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BY ARTHUR EDWARD WAITE

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[In preparation.]

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF
ARTHUR EDWARD WAITE

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF
ARTHUR EDWARD WAITE

IN TWO VOLUMES



VOLUME II

The Lord is my Hierophant.—CLEMENT
OF ALEXANDRIA.

*Lumen vultus Tui est lumen oculi mei et
illuminatio mea, in medio animæ meæ.*—DE
TABERNACULO MYSTICO LIBELLUS.

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VOL. II

OF THE MORALITY OF THE LOST WORD

In respect of the surface sense, it will be obvious and possibly intelligible that the poem pictures, in its form of dramatic mystery, the declension of a Great Church, or Ecclesiastical System, from which the Divine Gift and Leading have been taken ; and, decaying gradually through a cycle of human thought, its doom is sealed at last by confession to a false deliverer and the sacrifice of spiritual aspiration, the intuition and the vision, symbolised as a Daughter of the House. Such symbolism may wear an aspect of anachronism, as these gifts and faculties can perhaps be regarded more truly as the origin of religious forms, and the Daughter is in this case older than the House itself or the imputed Mother and Widow. Yet, from another standpoint, it is out of particular religious forms and instituted Houses of Faith that the characteristic aspirations, vision and intuition of each age are born, therein are nourished and maintained. So only are official Churches and Temples the schools of saints at their periods. It is, I suppose, in this manner that most people will be content to understand the poem.

But those who know that apart from operations of the rational mind, there is another gift of knowledge, communicated through one simple and eternal convention sacramentally to the soul of man, may infer that there is at least one alternative meaning. They may conjecture, in

Of the Morality of the Lost Word

part or fully, what complexities of convention are shadowed forth by the House of Long Sorrow, and that the immolation of the Daughter of the House has been enacted through the ages. Notwithstanding some inferences which might seem irresistible from the poem itself, they will rest assured that the Soror Stellifera passed as Virgo intacta, it being impossible that she should do otherwise. She would bear, however, the imputation of sin, and hence the imputation in the poem. Hence also the lacuna noticeable between the second and third acts, when something appears to intervene, but it is rest rather than activity.

By some among these persons it may be understood that the failure of the logical understanding in face of the great problems is symbolised in the poem as the decay of a Church of time immemorial foundation. The Church is the world of conventions created by that understanding, which itself is typified by the Widow. I tend to think that Frater Pontificus might answer to the authority of material experience, Frater Pacificus to imagination under certain aspects, Frater Symphoniacus to the gift of expression in the arts, while other personalities, scarcely bodied forth, would answer to different fields and faculties of normal consciousness—edification, research, mathematical and experimental powers. The religious procession in the Second Act would symbolise ordered thought on any subject, but here on the great problems. The procession in disorder at the end would be thought in confusion and stultified, following the failure of the quest. Soror Stellifera is the soul part, or desire and psychic part, as distinguished from pure spirit, but retaining memories of the past which are not of this physical life. Count Phœnix is the architect of materialism in its widest sense, to which reason has for ages sought to marry the soul. These nuptials would be of necessity morганatic, but there is assuredly no union possible. On such a construction of the poem, it is significant that the false deliverer is taken away at the end, because in the completion of intellectual catastrophe materialism also fails. But what

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in this case is the "little child upon a great white horse," the "ante-natal Watcher of the House"? He is a guide more than a hope; now what guide and whither does he take the voided parable and the wrecks thereof? But indeed this interpretation is only a second aspect of a central meaning which I am not pretending to disclose.

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THE FURTHER SIDE OF THE PORTAL

PART I

THE HOLD OF GOD

The Legends of Death, its sacramental veils and all which lies behind its symbolical pretence are not less numerous than the Legends of Life and its continuity; and it does not appear, except in the Great Mysteries, after what manner, life having been exchanged for death, there is in fine a high restitution, so that once and for ever death and its several counterparts are merged in life. Herein now is an Interlude after Lesser Mysteries, a story without an end, where the Veil is in part lifted but in part declared only. It is to be received rather as one who witnesses a play-scene. I would invite reflection on the fact that whereas in The Hold of God Peregrinus is still manifest at what may be called the final fall of the curtain, the Epopt of the poem which follows is withdrawn before the end.

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The Further Side of the Portal

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THE BOOK OF THE KING'S DOLE AND CHANTRY FOR PLAIN SONG : A GREATER INITIATION

Having been oft born in many initiations, man takes the Exalting Veil and is received into the Heart of the Quest. This is a Hierophant and more than a Hierophant, for many Great Masters cannot witness his assumption. In this manner there comes to pass the desired awakening from dream, and the Wardens of the Watch-Towers of the World shall not tell after what manner the great sea shall in fine give up the secret.

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OF THE MORALITY OF THE
LOST WORD

Adverte, carissime, quod quæ sequuntur verissima sunt
intelligentibus.—ROSARIUM PHILOSOPHORUM.

Διάγνωσις

WITH a measure of light and a measure of shade,
The world of old by the Word was made ;
By the shade and light was the Word conceal'd,
And the Word in flesh to the world reveal'd
Is by outward sense and its forms obscured ;
The spirit within is the long lost Word,
Besought by the world of the soul in pain
Through a world of words which are void and vain.
O never while shadow and light are blended
Shall the world's Word-Quest or its woe be ended,
And never the world of its wounds made whole
Till the Word made flesh be the Word made soul !

THE CHILDREN OF THE MYSTERY

SOROR FIDES RECTA *The Widow*

THE SONS OF THE WIDOW—

FRATER SAPIENS DOMINABITUR

ASTRIS *Astrologer (Astrologus)*

FRATER EST IN MERCURIO . . . *Spagyrite (Spagyricus)*

FRATER BETH ELOHIM *Intendant of the Building
(Procurator)*

FRATER SECUNDUM ORDINEM . . *Grand Pontiff (Pontificus)*

SOROR STELLIFERA *Child of the Second Birth, or
Daughter of the House*

FRATER PACIFICUS

FRATER SYMPHONIACUS

COUNT PHOENIX

*Chief Huntsman, Warden of the House, Lesser Brethren, Servants
and Pages, Chorus of Suppliants.*

*The Scene is the House of Long Sorrow; the Place, in the Land of
the Living; the Time, yesterday, to-day, and—for ever?*

Of the Morality of the Lost Word

ACT I

SCENE.—*A vaulted hall in the House of Long Sorrow. The walls are damp and peeling; patches of old pictures shew beneath the crumbling plaster. The proportions and design are noble, but the plinths and pilasters are mouldering, and the old carvings are defaced. In places the roof has fallen and gnarled ivy hangs through, waving in the wind. The hall is hung with tattered banners and standards, bearing faded emblazonments and many royal arms and devices. Below these are other banners and pennons, but new, common and gaudy, with tawdry designs and high colourings. On the eastern side a great Gothic window is draped with blackened cloth of gold, so that all light is excluded.*

The WIDOW, old and furrowed, wearing a gown of rusty black with long train, is discovered on a high dais under the eastern window, with the Sons of the WIDOW grouped round her, as if for ritual. She is counting the beads of a rosary and intoning between the decades after the manner of plain-chant.

THE WIDOW.

Except the Lord His House shall build
But foolish pains take those who labour;
Except the Lord to guard have will'd
Defects the shaft and turns the sabre;

Of the Morality of

Pale watchmen, pacing to and fro,
And sad-eyed hodders, worn and slow,
Have but their barren labour's woe.

And when the House, which His decree
So firmly built and strongly warded,
Is left to storms of land and sea,
Of His eyes' light and power defrauded—
O more than woe of toil in vain!
O waiting which is worse than pain
Till He come to His own again!

[The chimes ring in the belfry.]

THE WIDOW.

What hour strikes now?

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

The hour of saffron wings.

New morning breaks.

THE WIDOW.

What morning?

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

Of the stars
Which sing together, of the promised light
Which shall not pass, of sorrow fled away,
Of weeping lifted into stedfast joy—
King's morrow and the Word restored in full.

THE WIDOW.

What day is this?

The Lost Word

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

The day of need which ends
In God's great chance embraced. It is Thy day,
O God, the tide of harvest and ripe fruit,
And all the leaves are green in all the world :
The old hopes throng the heart !

THE WIDOW.

Do the dead wait ?

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

With still white faces to the East.

THE WIDOW.

And they

That live ?

FRATER SYMPHONIACUS.

They wait : the hush'd, expectant call
Beats in their hearts, like a bird's wings before
The bird bursts skyward, voicing melody.

THE WIDOW.

And is the Old House ready ? Is it swept
And garnish'd ? Are the banners on the walls ?
Do all the ancient watchwords from the gates,
The four-square towers, the battlements, the roofs
Ring proudly to the corners of the earth—
A thousand voices as a single voice,
Proclaiming to the City and the World
One faith, one hope and one expectant joy
Prolong'd throughout the ages ?

Of the Morality of

FRATER PROCURATOR.

The House waits.

THE WIDOW.

Unbar the western windows, open wide
The doors and gates, proclaim upon the steps :
The House is ready and the heirs thereof.
O dead, who fell asleep in the faith of Him
And live therein ! O living, stay'd about
With hope of Him, now dead of His desire !
O falling House, by love of Him held up !
Cry at the doors : We wait ! Cry at the gates :
Our faith is burning still—the dead alive
Because of it, the living cannot die
Because of it, and the old house is strong,
Master of all our hearts, because of it !
Cry, Come ! Cry, Come !

FRATER VIATORIUS.

We have cried it in our hearts,
Have cried it with our voices through the woods
And forests ; the earth rings with it, the earth
Is warm and rich and lush because of it :
Its echoes move for ever with the winds
About the rolling sea.

THE WIDOW.

What sign is there ?

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

The sign of morning in the eastern sky ;
The sign of fire and light on forest-trees,

The Lost Word

Through all the landscape to the water's edge ;
The sign of sanguine mist upon the sea,
Sparkle and dancing wave.

THE WIDOW.

No sign in these !
Days break as hearts break, through the eyes' vain watch ;
Hearts break as bread breaks at the dreadful board
Where his high seat stands vacant, where his hand
Dispenses not.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Come, let us seek the Word !

CUSTOS INVISIBILIS.

The Word is lost.

THE WIDOW.

Who crieth in our hearts
Till vaulted roofs repeat, and corridors—
In muffled echoes—and whispering galleries—
With mournful murmurs—far reverberate :
“ Lost,” “ the great Word is lost,” and so return
Back to the heart that message of all woe
Which sinks lead-molten in the depths thereof,
Till once again upwelling from the depths
The sense of loss wails horridly throughout
The heart and house.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Chain up those gates beyond,
And bar the doors within ; be windows closed

Of the Morality of

And all the draperies drawn across the ways
Of light and sound, lest echoes should go forth
And in the towns and villages proclaim :
The Word is lost.

FRATER VIATORIUS.

We hush our hearts in vain,
For the heart shouts, and all the world divined,
Long ere it spoke within us, that the Word
Is lost : we hide it from ourselves alone.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

We know at least its legend lives in faith :
I will consult the sacred oracles.

[He goes out, with lights and incense before him.]

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Enters with her train of virgins.

Seek not the living amidst the dead : the Word
Has risen—years ago. It is not here ;
In the free world it dwells and in the Soul.
This house of clay and perish'd memories
Shall know the voice no more. Come forth, all ye
That truly seek it, from these walls come forth !
Here is no longer an abiding-place.

THE WIDOW.

Peace, dreaming daughter of a later day !
This is the Holy Palace of the King,
Whence His Word only from the first of things

The Lost Word

Has sounded down creation's echoing aisles ;
But if beneath the chancel and behind
The altar, tabernacle or mercy-seat,
A little while slumbers the voice withdrawn,
And there is silence through the galleries
Of universal worship, O again
A little while and forth its music peals,
With all the worlds restored in all their joy !

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Once in the glorious past the Word was ours,
And the King tarried in our courts and halls.
We had no need to speak it when the King
Was with us in the morning of the world.
But the King left us when the sun was high
In the house of beauty ; yea, in the noon of time,
And bade us keep the Word, His Word of Life,
Till His sure coming at some good hour ere night.
Then did we treasure it a little space,
A little hour, a little age of time.
Ah, sadness ! Shortly the Word slipp'd away
Out of our hearts, but tarried on our lips—
How long ! A silver moment ! Then it died,
As a dewdrop on the petals of the rose,
And when we found our lips were crack'd and dry,
We sought to speak it, but the Word was lost.

FRATER PROCURATOR.

Ill has it fared in the old House since then !

THE WIDOW.

O, all the world was ours ! We ruled it all
By one Word's might.

Of the Morality of

SOROR STELLIFERA.

But this has pass'd from us.
In vain we kept the secret of our loss,
And put forth sounds to imitate the Word,
And all the while waited and call'd on Him
Who could restore our treasure.

THE WIDOW.

And our reign.
But now our need becomes a woeful want;
The naked waste is richer, the green burn
Has brighter depths; all worship lost to us,
We are bywords only in the place of life.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

The age has left us, as the restless sea
Leaves arid sand-hills dry and white at ebb—
All place, all ministry, all meaning gone.

THE WIDOW.

As spins the desolated, lifeless moon,
All sharp with lights and shadows, and devoid
Of atmosphere, our nimbus slipp'd from us;
Veils rent, our sacraments as things of scorn,
Naked we stand, and laidly and ashamed . . .
See ye no signs?

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

The sign of Nature's light,
Strong, splendid, lightly leaping—the great sun
Comes forth. All stars have ceased to prophesy.

The Lost Word

THE WIDOW.

I seem to stand upon an open door's
Dark threshold ; nothing shews to me beyond,
And yet a sense of expectation fills
My shrivell'd heart, at once with hope and dread.
If skies are silent, in the heaven of mind
I hear strange sounds and ominous reports.
A mystic whisper hisses through the house.
Hearken, Beth Elohim, my son, my son !
What dost thou hear ?

FRATER PROCURATOR.

The swing of closing doors
Down distant corridors, the creak of rusty gates
Which, startled, move on unaccustom'd hinges,
And—spread through all—the throbbing of the tense,
Distemper'd silence of great galleries,
Of rooms untrodden and long cathedral aisles.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

The measure and the number of the law
Which built the house—of meaning, virtue now
Long voided.

THE WIDOW.

Are there tidings of the night ?
Have any watch'd, have any work'd therein ?
Does thine arch-secret quiver on the verge
Of knowledge, by thy furnace-doors, my son,
Spagyricus ?

Of the Morality of

FRATER SPAGYRICUS.

As dying tapers dart
And quiver and are quench'd, till now I see
My secret is the secret of the King,
Whence it is hidden in a mystery.

THE WIDOW.

Our woe is with us and the want thereof.

FRATER SPAGYRICUS.

We put red gold into the crucible.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

And here is lead.

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

Gnomon and astrolabe—
We calculate the shadow of our loss.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Divining ever and discerning nought.

THE WIDOW.

*As FRATER SECUNDEM ORDINEM returns with lights
and incense borne before him :*

Call on the Master in the morning ; chant
Thy masses ; consecrate the wine and bread.
Perchance He stands without the door, perchance
Will knock between the pauses of the bell,
At elevation or at Agnus-time.

The Lost Word

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

By Apostolic virtue vested in
This servant of the servants of the Lord
Set in the Master's seat, I do proclaim—
The Word is found ; commit it to your hearts ;
Proclaim it through the city and the world.
As o'er the Sacred Host, with bended head,
Cry, "INRI," the most holy Word long sought!

SOROR STELLIFERA.

The House of God is empty and to let.

AN ACOLYTE.

There is no wine to mingle.

THE WIDOW.

O tears of Christ !
Uplift the chalice, let the air distil
Blood-drops therein ; our sorrow's cruel sweat
Shall thicken it. Extremity ere now
Has wrung a miracle : one sign, one sign !

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

The world is full of cyphers and of signs.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

But all the keys we wrought to loose their gates
Have broken in the locks ; the master-key
Is missing.

THE WIDOW.

Fortitude and patience ! Hope
May perish ; but, erect and swerving not,

Of the Morality of

I call upon the King with burning heart,
And that cry, prevalent o'er time and space,
Goes searching up and down the boundless world,
Stedfast to find Him out. O soon or late,
Touch'd with the woe thereof, the King will come—
Heart, beyond deepest heart—is nigh perchance !

THE WARDEN OF THE HOUSE.

Our messengers are scouring all the ways.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

But ah ! what tidings ?

A MESSENGER (*entering*).

There is fire and sword,
Fell pest is ravaging the place of life.

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

Strange fingers trace strange words on every wall.

THE WIDOW.

Mine eyes are dim ; I cannot see them. Read !

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

They flicker, like the firelight in the dark ;
They come and go. I cannot read them. See :
The ancient ensigns wave in the wind's fresh gust ;
Perchance it is the shadows which they cast.

THE WIDOW.

Fails e'en thy faith, rooted in earth of stars !
Perchance the wind is writing the Lost Word.

The Lost Word

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

Strange characters of tongue conceal'd too long—
How long !

THE WIDOW.

Pronounce the watchword of our strength.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

The King comes.

THE WIDOW.

How it echoes from the past !
We went to meet Him out of Egypt, call'd
By prophets forth and urged by dreadful signs.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Our tribes were scatter'd in the wilderness.

THE WIDOW.

We sought Him ; Calvary and Golgotha
Loom'd on us in the night of our distress.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

But when the clouds were rifted by a light
Red as the wrath of God, scarlet as shame,
We saw Him crown'd with thorns and cross-enthroned.

THE WIDOW.

They noised Him far abroad, who died and rose :
He left us with the Word upon His lips.

Of the Morality of

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Too lightly graven in our hearts, too light.

THE WIDOW.

We went again into the wilderness
And heard the holy echoes of that Word
In Thebaid caves, on breathless Carmel tops.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

They call'd us forth to worship : " He is there :
He sits in Rome." And we received our King
In poison'd hosts and Borgia chalices.
They snatch'd his chalice from our lips, they gave
A mutilated Christ ; they rent the House
Of God with fell dissensions on the Word,
And with the letter and dead symbols made
An empty war-cry, for the Word was lost.

FRATER PROCURATOR.

But now the stays are taken from the House ;
All men pass over on the further side,
Lest they be buried in the fall thereof.

THE WIDOW.

Yet we remain under the sinking roof,
Nursing the watchword in our hearts : The King
Cometh ! We cry the watchword with our lips :
He comes. O surely in this need extreme
At length He comes.

THE WARDEN.

The House is falling.

The Lost Word

THE WIDOW.

Let

The King come to His ruins.

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

Were it well

To question now? Perchance the King will come.
Did stars, prophetic of the fate of man
Or fate dispensing, ever heed or spare?
Man working only with some law of grace
Believed he ruled them to a milder end,
But in the last resource the rule is theirs.
And man has hedged himself about and made
A magic ring of prayer, has dress'd himself
To subtle combat, has set star to star,
Check'd destiny by God's will and his own,
And said: I conquer. But the stars, serene
And sure, still spun the threads of fate together,
And when the mesh was drawn he strove in vain.
So also we, who put the Holy Word
To auction in the past; who bought and sold
And traffick'd in it, till the sacred gift
Became a byword; who gave out false words;
Who utter'd counterfeit and worthless coin
As true mint under warrant of the King;
Have check'd and countercheck'd the wrath of Him
With prayers and watches and humiliaties,
Saying: The King will come, the King forgives!
Perchance the King will come in wrath alone,
Perchance a strong delusion comes instead,
Perchance 'twere better did we abrogate
The rite of old which memorised our loss,
Crying no more: Come, let us seek the Word!
But saying rather: Since the Word is lost,
Come forth from this old House!

Of the Morality of

FRATER PROCURATOR.

A fissure yawns
From base to roof upon the southern side.
The very rats in corridors and lofts
Make sudden leaps for safety; the blind hound
Slinks howling down the stairway; underneath
His feet, which falter, all the winding steps
Tremble and creak.

THE WARDEN.

We cannot save the House;
We yet may save ourselves. Come forth!

FRATER PACIFICUS.

The King
Shall find us camp'd amidst the meadow-sweet
In this fair spring-time under fairest sky.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Non nobis, Domine : non nobis. We
Have loved the Lord's House and the place where once
His glory minister'd. For this last time
Flectamus genua. The House hath swerved.
Levate. We have kept His doctrines sure
Till now the House of Doctrine—overthrown—
Expels us. Therefore, Lord, impute it not
For sin to us if, with reluctant steps,
We quit Thy Holy Place and fix our ark
Of refuge where foundations cannot split,
Or roof-tree fall, or vaulted roofs give way,
Till Thy Lost Word at end of all return
And wreck Thy world of Nature, as this House
Of Grace is wreck'd.

The Lost Word

THE WARDEN.

O ye who would be saved,
Come out of her !

THE WIDOW.

Nay, rather, seek the Word !

THE WARDEN.

The House is in its agony. Come forth !

FRATER PACIFICUS.

The Word has pass'd into the world without ;
It fondles green leaves in the sunlight, sighs
Among the floral wonders of the fields,
Lifts up the light voice of the brooks and birds
To rushing music. Hark, and far away
Resounds it in the organ of the sea !

THE WIDOW.

Come, let us seek the Word !

CHIEF HUNTSMAN (*enters*).

There is no corn
In stall or stable left : all creatures starve.

THE WIDOW.

Our need increases from a narrow track
Now to a bridle path, and now again
It opens out into a broad high road,
Down which the steeds and coaches of the King
Roll smoothly. The King cometh.

Of the Morality of

THE WARDEN.

We have watch'd
With trimm'd lamps through the night : the oil is spent :
We have no money.

