blossom of the sacred plant,
Saw he the insolent mailèd hand stretch'd out
To break down all his barriers, strong and stout?
Knew he aught of that gracious covenant?

XXVIII.

His pride serenely slept. Nor did it wake
Till, in amaze, he saw his enemy stand
In his own castle, praying him to take
The pledge of peace for Lady Gertrude's sake—
Praying him humbly for the lady's hand.

XXIX.

Slowly the knitted brows grew fierce and black;
Slowly the eagle eyes began to shine.

"Sir knight," he said, "I pray you get you back.
But one hour—and the Bears are on your track.
There's naught but fire and sword 'twixt mine and thine."

XXX.

And then the doors were barred on every side

Upon the innocent traitor, who had done
Such doubly-shameful despite to his pride.
Mocking, "I'll satisfy your heart," he cried,
"An' you will have a husband, pretty one!"

XXXI.

Yet did she send a message stealthily,
Spurred by the torture of this ominous threat.
"Thou wilt not suffer it?" she said. And he,
"Fear not. To-morrow will I come for thee,—
At eve to-morrow, when the sun has set."

XXXII.

And on the morrow, when the autumn light
Of red and gold had faded into grey,
She heard his signal up the echoing height,
Like hoarse owl-whistle, quivering through the night;
And in the dark she softly slipped away.

XXXIII.

Her faithful nurse, with trembling hands, untwined
The new-forged fetters and drew back the bars.
The hound look'd up into her face, and whined,
And scratch'd the door; he would not stay behind.
And so she went—watch'd only by the stars.

XXXIV.

Adown the mountain passes, with wing'd feet
And bright, blank eyes—her hand fast clutch'd around
A ragged slip of myrtle, white and sweet;
The hound beside her, velvet-footed, fleet
And silent, with his muzzle to the ground.

XXXV.

The knight was waiting, with his dappled steed,
Hard by the black brink of the waveless pool.
In his strong, tender arms—now safe indeed—
She cross'd the valley, with the wild bird's speed,
Fanned by the whispering night-wind, clear and cool.

XXXVI.

Away—away—far from the trysting-place—

Over the blood-stain'd border-lands at last!
One wandering hind alone beheld the race;
A sudden rush—a shadow on his face—
A glint of golden scales—and she was past.

XXXVII.

She felt the shadow of a mighty wall,
And then the glow of torchlight, and again
The gloom of cloister'd stair and passage, fall
Upon her vacant eyes. She heard a call;
And, in the echoing mountains, its refrain.

XXXVIII.

Then all around her a great silence lay;
She knew not why, nor greatly seem'd to care,
Till, in low tones, she heard the baron say,
"Hast thou confess'd, my little one, to-day?"—
The while he weaved the myrtle in her hair.

XXXIX.

She glanced up suddenly, in blank amaze;
And then remember'd. 'Twas an altar, hung
With silk and rich embroidery, met her gaze;
'Twas perfumed, waxen altar-tapers' blaze
On her chill'd face and troubled spirit flung.

XL.

A holy father, with his open book,
Stood by the threshold of the chapel door.
Slowly, with bated breath and hands that shook,
Soft-clasped together—drawn with but a look—
She went, and knelt down humbly on the floor.

XLI.

The baron left her, lowly crouching there,
Her bright, starred tresses trailing on the stones;
And waited, kneeling on the altar-stair—
Holding his sword-hilt to his lips, in prayer—
The while she pleaded in her tremulous tones.

XLII.

A warning voice upon the still air dwelt,

A long, low cry of mingled hope and dread;—
A pause—a solemn silence—and she felt
The sweet absolving whisper as she knelt,
And hands of blessing covering her head.

XLIII.

The knight arose in silence, with a brow
Haughty and pale; and, softly drawing nigh,—
Love, life, and death in the new "I and thou"—
He gave and took each solemn marriage vow,
With all his arm'd retainers standing by.

XLIV.

The soft light fell upon their faces—still,
And calm, and full of rest. None now to part
The golden link between them!—naught to chill
The blest assurance that the father's will
Laid hand in hand, and gather'd heart to heart.

XLV.

And so 'twas done. Each finger now had worn
The rings that aye ring'd in the double life;
From each the pledge had been withdrawn in turn,
As one by one the hallow'd oaths were sworn;
And Lady Gertrude was the baron's wife.

XLVI.

He led her to her chamber, when the glow
Of dawn began to quicken earth and sky;
They watch'd the rosy wine-cup overflow
The pale, cool, silvery track upon the snow
Of Alpine crests, uplifted far and high.

XLVII.

They saw the mountain floodgates open'd wide,
The downward streaming of unfetter'd day;
In blessed stillness, standing side by side—
Stillness that told how they were satisfied,
Those hearts whereon the new-born glamour lay.

XLVIII.

And then, down cloister'd aisle and sculptured stair,

Through open courts, all bathed in shining mist,
They pass'd together, knight and lady fair;
She with the matron's coif upon her hair,
Her golden hair by lip and finger kiss'd.

XLIX.

He throned her proudly in his castle hall,
High on the daïs above the festive board,
'Neath shields and pennons drooping from the wall;
And they below the salt rose, one and all,
To greet the bride of their puissant lord.

L.

Loud were the shouts, and fair with smiling grace
The blue eyes of the lady baroness;
And bright and eager was the haughty face
Of her brave husband, towering in his place,
Yet aye low-stooping for a mute caress.

LI.

There came a sudden pause—a thunder-cloud,
Darkening the sunshine of the golden noon—
An ominous stillness in the armèd crowd,
While slowly stiffening lips, all stern and proud,
Shut in the kindly laughter—all too soon!

LII.

"To arms! To arms!" A passionate crimson flush
Rose, sank, and blanched the fair face of the bride.
"To arms!" The cry smote sharply on the hush,
And broke it;—all was one tumultuous rush—
"The Bears have cross'd the border-land!" they cried.

LIII.

But a few hours had Lady Gertrude dwelt
With her dear lord. Sad honours now were hers,
With white, hot hands she clasp'd his silver belt;
She held his dinted shield and sword; and knelt,
Like lowly squire, to don his golden spurs.

LIV.

"Thou wilt not fight with him?—thou wilt forbear

For my sake?" So she pleaded, while the sun
Shone on her falling tears—each tear a prayer.
He whisper'd gravely, as he kissed her hair,
"I know not if I can, my little one."

LV.

She held his hands, with infinite mute desire
To hold him back; then watch'd him to the field
With hungry, feverish eyes that could not tire,
Till sunny space absorb'd the fitful fire
Of the bright dragons on his crest and shield.

LVI.

When he was gone—quite gone—she crept away,
Back to the castle chapel, still and dim;
And knelt where he had knelt but yesterday,
Low on the altar step, to watch and pray—
To pour her heart out for the love of him.

LVII.

Her bower-maidens sat alone and spun
The while she pray'd, the terror-stricken wife.
The long hours slowly wanèd, one by one,
And evening came, and, with the setting sun,
The sudden darkness that eclipsed her life.

LVIII.

She listen'd, and she heard the sound at last,—
The ominous pause, the heavy, clanging tread;
She saw the strange, long shadow weirdly cast
Upon the floor, the red blood streaming fast,
The dear face grey and stiffen'd;—he was dead!

LIX.

"Ay, dead, my lady baroness; and slain
By him you call your brother. Curses light
Upon his caitiff soul! Ah, 'tis in vain
To murmur thus,—he will not hear again—
He cannot heed your whisperings to-night."

LX.

She lay down on her bridal couch—the stone

Whereon he lay in his eternal rest;
They, pitying, pass'd out, leaving her alone,
To kiss the rigid lips, and cry, and moan,
With her white face upon his bleeding breast.

* * * * *

LXI.

'Twas night—wakeful, restless, troubled night,
Both wild and soft—fair;
With clouds fast flying through the domeheight,
And shrieking winds, and silvery shining light,
And clear bells piercing the transparent air.

LXII.

Down vale and fell a lonely figure stray'd,—
Now a dark shadow on the moonlit ground,
Now flickering white and ghostly in the shade
Of haunted glen and scented forest-glade—
A woman, watched and followed by a hound.

LXIII.

'Twas Lady Gertrude, widow'd and forlorn,
Returning to the wild birds' mountain nest;
Sent out with smiling insult and with scorn,
And creeping to the home where she was born,
To hide her sorrow, to lie down and rest.

LXIV.

She reach'd the gate and cross'd the castle-yard,
And stood upon the threshold, chill'd with fear.
The baron rose and faced her, breathing hard:
"Troopers," he thunder'd, "let the doors be barred
And double-barred!—we'll have no traitors here."

LXV.

Such was her welcome. As she turn'd away,
Groping with sightless eyes and hands outspread,
The hound, unnoticed, slowly made his way
Along the hall, as if in track of prey,
With glistening teeth and stealthy velvet tread.

LXVI.

There was no clarion cry, none heard the sound
Of knightly challenge, till the champion rose,
Avenging. Lo! they saw upon the ground
The baron struggling with the savage hound,
And grim death grimly waiting for the close!

LXVII.

'Twas done. He lay there unassoilzied, dead,
Ere scarcely fell'd by the relentless paws.
And the fierce hound, with painful, limping tread,
Was following still where Lady Gertrude led,
His own red life-blood dripping from his jaws.

LXVIII.

'Neath shadowy glades, with moonbeams interlaced,
Through valleys, at day—dawning, soft and dim,
Up mountain steeps at sunrise—uplands paced
By her dead lord in childhood—she retraced
The long miles stretching betwixt her and him.

LXIX.

She reach'd the castle, ere the torches' glare
Had wanèd in the brightness of the sky—
Another lord than hers was feasting there!
She shudder'd at the sounds that fill'd the air,
Of drunken laughter and loud revelry,

LXX.

And softly up the cloister'd stairs she crept,
Back to the lonely chapel, where all sound
Of human life in solemn silence slept.
With weary heart and noiseless feet she stept
Beneath the doorway into hallow'd ground.

LXXI.