THE WIDOW.

I besought a sign :
Here is the sign of our necessity.
He comes ere night.
*[There is a noise of many voices in the
four quarters of heaven.]*

FIRST VOICE.

The King is on the sea.

SECOND VOICE.

The King is in the hills.

SHEPHERDS (*entering*).

We have seen His star
Shine like a beacon in the East.

THIRD VOICE.

The King !

A STRANGER (*enters*).

The Word is found.

A PAGE OF THE GATE.

It is May-morning now.

The Lost Word

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Meseems, the world is one great incense-pot
Which swings about the altar of the sun.

FRATER DIACONUS (*enters with aspergillus*).

The plain-chant throbs through the cathedral aisles ;
A hand unseen is on the organ keys :
Unearthly notes stream from string'd instruments.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Reflorent omnia : we knew thy day
Would come.

THE WIDOW (*rising*).

Our enemies confounded stand ;
But Thou hast kept Thy servants and Thy sons
From shame.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Our foot is on the world's neck now :
Our heels shall grind the serpents of the world.

FRATER PACIFICUS.

Lord, we have kept Thy presence in our hearts !

A HERALD (*enters*).

The King, the King, the true Legitimate !

THE WIDOW.

O Lord, O Lord, that we desirèd so !

Of the Morality of

AN ACOLYTE (*enters*).

A voice behind the altar has cried :
The King !

SEXTON (*enters*).

There are strange lights among the crypts.

THE WIDOW.

The dead
Light tapers for the tripods and the shrines.

ANOTHER ACOLYTE (*enters*).

A great white hand has kindled from the roof
The great pasch candle.

THE WIDOW.

It is Easter-Tide.
Bid the bells ring ; bid beacon fires, on all
The hills about, blaze high to tell the ships
At sea, and signal to all villages ;
Bid all the villages and lonely ships
Far out respond with beacons and with lights :
The stars shall know the coming of the King.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Who cries the King, sweet mother ? To the soul
He only comes. When voices on the hills
Proclaim His presence, whether East or West,
He bids us heed them not. The soul alone,
From all the quarters of her wide domain,
Shall know His coming when the King returns.

The Lost Word

THE WIDOW.

Void not His presence when He knocks without !
O not in shadow, type or sign He comes !
No subtle essence in the sap of life,
No change of order working in the heart :
He comes, a man like us.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Comes woe, comes loss !

A MAID (*enters*).

We have clean sheets of flax to dight his bed.

THE WIDOW.

Make it white samite : He will make—the King !

A SCULLION (*enters*).

There is black bread upon the board.

THE WIDOW.

His word
Will make black bread white meat. O Golden Dawn,
When all the order of the world renews !

CELLARER (*enters*).

There is spring water in the wine-pails.

THE WIDOW.

He
Makes richer wine than ran in Galilee.

Of the Morality of

A VOICE (*without*).

The Word is found.

THE WIDOW.

Ah God, the King has come !

AN USHER.

The Count Phœnix.

The Lost Word

ACT II

SCENE.—*A certain garden attached to the House of Long Sorrow. At the farther end there is a Grotto, and within this is a Shrine where there are many candles lighted. A procession passes through in the following order, and goes about to the Grotto: a CROSS-BEARER with ACOLYTES; two surpliced children with incense, and behind them veiled maidens strewing flowers; PRIESTS with golden copes, preceded by one bearing a sanctuary bell. It is the afternoon of a brilliant day in the summer. The WIDOW is seated under trees at some distance from the Shrine, on a high-backed chair with faded canopy overhead. The Sons of the WIDOW pass to and fro near her, speaking earnestly and with animated gestures. A spectator would observe that no heed is paid by any one to the religious rite which is beginning, and the chants of which mingle confusedly with the dialogue throughout all its length.*

HYMN.

*A voice came out of the South and fell,
With a pleasant rain, O Israel!
And a second spring there came to thee,
A sowing-time, and the goodly sheaves,
Before the fall of the autumn leaves,
We have looked to see.*

*A wind rose up in the North and blew
Meadows and mournful marshes through,
Till the air was cleansed and the sky was clear,
When a time of joy after mourning fell,
For they wiped thy tears, O Israel!
And the Crown came near.*

Of the Morality of

*A light rose up in the East and gilded
The House of Life which the Lord had builded ;
And a Building-Word from the Lord there came,
As over the roof His glory fell ;
By this it was raised, O Israel !
By the Word and Name.*

*Dark clouds went into the West, and lo !
Henceforward only the light we know,
For here in place of the frozen clime,
And in place of the sorrowful House which fell,
Is a House for ever, O Israel !
And a harvest-time.*

THE WIDOW.

The Keepers of the outward Word proclaim
The outward meaning ; we have need thereof
No more. The Word is at our gates, and now
The Word has pass'd the threshold. It awakes
Strange echoes, not in galleries alone
But in the heart, yea, in the heart of hearts :
It quivers almost on the lips of all ;
The recollections, shaping in the mind,
Stir ; I could speak it now—I dream, I dream—
Waiting alone upon the Master's lips.

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

Why keeps the Master from the sons He loves ?

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Perchance His ruin'd chancel fills no more
With common daylight, through the fractured roof
Pouring ; His presence with diviner light
Possessing our poor place of earnest prayer,
Our mournful shrine of patience and of hope.

The Lost Word

HYMN.

*Blessed hope ! From day to day
We have watch'd, we have pray'd ; in our watching,
O Master, we pray :
Surprise us ere sleep on our eyes seal up lips, ere the hearts
in us dumb,
Which like children would scream Thee a welcome, can
crave Thee to come !
We have look'd for Thee more than one hour ; ah, tarry no
longer, but come !*

FRATER VIATORIVS.

I saw His garments gleaming in the woods,
And all fair creatures follow'd from afar.

FRATER PROCURATOR.

He pass'd like one that hath the feet of ghosts,
How lightly gliding over broken stairs,
And in high turrets have I seen His eyes
Turn mildly on the wreckage of the House :
How meet that He surveys Whose word rebuilds !

FRATER SYMPHONIACUS.

Anon He spake with acolytes, and grave,
Sweet words exchanged with sweet-voiced singing boys,
Or kiss'd, I think, those lips which praise of Him
So oft has parted.

THE WIDOW.

Doing all things well.

Of the Morality of

HYMN.

*How well, O Lord, how sweet in Thee,
That Thou didst hide so long from me !
For when I sought Thee long and far
Thy voice was in the Evening Star,
Thy face was o'er the dark'ning sea ;
And hence I could not reach to Thee !
How sweeter still if Thou from far
Wouldst pass to me, wouldst leave Thy star,
Or walk across the darkening sea,
And—night or morning—come to me,
Because I cannot reach to Thee !*

THE WIDOW.

My heart is troubled at His absence ; seek
The King ; fall prostrate at His feet and say
That those who worshipp'd Him of old, who long
Did wait His coming, whom His presence fill'd
With life, and joy of life, expectant seek
His presence ; that His rites without the walls
Are practised here under the open sky :
May He be with us to infuse His light,
And make them other than a show which shews
No more, since He came back, the end of all ;
Make meanings new to fill them, and our hearts
With joy in them, as He is all our joy.

FRATER PACIFICUS.

My heart is troubled, but the dread therein
Is not His absence whom we hail as King.

The Lost Word

HYMN.

*My feet were on the mountain in the morning, and they said
that He was here ;
Then I cried : O Lord ! Where art Thou ? and the sea
where it was seething answer'd : Near.
But I saw the sun move forward, from the peaks and morn-
ing spaces, to a torrid house high over in the noon,
And I think it was the heart within me whisper'd : Get
thee down out of the mountains, for be certain, He is
coming very soon :
Hence they found me in my white robes in the meadows,
when the darkness was enlighten'd by the moon.*

FRATER PACIFICUS.

High stars, me visit for my doubt alone
If He be King ! And Thou Who from of old
Hast chosen the unlikely instrument
To manifest at times Thy power, at times
Thy love, Thy mercy, pardon if it prove
That this is Thine anointed, and on me,
Sparing this falling house, turn, if Thou wilt,
Thy wrath alone, Whose messenger has brought
No word of all by which a yearning heart
Might dare confess him to itself as Thine !

THE WIDOW.

It is His pleasure to conceal the Word.

HYMN.

*Our sins alone to such confusion
And unto these last woes have brought us ;
But spare, O Lord, that strong delusion,
The fear of which Thy Word has taught us !
O, if Thy promise fair we fail to see,
We seek at least to die adoring only Thee !*

Of the Morality of

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

He will declare Himself anon—anon.
Our hopes are all in Him ; did He deceive—
O, we most wretched, and lost most of men !

FRATER PACIFICUS.

One sign alone to pacify the heart !
To make Faith's cry less abject, and Faith's gift
Less void, or in the face of evidence.

THE WIDOW.

What need has He of signs ? And yet one sign !
Ask and receive at will ; knock and all gates
Fly open—it is here, the sign of Faith :
I do believe that we have seen the King !

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

And when our foot is on the nation's neck,
And when we tread them in the press of wrath—
His wrath, and glory in His victory—
We to our triumph, and the world its cost
Shall know the King. *Flectamus genua . . .*
Levate. By the faith at heart of doubt,
Thou, Who art King, forgive us !

FRATER PROCURATOR.

How the House,
Like to some tree torn up, leans over, poised
Towards frightful fall. Bid all our craftsmen come
To shore its gaping sides.

The Lost Word

THE WIDOW.

What need has He
Of craftsmen, when the Building Word is His?

FRATER PACIFICUS.

He hath not utter'd it.

THE WIDOW.

He tries our faith.

HYMN.

*My wings are broken with my flight,
Mine eyes are dim through Thy great light,
My heart is dead with hope and fear ;
Though Thou art near, though Thou art near,
I cannot reach Thee, fallen here.*

*If Thou wilt raise me, I am blest—
O let me die upon Thy breast !
Ah, better, if Thy mercy deign,
In holy sleep I will remain
And wake beneath Thine eyes again !*

THE WIDOW.

O we have hoped and waited and held on
So long ! But He is here, and now our hearts,
Too tensely strain'd, must hurry Him or burst.
Let the old House dissolve : I wait on Him.
In His good time, which never is too late,
This House and all things shall the King make new.

Of the Morality of

HYMN.

*Thine is the world, and Thou through all
Dost utter forth Thy far-resounding call !
Grant us, at early morn or sombre close of day,
Who hear Thy call, to take up staff and scrip and come away ;
But if we fail to find Thy place in ways so wide and worlds
so far,
O when we stand and call on Thee, turn Thou aside and
hasten where we are !*

FRATER PACIFICUS.

Meanwhile He tarries in waste places ; He
Too waits, but whether on the master-word,
Or this great need of ours, too narrow yet
To shew His power who is so strong to save,
Or some accepted time—who knows ? Meseems
His eyes are on the daughter of the house.

THE WIDOW.

What if our daughter were the Queen to come !

FRATER PACIFICUS.

She shrinks from Him : He hath said words to her.
What words ! O Lord, our faith is sorely tried !
How doth Thy day-star visit us ? What light
Comes lurid with Thine orient from on high ?
The serpent's glitter lies behind his eyes.

HYMN.

*The serpent wreck'd Thy garden, Lord,
Of all glad things the Giver ;
But Thou at need, with arm and sword,
From snake and snare deliver !*

The Lost Word

FRATER PACIFICUS.

As snakes charm birds, He charms her : she grows lean,
She withers, and her garments, trailing light,
Have faded ; all the music of her eyes
Is silent now, and void of all its light
Her radiant voice.

THE WIDOW.

Our daughter wrecks the house.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

He asks for her : she flies into the woods.
He watches on her coming, as God waits
The wandering soul to lead it back to Him :
She tarries in waste places of the world ;
The stars turn dark at her who turns from light.
If we be weigh'd in her and if in her
Found wanting, what is there will save the House ?
Rejected is the King, our corner-stone,
So then the King will leave us, and unroof'd
We shall go forth, while all our foes succeed
Against us. Haste into the woods and wilds !
We must prevail upon her and at need
Compel.

THAT STRANGER.

The King is in His gardens now.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Make acts of faith : display our faith in Him.
Lord, we have look'd for Thee : we are glad, O Lord !

Of the Morality of

HYMN.

*Come quickly, we cried, O Lord! Perchance it was
morning's prime
And the world was young in the morning; fair over our
faces fell
The golden locks and the dark locks: a moment only of
time,
But it seem'd that an age toil'd past and a world went by.
The locks are white on those heads so bright, and the hearts
have burnt to a shell;
But a rumour, a whisper, a word, a trumpet-voice drew
nigh:
It answer'd: Behold, I come! Then age upon age ran by,
As it seem'd but a moment leaping from then to now,
And this is Thy light on our brow.
Sun-down glory of all, we know not when nor how,
Whether space and time have drifted,
But we know that our eyes are lifted
And that this is the light of Thine eye:
World over world we have doubtless travell'd and far through
the starry spaces,
Till sweetly, softly we find Thee here, Thy face shining over
our faces.*

THE WIDOW.

*I am the oldest in the House: I know
He is the King. Flectamus genua.*

GRAND ANTIPHON.

*O Wisdom, from the mouth of the Most High
Forth issued, and from end to end extending,
In strength disposing all and tenderly,
Thy way of prudence teach, to us descending!*

The Lost Word

PAGE OF THE GATE.

I am the youngest in the House : I know
He is the King. *Flectamus genua.*

GRAND ANTIPHON.

O Lord of Hosts and Duke of Israel,
Who didst, on Sinai's Mount, Thy Law revealing,
By burning bush and prophet's brows dispel
Misrule and night, put forth thine arm of healing !

A BONDSMAN.

I am the oldest servant in the House :
He is the King. *Flectamus genua.*

GRAND ANTIPHON.

O root of Jesse, as a sign erected
To quell the kings of earth through Kingship stronger,
Though oft by nations of the earth rejected,
Come down and set us free : delay no longer !

BONDSWOMAN.

I am the youngest of the serving-maids :
He is the King : *flectamus genua.*

GRAND ANTIPHON.

O Key of David, every door and gate
Loosing and locking, from this House of anguish
Lead forth Thy bound ones, yea, from dungeons strait
And shadows deep of death wherein they languish !

FRATER QUÆSTORIUS.

I am the treasurer : He has fill'd the purse :
He is the King. *Flectamus genua.*

Of the Morality of

GRAND ANTIPHON.

*O Day-Star, Splendour of Eternal Light,
O Sun of Justice, come, Thy beams maintaining,
And through the mists and darkness of the night
Give light to those too long in night remaining !*

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

I am the priest, and the Shekinah fills
The Holy Place ; incense and altar-lights,
Fire and the smoke of fire shew forth His name :
He is the King : *flectamus genua.*

GRAND ANTIPHON.

*O King of nations and the Corner-Stone,
Conjoining all in one divine communion
Of saving faith and rest in Thee alone,
Those whom Thou madest lift into Thine union !*

FRATER VENATICUS.

I am chief huntsman : In the woods at morn
I pass'd Him ; all that lives obeys the King.

GRAND ANTIPHON.

*O Lawgiver, Emmanuel and King,
Saviour of nations and their expectation,
Our Lord, our God, when adverse hosts enring,
Strong to redeem us, haste to our salvation !*

FRATER SYMPHONIACUS.

The world has turn'd into a psaltery.

The Lost Word

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

All computations shew that He is due :
He bears all marks and signs.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

The King demands
A sacrifice.

THE WIDOW.

Not sacrifice but glory.

CUSTOS INVISIBILIS.

Hereof is Antichrist and Lucifer.

THE WIDOW.

The spirit of the House, which from of old
Took voice, cries sadly in the heart of us ;
But who is strong to save ? Not he, not he !

HYMN.

*Thy voice across the waters of the sea,
Thy voice far off in Thine eternity,
As here we stand and wait !
But whether time be early or be late,
Stars in their rising or their setting,
We know not—in this trance unbroken—
All time, all space, and all forgetting,
Except that thou art there and Thou hast spoken.*

[SOROR STELLIFERA *passes ghost-white over the*
grass with the COUNT PHŒNIX.]

THE WIDOW.

Thou can'st save only ; we are Thine alone.
Dark stars have haunted us through all our days,

Of the Morality of

Dark stars have ruled our destiny, and dark
Our House is, long its sorrow, while perturb'd
And shrouded are our hearts, since Thou didst go :
Now art Thou with us ; now the brightest stars
Rule ; night and stars thereof in glory flower.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

*Credo videre bona Domini
In terra viventium.*

COUNT PHŒNIX.

*With upraised hand, as if in blessing, but extending three
fingers.*

A little while
And I go forth, but I requite you first :
Ye shall remember me.

THE WIDOW.

Our doom is Thine !

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Non nobis, Domine, non nobis.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

*Passing on with the daughter of the House, and
speaking to her apart.*

I
Come forth from the eternal, and I take
Thee forth from time : out of the great quick joy
I come to lead thee back into My joy.

The Lost Word

SOROR STELLIFERA.

If Thou be King, set up this sinking House.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

What part have I herein, except in thee?

SOROR STELLIFERA.

If Thou art King, place in the day-star now
Thy royal sign.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

What is thy day-star's light?
My darkness: I will place my sign on thee:
My seal upon thee shall outflame all stars,
And from thy brow such fire thy House shall save.
[*They pass on.*]

CHORUS OF SUPPLIANTS.

*Thy hands are white,
Thy heart is pure,
We saw Thy face in dreams of light;
Thou wast our moon in that old night,
Which cannot in this day endure,
That his sun makes and thou reflectest—
A mirror's shining ecstasy.
Ah, move not, happy moon, away!
More chaste than any moon in sky,
More soft than gentlest human eye.
Ah, close not, eye of holy light
And all felicitous augury!
Ah, look not from this sun away,
Lest thou should'st cloud our borrow'd day,
Which in his absence thou directest,
O loving face, to light our way!*

Of the Morality of

*The birds in the green of the woodland cry to thee,
Leaves in the woods beseech thee,
Soft sea-murmurs and voices sigh to thee,
All the low breezes which faint as they reach thee
And pibroch winds from the hills beseech thee.
Patient, humanly, mourning faces
Of cattle in meadows are turn'd to pray thee ;
With passionate, tender and superhuman yearning,
The heart of the human world to thy heart, dear heart, is
turning.
And turn not away thy heart,
With the springs of its love, which never in vain we
turn'd to,
Who turn as the spikenard sunward to thee wheresoever
thou art,
And forever thy light have yearn'd to.*

The Lost Word

ACT III

SCENE.—*Without the gates. Rock and precipice, and above these a sheer height. It is night, and there is the rumour of many voices crying in the night. The moon breaks forth fitfully through black plumes and ragged masses of cloud surging above the peak. At these moments the House of Long Sorrow is seen riven from cope to base, far away to the left, with a confused crowd gathered at the gate, bearers of banners and canopies, incense-bearers, and the carriers of sacred vessels. In a narrow pathway winding upward among the rocks the COUNT PHŒNIX ascends, followed by SOROR STELLIFERA. There is a great heat in the air, with falling of rain at intervals and the rumbling of thunder far away.*

COUNT PHŒNIX.

The storm is on the mountains: I am call'd.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Is this thy promise to redeem the House?

COUNT PHŒNIX.

I have many mansions.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

If a mercy-seat—
Though hidden somewhere from the sight of all—
Be set within thy heart, I pray thee, pause,
Being outworn and perishing.

Of the Morality of

COUNT PHENIX.

Look up:

There is keen air upon the height, live flame
Streaming above the height, and I am call'd :
Thou shalt learn all before I leave thee, yea,
The Word in secret and the power thereof,
Which fills all life.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Dark Master, darker woe !

They bound me truly in my love for them ;
They led me shackled in the bonds of love ;
They offer'd up the saddest sacrifice
Which e'er was smitten since the world began.
Still the envenom'd knife is in my side ;
It cuts past heart and flesh into the quick
And inmost core of a death-wailing soul,
Which bleeds for ever.

[*They pass on.*

FRATER PACIFICUS (*enters*).

Our sweet soul is lost :

They stole our soul away ; they have put out
Her gentle light : she cannot fly to us ;
Her wings are broken now ; and in this dark
We cannot see her. O most piteous quest !

[*He ascends.*

*Smoke and red light issue from the House of Long Sorrow.
The crowd, still massing at the gates, begins to form
into a disorderly procession, and, amidst strident cries
and the uproar of many voices, a chant is heard at
intervals.*

The Lost Word

CHORUS VIATORIUS.

*O Blessed City, Inmost Shrine,
Still let thy light, from far away,
Soft over all our paths incline !
Yet we may reach thee, yet thy day,
Light as the leaves fall—thus and thus—
Shine on us holy and glorious.*

*O Blessed City, the heart is dim
With the tearful mist of a white desire,
And words of longing the lips o'erbrim,
But songs are feeble to voice our fire ;
The music falters, the thought is cold
Which springs in the soul for thy roofs of gold.*

*O Blessed City, O magnet-walls,
Out of the weary and darkling time
Lift us into thy timeless halls !
Far have we stray'd from thy healthful clime,
Through poison'd wastes and a hemlock sea ;
Still we are townsmen and sons of thee.*

On the Peak. Fire and Storm.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

Look back !

SOROR STELLIFERA.

The House is flaming.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

Dost thou see
Those crested riders in the path beneath ?

Of the Morality of

SOROR STELLIFERA.

I see the plumes of hearses.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

Dost thou mark
The smoke and flame of torches in the gorge
Below us !

SOROR STELLIFERA.

I see demon-eyes ascend,
And muffled faces in the darkness grow :
They move about us now on every side.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

Dost thou behold the life which fills the world
Burst suddenly up from path and gorge far down,
And deeper still from misty mountain-pools,
From forest-coverts and turbid water-ways ?

SOROR STELLIFERA.

I see consuming fire.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

Thou hast the Word :
Ignē Natura renovatur integra !
Thou lookest on the glory of the world.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

I see thy lurid hell.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

The Word is thine.

The Lost Word

SOROR STELLIFERA.

An all-embracing pity from the heart
Within me wells up suddenly and flows
Towards all that lives and suffers or is lost,
Engulph'd in this great woe.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

Beyond thee now
Opens an endless void, within the light
And splendour of the coruscating flame—
A dead black peace of uttermost abyss :
Into such peace I take thee : be thou still'd !

SOROR STELLIFERA.

I call upon the peace of Christ and God :
Thou hast no power in me ; no part hast thou.
Thou who art nothing, to the empty void
Thine utter nothing take.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

My people call.
[*He disappears.*]

FRATER PACIFICUS (*from below*).

O arms upflung under the violet light !

The Burning Gates.

THE WIDOW.

Our daughter does not come.

Of the Morality of

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

And he is gone.

THE WIDOW.

And the Lost Word is with him.

FRATER PROCURATOR.

The House sinks.

Let us go forth.

THE WIDOW.

The Word !

FRATER PACIFICUS

She dies thereof.

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

All things have fail'd us. The stars lie ; the sun
Betrays us ; signs upon the earth and sea
Have mock'd us. End it now !

THE WIDOW.

I do believe

That the King cometh.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Yet shall the Word be found.

THE WARDEN OF THE HOUSE.

Bring forth the starving horses through the smoke :
There is grass somewhere in the world beyond.

The Lost Word

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Come forth to seek the Word !

THE WIDOW.

Perchance to greet

The King.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Who cometh in the morning.

FRATER SYMPHONIACUS.

Dawn !

[The light breaks.

On the Peak. The smoke of the Burning House rolls up from below, and over the human voices there is heard from time to time the scream of frightened horses, with the bellowing of kine. There is also, ever and anon, a sudden crash of cymbals, with beating of tabours, and occasionally the winding of a solitary horn. A fitful chanting ascends at intervals.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

The gorges in the mountains, and the wind
Among the mountains, and the lights on snow ;
But the steep's prospect is the gulf's great depth !

THE CHANT FROM BELOW.

*In the day of the wrath of the Lord expell'd,
Out of the gates we have loved, we go,
With the signs of pity and grace withheld,
Nor what shall befall us know.*

Of the Morality of

SOROR STELLIFERA.

To totter only where of old we stood,
To find the stars quench suddenly, to feel
A sudden sinking of the rifted earth,
And here the very end, the dirge of all !

THE CHANT FROM BELOW.

*Sad perforce is our slow retreat,
Turn we often with lingering feet,
Follow we forward with bended head,
Humble enough to be comforted,
Wretched enough to be heard, who pray
For a cup so bitter to pass away.*

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Past every point of being have I gazed :
What lies beyond ?

THAT VOICE.

Thy path, which lifts above ;
Thy star, which draws.

THE CHANT FROM BELOW.

*O if a visible hand had driven
Forth to the waste, like our sires of eld !
Yea, if the lightning our house had riven,
Over us only our foes prevail'd ;
If forth we went in the storm and stress,
Surely the woe of the heart were less !*

The Lost Word

SOROR STELLIFERA.

A very simple thing
And easy, to be full up to the brim
With sorrow ; to look back with wistful mind—
When there was not one sorrow in the world
Without some healing balm, which seem'd as sweet
As joy unended !

THAT VOICE.

To look forth and hear,
O Soul, the Spirit's voice, the Spouse—who speaks !

THE CHANT FROM BELOW.

*But stone by stone has the house sunk down
And left us homeless, to camp without,
Lodge, if we will, in the distant town,
Or quarter in villages round and about,
Nothing ordain'd us, nothing denied—
Whether to part where the ways divide,
Whether to wander or pause and rest,
Who in this doubt shall declare the best ?*

SOROR STELLIFERA.

They gave me sacraments and means of grace
In childhood, and they bade me love my house,
As they had loved me who abode therein,
And thus have brought me past all thought to woe.
They gave me sacraments and means of grace,
Pour'd consecrated water on my head,
And the cleansed spirit soar'd past Nature's range :
Now past the range of Nature have I gazed
On voids beyond.

Of the Morality of

THE SPIRIT'S VOICE.

*It falls from the furthest height
Through midnight's lonely halls,
Falls with a darting light—
The Voice of the Spirit falls.
Splendour of morning gold
Scatters the dark of old ;
Splendours of dawn unfold ;
Glory is everywhere—
Infinite light and air.*

THE CHANT FROM BELOW.

*Foes that turn'd in the past to rend us,
So helpless finding, might now befriend us ;
Those who betray'd, of the hearts we cherish'd,
Could half rekindle the love that perish'd.*

SOROR STELLIFERA.

There comes before mine eye
The light on leaves in gardens blithely gleaming—
So sweetly brooding on the velvet lips
Of full-blown roses ; apples to the sun
Their shining faces turning ; over all
The paths and beds, a busy work of winds,
So full of pleasant purpose unconcern'd ;
And at the heart a mystery, within
The mystery a hint of such a crown,
Of undiscover'd kingdoms full of life,
And all in reach and all a little part—
So small a part—of such a joy to come.

The Lost Word

THE SPIRIT'S VOICE.

*Out of the world of bright,
Fix'd and enduring thought,
Listen—it calls, it calls—
Thou who hast bravely fought,
In thine unaided might.
Henceforth of spirit taught
Never henceforth shalt stray,
Never defeat thine end,
Drift and be drawn away,
Nor force in vain expend.*

THE CHANT FROM BELOW.

*If we had strength or the steel to arm us,
Nothing is left with the will to harm us ;
So utterly broken and bow'd are we
That the very branch of the woodland tree,
Which sways in the breeze and the dawn-light near us,
Has a gentle thought at the heart to cheer us.*

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Long and so long I have awaited Thee,
O Thou from Whom I come, to Whom I go ;
That I have taken to my heart of hearts
A great resolve to finish from henceforth
With any waiting. Here and now I stand—
No longer praying and pleading, seeking not,
Demanding scarcely longer. Thee I claim :
Give me no reasons to excuse delay ;
Weave me no veils ; take back Thy sacraments ;
Roll up Thy pageants and Thy panoplies !
Such ministries have help'd me in the past
A little space of time, a measured length

Of the Morality of

Of distance ; now they hinder. I will brook
No other channels and no substitutes.
Give me Thyself in utter nakedness,
From all devices free, and strip me too :
I will not see Thee till myself am bare.
Centre of my deep heart, longing for Thee,
Give me Thy very self.

THE SPIRIT'S VOICE.

*Thou shalt be guided, led—
Lo, it descends on Thee !
Come, with uplifted head,
Drawn out of self to me.
My voice, which quickens the dead,
Calls to thee, calls to thee ;
My glory is round thy head
Unto eternity.*

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Do with me as Thou wilt, but take me straight :
This is the end of all ; I end in Thee.

[Ascendit Stella.]

*There is utter silence, as it might be said, for a few moments
and then, through the invisible light, her voice—
ringing clearly and sweeter than all sweet sacraments.*

SOROR STELLIFERA.

The soul alone
Shall know His coming when the King returns.

*The defiles and gorges of the mountains through which the
procession is pouring in full sunlight, bearing the
scorched and tattered banners, sacred vessels and broken*

The Lost Word

emblems rescued from the ruins of the House of Long Sorrow. Some of the cohort are mounted on lean horses or mules, and the Children of the Exile are in wains, drawn by oxen. Others are walking. The priests, deacons and acolytes preserve something of the aspect of a religious procession. The rest are still in disorder, and some fall by the way. The WIDOW is seated in a gilded chariot decorated with artificial flowers, being encircled by the Sons of the WIDOW.

THE CHANT CONCLUDED.

*And not with evil intent to flout us
Flaunts the great glory of light about us ;
But rather a pity misplaced possesses
The fond old heart of the world without us,
A vacant craving conceives to cheer us
With vapid kindness of crude caresses,
And, more to parade benign intentions,
Spreads gewgaw tinsel and outward gleam,
Her old, expended and crass conventions,
To cover the acrid truth of things
With shallow pleasaunce of hackney'd dream,
And loss which never the heart expresses
With irritant pipe of the voice which sings.*

FRATER SYMPHONIACUS.

Who goes before us in the rock-hewn way ?

FRATER PACIFICUS.

A little child upon a great white horse,
Who gives the sunlight back from golden hair
And the lithe wonder of his naked limbs
Thrice glorified. Whence comes he ! The old House
Has known him not, whom now we mark alone.

Of the Morality of the Lost Word

FRATER SYMPHONIACUS.

The oldest and the youngest of the House
He seems ; direct along the lineal way
He leads us : surely, in this need extreme,
Not utterly cast out, the sign long sought,
Forbearing violence and void of haste,
All silently the flower-sweet natural air
Gives up, as thuribles their incense-smoke.
We see the shoulders and the hinder parts
Of that which never is by face reveal'd—
The ante-natal watcher of the House.

FRATER PACIFICUS.

Forth from this vista o'er the world we gaze
And the great undeclared, inscrutable time
To come far stretches, as a strenuous wind
Tears through some fissure in the wall and thence
Fills chambers vast and resonant vestibules.

FRATER SYMPHONIACUS.

So take we forth our parable made void ;
At least before us there are fields unknown,
And past the sorrow of the ages lies,
May be, the still immensity of God.

THE FURTHER SIDE OF
THE PORTAL

PART I

THE HOLD OF GOD

N.B.—The initial design of this Mystery Play is referable to a friend and fellow-worker in the mysteries, who has contributed also a few lines, there and here.

The Hold of God

SCENE.—*A clearing in a certain forest. The back-cloth represents the closed doors of a mediæval chapel, amidst trees and undergrowth. There is enough light for the audience to distinguish features, and no more. Through small lancet windows in the walls, on either side of the doors, there is a faint, reddish glow, as of a Sanctuary Lamp. Enter MASTER, with seven SCHOLARS.*

THE MASTER.

And pausing briefly in this place of stay,
Ere further travail fills the toilsome way—
What time the moon shall o'er these trees ascend—
I pray you, good my sons, in order shew
This valiant journey's cause and seemly end.

FIRST SCHOLAR.

Methinks, like life itself, the path goes on,
In dark or light, and weary still we tread
The wild and rugged track, nor rightly know
If inn of refuge we shall light upon,
Or ever more find hope of mead and bread.

THE MASTER.

Nor end nor cause is here: if ways be far
The hope within us shines, a faithful star.
Poor is the heart which cannot keep in view,
'Midst transitory pangs, a purpose true!

The Further Side of the Portal

SECOND SCHOLAR.

I too am footsore ; I am empty too.

THE MASTER.

Be comforted, fair sons, a little space
Of pilgrim days—then, through a shining gate,
We pass within the City of High Debate,
Where all shall gaze with joy on Wisdom's face.

THIRD SCHOLAR.

I look to greet her with my latest breath,
Her place the grave, her other title Death.

FOURTH SCHOLAR.

Some meat, some wine ! I follow as I can.

FIFTH SCHOLAR.

Prithee, restore the fainting inward man !

SIXTH SCHOLAR.

Give me a bed for sleep !

THE MASTER.

Alas, poor fools !
I say, the City of a Thousand Schools
Awaits our coming, and three days, as thus,
Shall end our sorrows ; but when these are done
High Wisdom's self shall feed each toiling son.

The Hold of God

I say, the City is rich and fair; to us
It shall give food and, being generous,
Refresh both body and mind. With strength restored
By all the plenitude of bed and board—
God save us—we shall enter in the lists
Of learning and therein maintain our parts
With all the zeal of subtleties and arts,
Compete for highest prizes, who resists
Shatter with mighty arms of argument;
But if a while one finds his forces spent,
Lo, I am with you all days, fill'd with fire,
For new contention till the foes retire!
We will increase the schools or make them one,
Shining upon it as their ruling sun.
Less than the least of you I drink and eat,
Yet still go forward with unyielding feet;
And when you sleep, in stable or on sward,
I find repose in theses and reward
For watches in the tortuous ways of thought.

FIRST SCHOLAR.

But we will follow, Master, till we die.

THE MASTER.

God keep you, fairest sons, our bourne is nigh!

SECOND SCHOLAR.

The term of all, in thirst and hunger sought.

THIRD SCHOLAR.

I see the Halls of Learning, hear the clash
The onset and the parry and the flash
Of keen mind-weapons, met in high mind-strife.

The Further Side of the Portal

FOURTH SCHOLAR.

Glory and crown for those our Master taught !

FIFTH SCHOLAR.

Knowledge is life and Wisdom life of life.

SIXTH SCHOLAR.

Behold the sorrows of my proper need !
What boots it now to hear the sounding brass,
The clashing steel in knightly warfare bent,
Or in high metaphor of argument ?
Perish the Halls of Learning ! Who shall heed ?
I see the flicker of poor souls that pass.
Surely of all things baneful this is worst,
That one should go, by hunger and by thirst,
Through all his mortal days, companionéd.
He fares, to wrack and wrath of storm exposed,
Is least with these to strive by shields disposed,
In sorry rags by day apparelléd,
While straw provides at night a cheerless bed.
Nor does, for this, his life in idlesse pass,
Since toil that in green youth his guerdon was,
Fills up the measure of futurity,
And little gain has he of all his days.
So at his passing wins he poorer praise,
For in contempt sinking him down to die,
He finds in death more deep obscurity ;
Nor in such sorry life is better taught
To meet his end ; nor goes he less to naught ;
Nor can more firmly look than other some
Towards holy bliss, which may hereafter come.
Hence if I follow in the path you take,
One hope impels alone—my thirst to slake,
To fill the belly, in a bed to rest :
Let Truth and Wisdom hang, for ease is best !

The Hold of God

SEVENTH SCHOLAR,
id est, Frater Peregrinus.

Methinks, mere wants which harry on the road
Are less than little, if the goal be blest.
Wisdom and Truth of all in their abode
Seek I, my brothers, and that holy quest
Will follow, whether I find daily bread
Or fail, so only—in the term of rest—
At the King's Table I be comforted
And find my joy within the Mystic Town,
My rich delight, my treasure without end,
My healing salve which can all hearts amend—
Beneath the sunshine of the Great White Crown.

THE MASTER.

Ex ore infantum was said of old :
Herein the very truth is haply told ;
And he who lights upon this secret store
Shall know that all his days were loss before.
No less, I doubt if in this lower ground
Has purblind man the place of wonder found,
However much his halting steps bestir . . .
'Tis true some tell us of enchanted Ur,
Built out of sight, deep in the morning land ;
And some there are—that none can understand—
Which, as they say, have visited in dream
The moving palace that they call Irêm ;
While other some, with fever in their blood,
Do rave of marvels they have seen in Hud.
To make an end, the healing salve—I say—
Shall bless the heart which finds it on a day.

SIXTH SCHOLAR.

A vainer quest than that we now pursue !
Prythee, fare on ! From foolish words desist.

The Further Side of the Portal

FIRST SCHOLAR.

Anon, we perish in this murderous mist !

SECOND SCHOLAR.

Who cries King's Table? Sirs, 'twixt me and you,
Give me the nearest tavern's blessed chance !

THIRD SCHOLAR.

Aye, any hostel ere the night advance ;
Then seek who wills beyond for Mystic Town,
Treasure and healing salve and Great White Crown !

FOURTH SCHOLAR.

But softly, friends, perchance with failing breath
He raves of joys beyond the gate of death !

FIFTH SCHOLAR.

His face is white ; I would the moon might rise
And save us from that madness in his eyes.

THE MASTER.

You are misguided all, by Holy Rood,
And have not this high matter understood !
Myself in other days did joys conceive
Of quests like this, and in my heart believe
That, for his spirit's and his life's defence,
A man might haply find the quintessence,

The Hold of God

Since very surely, as the sages shew,
Thesaurus latet in Mercurio.

Yea, if a man could see them with his eyes,
Sulphur and Salt withhold great mysteries ;
While he which can extract the seed of gold
Shall wealth of all this world most truly hold.
The quest, moreover, and its end premised
Do seem our own, yet subtly symbolised :
That Mystic Town our City of Words at war,
Well arm'd and marshall'd duly and maintain'd
For ever ; but the Table of the King
Is mind's refreshment, which from more to more
Swells mighty annals ; and the healing thing—
Laurel and wreath of fame, true crown attain'd.

But haste we now to reach our journey's end,
And may good angels on our path attend.
Thus shall we gain, if not all term of quest,
At least a little of the mind its rest,
With ease of body and no greater blame
Than souls may bear which shall escape the flame
That cleanses sin in purgatory's well,
Having been ransom'd first from fiends of hell.
From magic's art, meanwhile, and witchcraft may
St. Mary shield our paths—both night and day !
So God shall save us and bring judgment quick
Less on the outlaw than the heretic.
May Plato's method ne'er prevail with us ;
To all such whimsies—*phi, Diabolus !*
And may our steps keep straight within the schools
Confessing only Aristotle's rules ! . . .
This way the forest thins, faint light appears,
As of a moon white in her mist of tears.

[*The darkness lifts very slightly, beyond the
trees on the left.*]

The Further Side of the Portal

PEREGRINUS.

Life and the food of life, the heart-sweet fruit
Of grace therein, good Master ; these I seek !
Thereto your colleges of vain dispute
Can bring me not, and so by ways more meek,
To halls more sacred, must my steps repair :
Give me God's speed therein, to Whose good care—
Whatever sorrows by the way befall—
With trusting heart, I now commit you all !

FIFTH SCHOLAR.

The madness grows ; he shakes in limb and speech.
[Exit.

SIXTH SCHOLAR.

Leave him : Salt, Sulphur, Mercury may teach
His path of peace.
[Exit.

FOURTH SCHOLAR.

Or prove his Devil's Bread.
[Exit.

THIRD SCHOLAR.

Perchance the Great White Crown shall give him light.
[Exit.

SECOND SCHOLAR.

And shew King's Table with King's meat bedight.
I wish him all good luck of board and bed,
Midst dews and darkness strangely comforted.
[Exit.

FIRST SCHOLAR.

In Belial's realm, midst witchcraft's Sabbath's spells,
Go seek the city of a thousand hells.
[Exit.

The Hold of God

THE MASTER.

God grant we see you at the shining gate
Which opens on the City of High Debate !

[He hastens after the SCHOLARS, and the stage darkens. A chant sounds within the Chapel.]

THE HIDDEN CHORUS.

From arrow flying in the light,
From demon wiles which lurk at noon
And things unclean that move at night
In stealthy mist beneath the moon,
God save, and hold us—waiting, sleeping—
Ex hoc nunc, in His holy keeping !

[The WANDERING SCHOLAR is left alone, standing in the centre, with bowed head, while the laughter of the SIX COMPANION SCHOLARS dies away in the distance. He then gazes about him with something of dismay in his aspect.]

PEREGRINUS.

Here in this shadow'd place I stand alone,
Old sense of end in sight and guidance gone :
Gone too the secret words which, passing thought,
Were in strange hours of trance and vision taught
Sweetly, to one forlorn, by him who came—
Withholding his great ancestry and name—
But things so high announcing that, meseems,
This life henceforth is thinnest woof of dreams.
Yet in my thought a gate at times I find
Through which a man may leave such dreams behind
And in a little while all true things reach.
Ah, my true Master, now thy faithful speech

The Further Side of the Portal

I lack indeed, from beaten ways aside,
Here standing sadly where the tracks divide
And knowing nothing of the road I take !
O thou who didst my soul from darkness wake
And to be mindful of my want
Didst kindly covenant,
Be with me here, I plead,
In this my great disquietude and need !
[There is here a certain pause.]

Poor heart, so ready but of will so weak ;
Vain mind, so swift in barren thought to seek—
But slow to render one small thought in act !
Thou picture-teeming fancy, every tract
Of quest encompassing and calling down
All stars each venture in advance to crown,
But holding nothing save its dream at end !
And O the toils which strength of limbs expend
In unproductive passing to and fro,
As if from East to West the search should grow,
'Twixt points of space towards ends which lie beyond
All space, all time ! Yet thus, from bond to bond,
The soul writhes, swopping trammels to get free,
At each new yoke making vain bids to be
Once and for all unshackled from the whole.
Weary of toils and full of earthly want,
Still undeterr'd, I sought the living font,
Seek even yet, but famish'd now in soul.

[There is another pause, and the Moon shines through the forest-trees, with a growing light, from the far end of the stage, on the left hand. PEREGRINUS has now the aspect of one who is in a waking sleep. A shadowy motley of figures begins to pass and repass up stage, on the right, like shapes in a dream which is his.]

The Hold of God

Alas, no help is mine in this strange land,
Where doubtful shapes do lurk on every hand !
Ah, woe is me ! And whither shall I go ?
How pass unscathed through such a world of woe ?
Yet well I deem that—closer unto me
Than lips to lips which meet—in all we see
Lies heal'd the tincture, lies that mastery
Which can the whole world change to angel-gold
And bring to man beatitude untold.
But now my body faints with weariness
Of this long journey and the dire distress
That falls on footsore men which find no meat.
I fail in truth : no strength is in my feet,
And this cold heart seems chill'd within my breast :
Here yawns my grave : is this the body's rest ?
*[He sinks fainting on the ground. The Chant
sounds from the Chapel.]*

THE HIDDEN CHORUS.