Low at the altar, wrapped in slumber sweet
And still and deep, her murder'd lord lay here;
With waxen tapers at his head and feet—
Forcing reluctant darkness to retreat—
And cross-embroider'd pall upon his bier.

LXXII.

The blood-hound blindly stumbled, and fell prone
Across the threshold. Something came and prest
His huge head downward, stiffening him to stone.
And Lady Gertrude, passing up alone,
Spread her white arms above the baron's breast.

LXXIII.

The weapons which his lowly coffin bore—
His sword and spurs, his helm and shield and belt—
Like him, to rest from battle evermore,
Whose long-drawn shadows barred the chapel floor,—
She kiss'd them, for his dear sake, as she knelt.

LXXIV.

She laid her cheek upon the velvet pall,
With one long, quivering sigh; and tried to creep
Where the soft shadow of the rood would fall,
'Mid light of sunrise and of tapers tall,
Upon them both, and there she fell asleep.

* * * * *

LXXV.

She woke no more. But where her track had been,
On that last night, became a haunted ground.
And when the wild wind blows upon the sheen
Of summer moonlight, there may still be seen
The phantom of a lady and a hound.

Ada Cambridge

The Magic Wand

As an April garden
Breathes the scent of rain -
Rain that calls her treasures
Back to life again -
So my spirit quickens to the opening strain.

In its sheath of darkness
Fancy's folded wing
Thrills and stirs and quivers
To another spring,
When the bow is drawn across the trembling string.

In their grave of silence,
In their husk and core,
Dreams that winter buried
Feel the sap once more
Running warm and vital, as it ran before.

Into secret chambers
Where old passions sleep,
Through the long-closed shutters,
Lights of morning creep:
Through the opening doorway airs of morning sweep.

Hope resurgent, and Youth,
With their dancing train,
Mingled grief and glory,
Blended bliss and pain,
Ecstasies and agonies, come forth and live again.

Wizard hand that summoned
Each forgotten ghost,
Plays like wind or water
With the spell-bound host,
Sailing seas supernal, for no earthly coast.

Yet no magic music
That an ear can mark
Draws them winging upward

Through the mist and dark,
As the sky at sunrise draws the mounting lark.

Through the poet-spirit,
Touched with heavenly fire,
Heavenly voices whisper
In the wood and wire.
God is the musician, and my soul the lyre.

Ada Cambridge

The Midnight Mass

An incident of the French Revolution.
The light lay trembling in a silver bar
Along the western borders of the sky;
From out the shadowy dome a little star
Stole forth to keep its patient watch on high;
And night came down, with solemn, soft embrace,
On storied Brittany.

Another night lay over all the land—
The dark of hell, and lurid with its fire.
She heard the roar of fiends; she saw the brand
Flung red and hissing over roof and spire;
She saw her golden spurs and reaping-hooks
Tossed on the funeral pyre.
She stood in calm defiance, while the flood
Swept over her;—while everywhere was seen
Her dim, majestic cities drenched in blood;
Ashes and smoke where temple-walls had been;
And high on woodland knoll and market-place,
The ghastly guillotine.

'Twas hard to tear her peasant-souls apart
From priest and liege, and clinging faith of old;
'Twas hard to bend the strong and simple heart
By fear of torture or by love of gold:
For naught those gory hands could offer them
Might consciences be sold.

"No tower or belfry shall be left to stand,"
Saint André swore, and waved his cap of red;
"You shall have naught in all this cursèd land
For sign of your superstition,—it is dead!"
A peasant heard, and raised his eyes to heaven;—
"You'll leave the stars," he said.

True were the priests and people, each to each,
And all alike to their unlettered creed;
No violent force of sophistry could reach
Their rough-hewn faith in bitter time of need.

They died with deaf ears and dumb mouths; and theirs
Was martyrdom indeed!

Night—midnight—lay beneath her silver lamps;
Her deep sleep broken by the fitful glare

Of bivouac fires in noisy village camps,
And hoarse shouts mellowed through the listening air;
Save only where the sea-waves washed the coast—
'Twas still and quiet there:

The heave and swell, and sudden, plunging dash
Against the low rocks lying in their reach;
The hissing shingle, and the sweet, free splash
Of long-drawn breakers on the open beach;
And now and then, in momentary pause,
The curlew's mournful screech:

The soft, low gurgle in the hollowed track
Through reef and boulder; and the rippling fall
Of idle wandering waters, swirling back
From secret tryst in Naiads' rocky hall;—
Only these sounds—save that deep monotone
Which held and hushed them all.

Only these sounds? Was nothing to be heard
But voice of breaker as it rose and fell,
The kelpie's song, the wailing of a bird?
Ay, far and faint amid the restless swell,
One other voice stole whispering through the air—
The chime of a silver bell.

It came from dim mid-ocean, wild and free,
To listening ears, in silence of the night;
And watchful eyes saw, out upon the sea
And 'neath the stars, a little twinkling light—
Now lost behind a waving mountain-top,
Now shining clear and bright.

Softly the fishers' boats began to glide
From shadowy rock and sheltered cave and creek;
Bronzed men and gentle maidens, side by side,

Dipped muffled oars; no woman-hand was weak.
All eyes turned, wistful, to the beacon-lamp;
But no one dared to speak.

The scattered specks, with each its little crowd,
Drew near, converging on the distant bark;
The sweet bell rang out louder and more loud,
The light shone bright and brighter in the dark;
And soon a hundred lips burst forth in praise—
For all had reach'd the ark.

There was the priest, with whom they came to sup,
White-hair'd and holy, by his humble board;
There, amid light and darkness lifted up,

The blessed rood, by simple eyes adored.
Each head was bowed, each pious knee was bent
In presence of the Lord.

Ah! 'twas a grand cathedral where they knelt!
Grand was the organ-music—vast the crypt
Wherein its wild, mysterious echoes dwelt;
And fresh and pure the incense, as it slipp'd
Down shining floor and down wide altar-steps,
With frosted silver tipp'd.

Grand was the darken'd aisles and solemn nave—
The domèd roof, magnificently high—
The airy walls and mighty architrave—
The sweet star-tapers that could never die!
And grander still its purity of peace,
Its untouched sanctity.

The worn and weary ones came there, to search
For rest and hope in holy Eucharist;
There—in the splendour of that solemn church—
They, priest and people, communed with the Christ;
Thus—with all other temples overthrown—
They kept his sacred tryst.

With calm, grave eyes and even-pulsing breath,
They dipp'd their still oars in the darken'd space.

Strong now the hands fast rowing back to death!—
And strong the simple hearts, new clothed in grace—
The hush'd and quiet souls—ere long to meet
Their Saviour face to face.

Ada Cambridge

The Mob

Why stand dumbfounded and aghast,
As at invading armies sweeping by,
Surprised by haggard face and threatening cry,
The storm unheralded, that rose so fast?
Men, with gaunt wives and hungry children, cast
Upon the wintry streets to thieve or die,
They cannot always suffer silently;
Patience gives out. The poor worm turns at last.

And no ear listens to the warning call.
No eye awakes to see the portent dread.
Must brute force reign and social order fall
Ere these starved millions can be clothed and fed?
A strange phenomenon, this, unconcern -
To live so fast and be so slow to learn!

Ada Cambridge

The Night

II

Watchman, what of the night?
See you a streak of light?
Whither, O Captain of the quest,
The course we steer for Port of Rest?

How shall he answer - he
Who never put to sea?
Within his tabernacle wall
He cannot even hear us call.

Behind the jealous door
That he must pass no more,
And whence he scarcely dares to look,
He keeps his eyes upon his book.
The little candles, lit
Where the disciples sit,
Light their small refuge round about,
But show no gleam to those without -

Spirits that cannot dwell
In such an airless cell,
Sniffing the sea-winds from afar,
Glimpsing the light of moon and star.

We must fare forth, unsped,
From homely board and bed;
We must set sail for port unknown,
On an uncharted course, alone.

Push off. We have to go,
Whether we choose or no.
The Call, though faint and far away,
Has reached us, and we must obey.

.

O but the night is dark
Beyond that only ark!
The salt sea-winds blow keen and cold

Outside the shelter of the fold!
Boom of the deep-sea swell,
Solemn as funeral bell -
Silence transcending sound, to make
High courage falter and heart quake

What will the voyage cost?
We are already lost
Who turn from land and love, to face
This blank immensity of space.

Push out. We have to go,
Whether we fear or no.
And why stand shivering and appalled?
We go because the Voice has called.

Noah's inspired dove
Took wing to find her love.
The sea is His - safe as the land
Within the hollow of His hand.

Here are the breakers - pull
Before the boat is full!
'Ware the sharp reefs that line the shore!
Row for the open evermore!

.

O but the night is dark!
Never the faintest spark
Where surf and shore and cities were!
And not a whisper in the air.

The open - heart of grace,
It is a lonely place!
No light on any onward track!
Too far - too late - for turning back!

Where is that little ark -
Those candles in the dark -
The Rock of Ages cleft for me -
The Cross uprising in the sea -

Whereto the drowning grope
With yearning faith and hope,
And cling as to their mother's breast,
And find safe shelter and sweet rest?

Gone, gone - for ever gone!
And still we must press on.
Steady, true soul, too brave to fret!
Press on - we are not drowning yet.

.

The night is soft and still
That was so wild and chill;
The bosom of the mighty deep
Breathes like a tired child asleep.

So peaceful, so profound,
The silence spread around!
The very breakers of the shore
Moan to the listening ear no more.

Night - but the stars are out.
Darkness of dread and doubt,
The way so lonely and so rough,
Have cleared a little, but enough.

We know not where we are-
Light cannot reach so far,
But shows us we have lost and gained
As the compelling Voice ordained.

Gone, gone beyond recall,
Candle and prisoning wall,
Last echo of the hue and cry,
Last glint of an accusing eye.

Too late for looking back
Over the darkening track.
How should the life-taught soul return
That cannot unlive or unlearn?

.
Changed, changed, for ever changed,
Since hitherward we ranged,
To vision in a space so vast,
All the perspectives of the past.