Perchance from distant haven, further star,
Beyond—perchance—where any systems are,
Cometh a man's soul on this earthly ground—
With whose high offices the ways resound
A little while, till he is taken far,
Leaving the rumours of his body and mind
To echo briefly in the ways behind.
Meanwhile, from other star or shining sun
Comes here a second, to replace that one ;
But having gather'd up his own he goes
And unescorted must in turn ascend :
So from its source unseen the pageant flows,
For ever passing to the unseen end.

[From the shadowy crowd of figures in the right-hand corner, up stage, comes one who is crowned with vine-leaves, in the guise of a reveller. He approaches PEREGRINUS, bearing a brimming cup. He bends over him.]

The Further Side of the Portal

REVELLER.

Behold, in happy time I come !
The heart is chill, the lips are dumb,
The ichor of sweet life is sped,
And heavy lie both limbs and head :
But what of this, when I can give
The pure and perfect sanative ?

[*He raises* PEREGRINUS.

PEREGRINUS (*murmuring*).

A dream upon the edge of death,
The shadow'd shape of failing breath,
A thought of healing in the dream,
To lengthen an expended theme
With words as empty in the ear
As ghostly forms to eyes appear.
O ichor of the light to be,
O shapes of dying phantasy !

REVELLER.

Partake of this, the great redress,
The help, the cure, the antidote,
Nepenthe for all evil stress ;
For all life's wormwood, pest and bane
A counter-poison in the throat.

PEREGRINUS (*drinking*).

Well is it in the lips of pain,
Sweet fire which courses in the breast,
A Mænad-dance in nerve and brain,
A rose-bed in the sense of rest,
Yet in deep chambers of the brain
Some strange beatitude of zest !

[*He starts up.*

The Hold of God

If this be earthly wine you bring,
'Tis shadow of a sacred thing,
Whose light—on dream and waking shed—
My soul through many a path has sought
In long protracted wayfaring,
In fasts and watches and much want.
There is a Palace of the King
And there a Royal Table spread ;
The food is purest benison,
The cup a mighty orison,
Of life the very spring and font.
And there the King, with holy hands,
Serves meat and wine to seekers—brought
From out of all the earthly lands :
While in me still your juices stir,
I deem you are His messenger.

REVELLER.

Receive again the cup of bliss :
Drink and drink deeply.
[PEREGRINUS *finishes the draught.*

You say well :
I come from halls divine, and this
The mystic nostrum truly is ;
More than a medicine, more than balm ;
Elixir vitæ, mythridate ;
The opener of every gate
Which leads to palace, crown and palm !
So follow me, for this I tell—
You shall no longer faint nor die :
No messenger, but king am I !
[*The YOUNG SCHOLAR falls back,*
with averting arms.

The Further Side of the Portal

PEREGRINUS

Not thou the King who crown'd with light,
In purple vested and in white,
Sits throned beside the sacred board,
By angels and by saints adored.
Him have I seen in dreams of night
And him in rapture of desire,
When far above myself upraised,
I knelt behind the holy quire,
While in the minster fair and high,
Amidst all manner of psaltery,
The Altar in strange glory blazed.
Yea, I have seen the red wine pour'd
By hands most sacred, hands most clean
And souls to grace in life restored.
So also in the waking ways
One vision came—true joy for praise :
A jasper cup which hands unseen
Exalted heaven's high gates between,
Until—beyond the pole's clear star—
It shone with ruddy light afar.
Thereafter, loosed from mortal things,
As one abruptly finding wings,
Within that cup I dwelt and knew
All heaven's keen rapture through and through.
Is this your cup? That King are you?
Methinks in your true light I see
A wanton king of revelry.
Take hence your cup's foul incantation;
And grant me, Lord, when fiends intrude,
To keep in heart for my salvation,
Thy mystery of celsitude !

[The REVELLER thereupon reverses his vessel.]

The Hold of God

REVELLER.

Deep shadows 'twixt pale moonbeams lengthen,
The follies grow from end to end ;
No wine is left my heart to strengthen,
And thither whence I came returning
I carry the parch'd lips' endless yearning.

Strange spectres on my path attend,
And trembling hands do offer mutely up
The hollow semblance of an empty cup.

*[He returns as he came, but now with failing
gait. There is a moment's pause, and
the Chant sounds from the Chapel.]*

THE HIDDEN CHORUS.

Sufficient to the night was sleep, and late
We enter slowly on the waking state,
Uncertain yet if all the dreams be past ;
But having drunk of poppies, we collect—
A little band—to watch, with heads erect,
If anywise the day should break at last.

*[PEREGRINUS kneels on the sward with clasped
hands, while the moon brightens above
him.]*

PEREGRINUS.

I do believe that all I seek is here ;
That Zion's peace within this place abides ;
That wheresoe'er the steps of man have trod
There is an open path which leads to God ;
That all the veil that God from man divides
Would thinnest woof of fondest dream appear,

The Further Side of the Portal

Could we but clearly see with our mind's eyes.
It boots us not to seek in journeys long
What is more close than singer to his song,
But neither more nor less at the world's edge.
So take I here my stand and counsel wise
Do offer to myself, to heaven this pledge—
That here I rest, whatever yet betides.
Do Thou, dear Lord, Who art both part and whole,
Now with Thine All fulfil my part of soul!

*[In the speaking of these words there has
passed from among the shadows PUELLA
PELLACIA, intoning as she comes.]*

PUELLA.

Fair chantries, meetly for petitions wrought,
And castles in their building come to nought
If love's strong god do not abide in each,
And all the secret things of sweetness teach :
Yea, without love learning is foolishness,
And all sinks down to pasture with distress.

*[She takes PEREGRINUS by the hands, and so
is he raised. The moon has brightened
in heaven. It is like a fair evening
in summer.]*

PEREGRINUS.

Art thou more wise than doctors in the schools?
Thou hast not studied Aristotle's rules,
Still less at sovereign Plato's hidden spring
Demanded deeper wisdom's treasured thing.

PUELLA.

But I will bring you where that treasure lies.

The Hold of God

PEREGRINUS.

The purest learning fills the Courts of Love,
And Wisdom's day-star shines undimm'd above.
Learning is Love's true path, and Wisdom's prize
Is Love indeed, so all is summ'd in these
Of God and Love's most highest mysteries.

PUELLA.

Know then, fair sir, that in such paths as this
I also learn'd, and I am also wise,
A license hold to teach the lore of bliss,
All secret things in love's world lieffly done.

PEREGRINUS.

Declare, I charge you, how such joys are won,
For hither came I from a far-off land
The secret work of bliss to understand
And all my soul with good to satiate !

PUELLA.

Hid in my eyes and body passing sweet
The treasure lies. I am the open gate,
The life, the way, the love, the light and fire,
The end attain'd of all the heart's desire.
Whate'er your soul conceives freely I give,
That you in rapture may henceforward live
And that my rapture with your own may meet.
Come, love, and follow in my paths awhile
And visions false shall fade before my smile !
So fetously bedight, so close at hand,
Within these woodland-walks my arbours stand,
And in no tract is found retreat more fair
Or rigidly enclosed from all rude air.

The Further Side of the Portal

King in his palace shall not feast so well ;
Heal'd we shall be therein from all dark spell,
For potent herbs have I, and those who taste
Above all pain and sorrow shall be placed.
On moly beds, in meads that few men know,
Those herbs, *pardie*, were gather'd long ago.

PEREGRINUS.

I know, through secret halse and housel move
The saving prodigies of holy love
And that ineffable service there is done.
The Cup of Life, 'midst rites in secret heard,
Is by unspotted maidens minister'd,
In light which shines not from an earthly sun.
If you, like them, be privileged and clean,
Perchance the end of this my quest is seen ;
Address'd to follow where your hands may lead,
Right bless'd I count our meeting in my need.
But if with secret guile to tempt you strive,
Then other ways shall save my soul alive.

*[She throws up her arms, with a white face
in the moonlight, so falling back towards
her place.]*

PUELLA.

How dark, how arid wind the ways of sense ;
Desire is dead and all sweet dalliance :
There is no magic left in hand or glance ;
The couch is lonely and the limbs are cold.
Dark, phantom-haunted, void of dear defence—
Kissing is over now : poor love is old !

*[She returns as she came, with wailing and
wringing of hands.]*

The Hold of God

PEREGRINUS.

Now does the need increase from more to more,
As one by one the ways about me close.
First human learning, its beloved door
Shut in my eager face, since he who held
The keys which open, who the prospect knows,
Had nothing in its treasures of eld
To offer him who in the inward sees—
Save outward figures and their similes.
And now the sanctity of human love,
Which proves for some the path to God above,
Has at its entrance-gate for me unveil'd
A wanton likeness of lubricities. . . .
With what new clamour am I here assail'd ?

*[There enters a troop of REVELLERS, both men
and women, headed by a FOOL. They
dance round PEREGRINUS, singing.]*

CHORUS.

Folly rules in peace and strife,
Leads the husband, lights the wife,
Makes and mars the marriage-bed,
Brings the man and maid to birth,
Roughs or smooths the path they tread,
Covers up their bones with earth.
Tell me, therefore, what is he ?
What should Master Folly be ?
Pleasant Folly, life of life.

*[The circle is broken into two groups, left and
right, below PEREGRINUS, the FOOL
standing on his left side.]*

FOOL.

Life of life, and that am I :
Prithee, tell me how and why.

The Further Side of the Portal

Ruling country-side and town,
Kings bow underneath my crown :
I the peasant and his spade,
I the merchant, stock and trade ;
Sailor in his ship at sea,
He is I and I am he.
In the college and the school,
I am learning and its rule,
That which works in hand and brain,
That the toil and moil attain—
All the loss and all the gain.
Unto Wisdom's high estate
I am pathway, I am gate :
Wisdom is my secret name.

Come they early, come they late,
I the trumpet, I the fame
And the voice in loud acclaim.
I am lovers and their lips,
All love's glory, all its shame,
Eyes in shining or eclipse ;
And where e'er the soft hand slips—
That forsooth and there I am.

Break and form and break again ;
Weave the dance with might and main ;
Follow, follow on my call !
Who shall help it ? Who will strive ?
Lilt of song-tide through the years,
All the maytime, all the tears,
Whatsoever chance arrive—
I am that and I am all.

[*The dance recommences more wildly, gathering about PEREGRINUS. He is approached by the FOOL in his antics, who shakes his bells violently as the ring breaks up at length.*

The Hold of God

FOOL.

Young Master, prithee, of your grace,
Why wear such sad and sober face
When all kind folly loudly pleads
For modes and manners debonair?
Why also wear outlandish weeds,
As one but late from school escaped?
Mark these wild glades, in moonlight draped;
Our motley mark and tousell'd hair!
Your heavy eyes, your careworn look
Do smack too much of judgment's book.
I counsel you, let sense go hang
And join in time this clownish gang,
Which never learn'd to speak or spell
Aught save words delectable
In perfect praise of Folly's King;
And these with might and main they sing,
Nor care for sober rule a fig,
But dance about and whirligig!

PEREGRINUS.

I pray you, sir, since now the hour is late
And on a pilgrimage from far I come,
Chide not the habit of my mean estate;
Perchance 'tis not more mean than other some!
I am a scholar and I seek as such
Some vestures of the mysteries to touch;
If Folly's themes and joys you folk prefer
I will not offer an affront to her,
Or counsel force on you her praise to cease:
Do you the same, and let us part in peace!

FOOL.

His anxious face, outlandish vogue
And sorry accent well proclaim

The Further Side of the Portal

This youth at best a cheerless rogue,
Unmeet to breathe kind Folly's name.
But, merry men, it matters not :
Come, leave him to his luckless lot ;
And pipes and bells, with jangling sound
Shall lead us to congenial ground—
Round and round, and merry go round !

*[The troop of REVELLERS make off, with
shrill noises.]*

PEREGRINUS.

The night is long which now is scarce begun ;
Full sorely here the comfortable sun
I miss, who am so lowly and bewray'd :
Will no one come to offer me true aid ?
Ah, Master good, thy prudent counsel left,
I am well visited, midst snares bereft !

*The stage lightens, and the QUEEN OF FAËRIE enters,
habited in green samite, like a fair lady.*

QUEEN.

Alas, poor youth, what sad mischance hath brought
Thy hapless steps to this sad place of thought,
Where verges of all worlds do mix and meet
And men are weariful of heart and feet ?
In haste I pass along, with clouded face,
Returning to my own auspicious place ;
But all my powers have waned, my light is dim ;
The haunting terror of a dubious hymn,
Which Nature never breathed through woodland trees,
Sounds in the cold air like the scourge of seas,

The Hold of God

And restless things are moving to and fro,
To poison all the joy they cannot know.
In sooth the place with peril is beset ;
But follow quickly, while the time is yet,
Where thou canst save at least thy flesh alive !

PEREGRINUS.

Ah, Lady fair, I would, I trow, derive,
Before my scanty days are overpast,
Some joy, long tides of sorrow to outlast,
And know the truth of things from all which
seems

The sorry semblance of my aching dreams !
If thou canst lead me thither, I would reach
The pleasant havens thy mellifluous speech
Declares thine own, and on thy path attend,
However far—yea, unto the world's end.
If thou hast powers and gifts with power to give,
Let it be life, I pray, for I would live
And reach what lies beyond our mortal breath,
Wherein we eat not bread of life but death !

QUEEN.

Poor youth, I pity thee ; I take thy hand,
Thou hast no need to question or to fear ;
I am the youngest queen in Faërie Land,
And but to crown thy days has brought me here !

PEREGRINUS.

Oh lady, listen to that voice without
My ear, so softly breathing, and such doubt
Within my soul inspiring !

The Further Side of the Portal

QUEEN.

Heed it not !

The Halls of Faërie bless the human lot,
And years as days shall pass when thou hast seen
The unveil'd beauty of an elfin queen.

PEREGRINUS.

Per signum Tau, per signum Tau,
Keep me, Great Lord, in Thy true law !
[*Crossing himself.*

QUEEN.

Ah, woe is me ! What malison
Falls on me from this gracious sign ?
Ah, Light that is of all divine
And grace of grace I shall not know !
What evil has the elfin done ?
My beauty and my power are mine :
Halls of Faërie, shine and shine ;
Save me, save me from this woe !
[*Exit.*

PEREGRINUS.

Right well it shall appear that mortal life
Is all engirded with incessant strife
And doubled with unending heaviness,
One knowledge lacking which alone can bless.
All woe is in the world, all want of love,
Because none thinks within his heart thereof,
Nor takes he heed of the great mysteries.
Surely there lie conceal'd in all man sees
High sacraments, holy and full of grace,
Meet to transform this world's laborious place
To hill of joy, which now is vale of tears,
If we could see with eyes, and our own ears

The Hold of God

Could open surely to the secret things.
A voice unknown continually sings
Of sacred Presences to earth denied
But seen in secret chapels at mass-tide,
And of the powerful words that there are said,
Which never enter in the learner's head,
Which no man knows, save God his soul has taught,
Though all our pain is by their absence wrought.
So speaks the voice unknown, but though I hear,
It is with clouded mind and torpid ear.
Nathless, if knowledge be our souls denied,
Full surely peace may come at altar-side
And sweet humility shall bless his lot
Which kneels in worship, understanding not.
Will it not also on a tide befall
That he who follows on this poor man's call
Shall find such meaning in the mystic chaunt
As all good Latin scholars may not vaunt,
Since well 'tis said that he who seeks shall find
And to receive when ask'd good givers are inclined?

I pray Thee, therefore, fair sweet Lord of all,
That some more lowly good may me befall,
If one so worthless, even in his need,
Must for Thy lofty mercies vainly plead!
So if those heights and deeps of Cup and Host,
Seen in the faith of dream, should prove the most
My aspiration to demand can dare,
May I at least their vision passing fair
Keep clean within me through my days unborn,
Thus hallowing a lot perchance forlorn
With sense of the high things exceeding ken!

[PEREGRINUS turns to the Chapel and kneels
reverently towards it, but without mov-
ing nearer. The moon is obscured, but
the light increases within the sacred
building, streaming through the windows.]

The Further Side of the Portal

PEREGRINUS.

And, for the rest, in common ways of men
I pray at least that I may never lack
One blessing of the seeker's daily track :
In quiet hold or hermitage to find
A priest with penances my heart to shrive,
Some space of prayer to purge the wandering mind,
And those true offices which save alive
The souls of common men in every place.
Then let me pass in Thee, with so much grace
As one may have who would have trod the road
To Kings-Town and the spiritual abode,
If call had come, yet on a rush-strewn floor
Has been content to dwell with open door
Beneath a humble thatch,
Knowing that somewhere there is Mont Salvatch !
Give me my proper eyes, the soul's true wit,
That—past these clumsy vehicles of sense,
As through those portals—I may pierce and find
That which shall open to illumined mind :
Beyond the sacrament, high grace of it,
And Thou in all reveal'd for my defence ;
Behind the poorest bread, what godly feast ;
Behind the Mass-words of the meanest priest,
The tincture's secret and its mastery ;
But, most of all, within this body of me,
Teach me to see my Soul, and That in Thee.

[PEREGRINUS rises. *The stage lightens and* DOCTOR
SERAPHICUS *enters, in the sorry weeds of a pilgrim,*
as one that is sore beset. There is now a light in
the eyes of PEREGRINUS, as if a time of dream had
passed over.

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

So, therefore, seeking still to gain our rest,
Henceforth we follow on a further quest ;

The Hold of God

No star of all the stars contains our prize—
Conceal'd in the Unearthly Paradise.

[PEREGRINUS *approaches, with head bent and
arms crossed upon his breast.*

PEREGRINUS.

May God for ever in His keeping have
Your heart and soul! This comfortable word
In sooth is other than my ears have heard
Since first my fortune to this fastness drave;
So for the secret grace which you have brought
Suffer the gift of thanks and grateful thought!
I pray you, gentle sir, all else before,
'To hold me as your servant evermore,
And if the path to Paradise, above
All nightly stars that here can manifest,
May by your grace be in clean words express'd,
I humbly say that there is set my love
And there is fix'd my only hope of rest;
Whence I would place my portion in your hands,
Obedient for such end to all commands.

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

If that the way of Paradise engage
Your mind in this green youth, it is most well,
And haply to attain it in your age
You shall not fail, good friend, but, sooth to tell,
Whatever words from lips untrain'd may fall,
Most sad distress has still a louder call,
And for this present, my great need is such,
As one that has been hurtled overmuch,
I would the rather with my failing force
Have to your charitable mood recourse.
Perchance you can me succour, and anon,
When on my pilgrim-journey I have gone,

The Further Side of the Portal

God will remember, for your kindness true,
Your fair ambition and take thought on you.

PEREGRINUS.

Sir, I have little of the world its boon ;
A scholar poor am I, who, from the rule
Full deeply laid in Aristotle's school
All recently come forth, my steps have turn'd
In quest of higher grounds than there discern'd ;
And having heard that in most holy ways
High hands a cup of benediction raise
For better hallowing and healing man,
With anxious thought, a certain private plan
I have sometime within my mind devised
To do my worship at that sacred shrine ;
And if my worthless state be not despised
By the high comforters and dukes divine,
It is my hope the burdens of my life
To lay therein and cease henceforth from strife.
But I have tarried till the rising moon
Should shortly o'er these arches of green leaf
To quaking darkness bring her full relief,
And in no wise from any ban exempt,
All hordes of mischief me have come to tempt.
Whence I have taken that resource which stands
Wide open to poor men in all the lands,
And—being sorely, like the winepress, trod—
Have cast my need upon the faith of God,
And so keep here, watching with empty hands.
It may be for my help that other some
Than thou, O true, sweet friend, to me shall come ;
But since thou art the first whom I have heard
To utter in this place a peaceful word,
I could not choose but think, from halls unseen
Sent for my soul's true solace thou hast been.

The Hold of God

Yet if I err therein and thou alone
A stranger comest to a man unknown,
For aught that I can proffer in thine aid—
It is thine own already, not as lent
But freely given by one sore afraid
That pauper gifts can bring to none content.

[The night has clouded about them.]

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

These are high words, fair sir, but as you spoke
The night, which waxes late, grew passing cold ;
If, 'midst your weeds, you had perchance a cloak
Wherewith I might these shrivell'd limbs enfold,
Much would I bless such gift ; and you perchance
Would on your path to Paradise advance,
If lightly clothed, more rapidly than now.
For many saintly histories relate
What rare rewards on charity await,
So that all heaven doth this mean earth endow.
I leave my humble matter in your hands,
Not knowing rightly how your humour stands.

PEREGRINUS.

The night in truth is chill and much I fear
The hap of tempest, if we linger here.
Full bitterly the wind about us wails
Vague snatches of sad, antiquated tales
I well remember having heard of yore,
As sadly and more fully by the folk
In my poor village whisper'd, long before
I learn'd that there were great and wondrous things
Of which no wind or water ever sings.
It may be, sir, their immemorial loss
Doth make all Nature seem to wear a cross,

The Further Side of the Portal

And hence she cannot comfort her dark self
Or her dejected children, but a gulf
For ever widens in the hearts of both.
I dare to think that could we each attain
Those certain places in a fair domain,
Where the high, holy secrets undeclared
Are treasured out of sight, then, by my troth,
One moment of their vision, if we dared
Indeed to look, would make all cold and heat
Which scourges this our temporal retreat
For ever more to us indifferent.
But till the night's keen arrows shall be spent,
Since this my wallet holds not cloak or weeds,
But some few things which spring from Plato's seeds
And one torn mass-book which I wont to use,
Do not the little I can give refuse,
And, coming close beside me, let me shield
Your age with warmth from youth which yet is mine !
Perchance beyond the forest and the field
Some better shelter, till the sun shall shine,
A little quest may find ; and I will guide
My pace by yours and any hold espied
Will search to see if it can take you in.