How infinitely small
The once so broad and tall -
The aims, the pursuit and the strife
Shut in the sheltered grooves of life!

Those terrifying laws,
The wrangles and the wars
Of church with church and state with state -
The things men love, the things men hate -

Money and gauds and fame,
And neighbours' scorn and blame -
The passion of desire and haste
To gather, to possess, to waste

How infinitely high,
Broad as the sea and sky,
The loyalty of man to man,
Once almost missing from the plan -

The elemental law
That codes and creeds ignore,
Of duty to the trust we hold
For heirs unborn and years untold

.
Night - and the drifting soul
Still without path or goal.
Yet was the voyage worth the cost.
We are not drowned. We are not lost.
'T'is I. Be not afraid.
Moonlight and stars may fade.
One walks the ocean and the night.
We have no further need of light.

What matters where we go?
We do not ask to know.
He called us, and we came. The quest
For us is ended, and we rest.

Ada Cambridge

The Old Maid's Story

Ay, many and many a year's gone by,
Since the dawn of that day in spring,
When we met in the pine-woods, Harry and I,
And he gave me this golden ring.
I had lovers in plenty, of high degree,
Who wooed in my father's hall;
But none were so noble and brave as he,
Though he was the scorn'd of all.
On the soft, green grass, where the shadows lay,
All fleck'd with the sun and dew,
With a ring and a kiss did we seal, that day,
Our vow to be leal and true.

'Twas a life-long vow;—but they did not know—
And they thought not of love or pain;—
We met just once in the sleet and snow—
We were never to meet again!
He was sent away o'er the blank, wide sea,
And I, with my hopes and fears,
Had never a message to comfort me
For over a score of years.
They laugh'd at my heart, they paraded my hand,
But I answer'd them, cold and grim—
“If Harry ne'er comes to his native land,
They shall only belong to him.”

At last came a tale from the battle-field;—
And they were not scornful now.
The sentence of exile might be repealed—
They would honour our plighted vow!
They told how my Harry, like olden knights,
Had fought for his land and Queen;
Fought hard and well on the Alma heights,
Where the deadliest strife was seen.
They told how he fell in the fire and smoke,
And they gave me his things to keep;
They wonder'd why I never cried or spoke,—
But it was too late to weep.

The Old Manor House

AN old house, crumbling half away, all barnacled and lichen-grown,
Of saddest, mellowest, softest grey,—with a grand history of its own—
Grand with the work and strife and tears of more than half a thousand years.

Such delicate, tender, russet tones of colour on its gables slept,
With streaks of gold betwixt the stones, where wind-sown flowers and mosses
crept:
Wild grasses waved in sun and shade o'er terrace slab and balustrade.

Around the clustered chimneys clung the ivy's wreathed and braided threads,
And dappled lights and shadows flung across the sombre browns and reds;
Where'er the graver's hand had been, it spread its tendrils bright and green.

Far-stretching branches shadowed deep the blazoned windows and broad eaves,
And rocked the faithful rooks asleep, and strewed the terraces with leaves.
A broken dial marked the hours amid damp lawns and garden bowers.

An old house, silent, sad, forlorn, yet proud and stately to the last;
Of all its power and splendour shorn, but rich with memories of the past;
And pitying, from its own decay, the gilded piles of yesterday.

Pitying the new race that passed by, with slighting note of its grey walls,—
And entertaining tenderly the shades of dead knights in its halls,
Whose blood, that soaked these hallowed sods, came down from Scandinavian
gods.

I saw it first in summer-time. The warm air hummed and buzzed with bees,
Where now the pale green hop-vines climb about the sere trunks of the trees,
And waves of roses on the ground scented the tangled glades around.

Some long fern-plumes drooped there—below; the heaven above was still and
blue;
Just here—between the gloom and glow—a cedar and an aged yew
Parted their dusky arms, to let the glory fall on Margaret.

She leaned on that old balustrade, her white dress tinged with golden air,
Her small hands loosely clasped, and laid amongst the moss and maidenhair:
I watched her, hearing, as I stood, a turtle cooing in the wood—

Hearing a mavis far away, piping his dreamy interludes,
While gusts of soft wind, sweet with hay, swept through those garden
solitudes,—
And thinking she was lovelier e'en than my young ideal love had been.

Tall, with that subtle, sensitive grace, which made so plainly manifest
That she was born of noble race,—a cool, hushed presence, bringing rest,
Of one who felt and understood the dignity of womanhood.

Tall, with a slow, proud step and air; with skin half marble and half milk;
With twisted coils of raven hair, blue-tinged, and fine and soft as silk;
With haughty, clear-cut chin and cheek, and broad brows exquisitely Greek;

With still, calm mouth, whose dreamy smile possessed me like a haunting pain,
So rare, so sweet, so free from guile, with that slight accent of disdain;
With level, liquid tones that fell like chimings of a vesper bell;

With large, grave stag-eyes, soft, yet keen with slumbering passion, hazel-
brown,
Long-lashed and dark, whose limpid sheen my thirsty spirit swallowed down;—
O poor, pale words, wherewith to paint my queen, my goddess, and my saint!

You see that oriel, ivy-grown, with the blurred sculpture underneath?
Her sweet head, like the Clytie's own, with a white stephanotis wreath
Inwoven with its coiling hair, first bent to me in greeting there.

I shall remember till I die that night when we were introduced!
The great Sir Hildebrand stood by—her cousin— scowling as he used
To scowl if e'en a poor dumb cur ventured to lift his eyes to her.

I cared not. Well I knew her grace was not for him. I watched them dance,
And knew it by her locked-up face, and her slow, haughty utterance.
I knew he chafed and raged to see how kind and sweet she was to me.

O dear old window!—nevermore the red and purple lights, that stray
Through your dim panes upon the floor on sunny summer-night, will lay
Soft rainbows on her glossy hair and the white dress she used to wear!

Those panes the ivy used to scratch—I hear it now when I'm alone!
A pair of martlets used to hatch their young ones in the sculptured stone;
Those warm slabs were the bloodhound's bed, with fine yew-needles carpeted.

The missel-thrushes used to search there for the berries as they fell;
On that high twig, at morn, would perch a shy and shivering locustelle,—
From yon low sweep of furzy brake, we used to watch it thrill and shake.

The banksia roses twined a wreath all round that ancient coat and crest,
And trailed the time-worn steps beneath, and almost touched the martin's nest;
The honey bees swam in and out, and little lizards flashed about.

And when we flung the casement wide, the wind would play about her brow,
As she sat, etching, by my side,—I see the bright locks lifted now!
And such a view would meet our eyes of crimson woods and azure skies!

'Twas there, when fell the twilight hush, I used to feed her wistful ears,
And make her cheek and forehead flush, and her dark eyes fill full of tears,
With tales of my wild, fighting life—our bitter, brave Crimean strife.

We had, too, little concerts in that dear recess,—I used to play
Accompaniments on my violin, and she would sing "Old Robin Gray,"
And simple, tender Scottish songs of loyal love and royal wrongs.

My violin is dead for me, the dust lies thick upon the case;
And she is dead,—yet I can see e'en now the rapt and listening face;
And all about the garden floats the echo of those crying notes!
'Tis a sweet garden, is it not? So wild and tangled, nothing prim;
No quaint-cut bed, no shaven plot, no stunted bushes, stiff and trim;
Its flowers and shrubs all overblown, its long paths moss and lichen-grown.

'Twas on that terrace that we read the "Idylls," sauntering up and down
With gentle, musing, measured tread, while leaves kept falling, gold and brown,
And mists kept rising, silver-grey, one still and peaceful autumn-day.

In those long glades we roamed apart, and studied Spanish, and the tales
Of Chaucer,—there we talked of art, and listened to the nightingales;
E'en now, when summer daylight dies, I hear their bubbling melodies.

You see that bower, half-hidden, made by the low-branching willow-tree?
We used to lounge there in the shade, and laugh, and gossip, and drink tea:
I wreathed her head with ferns, one night, and little rose-buds sweet and white.

It grew my habit, by-and-by, to gather all the flowers she wore;
She used to take them silently, or I would leave them at her door,—
And wait about till she was drest, to see them nestling on her breast.

In that green nook she used to sit, and I would watch her as she worked.
Her face had such a spell in it, and such a subtle glamour lurked
In even the motion of her hand!—why, I could never understand.

'Twas there I tied the little strap that held her netting down, one day,
And kissed the soft palm in her lap, which she so gently drew away.
Ay me, we held our tongues for hours! and I plucked off and ate the flowers.

She would not look at me at first—I recollect it all so well!
Her delicate, downcast features, erst so pale, were tinted like a shell—
Then like the petals that enclose the inmost heart of a moss rose.

The others came and chatted round, but we could laugh and chat no more;
I propped my elbow on the ground, and watched her count her stitches o'er;
Their talk I did not comprehend,—she was too busy to attend.

The days passed on, and still we sat in our old place; but things were changed.
We were so silent after that!—so oddly formal—so estranged!
No more we met to worship art,—our little pathways branched apart.

All day I kept her face in view—scarce one low tone I failed to hear;
And, though she would not see, I knew she felt when I was far or near.
Yet brief and seldom was the chance that gave me word, or smile, or glance.

One night I came home in the gloom. The other guests were mostly gone.
A light was burning in her room, and from the lawn it shone upon
I plucked a flower for her to wear—a white rose, fringed with maidenhair.

I passed through that long corridor—those are its windows, to the west—
That I might leave it at her door,—and saw her cross her threshold, drest.
No lamps were lit,—the twilight shed a grey mist on her shiny head.
Her garments swept the oaken stairs; I stood below her, hushed and dumb;
She started, seeing me unawares, and stopped. “Come down,” I whispered;
“come!”
She waited, but I waited too;—and she had nothing else to do.

She came down, slowly, haughtily, with sweet pretence of carelessness.
I watched each step as she drew nigh, each brighter gleam on her white dress.
I did not speak, I did not stir, but all my heart went out to her.

She would have passed me, shy and still,—she would not suffer herself to mark

That I was grown so bold, until I took her dear hands in the dark.
And then—and then—Well! she was good and patient, and she understood.