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

Since every path should warily be trod,
And those the most which lead at length to God ;
Before this pious journey we begin—
Where loving kindness leads upon the road,
Hearing the rumours of some bless'd abode—
I would make sure, in case we part at length,
Of fit provision to sustain my strength.
Some silver coins for this is all I need :
Give them, I pray, and may your quest succeed !
I do remember, now I think, of one,
Who having such a quest as this begun,

The Hold of God

By ghostly counsel left all goods behind ;
But this would tax perchance your youthful mind.

PEREGRINUS.

Master, no purse have I, which, by your leave,
Has never made me sorry, since I heard
Far off the tidings of a distant Word
Which could true life impart. But now I grieve
That in this matter of your need, again,
My anxious heart must yearn to help in vain.
Yet stay, perchance some scholar of the waste
Beyond these woods, in worldly goods well placed,
Might buy these books which I have prized full long ;
Plato, like Aristotle, may be wrong ;
But in this mass-book such shall find anon
The sounding grace of many an antiphon ;
And I will keep them as I can in mind
Till it is granted me once more to find
A priest to shrive me from my former sins
And give me leave to serve when Mass begins. . . .
Prepared our journey in the night to take,
Pray, by your blessing, fair that journey make !

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

*Ex hoc nunc usque ad æternum sit pax vobiscum,
Et divinum auxilium maneat semper nobiscum.*
Because from flowers of earth at need arise
The shining blossoms which are stars in skies,
I pray thy virgin lilies so transferr'd
May soon the chalice of thy dreams engird !
May wine of life therefrom, vouchsafed to few,
Sustain them sweetly with supernal dew !
May streams of life in thee be so reveal'd
That thou at length shalt be in life conceal'd !

The Further Side of the Portal

Come great abstractions which at times befall
When that which once was outward and apart,
Submerged completely in the All in All,
Knows God no longer by the yearning heart,
But as the One which doth with one abide!
Taste thou the sleep which turns all worlds aside,
From age-long motions in the great abyss,
To the inbreathing rest ; and that is this !
Worlds beyond worlds—on thee such peace descend,
And bring the quiet night and perfect end !

PEREGRINUS.

I know thee now ; in days I ne'er forget,
For my most high instruction, we have met
In lonely places—yea, by toiling seas,
Where thou didst give me the first mysteries.
I pray thee, being weary and oppress'd,
To take me hence into thine utter rest.

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

A little while, herein, we come to each,
Exchanging symbols in the guise of speech ;
A little while from one another go,
And at the end the greater blessings know.
Thou askest rest, and that is wisely said :
If I can give thee sleep, give thou me bread !

PEREGRINUS.

I do repent indeed my dearth of thought
Who no refreshment in my srip have brought.
On other ends than food my heart was bent ;
And, seeking hidden manna, felt content,
Until the great horizons are unfurl'd,
To fast through all rogations of the world. . . .

[PEREGRINUS *falls upon his knees in an
attitude of supplication.*

The Hold of God

Master, to whom I think that angels sing,
The poor oblation of myself I bring
And at thy feet do place for good or ill,
For thee to work thereon thy holy will.

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

O fair, sweet Lord, with what great power dost Thou
Thy blessing to the poor of heart allow,
Who, being ask'd for things full soon made void,
Are to the uttermost unfurnish'd found,
But yet full oft have brothers overjoy'd
By treasures incorruptible, and, crown'd
In all the light of givers, the whole land
Replenish royally, with open hand,
Yet are themselves by bounty evermore
Garnish'd with precious and increasing store ! . . .
Therefore, dear scion of the elect, hereby,
Before all worlds, truly I testify
That thy free gift above vain things of earth
Is precious first by love and next by worth,
Whence I accept it from clean hands which give.
And howsoe'er blind instinct prompts to live—
In things the highest as the meanest, most
In those whose youth as yet has spent no fires—
Here comes the utmost term of thy desires
And all ambition's lightly vested host.
Thou hast thyself surrender'd and I take
Both hermitage and hold, mine own to make,
Since verily thy life, and nothing less,
I needed when I ask'd for simple bread.
That lasts no longer than an hour's distress,
As gold, however gotten, on his head
Who taketh thought thereof, returns like lead ;
As care of raiment and with cold to strive
Will hinder those who would at ends arrive,

The Further Side of the Portal

And something seek to finish ere they move
From courts of passion to high halls of love.
Now therefore, to make end of all that means
Prolong'd dejection in these mournful scenes,
And leaves the soul unfit to travel back ;
I do invite thee here to choose a track
Which, far from foolish things of birth and breath,
May pass indeed through torrents of cold death,
But instantly thereafter wider schemes
Shall part the dream of stars from star of dreams.
Now, since the tide is late and none can tell
What follows on hereafter, let us call
Softly for help from Him Which helpeth all,
And so pronounce in patience our farewell,
With *mea culpa* on the humbled breast ;
The mass is over, *ite missa est*.

PEREGRINUS (*having risen*).

Master, acquit it that my heart is cold
And that, as one to whom it hath been given
With foes full long and sadly to have striven,
I do thus suddenly grow worn and old !
Herein it seems as if my days had past
With many veils of darkness overcast
And now their pallid span they here expend
With bitter rivings at this ghostly end.
Yet through the shrouded gulches of the gloom,
And past your prophet-voice, thus preaching doom,
Persuasive tokens of a light long miss'd
Find entrance and with late appeals persist
That in the common ways of Nature dwelt
Great joys, for ever by those hearts unfelt
Which do the cryptic paths alone applaud.
So also suddenly the frosts have thaw'd,
All turgid night from the empyrean rolls
And earthly spaces fill with happy souls.

The Hold of God

Now, high as lark in heaven or deep as bowers
Wherein the sea heals immemorial flowers,
The world's great organ sounds through spacious halls
And all the faithful fauna sweetly calls
To hear how priestly Nature, ere they pass,
Pontifically chants her twelvemonth mass,
And at each noon triumphantly lifts up
The measure overbrimm'd of the sun's cup.
Meseems immeasurable gain is loss
Perchance not less unmeasured, and the cross,
Which through the place of suffering spreads wide,
In heaven itself no less counts crucified.
But, making end of this, to die or not
For all things good in thy horizon's lot,
I do hereby, with so much of freewill
As heritors of woe reserve them still,
Make over, to accord my faithful pledge,
The life I call my own to thy sword's edge.
God grant me not with the last pang to strive
And after death's dark sting me keep alive,
That past the rubicon of this world's rim,
By paths unmanifest, I may reach Him! . . .
Let us go forth, kind sir, lest all of bliss
I, who have lost so much, at end should miss! . . .
Peccavi cogitatione, Lord—
Verbo et opere—I seek the sword!

MASTER.

From substitutes of joy which pall and cease,
To spiritual place, come thou in peace!
To cities shining in the morning land
Thee takes, by paths of peace, this guiding hand.
So shalt thou reach at length and touch the latch
Which keeps the secret door in Mont Salvatch,
And when thou tirst trembling at the pin
The keepers of the courts shall let thee in.

The Further Side of the Portal

PEREGRINUS.

I have been offer'd Wine, but he which brought
Was sorry and constrain'd beyond all thought ;
And his poor vanity's pretence was seen.
I have been offer'd Love, and this has been—
From everlasting—the chief stay of man ;
But in the heart thereof a hidden plan
Was cherish'd to delude me and undo.
Next Folly came in weeds of motley hue,
With hair unkempt, who wildly spoke anon
Of the waste years that have in wisdom gone
And counsell'd pleasant ways, the which dispense
His fond disciples from all sober sense.
But I had learn'd some elements in books
Whereat the Masters cast disdainful looks,
And thus, although imperfectly equipp'd,
Our bales to ports asunder straight were shipp'd.
In fine, it fell that being left alone,
With less than little I could call my own,
There gleam'd, with clouded grace and helping hand,
A queen emerging out of Faërie Land—
Who, past the woful gate of human tears,
Did offer anodynes for misspent years.
So in my heart such strong desire was bred
That spells to save from self seem'd needed then
For me so strongly tried by maids and men.
But at one orison that fair dame fled,
For whom I pray no less the cross may come
At length in healing, as to other some.
Thus in great dark once more alone I dwelt,
Until the magic of thy voice was felt
Conversing, as from other years than these,
Of life for life and such deep mysteries.
And though it sounds to me a mournful word,
Thus on the early verge of manhood heard,

The Hold of God

I do believe, dear master, being thine,
That it is medicine more than anodyne.
Yet ere my sacrifice, completed, strips
My one possession, let thy patient lips
Declare, I pray thee, since they are so wise—
Beyond most wit—in these high mysteries :
What is that secret lore which may expound
Wherefore man is so sorry on this round
Of earthly things, why nought of joyance is
Which at the end falls not to him amiss ?

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

Surely the answer doth most plain appear—
It is the secret of man being here.

PEREGRINUS.

What then, amidst his stress and its sharp pain,
Shall be the greatest thing that he can gain ?

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

Who runs shall read herein : great gain they find
Who to be here no more apply their mind.

PEREGRINUS.

But how and whither shall the mind be bent
Which being here no more, is then content ?

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

Thus it is with him who, by God His grace,
Gains that which makes all ways the Holy Place.

PEREGRINUS.

How shall this greatest treasure under heaven
To man of poor desert be truly given ?

The Further Side of the Portal

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

If having sought in vain through things without,
To find its gate within he turns about.

PEREGRINUS.

I pray thee take me on to thy far goal !
My flesh is weary of itself and drags
A chain which sorely past all longing lags.
Receive my life and let me see my soul !
Too long have we been parted in the ways
Which lead so far from any peace or praise.

[DOCTOR SERAPHICUS *takes PEREGRINUS by the arm and leads him up stage, as if moving eastward. They approach the door of the Chapel.*

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

Line upon line, and there is none left out,
When earthly shades in fine are put to rout.

PEREGRINUS.

In manus tuas ; fair, sweet Lord of all :
Thy Thorns shall crown me and Thy Cross enthrall !

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

Thus through the night, as through those wells most cold
Which must each passing soul receive and fold,
I take thee by a path that from the West
Leads forth—*mysterium consummatum est*—

The Hold of God

The mystery of mortal life—and thus
In depths beyond all deeps of perfect peace
Perchance the East on high shall visit us,
Which in such light expect the heart's increase.

*[The doors of the Chapel open from within and—albeit
there is a great light—it appears simple and un-
adorned. As they move forward :*

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

Beyond the vision and that grace we see,
All deeper measures of the mystery !

*[Solemn music is heard, and the light increases. The
Sanctuary now appears to be circular in shape,
having a vaulted roof, painted sapphire colour,
and emblazoned with the Sun, Moon and Stars.
In the centre is an Altar-Shrine, having in the
midst thereof a great cup, in appearance of
emerald-coloured jasper, glowing red within, and
enriched with a stand after the manner of chased
gold. The back-cloth represents mountains and
clear sky.*

*Three KEEPERS OF THE MYSTERY are discovered
before the Shrine. He in the centre is an ancient
man, whose vestments are like those of a Bishop.
Of the others, the one on the right hand is of
middle life, but the third, on the left, is a beard-
less youth. These are in priestly vestments. They
are surrounded, in addition to the torchbearers,
by Seven Deacons, who are clothed as EQUITES
CLERICI—that is, with a cassock descending to
the feet, a surplice of white linen, a knightly
mantle brodered with violet, a ruby pectoral
cross, a girdle of violet silk, knotted in front.
The Chief Deacon stands behind the BISHOP, and*

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has the six other Deacons, three on each side. The BISHOP offers incense in a thurible. The BISHOP returns the thurible to its bearer. He faces westward.

BISHOP.

VENI AD ME, FRATRES CARISSIMI, ACCIPITE OSCULUM
SANCTÆ FRATERNITATIS ET VERBUM PACIS ET TRANSEANT
A ME INTER VOS OMNES.

[He gives the Kiss of Peace and the Secret Word to the Second Keeper, from whom they pass to the Third, thence to the Chief Deacon and the rest of the Brethren.

Two young men in white and gold draperies of the Second Order of the Mystery come forward and clothe PEREGRINUS in the marriage-robe of the Sanctuary. This is done in silence, and they return as they came. The DOCTOR SERAPHICUS takes PEREGRINUS to the threshold, between the doors, saying :

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS.

*Domine, non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum,
sed tantum dic verbo et sanabitur anima mea.*

[PEREGRINUS kneels at the Shrine.

*The HIDDEN CHORUS of Clean Offerings breathes out very
softly and solemnly behind the Holy Place of the Shrine.*

CHORUS.

From day to day, because of human sins,
O'er all the world the blessed Mass begins.

From day to day, ere that oblation ends,
A certain far-off peace on earth descends.

The Hold of God

The secret centre offers mutely up
The Inward Mystery of the Outward Cup.

That which on earth is validly begun
In many places, here conjoins in one.

Thereby, in the good pleasure of the Lord,
All toiling worlds shall be to rest restored.

DOCTOR SERAPHICUS (*addressing the Most Blessed
Company*).

Seeing, high brethren and adepts exempt,
That outward vestures for a time may tempt
The children of desire; but in the end
Their tribulation's strong appeals ascend
And mercy cometh from the mercy seat;
I, even I, the Herald of the Call,
Was with full powers commission'd to estreat
Some certain wiles encompassing the feet
Of this our son and brother, lest he fall.
Now, having the allotted tests applied,
With those purgations to his need allied,
I bring him hither, by your holy leave,
Some token of your favour to receive,
That his translation may, by saving grace,
From seeming death to very life take place.

*The HIDDEN CHORUS of Clean Offerings chants solemnly
behind the Holy Place of the Shrine.*

CHORUS.

Once on the threshold of this life's distress
The Steward of the Mysteries, to keep
Intact a certain narrow space of sleep,
Proffer'd the chalice of forgetfulness.

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Then man's departing soul, amidst its fears,
Stoop'd and thereof drank deep,
Forecasting toil of unfelicitous years
And the long aching past the gate of tears.
Hence it befalls that in the show which seems
There is but dreaming and a dreamer's schemes,
For no true waking can to man befall
Whose hold has loosed upon the life of all
And the great treasures which do perish not.
It doth behove us therefore, sadly placed
Like this, if it may be, to mend our lot
And seek one high light shining in the waste :
Such beacon, lifted through the dark, can bring
Alone our soul to its awakening.
So past the gate of tears at length it sees
That chasten'd Steward of the Mysteries
Lift, on the threshold of the things which be,
A consecrated cup of memory.

[*The BISHOP turns with extended arms pronouncing the Dominus Vobiscum. At the raising of the cup PEREGRINUS falls upon his face ; the Deacons gather about him in a semicircle. The HIDDEN CHORUS of Clean Offerings again breathes out, but this time triumphantly.*

CHORUS.

*Hac die laetus meruit beatas
Scandere sedes.*

[*The doors of the Chapel are closed. There is complete silence. The doors are then opened for a second time. PEREGRINUS stands alone in the Sanctuary, on the uppermost step of the Shrine, holding the Sacred Cup.*

The doors of the Chapel are closed. There is complete silence. The doors are then opened for

The Hold of God

a third time. There is now neither Shrine nor Cup. PEREGRINUS stands alone in the Sanctuary, with uplifted arms.

PEREGRINUS.

ECCE REGNUM DEI INTRINSECUS, ET DEUS, ET CHRISTUS
DOMINUS NOSTER.

THE FURTHER SIDE OF THE
PORTAL

PART II

*THE BOOK OF THE KING'S DOLE AND
CHANTRY FOR PLAIN SONG*

Desiderabile desiderium, impretriabile pretium, à cunctis
philosophis positum.—ROSARIUM PHILOSOPHORUM.

The Proem to the King's Dole

THE blessed legends tell that God made man
After the fashion of the cosmic plan ;
And hence, in miniature and outline, he
Holds all its vastness sacramentally,
Being its mirror and its synthesis.
Nature's great elements are therefore his,
To high perfection in his frame refined
And in pure motions of the natural mind.
Thereto was added, far exceeding sense,
A certain rare and secret quintessence—
By those well known which seek the Holy Place
And light far-shining from the Father's face.
Thereby man's natural and human part—
With all the fire of mind and fire of heart—
Did suffer transmutation and receive
The gifts from God of those who well believe.
Hence such high pathways of the soul he trod
As are reserved to those who walk with God
And joyful in one mystic city dwell :
All this at least the sacred legends tell.
But in some way which passes mortal thought
Man's royal nature unto shame was brought ;
Whence that which once was elemental fire,
But held thereafter the divine desire ;
And that which being stainless earth of old
Was quintessentially transform'd to gold ;

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Such strange corrosion underwent and loss
That angel-gold was turn'd to dragon's dross,
While the immaculate and virgin earth
Was turn'd to common clay, of meanest worth.
O image of the One! What evil spell
Could thus prevail, the sacred legends tell.
Behold him now, from early place and state
Sent into exile; there, disconsolate;
There, lame and halt and blind; there, inly maim'd,
Within a desert Nature unreclaim'd
Set, as he could, amidst all toil and pain,
His unprotected body to sustain
And his poor wounded soul to soothe and heal!
O voice of ages, raised in wild appeal!
Must man for ever in such dolour dwell?
Ah, list again what sacred legends tell!

For on sore straits and sorrows of the soul
There came the balm and mercy of the Dole.
Yes, the King's Dole from the King's Place was sent
To soothe and strengthen in our languishment;
And thus were some through many ages fed
With wine transmuted and an alter'd bread,
By faithful ministers distributed,
And in the blessed Chantry of the King
Set up for service high. The censers swing
There, while for ever the great altar rays
Burn in this darkness of our mortal days;
And 'midst the sick humanities, do there
The white-alb'd ministers, with tender care,
Pass and repass, repeating words of peace—
O'er cups that fail not in their fair increase
And the unfailing host's white miracle,
Strong to sustain, to save—as legends tell.

And so the soul of man, amidst the waste,
Of its first nourishment can dimly taste,

The Book of the King's Dole

Whereof the saving virtue works within
Against the venom of the life of sin ;
The age-long hurts within the soul are cured,
The blind eyes open'd, the old heights assured,
And though without the Chantry, through the waste,
Of death in place of life still exiles taste,
The Blessed Shrine abides for those who seek.

With loving aspect, mortified and meek,
Still in the reverence of the rites concur
Each solemn-voiced, slow-moving minister ;
The bread is broken and the wine is pour'd ;
Each wounded spirit is to health restored ;
And, wash'd from stain, the travel-weary feet
Are fairly rested by the Mercy-Seat.
Then, through the open door which stands behind
The altar, passing, they go forth and find
That Hidden House whereof the legends tell
In words of rumour, words of oracle.

THE PEOPLE OF THE MYSTERY

SOROR JANUA CÆLI	<i>High Priestess of the Sanctuary</i>
PATER OMNIPOTENS	<i>Pontifex Maximus</i>
FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR	<i>Priest of the Order of Melchisedec</i>
PATER SERVUS SERVORUM	<i>The Great Abbot of the Chantry</i>
SOROR BEATA PULCHRA	<i>A Stained Virgin</i>
THE LOVING FATHER CHRISTIAN ROSY CROSS	<i>Doorkeeper</i>
THE LITTLE SOROR PUELLA	<i>A Child of the Mystery</i>
FRATER E MILLIBUS VIX UNUM	<i>Most Wise Sovereign and Epopht</i>

*The Familiars of the Holy Office: the Commemorating Chorus
of the Faithful, ID EST, Hierophants.*

*The Scene of this Greater Initiation is the assumed Sanctuary of the
Holy Assembly, with the Veil of the Holy of Holies behind the
Altar.*

THE CEREMONY OF OPENING THE CHANTRY

The Convention of the Holy Assembly takes place mystically in the Sanctuary of the outward Church, and there is no Temple, having a Locus Sanctorum and an abiding Presence, in which the Rite of the King's Dole cannot be appropriately worked. The particular arrangement of the Holy Place is shewn in the Faithful Words of the Mystery, and it is so simple that any cathedral, and at need any hermitage, with the necessary issue behind, can be appropriated as a hold for the pageant. It should be observed, or at least in most cases, that the Sanctuary is not oriented according to the cardinal points, because the East follows the Master. The entrance at the imputed West of the Chancel is guarded by two Great Pillars, inscribed, in the tongue of men and angels, with the respective words MERCY and SEVERITY. The broad intervening space is taken up by the five steps of the Chancel, but ingress is not attained, except at need by the Epopets, through the Rood-Screen betwixt the Pillars, as the column inscribed SEVERITY is the Place of Indulgence by which admission is given from without.

At the imputed East, behind the Altar, there is a heavy curtain embroidered with figures of palm-trees. A certain natural light filters through the Chantry, but it is tinged and transmuted by intermediaries of coloured glass and by emblazonments in the great windows North and South, belonging to the body of the Church. An enormous TAU Cross lies upon the Chancel steps, but there is no figure of man extended thereon. The Lamp of the Sanctuary, which burns at the opening with exceeding brightness, and the major lights of the Altar illuminate the place moderately.