My arms were strong, and rude, and rough—because my love was so intense;
She knew the reason well enough, and so she would not take offence;
Though 'twas by force I made her stay, she did not try to get away.

Ah, then we had some happy hours—some blessed days of peace and rest!
This garden, full of shady bowers and lonely pathways, from whose breast
A thousand blending perfumes rise, became a very Paradise.

'Twas fair as the first Eden, then; and Adam had no fairer mate!
Nor grieved he more than I grieved, when the angel drove him from the gate.
When God cursed him from His high throne, He did not cast him out alone!

'Twas on that broken step we sat, where the yew branch is fall'n and bent,
And read the Colonel's letter, that recalled me to my regiment.
'Twas there, on such a night as this, I stood to give my parting kiss.

'Twas there I hugged the small Greek head upon my bosom, damp with dew;
'Twas there she soothed my grief, and said, "But I shall still belong to you."
O my sweet Eve, with your pure eyes!—you're mine now, in God's Paradise.

I sailed, you know, within a week, en route for Malta's heat and blaze;
And tender letters came, to speak of love, and comfort, and bright days.
I tried to think it was not hard—of what was coming afterward.

I used to dream, and dream, and dream, from night till morn, from morn till
night;
My future life just then did seem so full, so beautiful, so bright!
I could not see, I could not feel, the sorrow dogging at my heel.

At length it touched me. By-and-by the letters ceased. I looked in vain;
I roamed the streets dejectedly, and gnawed my long moustache in pain.
I wrote twice—thrice; no answer still. Surely, I thought, she must be ill.

Until one evening Eyre came in, to lounge and gossip, drink and smoke,
I gave him leisure to begin; and, when his pipe was lit, he spoke,
Through curling vapour, soft and blue—"Guy, I've a piece of news for you.

"One of the girls you met last year at that poor tumble-down old place—
The dark-haired one—she with the clear white skin and sweet Madonna face,—

She's married now, I understand, to her rich cousin Hildebrand."

I felt my limbs grow stark and stiff; I felt my heart grow cold as lead;
I heard Eyre's quiet, musing whiff—the noise swam round and round my head.
I veiled my eyes, lest he should see their passionate, mute misery.

"I only heard," he said, "to-day. It's out in all the papers, though.
She did not care for him, they say. But the old house was falling low—
Her father's name and fame at stake. She would do anything for his sake.

"Some mortgages foreclosed—the price of years and centuries of debt;
The manor doomed for sacrifice—or else the Lady Margaret.
Doubtless for Hildebrand's red gold the rare Madonna face was sold.

"I fancy that's the history," he ended, in a bitter tone.
"It's not a new one, by-the-bye." And when he went, I sat alone,
And tried to ease me with a prayer, but ground my teeth in my despair.

Then I grew stupid, numb, and tired. A fever crept through all my veins,
And wearied out my heart, and fired my dazed, tumultuous, teeming brains.
I hung suspended by a breath, for weeks and months, 'twixt life and death.

Then I recovered, and had leave to go to England— where she dwelt;
In my home climate to retrieve my broken health and strength. I felt
Twice ten years older than before. I knew I should come back no more.

Soon as I touched my native land, my feet turned toward the manor house.
They told me that Sir Hildebrand was in the Highlands, shooting grouse;
That she was in her father's care. That night I found her, sitting there,

On that third step, just where the trees cast down their greenest, coolest shade;
Her weary hands about her knees, her head against the balustrade;
And such dumb woe in her sweet eyes, uplifted to the fading skies.

She did not see me till I burst through the rose-thickets round about.
She sprang up with a cry at first—and then her arms were half stretched out—
And then caught backward, for his sake. I felt as if my heart would break.

I knew the truth. I did not care. I did not think. I flung me down,
And kissed her hands, her wrists, her hair, the very fringes of her gown;
While she sat cowering in a heap, and moaned, and shook, but could not weep.

It was soon over. O good God, forgive me!—I was sorely tried.
'Twas a dark pathway that I trod; I could not see Thee at my side.
It was soon over. "I shall die," she whispered, "if you stay here, Guy!

"O Guy! Guy! you were kind to me in our old days,—be kinder now,—
Be kind, and go, and let me be!" And then I felt on my hot brow
The brush of her cold finger-tips—the last soft contact of her lips.

And I obeyed her will and went, and vowed to tempt her nevermore.
I tried hard, too, to be content, and think of that which lay before.
I knew my dream of love was past, yet strove to serve her to the last.

I left my comrades—I had lost all taste for glory and for mirth—
And, without hopes or aims, I cross'd the seas and wander'd o'er the earth.
Without a light, without a guide, I drifted with the wind and tide.

My heart was broken when 'twas struck that bitter blow, and joy ran out!
Only a few stray treasures stuck—a few gleams flickered round about.
My old art-love still lingered there,—I think that kept me from despair.

With strange companions did I dwell, one scorching summer, on the heights
Of Tangiers' Moorish citadel, and mused away the days and nights.
With loose white garments and long gun, I roamed the deserts in the sun.

I painted Atlas, capped with snow, and lifted, cool, and still, and fair,
Out of the burning heat and glow, into the solemn upper air;
And Tetuan's gleaming walls I drew on fields of Mediterranean blue.

I haunted Cairo's crowded ways, and sketched carved doors and gilded grates,
Mosque-domes and minarets ablaze, and sweet dark heads with shining plaits;
And now a grave old Arab sheikh, and then a slim, straight-featured Greek.

In a swift wing-sailed boat I slid across the stream where Libya looms,
And from King Cheop's pyramid saw Pharaoh-cities, Pharaoh-tombs;
And, stretching off for many a mile, the sacred waters of the Nile.

I saw the graves of mighty states,—I saw Thebes' temple, overturned—
The City of the Hundred Gates, where Moses and Greek sages learned,
Where hungry lions prowl at noon, and hyaenas snarl at the bright moon.

I roamed through Nubian desert flats, where vultures sailed o'er burning seas;
And forests where the yellow bats hung, cloaked and hooded, from the trees;

And marshy wastes, where crocodiles slept on the shores of sandy isles.

I followed, through long days and nights, where, with their little ones and flocks,
Had passed the wandering Israelites; I read the writing on the rocks;
And e'en these restless feet of mine tracked holy feet in Palestine.

Roaming through India's burning plains, I chased wild boars and antelopes;
Swam brawling nullahs in the rains, and haunted dew-wet mango-topes;
Shot bears and tigers in the gloom of the dense forests of Beerbhoom.

Through swathing-nets I watched at night the clear moon gild a palm-tree ledge;
And, through the flood of silver light, heard jackals at the compound-hedge;
While punkahs waved above my head, and faint airs hovered round my bed.

I mused by many a sacred tank, where lonely temples fell away,
Where the fat alligators drank, and scarlet lotus-flowers lay;
Smoked curling pipes 'neath roof and tree, the while dark nautch-girls danced to
me.

I trod the creeper-netted ground of deadly, beautiful, bright woods,
Where birds and monkeys chattered round, and serpents reared their crimson
hoods.
I dwelt 'neath breathless desert-glows, and Simla's Himalayan snows.

From the hot glades of garden reach, I wandered upward to Cabool—
From the bright Hooghly's flowering beach to the wild mountains, calm and cool.
I wept at Cawnpore's fatal well, and where our heroes fought and fell.

I roamed through Lucknow's battered gate—thick-thronged with memories so
intense!
And Delhi's ruins of wild state and old Mogul magnificence.
I pressed the rank, blood-nurtured grass that creeps along the Khyber Pass.

I sailed the Irrawaddy's stream, 'mid dense teak forests; saw the moon
Light up with broad and glittering gleam the golden Dagon of Rangoon—
The delicate, fretted temple-shells, whose roofs were rimmed with swaying bells.

In his gold palace, all alone, with square, hard face and eyes aslant,
I saw upon his royal throne the Lord of the White Elephant.
I mixed in wild, barbaric feasts with Buddha's yellow-robèd priests.

I crept with curious feet within imperial China's sacred bounds;

I saw the Palace of Pekin, and all its fairy garden-grounds;
The green rice-fields, the tremulous rills, the white azaleas on the hills;

The tea-groves climbing mountain backs; the girls' rich robes of blue and white;
The cattle 'neath the paddy-stacks; the gilt pagodas, tall and bright;—
And in a merchant-junk I ran across the waters to Japan.

I saw, where silk-fringed mats were spread, within his laquered, bare saloon,
With his curled roofs above his head, on muffled heels, the great Tycoon.
Familiar things they were to me—the pipes, and betelnuts, and tea.

I dug in Californian ground, at Sacramento's golden brim,
With hunger, murder, all around, and fever shaking every limb;
Saw, in lush forests and rude sheds, the Dyaks roast ing pirates' heads.

I shot white condors on the brows of snowy Andes; and I chased
Wild horses, and wild bulls and cows, o'er the wide Pampas' jungle-waste;
And saw, while wandering to and fro, the silver mines of Mexico.

In Caffre waggons I was drawn up lone Cape gorges, green and steep,
And camped by river-grove and lawn, where nightly tryst the wild things keep;
Where glaring eyes without the line of circling watch-fires used to shine.
I chased o'er sandy plains and shot the ostrich,—at the reedy brink
Of pools, the lion, on the slot of antelopes that came to drink;
Giraffes, that held their heads aloof'neath the mimosa's matted roof;

And brindled gnus, and cowardly, striped shard-wolves, and, 'mid water-plants
And flags, black hippopotami, and snakes, and shrieking elephants.
From courted sickness, hunger, strife, God spared my weary, reckless life.

In the bright South Seas did I toss through wild blue nights and fainting days,
With the snow-plumaged albatross. I saw Tahiti's peaks ablaze;
And still, palm-fringed lagoons asleep o'er coral grottoes, cool and deep.

I built an Australian hut of logs, and lived alone— with just a noose,
A trap, a gun, my horse and dogs; I hunted long-legged kangaroos;
And oft I spent the calm night-hours beneath the gum-trees' forest-bowers.