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The Most High SOROR JANUA CÆLI, the Most Merciful PATER OMNIPOTENS and the Released FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR enter the Sanctuary from the curtain behind the Altar. They are followed by the Chorus of Hierophants, which pours in through a secret door opened on the eastern side from within the Pillar of Mercy. These are types of a great multitude which no man can number. Lastly, the FAMILIARS or SERVANTS OF THE HOLY OFFICE enter through a similar door opened in the Pillar of Severity. There is a crowd of worshippers in the body of the Church; these are Postulants, external Servitors and Probationers of the Lesser Grades, who follow the Stations of the Cross, tell the beads of the Rosary, or recite orisons at the side chapels in aisles and transepts, where the ordinary services and public offices are conducted, seemingly with no one understanding or even seeing what takes place in the Sanctuary. The Loving Father CHRISTIAN ROSY CROSS is seated within the door of the Rood-Screen looking down the great nave.

The General Assembly in the Chancel having repaired to their proper places, the SOROR JANUA CÆLI, officiating as Celebrant-in-chief, commences the Ritual of the Mass with the Introibo ad Altare Dei, as in the Ordinary of the Missal, the two Pontifices Maximi assuming the functions of Deacons. The Liturgy is in general outward respects identical with the authorised form, but there are certain changes in the Epistle and Gospel parts, while the Preface, the Canon and the Secreta seem entirely different. The words of Consecration are unknown, but it is supposed that these also are the formulæ of a more secret Rite. After the Panem cœlestem accipiam, the office for the time being is suspended altogether. The Celebrants turn towards the body of the Chancel, the SOROR JANUA CÆLI having her back to the Tabernacle, the PATER OMNIPOTENS, as First Deacon, being on the Gospel side of the second Altar-step, and the FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR at the Epistle horn on the third or lowest step.

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SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

With recollection, in the Name and Cause
Of all which stands behind the written laws
And is the last intention of the Word
That even here is by no Epopt heard,
I witness to the city and the world
How Grace abounding has all flags unfurl'd,
Prompting me here and now to exercise
That gift of ministry which in me lies
And to decree forthwith a sacred thing :
This venerable chancel's opening,
So to dispense the King's most Royal Dole
And to enrich thereby a chosen soul.
But heedful first that all be duly done,
With Sacred Names is this true Rite begun ;
Some ye shall utter in your hearts, but most
Praise clearly Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

We know, High Sister, these are One in Three,
Saving the Hallows and the Mystery.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

What sacred usage to the Rite is brought?

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

A reservation of illumined thought.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

And what does reverence of reserve impart
To this high formula of secret art?

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PATER OMNIPOTENS.

That sacramental numbers can infold
The truth which never is by numbers told.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

The sense hereof expound with loving word.

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

They that have ears to hear long since have heard.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

The power within me your reluctance presses.

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

The truth I hold to all high truth confesses,
But let the lesser issues cease to vex :
De minimis non curat sacra lex.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Does truth more dimly shine in less than great?

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

It is the measure of all high estate,
Yet does the ample mode the less contain ;
And hence the wise commend us first to gain
All that which signifies and leave the rest.
What is the end by which a man is blest ?
What exile fell upon him far behind,
Suspending faculties, beclouding mind,

The Book of the King's Dole

Replacing royal heritage by want
And sealing memory's all-holding font ?
How shall man now into his rights return ?
Shall he the witness of his senses spurn,
The needs of flesh deny, and thus work back ?
Or is there haply some more holy track,
Some gospel fitted to the words of joy,
Commission'd to fulfil and not destroy,
Telling that paths of rapture can be trod
And that beatitude leads best to God ?

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Who, faithful and holy Father, answers these
Recurring questions of the soul's misease ?

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

They who possess and can apply the keys.
Therefore this hallow'd chantry, from the first
Of things, to quench the hunger and the thirst
Which spur all seekers on, both quick and dead,
Was founded that the chosen might be led ;
And into truth—as great evolved from less,
As archetype declared in semblances—
Through many ages has it brought the race
First to the Blazon'd Veil and then the Face.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Ah, highest substitute of long-lost Word !
When moving spheres first sang together heard
And since not utter'd under any sky,
We in these precincts keep thy memory
And do, with licence full, dispense at need
Doctrine which is not life, yet holds life's seed.

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We have a charter, out of storms and wreck
To pilot home from havens false afar :
Declare by what keen light of lambent star,
Priest of the order of Melchisedec !

FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR.

One star, one truth, one passage and one term ;
One grace of life which does each heart confirm ;
One sanative for worn and weary eyes ;
One final and effective sacrifice !

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

To offer this and so dispense the Dole,
Accomplishing the raising of a soul,
Is here our great intent ; for that we come
From places more withdrawn, where other some,
Call'd forth in turn upon a perfect track,
Our offices fulfil till we go back.

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

And since the time is short, while needs increase,
With decent haste confer the Dole of Peace !

FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR.

The grapes are heavy on the vines we tend,
The craftsmen few to make our harvest's end ;
For lack thereof perchance we yet must go
And seek by public ways and green hedge-row.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Assist me, Brothers of the secret hidden !

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

We should be with thee in the task unbidden.

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SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

And in accordance with the ancient rule,
Let us confess the purpose of our school !

THE SYMBOL.

We do by knowledge testify and hold
One sainted plan, high-wrought in days of old,
Set in these precincts forth and duly kept.
Here, while humanity at large has slept,
The Dole has gather'd from all peopled tracts
Cleansed hearts adjusted to exalted acts,
And takes them softly to this place apart
For one great work of science and of art,
Whereof we here divine the whole intent
As deeply fix'd in spheres of sacrament.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

So, therefore, Brothers, in the Light's great Name
And in the heart of heart remembering,
Beyond all spheres which do their place proclaim,
That one asylum which the rays enring
But cannot enter, let us freely ask
The virtue needful for so great a task !

FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR.

High light, as ever, on our labour falls ;
Beyond its manifested beams there calls
The still small voice, which unexpounded is,
From formless, hidden and obscure abyss.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

What first behoves the Keepers of the Dole ?

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FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR.

To watch over the safety of the soul,
Lest out of time and mind the work should pass
And where the reverence of recipients was,
For dearth of penitents prepared and those
Who seek the altar bread, some deep repose,
Should fall at length upon the ministers
By portal side, which knocking never stirs.

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

Mistress and queen, the soul is guarded well ;
Even in pools of sense still works our spell,
As on the heights where comes awakening
And those which stand for stars together sing.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

What time is reckon'd in the world without ?

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

Dawn, and the watchers of the morning shout !

FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR.

All times are ours who do the call obey,
Prepared with sacraments both night and day.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Prayer as of old, or act of prayer, beseems,
At least in memory of former dreams,
What time by rites the heart in sleep was stirr'd
And life in tokens was administer'd.

The Book of the King's Dole

PRAYER AT OPENING.

The dawn of high rites comes like morning's dawn :
Be therefore with us from Thy seat withdrawn !
No homage hither unto Thee we bring,
Nor blessing ask, who live beneath Thy wing
And do Thy substituted lights reflect.
Thou wilt not fail to lead and to direct,
While fair reward shall crown our holy zeal
Who neither seek arcana to reveal,
Except with licence in salvation's pale,
Nor to withhold what can in quest avail
The dedicated heart of chosen man.
Success still follow on the age-long plan,
Which, after deep, condition'd, long research,
Gives entrance firstly to the inward church
And doth, unfailing at the times of need,
The outward church unseen but surely lead
By ways of exile, far as woes attend,
Through inhibitions which by turns suspend,
That all who at the Temple's porch begin
From step to step may climb and enter in !

Those powers benign which here are strong to save,
Lead Thou from lustral font, up sounding nave,
First at the chantry steps to kneel in prayer
And then the sanctuary's secret dare,
That by the highest altar's holy shroud
They may find egress from the field of cloud,
Nor wholly fail who have in fine recourse
Sole unto Thee, Which art their primal source ;
But through the fire of cloud to light of fire
And past all fires of light find their desire ;
Wherefore the praise is Thine and surely given :
May all high crowns be theirs ; crown Thou in Heaven !
[*A pause.*]

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SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

All power within the outward Church I lift
Beyond these vested regions of the mind,
Beyond the rays which pierce through gulf and rift,
The veils beyond, into the Church behind ;
That so when term is more with source allied
And lesser issues are construed aside,
The weaker vessels, visible to eye,
May serve the office of our mystery.
Brothers, we here complete a sacred thing,
Which is the function of our opening !
In the great Name and in that Name beyond
Such greatness, whereunto all stars respond,
And by the power within me vested here,
I open widely these great gates : Draw near !
The treasures of the Dole are offer'd free :
Let all thereto entitled come and see !

[Here ends the Ceremony of Opening the Chantry.]

THE RITUAL OF THE LIFTING OF THE VEIL

THE FIRST OBSERVANCE, OR TWILIGHT OF THE GODS.

The Celebrants face the Altar. The two Deacons form a half-circle with the High Priestess, who takes the Chalice from the Altar and lifts it on high. It is covered by the paten containing the Holy Hosts.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Exalted Fratres, justified, anneal'd—
Behold the Treasure of the Dole unseal'd!
[*She replaces the Sacred Vessels.*]

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

Here is the food of man, from every eye
Conceal'd by veils until the man shall die.

FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR.

I see the children's bread transform'd to meat,
Whereof the Masters in the Presence eat.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

That Place beyond the Holy Place has sent
Its messengers—on what high purpose bent?
The outward chancel in the outward gloom—
Say for what end we here and now assume
Into the place apart since time began,
And yet assuredly the house of man?

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FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR.

One further step to take the great command
Decreed since epochs immemorial,
Beyond all offices of heart and hand,
And, since the chosen follow on the call,
That life's glad end may be with joy fulfill'd,
Thirst quench'd and longing in attainment still'd.

The Most High SOROR JANUA CÆLI *faces westward
and gives the pontifical blessing with two fingers uplifted.
Again she turns to the Altar.*

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

The earthly elements are taken up
From sacrificial paten and from cup,
That things which here are visible, made clean,
May be exalted by the things unseen.
We therefore recognise the type and sign,
With all true terms and veils of things divine,
And whatsoever in its order known
Has the great mystery signified, has shewn
Forth before man the hidden essences
Which to extract he toils with weary stress.
But with much worship, for the rest, herein
We do remove them also and begin
To cleave alone unto the second sense,
Then to confess the third, with all which thence
Takes forward souls, from earthly bonds set free
And temporal measures of eternity.
To such an end, by operative art
Presenting pictures from the world's deep heart,
We will forthwith this grade administer:
Rites beyond rites arise: who hold, confer.
These grave reflections warn, for our behoof,
Not from old modes and rites to stand aloof:

The Book of the King's Dole

Now let us therefore here of bread partake
And here with wine our thirst symbolic slake.

At this point the Ordinary of the Mass is resumed, subject to the Proper of the Chantry, for the communication of the High Priestess and Deacons in accordance with the Secret Liturgy. The Ordinary is again suspended subsequently, and what then follows in the Rite takes place between the Communion and the First Oblation.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

We are not worthy in Thy House, O Lord,
To enter : cleanse us by Thy Holy word !

At the hands of the Celebrant-in-chief the PATER OMNIPOTENS communicates in both kinds, with bowed head and crossed arms, kneeling at the Gospel side of the highest Altar step.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

We are not worthy here Thy gifts to set :
Do Thou in clemency our faults forget !

The FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR communicates, at the hands of the Celebrant, in both kinds, with uplifted face and widely extended arms, kneeling on the Epistle side at the second Altar step. The High SOROR JANUA CÆLI replaces the chalice and paten containing the Hosts on the Altar, at the southern side of which she then kneels in adoration. The Little SOROR PUELLA, who is ROSA MYSTICA, a Novice of the Order, comes forward in white robes from the side of the Pillar of Severity and ascends the steps of the Altar, with the forms and genuflections prescribed in the Rubric. She lifts up the paten, turning towards the Celebrant-in-chief.

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SOROR PUELLA.

The body of God defend me !

*The High SOROR communicates in the element of bread.
The SOROR PUELLA replaces the paten, exalts the chalice
and again turns towards the Celebrant.*

SOROR PUELLA.

The blood of God expend me !

*The High SOROR communicates in the element of wine.
The SOROR PUELLA replaces the chalice on the Altar, and
turns with extended arms towards the body of the chancel.*

SOROR PUELLA.

The life of life in our Sustainer end me !

*She returns as she came. The High SOROR remains
kneeling and prays in a subdued voice as follows :—*

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

O not because we hope in Thee, our Goal,
Do Thou from formless centre draw us on,
Nor only since upon Thy help the soul
Hangs utterly, whose course, so long begun,
Draws in the chancel of the King's High Dole
Some distance towards a semblance of its end !
But since both term and origin art Thou
And we came forth from Thee long since, extend
Thine efficacious help to those who now
Feel, while they near Thee, as the days succeed,
An infinite extension of their need !

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PATER OMNIPOTENS.

There is no grace in charity, no love
Of man and man which of itself can reach,
By any ways, the height of things above,
Till that descends which us alone can teach
With silent eloquence and golden speech.

FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR.

Ah, uncreated glory, ah, infinite
White world of the irradiate still light !
Worlds to the Crown, but still a world above :
All fonts and springs and wells are those of love !

*The Deacons rise ; they descend the steps of the Altar
and face it on the Epistle and Gospel sides. SOROR JANUA
CÆLI also rises and turns towards them.*

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

If any novice, who has watch'd his arms
And overstay'd the night with its alarms,
Stands at the postern and is meet to see
What lies beyond all common chivalry,
Let now the open'd postern take him through !
If any Master past his chair of state
Discerns the splendour of a further gate,
Impearl'd beyond the still void and the blue,
That gate may open when he stands outside.
If any consecrated priest appointed
To humble ministries of public cure,
Seeks other oils than those which first anointed,
For him the chrismal treasures of the Dole
Are open'd, like the arms of mercy, wide
To work the ordination of his soul.

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The aperture, though straiten'd, shall be sure,
And still at end thereof new rites allure.

A silvery bell rings softly within the Pillar of Mercy ; the door of ingress opens ; a neophyte bearing the bells enters within the Chancel ; he is succeeded by the partisans of the Sanctuary, some of whom carry seven-branched candlesticks, and by one who swings a lighted thurible. The Candidate for advancement, who is termed FRATER E MILLIBUS VIX UNUM, follows in the vestment of a white friar, having the tonsure of the order on his head, which is also encircled by a faint nimbus. Scarlet crosses are embroidered before and behind on his habit, and he wears a large ring of profession on his right hand, with which he makes the sign of concealed doctrine in front of him. The Loving Father CHRISTIAN ROSY CROSS, as the Warden of the Gate, joins him on the left side, carrying a great white stone, in the form of a cube, on a cushion. The air also gives up the SOROR BEATA PULCHRA at the right of the Candidate, bearing a basket of cut flowers for strewing. The Familiars of the Holy Office place the seats of the Celebrants before the Altar, over against the lowermost step thereof. As the procession passes up the Chancel, the officiating Pontiffs take their seats, with the High SOROR JANUA CÆLI forming the centre of the triad. At the same moment a large Host appears above the chalice on the Altar and shines with transforming light. The High Abbot of the Chantry comes forward with jewelled mitre and golden crook. The acolytes and servers part on either side as FRATER E MILLIBUS VIX UNUM approaches the Abbot, before whom he stops with crossed arms. The Sponsors of the Candidate pause behind him.

PATER SERVUS SERVORUM.

Whom lead you hither ?

The Book of the King's Dole

THE LOVING FATHER.

One who not in vain
Is Epop't call'd and Most Wise Sovereign.
He, having first as Postulant been brought,
Was seal'd with sacraments and after taught
Effectively and well, till, in good time,
He graduated for the mundane clime
And sweetly enter'd into perfect sleep.
There, haunted long by imagery deep,
Wild wings he beat against the ivory gate
And striving ever towards the waking state,
Some secret doctrines in the twilight dim
Of life's strange houses were proclaim'd to him,
As unto one who half, ere morning, sees
High semblances of lesser mysteries
And takes refreshment of false wine and bread.
Thereat, illumin'd and discomforted,
As many seekers have before him found,
He learn'd that those aspiring to be crown'd
Already taste the death of earthly joys
And find life's treasures are as children's toys.
So thence it came to pass that, human love
Taught to renounce because such heights above
Offer'd their summits through the mist, he knew,
At least by legends high, of unions true
And took therein a further secret grade.
Thus time and circumstance the groundwork laid,
'Midst lights which in succession fade and fail,
Of some fantastic broideries of the veil,
And Nature sanctified was set aside.
Far reaching ministries, which deep and wide
Forth spread their missions, at the first were tried
And full of delectation in their place
Allow'd, but wanting the exalted grace ;
Wherefore the Candidate was thus made free
Of the high service of a fourth degree.

The Further Side of the Portal

So was he left, as one would think, alone—
Say, with the dreams which haunted him, unknown
Suggestions of the something which subtends
All that is here discern'd and somewhere ends
In the great term of God, yet does not give
Meanwhile sufficient food for souls to live.
Therefore the Epopot who has since attain'd,
By certain secret magnets still constrain'd,
Did more consistently aspire, and trod
The paths which by convention lead to God.
These towards the very centre and its core
May lead in very truth, for many roads,
Straight or circuitous, in fine restore
True hearts inflamed to high desire's abodes ;
At least in ways which Epopts understand
They are like temporal centres close at hand
And great preparing grades, till circumstance
Shew forth the true path for the soul's advance.
Thus was the Candidate supremely taught
And through external channels safely brought,
With certain tintured glasses of the mind,
To gather something of the light behind
And yet another mystery to pass,
Touching the most high sacring of the Mass.
In moving pageants first the Rite appeal'd,
Some quests, some meanings of the work reveal'd ;
And then unfolded to his earnest search
In part the office of the outward Church.
That Church did therefore to his heart disclose
The many petals of the secret rose
And underneath the vastness of their screening
A tintured heart of the more hidden meaning.
Thereon the restless soul, to gain its end,
Does the high treasures of its force expend.
Out of the dim allusions and mere hints
It strikes, in mystic night, the saving glints,
So that beyond the dark it dimly sees

The Book of the King's Dole

Penumbral gleams and hallowing mysteries.
The signs and portents of the light which lifts
Its beacons past the variable rifts,
By work of secret winds, were thus laid bare,
O'er pathways giving on the clearer air.
So taught the soul itself and so was taught ;
Thus on the matter of the work it wrought,
Through all purgations, the refiner's art,
Transform'd and perfected from grade to grade.
The substituted maxims which depart
From all convention's ways, the lines new laid,
Unto high semblances of doctrine led.
Hence it is meet and right and just that such,
Being perchance exalted overmuch
By great subsidiary names, should now
Take higher pledges and adventure how
From mystic death are raised, in fine, the dead.
As sponsor of the Epopts, upon whom
Devolves such task, about their whole estate
I certify, before they pass the gate,
Having once made unto myself a tomb,
Within the auspice of another sun,
As analogue and compend of the One.
Therefore—by all that has been proved, by loss
And gain, advancement, carriage of the Cross—
I do proclaim this Sovereign Prince has shewn
His title-deeds for entrance to his own
And call on those who here the Dole dispense
To grant him quittance for departure hence.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Most loving Father, your commands, disguised
As meek petition, shall in order due
Our notice gain who, otherwise apprised,
Hold in remembrance the memorial true

The Further Side of the Portal

Of this beloved Epopt and most wise
Prince of the Royal Secret, held from eyes
Profane among the Archives of the Gate.
And when the final values here we gauge
Most fitly may he reach the final stage
Of his protracted visionary course,
Scaling some further height to reach his source.
Unto this end, with adjuration fair,
Prithee, commend him to the Abbot's care ;
Then, crossing once again the chancel's floor,
Resume your place behind the secret door,
Since other candidates perchance await
Admission, seeing that the hour is late
And that the ends of all the age are near.

THE LOVING FATHER.

Into the holy hands of Mother Church
I place the issues of my time-long search
And all the Postulants of grace far brought,
So to be judged and pardon'd, raised and taught.

The Loving Father CHRISTIAN ROSY CROSS gives the sign-in-chief of the Chantry and returns to the South-West, where he stands in the angle of the Rood-Screen, between the door thereof and the door in the Pillar of Mercy. The SOROR BEATA PULCHRA mingles with the Familiars of the Holy Office in the Northern part of the Hall and passes for the time being out of sight.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

FRATER E MILLIBUS VIX UNUM, long
Straining your ears to catch the marriage song,
Come forward ; set apart all human fear :
Place in the Abbot's hand your own !

The PATER SERVUS SERVORUM, or Great Abbot of the Chantry, leads the Candidate towards the East.

The Book of the King's Dole

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

In mine
The ancient guardians of the Bread and Wine
Receive you :

*The right hand of the Candidate is placed by the Great
Abbot in that of the Chief Celebrant.*

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

And do welcome and make free.
Your pledges and disownments, sworn of old
At each symbolic grade and high degree
Of your advancement, in our rolls we hold :
Do you renew them freely here and now,
With mind prepared to take a final vow ?

THE CANDIDATE.

Prove me, O Steward of the things of type
Which here begin to fall, like fruit o'er ripe !
My pledges have been kept, but higher lead
I follow now and, as it seems, proceed
Thither whence first I came, long ages since—
Beyond the offices of priest and prince.
Such obligations from the soul dissolve
When other orders greater bonds evolve ;
Whence I look rather that my faithful pledges
Should, in the final ordeal, by the edges
Of my precipitous path stand round to-day,
Keep me equilibrated in the way
And save me at this last from the abyss.
For now, meseems, I come where great death is,
And seeing that so long, through bad and good,
I have sustain'd my cross as best I could,

The Further Side of the Portal

Full time it grows my cross should carry me.
No less, if other vows than these must be,
Or ever bitterness of death can pass,
I hold myself to consecrate once more
This militant church which veils what once I was
Before I seek in faith the further shore.