I threaded miles and miles and miles, where Lena's sad, slow waters flow,
'Mid silent rocks, and woods, and isles, and drear Siberian steppes of snow;
Where pines and larches, set alight, blaze in the dark and windless night.

I shot a wild fowl on the shore of a still, lonely mountain lake,
And, o'er the sheer white torrents' roar, heard long-drawn, plaintive echoes
wake;
Caught squirrels in their leafy huts, munching the little cedar-nuts.

I trapped the small, soft sables, stripped the bloomy fur from off their backs,
And hunted grey wolves as they slipped and snuffed and snarled down reindeer
tracks;
I brought the brown, bald eagle down from the white sea-hill's rugged crown.

I saw the oil-lamp shining through the small and dim ice window-pane;
And the near sky, so deeply blue, spangled with sparks, like golden rain;
While dogs lay tethered, left and right, howling across the arctic night.

I saw when, in my flying sledge, I swept the frozen tundra-slopes,
The white bears on some craggy ledge, far-off, where ocean blindly gropes
In her dim caves—where bones lie furled, the tokens of a vanished world.

I saw across the dread blue sky, spanning blue ice and bluer mist
(That shows where open waters lie), the bright Aurora keep her tryst,—
That arch of tinted flame—so fair! lighting the crystals in the air.

Then, all at once—I know not why—I felt I could no longer roam;
A voice seemed calling to my heart—Return to England and thy home;
I found my thoughts were yearning yet, for one more glimpse of Margaret.

So on a sudden I returned. I reached the village in the night.
At one small inn a candle burned with feeble, pale, unsteady light:
The hostess curtsayed, grave and strange. She did not know me for the change.

My broad white brows were bronzed, and scarred with lines of trouble, thought,
and
care;
My young bright eyes were dim and hard—the sunshine was no longer there;
My brown moustache was hid away in a great beard of iron-grey.

"The Manor House is habited," to my brief question she replied.
"To-night my lady lies there dead. She's long been ailing, and she died
At noon. A happy thing for her! Were you acquainted with her, sir?"

"A sweeter lady never walked! So kind and good to all the poor!
She ne'er disdained us when she talked—ne'er turned a beggar from her door.

Ah, sir, but we may look in vain; we ne'er shall see her likes again.

"I heard the squire's great bloodhound's bark; I woke, and shook, and held my breath.

My man, he stirred too in the dark. Said he to me, 'My lady's death
Is not far off. Another night she'll never see.' And he was right.

"'Twas over in twelve hours or less. She lies there, on the golden bed,
In her old confirmation dress, with the small white cap on her head
Which bore the bishop's blessing hand,—she asked that of Sir Hildebrand."

You see that window in the shade of those old beeches? 'Twas that room
Wherein my dear dead love was laid. I climbed the ivy in the gloom
And silence—just once more to see the face that had belonged to me.

I stood beside her. No one heard. On the great rajah's bed, alone
She lay. The night-breeze softly stirred the Cashmere curtains, and the moan
Of my wild kisses seemed to thrill the solitude. All else was still.

In the pale yellow taper light, I gazed upon her till the morn.
I see her now—so sweet and white! the fair, pure face so trouble-worn!
The thin hands folded on her breast, in peace at last, and perfect rest!

Ada Cambridge

The Physical Conscience

The moral conscience — court of last appeal —
Our word of God — our Heaven- sent light and guide —
From what high aims it lures our steps aside!
To what immoral deeds it sets its seal!
That beacon lamp has lost its sacred fire;
That pilot- guide, compelling wind and wave,
By slow, blind process, has become the slave
Of all- compelling custom and desire.

Not so the conscience of the body. This,
Untamed and true, still speaks in voice and face,
In cold lips stiffened to the loveless kiss,
In shamed limbs shrinking from unloved embrace,
In love- born passion, that no laws compel,
Nor gold can purchase, nor ambition sell.

Ada Cambridge

The Resting-Place

“Because I live, ye shall live also.”

Calmly the Paschal moonlight now is sleeping
On mossy hillock and on headstone grey,
Where still our Mother holds in faithful keeping
Such as, while living, in her dear arms lay.
Ah! loving and beloved, we know ye rest,
E'en in the grave, upon her hallow'd breast.

Where is the cumbrous robe—the flesh—the matter
Which held the spirit in such painful thrall?
A little dust that scarce a breath would scatter,
Darkness, and void, and silence—this seems all.
Yet somewhere, safe, the waiting body lies,
While the freed spirit is in Paradise.

Ah! in that day, when earth is all refinèd
From death and sin, the darkness and the stain;
When Eden's perfect beauty is enshrined
In unmarred purity and light again;
Transfigured, and “exceeding white as snow”—
But still that body—it will rise, we know.

The self-same lips that hymn'd the Easter story
With heart of Easter gladness, here, may sing
The song of angels, in the angels' glory,
Around the throne of our Almighty King.
The same feet, which this ancient pavement trod,
May walk for aye the temple-courts of God.

O blessed day, which saw the Saviour risen!
Which told to trembling man that wondrous news—
“The grave is not thy body's endless prison,
Thy soul no more in vain for pardon sues.
From Adam's curse, by Christ's death, thou art free—
The Lord accepts this sacrifice for thee.”

“Peace be with you”—by Him those words were spoken
After the glorious victory was won—

After the angel gave that blessed token
To her whose favour'd lips had called him "Son."
Ah! where were peace, if every trembling breath
Strengthen'd the fetters of an endless death?

Where were the peace, if that dark cloud of mourning
From Calvary's hill had never pass'd away?
If our deep night had never known the dawning
Of that mysterious Resurrection-day?
O Christ our Lord! Thou didst indeed release
Thy sinful children, and didst give them peace.

And now we know that Thou art throned for ever,
True God, and yet true man, in heaven above;
That now no power our life from Thine can sever,
That naught shall rob us of Thy gift of love;
That Thou, within the veil, dost intercede
For all who suffer and for all in need.

That Thou art with us here, too, in our sorrow—
With us to help in every time of strife,
Dost give to each dark day its joyous morrow,
Dost make us strong with Thine own love and life.
And we may love, and we may come to Thee
In heaven, and share Thy great felicity!

Ay, when the grass upon our grave is sighing
In the cool wind and Easter moonlight fair,
The mortal dust, beneath the violets lying,
Shall rest in hope and rest in safety there,
Till Thou shalt come with Thy celestial train,
And our bright spirit take its own again.

"After Thy likeness," in its sweet perfection,
Shall we awake in that eternal day;
All—save the sin—shall have its resurrection,
Clothed in Thy glorious immortality.
And we shall stand Thy radiant throne beside,
Blessed for evermore, and—satisfied!

Ada Cambridge

The Season

And must I wear a silken life,
Hemmed in by city walls?
And must I give my garden up
For theatres and balls?

Nay, though the cage be made of gold,
'Tis better to be free;
The green of the green meadows, love,
Is quite enough for me.

I'd rather ramble through the lanes
Than drive about in town;
I'd rather muse or dream than dance,
When the stars are shining down.

I do not care for diamonds, dear,
But I care a deal for flowers;
And thousands are just creeping out
For the sunshine and the showers.

I like to hear the Household band,
But I love the bird-songs best;
And hark! how they are twittering now
Round each half-hidden nest!

The wind is whispering in the leaves,
And the downy bees begin
To hum in the blossoming sycamores,
And the brook is chiming in.

There is such melody in the woods,
Such music in the air!
The streets are full of life and sound,
And yet 'tis silent there.

I like to see the pictures—ay,
But I am hard to please!
I never saw a picture yet
As great and grand as these;

Such tones of colour as transform
The tender green and brown,
When the pink dawn is flushing up,
Or the red sun sinking down;

Such painting as the chestnut bud
Shows in its opening heart;
Such lights as shine 'twixt earth and sky
When rain-clouds break apart;

Such soft, warm, subtle tints, as lie
In every mossy patch—
On the blue-brown trunks, now filled with life,
And the humble roof of thatch,—

In the purple hollows of the hills,
In the lichen on the wall,
In the orchard and the feathery woods,
And the sun-lit waterfall.

I like my humble country ways,
My simple, early meals;
I like to potter about the yard,
With my chickens at my heels.

I'd rather climb this brambly steep,
Where freshest sea-winds blow,
With my old straw hat hanging down my back.
Than canter along the Row.

To me (it's vulgar, dear, I know)
No fête half so gay
As a cricket-match on the village green,
Or a picnic in the hay.

Ah, yes! I'm happier as I am,—
I'm ignorant, you see;
And the life of fashion that you love
Would never do for me.

Ada Cambridge

The Shadow

1.

A vision haunts me, love, when thou art near,
Chilling my heart as frost nips April flowers;
A covering cloud, when all is fair and clear,
That takes the sweetness from our happiest hours.

2.

It steals the colour from our brightest sky;
It mars my soul's content when all seems well;
It quenches laughter in a shuddering sigh —
In thoughts that thrill me like a tolling bell.

3.

It numbs my passion when I love thee most;
It dims my eyes — it veils thy face; it slips,
An unseen shadow, like a creeping ghost,
Betwixt thy kisses and my hungering lips.

4.

What, amid richest plenty, starves me thus?
What is it draws my trustful hand from thine?
That sits a guest at marriage feast with us,
And mixes poison with the food and wine?

5.

In broad noonday — in dark hours long and lone —

A small green mound, a lettered name, I see.
There love is symbolled in a graven stone —
There I lie dead, worth nothing more to thee.

6.

There weep the dews, and winds of winter blow;
The soft breeze rustles in the bending grass;
The cold rain falls there, and the drifting snow —
But tears fall not, nor lovers' footsteps pass.

7.

Bees hum all day amid the young spring leaves;
The rooks caw loud from every elm- tree bough;
The sparrows twitter in the old church eaves —
But no voice cries for me or calls me now.

8.

Bright beams of morn encompass me about;
The stars shine o'er me, and the pale moonlight;
But I, that lit and warmed thee, am gone out,
Like a burnt candle, in eternal night.