The Celebrants rise and form a circle about the Candidate and the Great Abbot of the Chantry, who stands a little to the left behind him.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

The great asylums none shall need seek out,
For they descend and him are built about,
And so the further shore is closer far
Than any hands which we can stretch forth are ;
But that firm faith to which your heart responds
Declare, and comfort us, in place of bonds.

THE CANDIDATE.

(With bowed head.) I do recite my fix'd adhesion
first

To all those signs which illustrate the thirst
Of human nature, vehement to reach
Things that exceed the limit of our speech.
I call on God to witness I receive
Their import full and do in them believe,
Saving the solemn canons of the art
Conceal'd, by which the greater truths impart
And do at need interpret lesser things.
Wherefore, before the Unity made known
In mortal ways by Trinity alone,
One God in Persons Three, I claim to make
Confession, and the Chantry pledges take ;
Unto which task my soul the title brings

The Book of the King's Dole

That, howsoe'er in ways of sense I slept,
All ancient secrets of the Dole were kept
From common knowledge ever in my heart.
Whether reveal'd at secret shrines apart,
Where the great rites are work'd, or half divined
By inward ways untaught, the same were shrined
In depths of thought which speech has never stirr'd,
Lest I should lose the hope of the True Word.

Further, I do confess that Nature's voice
Did first in saving ways my soul rejoice ;
But when the hour arrived to reach her term,
At the dividing ways, I can affirm
That I put by her ministries, with mind
To great elections call'd, and so resign'd.
I do acknowledge with express intent
How far the outward Church my soul's ascent
Prepared and did exhibit ; if at last
Beyond such ministry's sweet yoke I pass'd,
I have not ceased at need to own her claim,
But have extoll'd her Holy Place and Name,
And also—in the night of dream's eclipse—
Maintain'd her truth and mission with my lips.
Hence if I go this day through death to wide
Horizons, let it be as fortified,
At least in thought, with her last rites, that so
The plain believer shall not come to know
Aught for his strength unmeet—that other way
Some souls tread, *mortis in examine*.

Lastly, with full conviction and complete
Assurance that the Angels' mystic meat
Is more than broken bread, derived to man
By hallows of the sacramental plan,
I do affirm that he who entrance wins
Into the Church's conscious life, begins

The Further Side of the Portal

Clearly to see that through the wider gate
No tittle of the work is abrogate,
And that, however far proceeds the search,
All high assemblies still remain the Church.
That apex where the seraphs' songs are sung
Is but the mystic ladder's furthest rung,
And at the base thereof, where children stand,
The hand that guides is still the self-same hand :
To all which subject, here I set aside
The outward sign for what is signified.

While the Confession is recited the High Priestess and Deacons stand up, and the Familiars of the Holy Office remove the seats of the Celebrants to the South side of the Chantry. When the Candidate has made an end, the circle is broken up ; the High Priestess and Deacons turn towards the Altar and the procession passes to the steps, at the first of which the High Priestess again faces the Candidate, from whom, by the direction of the Great Abbot, she receives homage on his knees and communicates in return her benediction, which is given with open hand, to indicate that between her and him the veils are withdrawn by his reception.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

We do maintain the signs with steadfastness
Because their shadows in some part express,
Some part convey, the grace from hidden wells,
Being conventions and yet vehicles.
We also know that in the soul's release,
And happy entrance to the paths of peace,
Far must she pass along the secret roads
Before she leaves all sacramental modes ;
Yet in the end set free, she goeth thence
And so attains direct experience,

The Book of the King's Dole

Even fruition of a perfect joy—
Which to promote, these rites all powers deploy.

THE GREAT ABBOT.

Not as a pledge of faith but as a sign
That well and worthily the Law Divine
Which calls on those with knowledge to conceal
Until the law for each shall break the seal,
And in due turn each come to understand ;
You will upon the consecrated hand
Of this High Priestess print the sealing kiss
And so in peace depart where deep peace is.

The Great Abbot bends slightly the head of the Candidate, who is still on his knees, and the latter kisses reverently the hand of the SOROR JANUA CÆLI, who at the same moment stoops forward and gives him the Osculum Fraternitatis on his forehead, saying :—

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

The service of my hands I take, and give
Lip service, that in death you yet may live.

The High Priestess and Deacons ascend the steps of the Altar. The Great Abbot raises the Candidate and places him with his back to the Altar, facing the concourse of witnesses.

THE GREAT ABBOT.

FRATER E MILLIBUS VIX UNUM, Prince
Of the most Royal Secret, Sovereign
Most Wise, by these and other titles—since
Those who in mysteries their advance attain
Must put aside both titles and degrees—
Fulfil your final duties unto these

The Further Side of the Portal

Who here their lesson in the prudent path
Put well to heart and whom the silence hath
In holy keeping !

The Candidate still faces westward and certain insignia, not otherwise specified in the Rubrics, are removed from beneath his Vestments.

THE CANDIDATE.

Brothers of the Veil,
The honourable tokens of the road
By which my soul has travell'd, thus I set
Before you, knowing that you need them not,
To count among the hallows of this spot,
Or work perchance some further service yet—
Among the places where the great lights fail.
Let other postulants in order wear
These high insignia, turn'd as light as air
To us on threshold of the true abode,
And as before the presence of the King !
Here at this last pause made upon the wing,
In native poverty, my leave I take
Of whatsoever, for the mystery's sake,
Has been held precious in the outward ways.
May God his faithful of the nave and aisle
Raise to the chancel in a little while
And on the hidden secrets let them gaze ;
May those who stand without the sacred fold,
Versed in the ways of folly and of sin,
Receive the call before their right is sold
And knock and find it open and come in !

The acolytes extinguish their torches. The three Pontiffs ascend the steps of the Altar. The SOROR JANUA CÆLI raises the chalice from the Altar and, with the exalted Deacons on either side, turns round, displaying the

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sacred vessel with the Host shining above it. At the same moment the Great Abbot of the Chantry turns the Candidate, so that the light of the Elements falls upon his face. He then directs him to kneel upon the lowermost Altar step. The procession approaches with extinguished torches and smoking censer. The only light of the Chancel is now that of the Sacred Elements. There is a great hush of silence, in which the still air suddenly becomes very cold. The SOROR BEATA PULCHRA moves a little distance towards the centre of the Chancel, and the flowers die in her basket. The Loving Father CHRISTIAN ROSY CROSS takes his place in the due South, carrying the Cubic Stone, which he opens without speaking. The cube unfolds as a Cross, which he exalts, and about the four branches the words MORS JANUA VITÆ flicker like writing on a wall. The bells of the Chantry begin to toll slowly and with a muffled sound. The procession disperses. The SOROR JANUA CÆLI descends the steps of the Altar, with the Elements exalted before her. On the Host there can be discovered very faintly the imprint of a Slain Lamb, in place of the canonical Sigillum.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

The sting is sharp ; its victory is brought
To nothing ; common faculties of thought
Through dissolution pass and are not found.
Here is inflicted the odyllic wound
Which does not fall on tissues and on nerves—
Unerring work of hand which never swerves,
Striking within, beyond the place of sleep,
To open ways through which a soul may sweep,
Past all earth's surging waters unanneal'd,
And the old war-cries past, where peace is seal'd.

O Lord, too long upon the exile's leave
Sent forth, we are not worthy to receive

The Further Side of the Portal

Thee in our house, nor stand in Thine, but Thou
Hast come among us to instruct us how
Some need divine impels Thee to fulfil
In our respect Thy high, most holy will !
By many names we did of old invoke
And seek Thine aid, but there was one unknown,
Through which at length we come into our own,
In truth, as sleepers from their swoon awoke :
By that great title undeclared we do
In fine receive Thee, and with homage true.

The High SOROR JANUA CÆLI lifts the Host, from which no splendour now emanates, over the bowed head of the Candidate.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Behold the Lamb of God, in sign again,
As from the ages and foundation, slain !

The High Priestess breaks the Element of bread over the chalice. The Communicant raises his head, about which the nimbus radiates more brightly, and receives the sacrament after the ordinary manner of a layman. When he has communicated in the one kind, the chalice is also administered, with the words :—

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

By this most holy unction and the great
Divine Compassion, at the open gate
To postulants exhibited, may those
Who are the wardens and that gate uncloze,
Shew forth the path which out of Mercy leads
To Understanding, as a broad, still sea,
And thence in Wisdom's further deep recedes ;
So may its issue at the end for thee
Not in the Kingdom but the Diadem be !

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THE CANDIDATE.

In Thy strong hands I do, my God, commend
My spirit, utterly attain'd this end.

[The CANDIDATE falls back dead.]

THE FAMILIARS OF THE HOLY OFFICE.

May this man's soul, and all whose souls with his
Are join'd by faith, attain that rest which is
Reserved unmanifest in worlds to come !

THE HIEROPHANTS.

Strong men in chariots and in horses some,
But we in the Lord's name invoke and bring,
To ease our needs, a votive offering.
Hear us, O Lord, invoking : Save the King !

THE GREAT ABBOT.

The wounded bird is saved upon the wing,
With those whom death has spared : Long live the
King !

THE SECOND OBSERVANCE

The Obscure Night of the Gods.

A veil is thrown over the Candidate and he is laid upon a funeral litter. The Chancel is now entirely in darkness, except for the flame of incense fuming in the thurible of the acolyte. The Familiars of the Holy Office move silently over the floor and place the candles of the dead about the catafalque. The Familiars light the candles, but they give only uncertain and flickering rays, making the darkness visible. The High SOROR JANUA CÆLI has ascended the Altar steps and replaced the Sacred Elements. The Deacons minister about her, and the ablutions are performed as usual. Certain propers of the faithful departed are added subsequently in a low voice, but their purport is not distinguishable. Subsequently, the High SOROR turns with extended arms, saying :—

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

The Lord be with you, Fratres : it is well ;
The grace long ask'd for falls on Israel !

THE HIEROPHANTS (*with muffled voices*).
And on thy spirit, as of old it fell.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Peace also, spiritual sleep, bereft
Of sounds ; all secrets in the Kingdom heard
Are utter'd ; nothing is for mystæ left
Except the word behind the spoken word.

She descends from the Altar, which she faces with the Deacons on either side.

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SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

My fault, my fault and my most grievous fault !
So long as savour rests in earthly salt,
I do repent this drag-net for the skies
Brings so few offerings for the service wise.

The High Priestess and Deacons prostrate themselves on the steps of the Altar, as at the opening of the Mass of the Presanctified. They move, on rising, in silence to their chairs in the South, and sit with hands laid palms downward on their knees. They remain in this attitude during the whole ceremony of the Candidate's raising, except for the share which they take in the burial service.

The SOROR BEATA PULCHRA moves forward from the northern side of the Chancel, scattering her dead leaves and withered blossoms.

SOROR BEATA PULCHRA.

Friends, who have known me and whom still I know,
Through each vicissitude of voided ends
And passage forth from show to greater show,
With all the calls that friends can make on friends—
Look at me, say what woe is like my woe !
Does not my legend's true memorial
Bear better witness than the purple pall
Can ever bear that those who lie beneath
Are folded closely in the arms of death ?
And as the shroud about a maiden's head
Is mournful evidence that one is dead
Who was most fair and little stain'd, we trust ;
So do all legends which my loss recount
Praise that which issued from the primal fount
And was so free and beautiful and pure
That virgin earth had little kin with dust.
But the woe came and woe must still endure,

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Though not indeed was mine the conscious fault,
Fierce war's most bitter fortune, in the vault
Now peopled by the planetary ghosts,
As by mute substitutes of former hosts.
Thus on me uninvoked there fell the curse
Which work'd the shipwreck of the universe;
Angels and men were both involved therein,
As by æonian strife where none could win.
So that which first came forth inviolate
Through bright creation's newly open'd gate,
Suffer'd a ruthless sacrifice and fell
Within the circle of the dreary spell
Which time served solely further to confirm,
Starving all knowledge of its final term.

*She approaches the head of the bier and scatters withered
blooms upon the veil which covers the Candidate.*

SOROR BEATA PULCHRA.

As one who leaves another in his need
Farthest and most extreme, thy soul indeed
Has issued, the last act of life which pass'd
'Neath other spells than I have ever cast,
For life itself divided thee from me
Than common stroke of death more utterly.
Thou wast not mine therein, and here it seems
That, coming out from all the power of dreams
And all my range exceeding, thou hast brought
Thy daring course from crowded realms of thought,
By ways unknown, to tenebræ of gloom,
And dost in death itself o'erreach the tomb.
In doubt I gaze where thou art here intern'd,
Lest intervening portents undiscern'd
Should manifest more dubious semblances
Than are the obvious limits of life's stress,
Strangely to counterfeit the mortal breath.
Truly thou are not mine in life or death.

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I give thee back to those of whom thou art,
Since in this place I have no power nor part,
Though here my sacramental doom must bring
Me, for some mystic work of witnessing.
Such witness faithful, full of vows, I bear
That all my claims on thee who liest there,
If not fulfilled, at least extinguish'd are :
The cup has pass'd from me ; I raise no bar.
I, the great spirit of the world, to this
World's prince unwillingly awhile allied,
Since that must hold which here my hindrance is
From restitution, who was sanctified,
Do thee renounce and thee therein give back.
Tempests remain and tarries tardy peace,
Nor tidings come from ends where labours cease ;
But thou returnest on thy starry track.

The SOROR BEATA PULCHRA, having emptied her floral basket about the catafalque, is escorted by the procession, carrying extinguished torches and an unswung censer, on her departure from the Chancel through the door in the Pillar of Severity. She pauses in her exit, turns to the East by South, and in place of the secret and invariable signs of the Chantry, she gives the Sign of the Cross extended, with uplifted arms. The High SOROR rises from her chair and says aloud :—

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Where is the light which on the path is shed ?

PUELLA.

(From the western end of the Chancel.)

The light is quench'd, Most High, the man is dead.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Are his accusers present ?

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FOREMAN OF THE HOLY OFFICE.

He has earn'd
His quittance, and the charges are return'd,
To those who did the schedule first prefer,
Mark'd : No advice—wherein all grades concur.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Then, recollected, we in short proceed
To the high office in such case decreed.

The Thurifer approaches with censer, which he presents on his knees. The High SOROR receives it ; the Deacons rise and take the ends of her cope. She passes to the East of the catafalque, which she circumambulates, following the sun, and the incense fumes over the veil with aromatic fragrance. The circumambulation being completed, the Pontiffs pause in a semicircle at some distance from the bier—thereunto facing—in the East. The Great Abbot of the Chantry comes before them with an extinguisher, circumambulates, following the sun, and puts out the lights successively, the one light in the East being excepted, using the following formulæ :—

PATER SERVUS SERVORUM.

At the First Light—

The Light of Life, the light of outward things,
The semblance of the Kingdom and its Kings.

At the Second Light—

The basis of the first fantastic gleam
Which falls on Israel in the tide of dream.

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At the Third Light—

The shadow of the ray reflected down
Which lifts the earthly towards the heavenly town.

At the Fourth Light—

The flush of conquest when the gloom reveals
The first libation of the cup which heals.

At the Fifth Light—

The middle splendour of the light derived
To all four points upon the man arrived
From the great deeps, carrying certain keys
Which are his title to the high degrees.

At the Sixth Light—

The Light of rigour where the glooms begin
To manifest a path which works within,
By far devolving ways and heights uptending,
For those who keep the virtue of ascending
As others keep well-ruled an inward fire.

At the Seventh Light—

The Light which fashions first the great desire
To see the temples, palaces and halls
Which those attain who follow the great calls,
To build the house that is not made with hands,
Giving on certain solitary lands
And shores, for ever to a silent sea
Confessing an unsearchable mystery.

*He approaches the Eighth Light, which is slightly
outside the rectangular lines formed in the oblong square
by the other funereal candles.*

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At the Eighth Light—

The Light which shews the gates of the great deep,
That lifts its voices in the dark and sings
Of correspondence in the higher things:
The gates which prophet and strong leader saw
But could not promulgate their secret law,
Whereby the hidden matters, and the rest
Behind the faculties of reason, keep
Some larger issues past the reach of sleep
And in all common vision unexpress'd.

The Bells of the Chantry again toll with a muffled sound. The Great Abbot of the Chantry raises the Eighth Candlestick and carries it, slightly exalted, by the South-East, behind the Altar.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

And blessed are the dead whose souls go forth
Beyond the darkness of the mystic North
To reach the source wherein all light increased
Resumes its higher splendours in the East:
Henceforth exempted from their labours, these
Share in the Centre's still activities.

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

Beneath the realm of internecine strife,
The length of days and endless years of life.

FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR.

The Resurrection and the Life am I:
He that in me believeth, though on earth
He may be dead, shall live and cannot die,
And I will raise him to the second birth.

The tenebræ alarm is heard behind the Altar, and the Eighth Light is exalted at the same moment in the high shrine placed over the Tabernacle.

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CHORUS OF HIEROPHANTS.

Ye who are laden, come : the Master saith ;
I hold the keys of Hades and of Death !

THE FAMILIARS OF THE HOLY OFFICE.

O grave ! where is thy victory ; and where,
O death ! thy sting ?

[*A long pause.*]

SOROR PUELLA.

(*Speaking from the western end of the Chancel.*)

The man enshrouded there
Has lain three mystic days.

THE LOVING FATHER.

(*Speaking from the angle of the Rood-Screen.*)

The worms are swarth ;
The cerements close.

PATER SERVUS SERVORUM.

And still he is not dead.

FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR.

He has slept long and dreams have visited.

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

Time grows to waken.

THE THIRD OBSERVANCE

The Raising in Darkness.

SOROR JANUA CŒLI.

LAZARUS, COME FORTH !

The Candlestick in the Altar-Shrine is removed from its place. An unknown hand is raised over it, as it is drawn down slowly, and extinguishes the light, after which it is placed behind the Altar. The Chancel is thus in complete darkness, the thurible being also closed down, though it continues to give forth smoke at intervals. The Great Abbot approaches the catafalque and puts back the veil from the face of the Candidate, who sits up and begins to speak.

THE CANDIDATE.

He who through frozen deeps alone has been,
And where the great gods are their glories seen,
Aspires no longer after length of days,
Seats of the mighty, or the choric praise
Which up and down the mystic chancel pants
In fires and salvoes of the hierophants.
But grasping what abysses intervene
And what suspensions of the vital law
Obtain, from Aleph in the heights to Tau,
One great experiment of him lays hold—
Who once, he knows not how, his birthright sold—
The secret ways to follow, where they trend
From Tau to Aleph, and attain his end.

The Book of the King's Dole

These having found and being fain to start,
But knowing also that the goal is far,
I rise at call, preparing to depart
And take all thrones, ascending towards my star.
Assist me, Brethren, who so far am led :
Lo, I am he that liveth and was dead !

[The Candidate rises in shadow.]

PRAYER OF THE HIEROPHANTS.

The road is open and if ways are long,
The Guide who inly operates is strong,
And thine own soul, which takes thee, shall not fail
Once and for all the Crown, in fine, to hail.
Thou dost not call on angels, nor hast need
Of outward mentors to assume the lead,
While every step upon the forward track
Shall render it the harder to go back.
And yet the workings of the ancient curse,
More secret than the serpent's wiles, reverse
All human judgments ; so there lives not one
Beneath the common splendours of the sun,
Or in the hidden lights of those whose course
Is lifted high to reach their primal source,
That ever heard of office or of grade
Wherein the subtle virus is, in fine,
Expended utterly. Thou hast therefore said
Farewell to sleep, and dreams for thee are quench'd ;
An age-long vigil is hereafter thine,
By frozen zones of dreadful glory blench'd
And destitute of all but one resource.
Know this exhibited, through inward force,
Most patiently to that not less within
Conjoin'd, a torrent inexhaustible
Which, when the floodgates of the soul begin
To open, in the soul's abysmal well

The Further Side of the Portal

Pours, till the soul is vivified and fed
And the last rite is so consummated.

We pray thee, therefore, coming thus from trance,
Be vigilant, be wary in advance ;
And to the great conferring Powers, which do
All the rough edges of the sleep-worlds hew,
That whom God calls may unto God be led,
We also pray incessantly ; may true
Help be derived at need—and now to you !

PATER SERVUS SERVORUM.

Within the bosom of the mystery
Raised in the darkness, ere the Rite of High
Observance raises into limpid light,
He who has come thus far, with one last veil
Behind the hallows of all holy things—
The bells, pomegranates and tall palms—in sight,
By semblance here is taught ere semblance fail ;
And for the last time call'd by mystic names ;
While the great epopt circle him enrings
Once and for all, and then the past is past.

Shall there be need to say, with such degrees
Received, that all the common smoke and flames
Of outward life are shadow'd and o'ercast
With portent lights ? In spite of narrow grooves,
The deeper meaning round the sligher moves ;
Wherefore the child upon his mother's knees
Is by the hauntings of the Holy Word
Pursued, has sacraments administer'd.
Thou too in paths of novices hast trod
And long been offer'd bread and wine for God,
But shalt henceforth, by this advance of thine,
Receive Eternal God for bread and wine.

The Book of the King's Dole

God's body then was taken to thine own,
Now must thy soul unto His Soul pass on ;
Wherefore thy part in earth its term attains
And former things are left for greater gains.

THE CANDIDATE.

As one far-travell'd, and withal outworn,
Or one in a new planet newly born,
The higher ministries of health I need :
Give me to eat and drink—strong meat indeed !
[*He leaves the bier and advances slowly
towards the Altar.*

THE FOURTH OBSERVANCE

The Candidate is instituted in Light.