9.

Earth to the earth upon this churchyard slope.
We made no tryst for happier time and place;
And in thy sky gleams no immortal hope,
No distant radiance from my vanished face.

10.

And still the sands between thy fingers run —
Desires, delights, ambitions — days and years,
Rich hours of life for thee, though mine are done —
Too full for vain regrets, too brief for tears.

11.

I have lost all, but thou dost hold and save,
Adding new treasure to thy rifled store,
While weeds grow long on the neglected grave

Where sleeps thy mate who may be thine no more.

12.

This is the fate I feel, the ghost I see,
The dream I dream at night, the thought I dread —
That thus 'twill be some day with thee and me,
Thou fain to live while I am doubly dead.

13.

Thou still defiant of our common foe;
I vanquished quite — the once- resplendent crown
Of all thy joys become a dragging woe,
To be lopped off, lest it should weigh thee down.

14.

I, once thy sap of life, a wasteful drain
On thy green vigour, like a rotten branch;
I, once thy health, a paralyzing pain,
A bleeding wound that thou must haste to stanch.

15.

Because the dead are dead — the past is gone;
Because dear life is sweet and time is brief,
And some must fall, and some must still press on,
Nor waste scant strength in unavailing grief.

16.

I blame thee not. I know what must be must.
Nor shall I suffer when apart from thee.
I shall not care, when I am mouldering dust,
That once quick love is in the grave with me.

17.

Cast me away — thou knowest I shall not fret;
Take thy due joys — I shall not bear the cost.
I, that am thus forgotten, shall forget,
Nor shed one tear for all that I have lost.

18.

Not then, not then shall sting of death and dole,
The penal curse of life and love, befall;
'Tis now I wear the sackcloth on my soul,
Bereaved and lonely, while possessed of all.

19.

O, wert thou dead, should I, beloved, turn
Deaf heart to memory when of thee she spake?
Should I, when this pure fire had ceased to burn,

Seek other hearths, for sordid comfort's sake?

20.

No — no! Yet I am mortal — I am weak —
In need of warmth when wintry winds are cold;
And fateful years and circumstance will wreak
Their own stern will on mine, when all is told.

21.

How can I keep thee? Day and night I grope
In Nature's book, and in all books beside,
For but one touch of a substantial hope.
But all is vague and void on every side.

22.

Whence did we come? And is it there we go?
We look behind — night hides our place of birth;
The blank before hides heaven, for aught we know.
But what is heaven to us, whose home is earth?

23.

Flesh may be gross — the husk that holds the seed —
And gold and gems worth more than common bread;
But flesh is us, and bread is what we need,
And, changed and glorious, we should still be dead.

24.

What is the infinite universe to him
Who has no home? Eternal Future seems,

Like the Eternal Past, unreal and dim —
The airy region of a poet's dreams.

25.

What spirit essence, howsoe'er divine,
Can our lost selves restore from dusty grave?
Thy mortal mind and body — thine and mine —
Make all the joys I know, and all I crave.

26.

No fair romance of transcendental bliss,
No tale of palms and crowns my dull heart stirs,
That only hungers for a woman's kiss,
And asks no life that is not one with hers.

27.

Not such Hereafter can I wish to see;
Not this pale hope my sinking soul exalts;
I want no sexless angel — only thee,
My human love, with all thy human faults.

28.

Just as thou art — not beautiful or wise,
But prone to simple sins and sad unrest;
With thy warm lips and arms, and thy sweet eyes —
Sweeter for tears they weep upon my breast.

29.

Just as thou art — with thy soft household ways,
Thy noble failures and thy poor success,
Thy love that fits me for my strenuous days —
A mortal woman — neither more nor less.

30.

And thou must pass with these too rapid hours
To that great deep from whence we both were brought;
Thy sentient flesh must turn to grass and flowers,
To birds and beasts, to dust — to air — to naught.

31.

I know the parable. The great oaks grow
To their vast stature from an acorn grain,
And mightiest man was once an embryo.
But how can nothing bring thee forth again?

32.

And is the new oak tree the old oak tree?
And is the son the father? And wouldst thou,
If thou couldst rise from nothing, be to me
Thy present self, that satisfies me now?

33.

Words — words! A dream that fades in Faith's embrace,
And melts in Reason's all-refining fires;
The cherished hope of every age and race;
Born of man's fancy and his own desires.

34.

Here in our little island- home we bide
Our few brief years — 'tis all that we possess.
The Infinite lies around on every side,
But what it holds no mortal mind may guess.

35.

Say we remain — a lasting miracle —
As well we may; for this small world is rife
With mystic wonders that no tongue may tell,
And all things teem and travail with new life.

36.

Say we awake — ineffably alive,
Divinely perfect — in some higher sphere!
'Twill not be we — the we who strain and strive,
And love and learn, and joy and suffer, here.

37.

What is our hope, if any hope there be?
'Tis for some bliss uncared for and unknown,
That some strange beings, yet unborn, shall see.
Alas! And all we cry for is our own!

38.

Only to be ourselves — not cast abroad
In space and time, for either bliss or woe —
Only to keep the treasures we have stored!
And they must pass away. And we must go.

39.

How can we bear it? How can we submit?
Like a wild beast imprisoned, in our pain
We rave and rage for some way out of it,
But bruise and bleed against the bars in vain.

40.

All — all is dark. Beyond our birth and death —
At either end — the same unyielding door.
We live, we love, while we draw human breath.
This much we know — but we can know no more.

41.

The stars shine down upon the minster spires,
Silent, and pale, and still, like watching eyes.
Think of the tumult of those spinning fires —
Think of the vastness of those midnight skies!

42.

Think of our world in the immense unknown —
Only a grain of stellar dust; and man,
Wanting a God, a Saviour, all his own —
Wanting to break the universal plan!

43.

He but a phase of planetary change,

That once was not, and will give place anon
To other forms, more beautiful and strange —
To pass in turn — till earth herself is gone.

44.

Earth, that is next to nothing in the sum
Of things created — a brief mote in space,
With all her aeons past and yet to come.
Ah, think of it! How we forget our place!

45.

Casual atoms in the mighty scheme
That needs us not, we dimly wax and wane,
Dissolving ever like a passing dream —
A breath breathed forth and then drawn back again.

46.

Lone in these infinite realms, perchance unseen —
Unheard. And yet not lost. And not so small,
So feebly futile, pitifully mean,
As our poor creeds would make us, after all.

47.

Still are we details of the great design,
Set to our course, like circling sun and star;
Mortal, infinitesimal — yet divine,
Like Him — or It — that made us what we are.

48.

Let manhood, God- begotten, have its due.
'Tis God — whate'er He be — hath made us thus,
Ourselves as gods to know the right and true.
Shall He not, then, be justified in us?

49.

The warm sap runs; the tender leaves unfold;
Ant helps his brother ant; birds build in spring;
The patient earthworm sifts the crumbled mould; —
A sacred instinct guides each living thing.

50.

Shall we, its born interpreters, not heed?
Shall we confess us failures, whom He lifts
So high above these creatures that succeed?
Or prove us worthy of our nobler gifts?

51.

Shall we not prove us worthy? Ay, we will
Because we can, we must — through peace and strife,
Bright hope and black despair, come good, come ill.
'Tis man's sole title to his place in life.

52.

To stand upright in all the winds that blow,
Unbeaten as a tree in driving rain;
In all our doubts, to do the best we know,
From no base fear of loss or hope of gain.

53.

To still the cry of self — give listening ears
To stern Truth's message, whatsoe'er it be;
To share our brother's toil and dry his tears —
This is the task set forth for thee and me.

54.

This is the lesson that we live to learn,
And, by brave thought, by word and deed, to teach;
These are the heights our lifted eyes discern
Through cloud and darkness, that our souls must reach.

55.

Not less am I in wisdom and in will
Than ants and worms. I am full- furnished too
My arduous errand hither to fulfil.
I know my work, and what a man can do.

56.

My God, I ask Thee nothing. Thou hast given
This conscious mind, this brain without a flaw;
And I will strive, as I have humbly striven,
To make them serve their purpose and Thy law.

57.

But thee, my soul's companion — thee I seek
For daily courage to support my lot.
In thee hath Nature made me strong or weak.
My human comforter, forsake me not!

58.

My nobler self, in whom I live my best,
Strengthen me! Raise me! Help me to the last!
Lay thy dear head upon my throbbing breast —
Give me thy hands, that I may hold thee fast!

59.

Come close — come closer! Let me feel thy heart,
Thy pulsing heart, thy breathing lips, on mine.
O love, let only death and graveyard part —
If they must part — my flesh and soul from thine!

60.

Let no mistrust, no doubt, no poor caprice
Darken for me in thy transparent gaze;
Let no self- wrought estrangement wreck our peace,
Nor vain dissension waste our precious days.

61.

Be thou my purer eyes, my keener ears,
My finer conscience, steadfast, unafraid —
Till these few, swift, inexorable years
Have borne us both beyond the reach of aid.

62.

Be thou my staff upon this lonely way.
Be thou my lamp till need of light is past —
Till the dark shadow, lengthening day by day,

Spreads over all and quenches us at last.

63.

Keep me from falling! Keep me from despair!
Keep me true man, if only man I be,
Faithful and brave to bear what I must bear.
For what else have I, if I have not thee?

Ada Cambridge

The Silence In The Church

“The congregation shall be desired, secretly in their prayers, to make their humble supplications to God for the which prayers there shall be silence kept for a space.”

(No. 1.)

O Holy spirit, we entreat,
Send down Thy quickening fire;
Let Thine own presence, dread and sweet,
These waiting hearts inspire.

In every thought and word and deed,
Breathe Thou the breath of life—
The fulness of the grace they need
For their appointed strife.

Help them to hold, in clasp of prayer,
The rod and staff of God;
And lead them safely, surely, where
The Christ Himself hath trod.

Give power to speak Thy message, Lord,
To every feeble voice;
May they the true seed cast abroad
Till desert wastes rejoice.

Make strong the toiling hearts and hands,
Keep watching eyes from sleep,
That golden harvests crown the lands
When angels come to reap.

* * * * *

(No. 2.)

POUR now, O Lord, all gifts of grace
From Thy most holy dwelling-place;
And let the living flame be shed
On each disciple's bended head.

Light up his soul with light divine,—
A star of heaven on earth to shine,
A beacon on life's stormy sea,
To guide the wandering bark to Thee.

Lord, clothe him now in white complete,

In Thine own spirit, pure and sweet;
Let him go forth to labour well,
In truth and strength invincible.

May his calm lips, that whisper now
The yearning prayer, the solemn vow,
Be ready, in the judgment-day,
The faithful servant's words to say—

“Lord, I have tried, in faithful strife,
To win Thy lambs to light and life;
Lord, I have truly kept for Thee
The awful charge Thou gavest me.”

Ada Cambridge

The Soldier's Grave

Tw'as long ago, in the summer-time,
On a day as sad as this,
That I laid my babe in its father's arms,
And he gave it his farewell kiss;
When the army sail'd from the English shores
In a mist of sun and rain,
To the vine-clad hills and citadels
And the olive groves of Spain.

I set my face to the balmy south,
And listen'd, intent and dumb,
As though a cry from the battle-grounds
On the fragrant wind might come.
I yearn'd for a gleam of the red camp fires
Which burn'd through the watchful nights,
For the shine of the bayonets that clash'd one day
On the dread Albuera heights.

Ah me! And my face cannot turn away,
Though the ashes are on my brow,—
Though the news of the battle came once for all,
And there's nothing to watch for now!
Though 'tis further away than that far south land
I must look for my dear man's face,—
Though I know he will never come home again
To the chair in the old house-place!

Ada Cambridge

The Vain Question

Why should we court the storms that rave and rend,
Safe at our household hearth?

Why, starved and naked, without home or friend,
Unknowing whence we came or where we wend,
Follow from no beginning to no end
An uncrowned martyr's path?

Is it worth while to waste our all in vain?
To seek, and not to know?
To strive for something we can never gain,
To labour blindly for a wage of pain,
And crack our heartstrings with the stress and strain,
And reap no field we sow?

What does it matter whether love or hate,
Or praise or blame, be theirs
Who pass like shadows, with no time to wait
For understanding of the ways of fate,
Which makes the hopeless desert blossom late,
And kills good wheat with tares?

Why do we choose to suffer, when we might
Lie down to sleep and dream?
Is praise for men who try to do the right?
Is blame for him who shirks the deadly fight?
And whose the friendship that is heart's delight?
And whose the love supreme?

Wide do we set our sanctuary door
That fairest guest to greet,
And find too late, when we have shown our store,
The sacred places rudely trampled o'er,
Bereaved, profaned, and soiled for evermore
With tread of vulgar feet.

And nothing left to solace us but this,
At such a frightful cost -
A taste, a glimpse, the memory of a kiss;
Only a sense of what diviner bliss,

That might have been, we have contrived to miss;
Only what love has lost.

And brother-bond - the loyal comradeship
That comes to every call -
What worth the smiling eye, the warm hand-grip,
The benediction of the kindly lip?
Sickness, old age or poverty can strip
The value from them all.

And faith, embalmed in immemorial creed -
Once our supreme support,
Our staff and beacon to uphold and lead -
A light extinguished and a broken reed!
And where, O where, in bitter time of need,
Shall substitute be sought?

Wherefore this anguish of desire to see
That which concerns us not -
The evolution of the life to be,
The distant course, the final destiny
Of worlds and men - the ages wherein we
Shall have no part or lot?

Why not shut eyes of spirit and of brain
That can torment us thus?
Why not take something to assuage the pain,
And shut the doors and go to sleep again?
The Search may be successful or in vain,
What matters it to us?

Is it worth while, when house and home are here,
And we can dwell at ease,
To go forth, lonely, and in mortal fear,
To travel roads that lead not anywhere,
As bare of lamp or signpost, far or near,
And full of thorns, as these?

To leave the Good whereof we are possest,
To seek, in senseless grief,
For some divine but ever unknown Best,
And see no goal and find no place of rest -

Is it worth while, on such a fruitless quest
To waste a life so brief?

We must not ask - we must not ask again.
We have to wait and see.
Press on, poor soul, along the path of pain
That is the one thing absolutely plain.
The last assessment of the loss and gain
Is not a task for thee.

Ada Cambridge

The Virgin Martyr

Every wild she-bird has nest and mate in the warm April weather,
But a captive woman, made for love -- no mate, no nest has she.
In the spring of young desire, young men and maids are wed together,
And the happy mothers flaunt their bliss for all the world to see:
Nature's sacramental feast for these -- an empty board for me.

I, a young maid once, an old maid now, deposed, despised, forgotten --
I, like them have thrilled with passion and have dreamed of nuptial rest,
Of the trembling life within me of my children unbegotten,
Of a breathing new-born body to my yearning bosom prest,
Of the rapture of a little soft mouth drinking at my breast.

Time, that heals so many sorrows, keeps mine ever freshly aching;
Though my face is growing furrowed and my brown hair turning white,
Still I mourn my irremediable loss, asleep or waking --
Still I hear my son's voice calling "mother" in the dead of night,
And am haunted by my girl's eyes that will never see the light.

O my children that I might have had! my children, lost for ever!
O the goodly years that might have been -- now desolate and bare!
O malignant God or Fate, what have I done that I should never
Take my birthright like the others, take the crown that women wear,
And possess the common heritage to which all flesh is heir?

Ada Cambridge

The Watchman

I

Through jewelled windows in the walls
The tender daylight smiles;
Majestic music swells and falls
Adown the stately aisles;
Shadows of carven roof and rood,
Of stony saints and angels, brood
Above the altar-glow;
They cannot dim the shining face
Of one conspicuous in his place
Amid the forms below.

He that was once my little boy,
With merry voice and look,
My babe, that quarrelled with his toy
And tore his hated book;
But yesterday a laughing lad,
In his dear worldly garments clad,
Talking of college wins,
Wickets, and bumping boats, and goals,
And not of shepherd and lost souls -
His sermons and their sins.

The same, he kneels there, pale and awed,
In cloud of prayer and hymn,
And we are to behold our Lord
Made manifest in him;
To sit, his pupils, and be taught,
Who knows not what the years have brought
To mothers and to men;
To take him for our heaven-sent guide
On seas he never voyaged - wide
And wild beyond his ken.

With all the lore of schools, and none
Of stern and suffering life,
A child with wooden sword and gun,
Unarmed for vital strife;

His mind a bud of spring, unblown,
Its flowering shape as yet unknown,
Its fruit awaiting birth -
A seedling of a thousand strains,
A parasite of dead men's brains,
Though sprung from living earth.

There, in his proud belief, he stands,
This simple boy of mine,
Transformed by necromantic hands
To something half divine -
All in a moment, in a breath,
An oracle of life and death,
A judge above us all!
What spell is this that has him fast,
When age of miracle is past,
And past beyond recall?

O knight of dreams, in fairy mail!
If for his sake I pray,
It is that fairy arms may fail
And tough steel win the day -
Aye, though his dear heart take the thrust,
And he be trampled in the dust.
But mother fears forbode
(May God have mercy and forefend!)
A tamer journey and an end
Upon an easier road.

A long fulfilling of the vow
Within the vow he spake -
To close the gates of knowledge now,
And no more dare to take
The broad highways of marching thought
By his unfettered brothers sought,
Who follow every clue
On every line, where'er it leads,
Heedless of heresies or creeds,
To find the Right and True.
The mother-love, so apt for woe,
Visions the joyless track
Where the beloved feet may go

And nevermore come back;
The boy become a thinking man,
That has outgrown the changeless plan
Once fitted to his shape;
The traveller, confident, serene,
Caught in an ambush unforeseen,
Whence there is no escape.

Struggling a little - overborne -
Perplexed - persuaded - spent
With dim self-pity and self-scorn
Supine in discontent.
No - no escape, by any arts,
Save through a score of bleeding hearts -
A stair too steep to climb;
Wherefore be wise and hide the chains,
Drug conscience, with its pangs and pains.
Give peace, Lord, in our time!

O waste of precious force and fire!
The sacred passion pales.
The soaring pinions droop and tire.
Our standard-bearer fails
To keep his battle-flag aloft;
The strong young arm is slack and soft;
The eager feet are slow;
The shining mail is dulled with rust
Of contact with mediaeval dust,
And will not bear a blow.

And under harness so decayed,
What ravage unrevealed?
What moral textures soiled and frayed
And moral sores unhealed?
He must not know that dares not tell.
Hush! It is nothing. All is well.
Peace in our time, O Lord!
And leave the fighting for the heirs.
The blood of sacrifice be theirs
Who cannot shirk the sword.

O boy of mine, that played the game,

And never learned to cheat,
Nor knew such word or thought as shame
In victory or defeat!
Will he be found, when he grows old,
Passing off spurious coin for gold,
Selling dry husks for grain -
The pottage of the Esau's bowl
That bought the birthright of a soul
His all-sufficient gain?

The image and the robes of what
He seems to serve and seek
But veils - although he knows it not -
On Mammon's brazen cheek;
His bishop's smile, his patron's nod,
The homage of his flock, his god;
His sensuous worship drest
In forms and colours rich and rare -
The spirit's sanctuary bare -
Heart emptily at rest

Let organ music swell and peal,
And priests and people pray;
Let those who can at altar kneel -
I have no heart to stay.
I cannot bear to see it done -
The hands whose work has scarce begun
Locked in these gyves of lead -
The living spirit gagged and bound,
And tethered to one plot of ground -
A prisoner of the dead.

Ada Cambridge

The Winged Mariners

Through the wild night, the silence and the dark,
Through league on league of the uncharted sky,
Lonelier than dove of fable from its ark,
The fieldfares fly.

Mate with his tiny mate, and younglings frail,
That only knew the crevice of their tree
Until, in faith stupendous, they set sail
Across the sea.

The black North Sea, that takes such savage toll
Of ships and men - and yet could not appal
These little mariners, who seek their goal
Beyond it all.

Turning those soft, indomitable breasts
To meet the unchained Titans of the deep -
Calm, as if cradled in Norwegian nests,
Their course they keep.

No more than thistledown or flake of snow
To those great gods at play, they win the game;
Never sped archer's arrow from his bow
With surer aim.

Still tossed and scattered, their unwinking eyes
Point to that pole unseen where wanderings cease;
Still on they press, and warble to the skies
With hearts at peace.

Scenting the English morning in the air,
Through the salt night, ere any morning wakes -
The perfumed fields, the dun woods, sere and bare,
The brambly brakes -

The well-loved orchard, with its hawthorn hedge,
Where luscious berries, red and brown, are found -
The misty miles of water-mead and sedge
Where gnats abound.

.
But what is this, 'twixt sea and surf-bound shore?
What form stands there, amid the shadows gray,
With flaming blade that smites them as they soar,
And bars their way?

Hushed are the twittering throats; each silken head
Turns to the voiceless siren - turns and stares -
By some strange lure of mystery and dread
Caught unawares.

It draws them on, as the magnetic sun
Draws vagrant meteors to its burning breast.
The day is near, the harbour all but won -
That English nest.

But here they meet inexorable Fate;
Here lies a dreadful reef of fire and glass;
Here stands a glittering sentry at the gate -
They cannot pass.

Confused, dismayed, they flutter in the gale,
Those little pinions that have lost their track;
The gallant hearts that sped them reel and fail
Like ships aback.

Sucked in a magic current, like a leaf
Torn from autumnal tree, they drift abroad,
But ever nearer to the siren reef,
The ruthless sword.

On, on, transfixed and swooning, without check,
To the lee shore of that bedazzling wall,
Until they strike, and break in utter wreck,
And founder all.

Brave little wings, that sailed the storm so well,
Trimmed to the set of every wayward blast!
Brave little hearts, that never storm could quell,
Beaten at last!

The great sea swallows them, and they are gone,
For ever gone, like bubbles of the foam;
And the bright star that lured them, shining on,
Still points to Home.

Ada Cambridge

This Enlightened Age

I Say it to myself—in meekest awe
Of Progress, electricity and steam,
Of this almighty age—this liberal age,
That has no time to breathe, or think, or dream,—

I ask it of myself, with bated breath,
Casting a furtive glance about the hall,—
Our fathers, were their times so very dark?
Were they benighted heathens after all?

Had they not their Galileo—Newton too—
And men as great, though not a Stephenson?
Had they not passable scholars in fair Greece,
Who traced the paths we deign to walk upon
Had they not poets in those dismal days—
Homer and Shakespeare, and a few between?
Had they not rulers in their barbarous states,
Who scattered laws for our wise hands to glean?

Had they not painters, who knew how to paint—
Raphael, to take an instance—well as we,
With near four hundred years of light the less?
Is Phidias matched in our great century?

And architects? Sure Egypt, and old Rome,
And ruined Athens tell of fair reputes!
The Pyramids, and temples of the Greeks,
May vie with our town-halls and institutes.

Their marble Venice, with her dappled tints,
Their grey old minsters, strong as chiselled rocks,
Their Tyrolean castles, lifted high,
May outlast all our brick-and-mortar blocks.

And were there not refinements in those days,
And elegant luxuries of domestic life?
I read the answer in the precious things
Whereof these clustering cabinets are rife.

What can we show so beautiful in art?
What new of ours can match their wondrous old?—
This fragile porcelain—this Venetian glass—
This delicate necklace of Etruscan gold.

And was there not religion—when the Church
Was one—a common mother—loved and feared?
When haughty souls rejoiced to bear her yoke?
When all those grand monastic piles were reared?

And were there not some preachers—Chrysostoms,
Whose golden words still linger, like a chime
Of falling echoes in lone alpine glens,
Amongst the sonorous voices of our time?

And soldiers—heroes? Do we shame them much?
Have men more courage than in days of yore?
Are they more jealous for their manhood now?
Do they respect and honour women more?

Are they more noble than those good old knights,
Who scorned to strike a foe save in the face—
Who reckoned gold as dross to gallant deeds,
And counted death far happier than disgrace?

Is life more grand with us, who bask at ease,
And count that only excellent which pays,
Than 'twas to the stout hearts that wore the steel
In those dark, turbulent, fearless, fighting days?

* * * * *

O nineteenth century! God has given you light;
The morning has been spreading—that is all.
O liberal age! stoop your conceited head,
And gather up the crumbs that they let fall.

Ada Cambridge

Tired

O For wings! that I might soar
A little way above the floor,
A little way beyond the roar—

A little nearer to the sky!
To the blue hills, lifted high
Out of all our misery.

Where alone is heard the lark,
Warbling in the infinite arc
From the dawning to the dark;

Where the callow eaglets wink
On the bare and breezy brink,
And slow pinions rise and sink.

Where the dim white breakers beat
Under cloud-drifts at our feet,
Singing, singing, low and sweet;

Where we see the glimmering bay
Greyly melting far away,
On the confines of the day;

Where the green larch-fringes sweep
Rocky defiles, still and steep;
Where the tender lichens creep;

Where the gentian-blossoms blow,
Set in crystal stars of snow;
Where the downward torrents flow

To the plains and yellow leas,
Glancing, twinkling through the trees—
Pure, as from celestial seas.

Where the face of heaven has smiled
Aye on freedom, sweet and wild,
Aye on beauty undefiled.

Where no sound of human speech,
And no human passions, reach;
Where the angels sit and teach.

Where no troublous foot has trod;
Where is impressed on the sod
Only hand and heart of God!

Ada Cambridge

To-Morrow

The lighthouse shines across the sea;
The homing fieldfares sing for glee:
'Behold the shore!'
Alas for shattered wing and breast!
The lighthouse breakers make their nest,
And hedges bloom for them no more -
No more.

In their old church the lovers stand.
His wedding ring is on her hand,
All partings o'er.
Alas for mother still and cold
The babe her dead young arms enfold!
Her lover will know love no more -
No more.

What fate is this for birds and men?
The blue empyrean theirs - and then -
This fast-closed door.
One answers from his bended knee:
'Another morrow comes, saith he,
'A day that brings the night no more -
No more.'

Ah, happy one! Yet happier he
Who knows he knows not what will be;
Who has no lore
To read the runes of life and death,
But lives his best while he has breath,
And leaves with God the evermore -
The evermore.

Ada Cambridge

Too Late.

Too late the prize is drawn, the goal attained.
Too late, too late, our heart's desire is gained.
Wealth's use is past; Fame's crown of laurel mocks
The downward drooping head and grizzled locks.
The end is reached — the end of toil and strife —
The end of life.

Love flowers and fades like grass, and flowers again,
And strong young hearts spend all their strength in vain.
The fiery passions burn out, one by one,
And then, too late, when our best days are done,
Spirit and body find their perfect mate —
Too late, too late!

Long sought, long seeking, through the lonely years,
We meet at last to weep our useless tears
For time and chance irrevocably flown,
For dreams outlived and fervent hopes outgrown,
For babes unborn, for myriad joys unseen,
That might have been.

Too late, too late! And yet the priceless boon
Might ne'er have come to bless us, late or soon;
And only comes, like Holy Grail, to those
Made wise and pure by bitter needs and woes.
We learn the worth of life when life is o'er,
And not before.

Not for the spring and morning time of youth
The perfect flower of slow- unfolding truth —
The perfect love, deep, passionate, and strong,
That comes of wanting much and waiting long.
This glorious fire is of the setting sun
When day is done.

This harvest wealth, this crowning gift of fate,
This fruit of suffering years, must aye come late;
And only seeking spirit and ripe mind —
Only a few — the matchless treasure find,

And find, despite all time and chances lost,
'Twas worth the cost.

Ah me! To stand upon this height at last,
Ere eyes are dim or daylight overpast;
To see one aim achieved, one dream fulfilled,
Ere striving brain and hoping heart are stilled;

To know that we have borne a lifelong pain
Not all in vain!

O, not too late, if once we reach the goal —
If once we satisfy this hungry soul —
If only for a year, a day, an hour,
We drink our fill of life's true bliss and power.
If we but touch that point, we conquer fate
Not quite too late!

Ada Cambridge

Unstrung

My skies were blue, and my sun was bright,
And, with fingers tender and strong and light,
He woke up the music that slept before—
Echoing, echoing evermore!

By-and-by, my skies grew grey;—
No master-touch on the harp-strings lay,—
Dead silence cradled the notes divine:
His soul had wander'd away from mine.

Idly, o'er strange harps swept his hand,
Seeking for music more wild and grand.
He wearied at last of his fruitless quest,
And he came again to my harp for rest.

But the dust lay thick on the golden wires,
And they would not thrill to the old desires.
The chords, so broken and jarred with pain,
Could never be tender and sweet again.

Ada Cambridge

Vows

Nay, ask me not. I would not dare pretend
To constant passion and a life-long trust.
They will desert thee, if indeed they must.
How can we guess what Destiny will send -
Smiles of fair fortune, or black storms to rend
What even now is shaken by a gust?
The fire will burn, or it will die in dust.
We cannot tell until the final end.

And never vow was forged that could confine
Aught but the body of the thing whereon
Its pledge was stamped. The inner soul divine,
That thinks of going, is already gone.
When faith and love need bolts upon the door,
Faith is not faith, and love abides no more.

Ada Cambridge

Wasted

Each day another soldier in the van,
Each day a new young worker in the fields,
And every day more plenteous harvest-yields
From human toil, to bless and not to ban -
A better world, upon a better plan.
And, daily strengthening the arms he wields,
And more disdainful of old shifts and shields,
An ever nobler and diviner Man.

But, oh, how few the saved, how small the gain,
How poor the profit as against the cost,
The waste of life potential, vast and fair,
In soul unfructified and starveling brain,
Of Power that might have been, and might be - lost
For want of common food and common air!

Ada Cambridge