A great light begins to glow through the embroidered veil behind the Altar. The Loving Father CHRISTIAN ROSY CROSS advances to the centre of the Chancel. The Familiars of the Holy Office marshal at the Northern side and file out. The Hierophants at the Southern end follow. The Acolytes with thurible and extinguished torches go last, led by the SOROR PUELLA. The illumination of the Chancel continues. It becomes in this manner a Chamber of the Presence. The Candidate, who has knelt on the lowest step of the Altar, is raised in solemn form by the High SOROR JANUA CÆLI, and this raising in the Light is performed without words. The Great Abbot of the Chantry, assisted by the two Deacons, escorts the High Priestess to her throne in the South, and the Candidate is then taken by the Deacons only to the Vestibulum-in-ordinary of the Chancel, where he removes his monastic habit and is clothed in pontifical vestments, as if for the celebration of High Mass. When all is ready the bell of the Vestibulum is rung, and the three Priests come into the Chancel, ascending the Altar steps, as at the point after the Communication of the Faithful. But in place of the Post-Communion the High Priestess rises and, still standing in the South, says :—

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

The Lord is with us and with thy spirit too,
The which henceforth by ministration true

The Book of the King's Dole

Shall be pour'd out from its unfailing fount,
Directing others still in gloom of dream
To their awaking and the further scheme
Which gathers man into the Holy Mount.
This is thy Compline service, to the night
Farewell, and institution in the light,
Which, that the city and world may know thy fame,
By power within me vested, I proclaim.

The High SOROR resumes her throne. The two Deacons descend the Altar steps, make the Ritual Genuflection, and resume their seats on either side of the Celebrant-in-Chief. The Candidate is thus left standing alone, with his back to the Tabernacle. There is a nimbus about his head.

THE CANDIDATE.

Most faithful witnesses were heard of old
Who in the Kingdom took their stand and told
How the withdrawn, invisible King abode
Beyond all gates of knowledge ; and the road
By which his secret palace must be sought,
In sacramental speech, they also taught.
Dark is the Kingdom, though cloud-breaking rifts
Open at times, what welkins and what lifts
Exhibiting, as if through ivory gates,
And dreams thereof, reality awaits !

Yet closing spells and semblances collect
Full soon, to dim the paths and misdirect
The seeker, since the Kingdom, on a day
Far and how far, put from the Crown away,
Has sat in exile and the folds of sense.
But many Powers, successively upraised,
Have intervened because of man's defence ;
So he from certain altitudes has gazed

The Further Side of the Portal

On many secrets of the world's advance ;
But still there rests conceal'd the countenance
And royal beauty of the King, from sight
Shrouded in glory of the limitless light.
The world's whole hope is in the paths which rise
Through spheres successive, by which first the Crown
Transmits benignant influences down,
As sacred wine is pour'd from sacred cup,
To heal the Kingdom ; and whereby the wise
Do from the Kingdom to the Crown go up.
Those paths are steep ; therein the weary halt—
Fail, as it seems, and, utterly at fault,
Do find in darken'd houses doubtful rest.
Yet are those paths left open and the quest,
By him who has been worthily prepared,
Not for rejection in the end is dared.
He, after length of labour and of stress,
Shall pass from tumult into silentness,
From which no voice on peak uplifted high
Has ever come but once to testify.
Now therefore in the road from star to star,
By great election having come so far
And being pledged to follow on the call,
Through power within me vested, once for all
I do my Chantry office here begin,
And by these presents have myself read in.
I know what Virtues from what veils behind
My ways have watch'd and have my path assign'd,
Who also on the reverence of high search
Wait to make known, beyond the outward Church,
The Great Assembly's work which leads unseen.
But having so been taught and thus made clean,
The soul, once guided, with the guiding hand
Is here made one, and that enlighten'd band
Has join'd which doth from stage to further stage
Assume the Church, and every closing age
Seal with a certain sign of progress won.

The Book of the King's Dole

Dear friends, when Rites and Liturgies are done
And the anointed celebrants have gone,
Signs in the heart remain to lead men on.
So, ere I go, I pray you, join with me
For one point more in this our Mystery ;
Then shall the Chancel be restored with peace
Unto the Church External, to increase,
We trust, the graces and the favours kept
For those who long the faithful sleep have slept,
Yet have preserved their sanctity in dreams
And certain hauntings of diviner schemes,
Through all the witnesses of sense, have own'd :
May they too wake and be in light enthroned !

If aught is left unfinish'd, I beseech
That my deficiency, atoned in each
Of you, my peers, may be so well fulfill'd
That more of good shall follow than we will'd.
If one of those to whom I once belong'd,
Rightly or not, regard himself as wrong'd
By me, his free forgiveness here I crave,
And may he have good issue from his grave !
If, when the earthly things aside I put,
One creditor unwittingly I shut
Out of his honourable share, I trust
To have his quittance now, and all star-dust
I will exchange for stars and so atone
When he and I shall come into our own.

My mystic titles having placed aside,
That less no longer may from great divide,
At times perchance their memories shall stir
Faint odours of sweet spikenard and of myrrh,
And in the outward worshippers' suspense
Increase the savour of strong frankincense.

*The Candidate descends the steps of the Altar, and the
Celebrants rise as he passes by the South-East side.*

The Further Side of the Portal

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

We are but signs which faintly here express
Some accents of remote, uplifted things
Beyond all speech : do thou at parting bless !

The Candidate gives the benediction with a triple Tau traced by his pastoral crook.

THE CANDIDATE.

Be healing ever in thy holy wings !
The sign evoked from the great sea art thou ;
Deep Understanding in the Chancel now
For ever dwells with thee. And those who take
The great diaconate and semblance make
Of lesser office, are the tokens here
Of emanations to the Crown most near,
Three, by intention one, and one in three :
Last sign dissolving towards reality.
In veils like this we almost see the dawn—
Bear witness still : I am the sign withdrawn !

The Celebrants resume their seats and the Candidate, with a new light in his nimbus, passes behind the Altar, opens the veil of the Mysteries and enters within. The veil closes behind him and through it a radiance, as of the First Resurrection, pours with power and glory. There is a brief space of silence, and after this the Candidate speaks very softly and slowly from behind the veil, that is to say, in the Chantry which is over against the Sanctuary of the Militant Church, being of it but not in it.

THE CANDIDATE.

The root of roots and basis of foundations,
The place of prudence which the wise alone
Approach, and ever in their labours own !
This—after Orders, Choirs and Dominations—

The Book of the King's Dole

Leads, and can only lead, to the most high
Knowledge of the Divine Priority.
The Bride and Mother this is named as well ;
The advocate whose potent sweetness stands
Twixt God and man with high uplifted hands ;
The Sabbath and the rest of those that dwell
Within the higher peace of Israel.

From outward zones, hereof the influx falls,
From star to star, through palaces and halls,
And he that knows—or in at least such part
As ever enters the created heart—

These deeps, discerns the well of generations
And how the soul, unclothed and lightly shod,
Through human sonship leaps to that of God.
So is it, standing by this limpid sea,
What orient from on high to seek I know,
When to the realm of unvoiced mystery—
Deep beyond deep of wisdom—forth I go.

[*A pause.*]

I do proclaim that there are many heights,
Whereof the first alone the Fathers trod ;
I see beyond the still depths other lights,
And entrance to the Mystery of God.
The soul, not utterly from symbols freed,
E'en in these holy places, knows indeed
At once the grace behind the sacrament
Fair overshadowing the outward sign,
And something more beyond it, which has lent
The dim allusion of its high intent,
Like after savour of imperial wine ;
As if within illuminating blaze
Of visible, superinceding rays,
The soul were inwardly advised to mark
Some greater wonder centred in the dark.

*The High SOROR JANUA CÆLI, assisted by the Deacons
of the Rite, proceeds to the High Altar. The Acolytes with*

The Further Side of the Portal

kindled thurible and lighted torches enter, followed by the Familiars of the Holy Office and the cohort of Hierophants. The Rite is resumed in the Office of the Ordinary of the Mass. The Ablutions are performed, and after the Dominus vobiscum, the Placeat tibi, proper to Masses for the Dead, is recited in secret, with the variations peculiar to the Chancel. The usual Benediction is followed by the Second Gospel, which is given rapidly, so that the text is not readily distinguishable. After the Deo Gratias, the closing of the KING'S DOLE is taken in solemn form.

THE HIGH OFFICE OF CLOSING THE KING'S CHANTRY

The SOROR JANUA CÆLI faces the Western end of the Chancel from the Altar. The Deacons do likewise from the Epistle and Gospel sides, standing respectively on the third and second steps. The Secret Signs of the Holy Assembly are given with the particular variations attributed to each office of the Celebrants, and are followed by the collective sign common to all members, and now repeated by all.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

Brethren, we know the mortal life of man
By one incredible divorce began
Which did the bridegroom from the destined bride
For all the calculable times divide ;
But restitution shall be made at last—
Old rights restored and all suspensions past.
Turn'd hereunto, while loyal hearts attend,
This holy grade we bring to hallow'd end.

PATER OMNIPOTENS.

Take these last words at parting from a soul
Drench'd with all light conceived : The greater goal
Lies infinitely far, and farther still—
Beyond the dream that we can shape—is He,
Past all distinctions born of thee and me :
He can alone us satisfy and fill.
O primal last and immemorial first,
We have put on perfection and our shame
Have set aside, yet issue as we came,
A-hunger'd and unquenchably athirst !

The Further Side of the Portal

What is thy union but delighted pain?
We rest not even in Thee while we remain :
Give us that greater marriage that will leave
Neither the soul which toils nor hands that weave
To compass Thy true end, nor Thy will work—
The signs of self in such abysses lurk :
Take back Thy plenitude and us take back,
Leaving of all we were nor sound nor rack !

SOROR JANUA CŒLI.

If any brother, by the Altar's call,
To serve entitled and assume his stall,
Is of his rights unwittingly bereft,
And hence is still amidst the semblance left ;
We here proclaim our undivided will
To abrogate all ruling laws until
Such Son of Doctrine in his class shall gain
The end design'd, till none without remain
Whose strife is firstly to be purged from sin
And then exalted to the heights within ;
While, for the rest, so far as work unseen
Can out of lesser goods lead man at large,
We stand behind them with oblations clean,
Nor length of ages shall outwear our charge.
We with our eyes have seen, our lips have known,
The soul has enter'd where the soul alone
Participates ; and patience never sleeps.
We, who have reach'd the heights, do know the deeps
And out of many regions of the curse
Have risen to possess the universe ;
So on the deeps we call, the lost therein,
Houses of profanation and of sin ;
We stand with open hands, with bleeding hearts
By many sorrows pierced, and all our arts
Do exercise to rescue and redeem.
Thus out of nightmare and of torpid dream

The Book of the King's Dole

Do we all orders of the world uplift,
Till all shall know the chancel and the gift;
For we have felt the chastening and the rod,
And through great sorrows have gone up to God,
To find that hell is God more deeply heal'd
And that beatitude is union seal'd.

FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR.

The creeds and dogmas into silence fall;
They gave us many nothings who need the All.
So therefore solemnly, with reverent lips,
Out of our hands the sacred vessel slips;
The hosts are broken on the patens; Christ,
Who for all needs that we could voice sufficed,
As manifested God we worship low.
Beyond these outward ministries, we know
An inward passion and necessitous
Craving, which cannot be assuaged in us
Till we, who have been saved by Christ, shall fall
Beyond all rescue in the All of All.

SOROR JANUA CÆLI.

In the High Name which is not spoken here,
Where ministries of Names no more appear,
I close this Chapter of the Epopts brought,
By many doctrines in the Churches taught,
Unto the sacramental world's first verge,
Whence secret paths on other spheres emerge.
By these the soul must issue forth alone,
If ever it would truly reach its own.
Now are all rites completed; rites no more
Dispense the qualifying grace or give
The consecrations which prevail'd of yore:
The soul exalted learns alone to live,

The Further Side of the Portal

Whence every pledge of him who gave I here
Without reserve into his hands restore,
That he who in the light of light is wise
May offer as he please his sacrifice
And those about him to their end bring near ;
That souls which follow on the call of grace
Where signs and letters can no longer kill,
And look to stand at length as face to face,
May freely work the Dole's most holy will.
So therefore is the Order closed and all
Fulfill'd at present in this sacred Hall
In his regard who came, through fire and cloud,
To share those gifts herein to hearts allow'd.
Now it is finish'd—work of peace and sword—
And for the last time therefore : Praise the Lord !

*The High SOROR JANUA CÆLI is led behind the Altar,
and so into the divided veil, by the Eminent PATER OMNI-
POTENS and the Exempt FRATER FILIUS REDEMPTOR.*

PATER SERVUS SERVORUM.

(Speaking from the centre of the Chancel.)

The Chantry back into the shade devolves ;
The Dole, expended, fails ; the Rite dissolves.

THE SPOKESMAN OF THE HIEROPHANTS.

And with the surging backward of the things
External, let us to the King of Kings,
Once and again, accord official praise ;
As saving help on the inferior ways,
Acknowledging the Lord of every Host—
The Triune, Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

The Book of the King's Dole

THE FOREMAN OF THE HOLY OFFICE.

Most meet it is that priests of every clime
Sing ALLELUIA in the Paschal time !

THE SPOKESMAN OF THE HIEROPHANTS.

Well done, thou faithful servant : enter in
Those nuptial joys which in the Lord begin !

THE FOREMAN OF THE HOLY OFFICE.

We hold the Rosary, since beads began,
Most helpful to salvation of the man ;
We do commend to all by faith's rule led
The system of paid Masses for the dead ;
And we desire to see with one accord
The temporal power of the Pope restored.

THE SPOKESMAN OF THE HIEROPHANTS.

While for the Stations of the Cross we wait,
Let Christian Rosy Cross still keep the gate.

PATER SERVUS SERVORUM.

So doth abysmal night on all descend :
This is the Chantry Mass-Book's very end.

The Acolytes lead the Procession. The Epopets file out through the Pillar of Mercy and the Familiars of the Holy Office through that of Severity. The Loving Father CHRISTIAN ROSY CROSS, in his capacity as Gate-Keeper, assumes the cloak and hood of a serving-friar. The Faithful crowd up and he sells to them scapulas and Agnus Dei tokens. The women of the crowd light votive tapers at tripods. Father Athanasius in the pulpit closes the Sermon of the day.

The Further Side of the Portal

FATHER ATHANASIUS.

Therefore, my brethren, let not wiles delude ;
So with this wholesome maxim I conclude :
Poor heretics may still be saved perchance,
But only by invincible ignorance ;
And even so the camel, I testify,
Shall pass more easily through the needle's eye.

The Sacristans make the collection, and the organ opens the hymn : " GOD BLESS OUR POPE, THE GREAT, THE GOOD "—which is sung by the children with shrill voices.

A SOUL'S COMEDY

PERSONS OF THE COMEDY

HENRY CARTWRIGHT.

JASPER	<i>His Son</i>
HUBERT MORVEN	<i>Jasper's Guardian</i>
FATHER PAUL	<i>Priest of the Most Holy Roman Church</i>
GABRIEL	<i>An Acolyte</i>
STEPHEN GILP	<i>A Schoolmaster</i>
JOHN JOHNSON	<i>A Friend of Morven</i>
WILLIAM MORVEN	<i>Brother of Hubert</i>
MARY BLAKE.	
MATTHEW, BASIL, ERNEST JOHNSON, MILES	<i>Friends of Jasper</i>
JOHN NORTH	<i>Jasper's Uncle</i>
GERTRUDE	<i>His Daughter</i>
AUSTIN BLAKE	<i>A Poet</i>
OTWAY, WILLIAM ARTHUR, ARNOLD	<i>Friends of Austin</i>

A SOUL'S COMEDY

PART I

THE SOUL'S DEVELOPMENT

“Faxit sancta Dei voluntas quod sibi placuerit,
indignum me fateor, per quem talia efficiantur.”—
INTROITUS APERTUS AD OCCLUSUM REGIS PALATIUM.

A Soul's Comedy

BOOK I

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

CARTWRIGHT.

Evening by evening did the burning West
Some splendid pageantry and pomp of flame
Display before us ; and the daily scene
Impress'd insensibly the youthful heart,
Pervaded thought, gave light to faithful eyes
That watch'd unfailing. In a waste forlorn
The schoolhouse stood, an old, disorder'd pile,
Wild grounds and orchards round it. As a dream
With life is blent, to us some part of life
That sight became, no less with dream involved ;
And as the world is rounded with the sky,
Those sunsets rounded all our daily life.
God's self no farther than the farthest verge,
Where silent fen was merged in silent sky,
Seem'd parted from us, Whose creative smile
From floating clouds and cold, exhaling mist
Lit up that glory's wonder, so it seem'd,
For us alone. The Sunset and the School,
God and the boys, across the mournful marsh
Faced one another. Wonted Nature there
Could play least part, her aspect scarcely known,
In God's absorb'd, and something felt at night,
Not God, yet dread, the Spirit of the House—
Abiding Presence ! Solitary, gaunt,
That mansion, magnified in mist and gloom,

A Soul's Comedy

Loom'd through the darkness imminent, immense,
With wide, blank eyes through space a stony stare
Directing. Which into the world went forth
Of all those boys, and did not bear through life
Those sunset shards, that homestall's ghostly guise
Imprinted on him? They have ruled in me:
If all were summon'd in the soul or flesh
To stand before us, do you think one boy
Would bring some plain-way, unenchanted tale?
I see you standing, mutely musing here,
With thoughts turn'd inward, your abstracted gaze
Remarking nothing—own their potent force!
How have you fared? When last we parted, you
And I were young together; now that hair
Is grizzled, now that face with lines of thought
And age is furrow'd. Was it well with you
Those years?

MORVEN.

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

CARTWRIGHT.

In your sad face and in its languid air
I read the soul's divorce from peace and joy.
We started both with brave and high resolves;
No doubts had we; bright hopes fulfill'd we thought
To wear as crowns. What bears your wrinkled brow?
The contrast, or the parallel, make plain
'Twixt yours and mine.

MORVEN.

There was, my friend, a boy
Seized with the quester's fever—that divine
Disease which opens secret, stored delights

The Soul's Development

Of this illimitable universe !
But friends too fond, a parent's selfish love
Denied the nomad's longing. As the boy
Grew up, such passion in his growth matured,
But fallen fortune bent the father's head ;
So duty bound, so held the man mature.
The fire which first inform'd now prey'd upon
The life within him. Thus the days dragg'd on,
Till when the tale of five and forty years
Was writ in wrinkles on his patient brow
This man was free—free, but with forces spent.
The sunshine came, yet with averted gaze
Backward he turn'd—the soul was sick within.
Now, God forbid that by one hour alone
His wish should shorten for a selfish end
The life whence his drew being ! . . . I recount
My story here.

CARTWRIGHT.

Sad tale, in brief reveal'd !
Did you then never, never in all your days,
That first vocation follow ?

MORVEN.

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

CARTWRIGHT.

Your shy, earnest face and eyes
In youth come back before me ; I have caught
Their light upon the sea since many times :
A pale, sun-freckled face that almost seem'd

A Soul's Comedy

A fair one, which an animating glow
Could kindle into beauty; a broad brow
And chest which met the wind that blew from sea
How oft in fancy; the round head thrown back,
Like some bold swimmer—when he takes the waves
With adverse chin. Your spirit was in thought,
Abroad for ever on the land or sea. . . .
I mark before me one subdued and sad,
Restrain'd in all his actions. How your day
From summer dawn has deepen'd into cold
And melancholy twilight! Now this hand
Grasps weakly; that last sunbeam on your face
Has dazzled you, grown old before the time,
And all hopes dead within you.

MORVEN.

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

CARTWRIGHT.

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

The Soul's Development

Stalk'd like a phantom through the house alone
And would not mark our presence, though he cast
His sad, deep-sunken, introspective eyes
At intervals upon us. We at night,
Who shared one room, would hear his distant step
Pacing some lonely corridor, wherein,
Through casements crusted with the dust of time,
The yellow moonbeams shone. Recall her face—
The sainted vision of his orphan niece.

MORVEN.

To whom your troth in that so early youth
Was fondly plighted.

CARTWRIGHT.

To whose soul I vow'd
All life, all love thereafter.

MORVEN.

Foolish pledge !

CARTWRIGHT.

My face in boyhood from your mind perchance
Has long departed ; but her grey, winsome eyes
Could never leave you, all her maiden mien,
When clad with simple raiment—white and blue—
She walk'd beside me over meads at eve
When school was ended. Out of all she chose me,
And I forsook, my friend, for love of her,
Both mate and play.

MORVEN.

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

A Soul's Comedy

CARTWRIGHT.

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

MORVEN.

It is too far from out the past evoked
Now to affect us, though the tale be sad.
An Autumn storm came on you once at eve,
Two miles or more from home, where both had
 watch'd,
Behind a dark copse over misty fields,
Cold evening quench the fire that fill'd the West
With lurid dyes. A rainbow rose and spann'd
The earth and sky ; then deadly mists exhaled,
They folded round you, soon the path was lost,
And both were drench'd and terrified and cold,
While one was fragile as a frost in spring :
Exposure wrought on her ; consumption seized
That gentle girl, the dreadful end drew nigh—
She sent for you ; I think all wits awhile
Forsook you then, for as with gentle voice
She counsell'd you, betwixt the tears and sobs
A vow was rashly made through all your days
To love no maid in flesh, if she would love you,
In spirit still, translated to the sky.
She then, who sought with dying strength at first,
Your after-weal to compass, whether touch'd
At all that youthful agony of grief,
Or by such love constrain'd, or weak herself
Through love, unwittingly did injure you.
She took that pledge, and bound herself to be
Your spirit-bride (perchance to keep you pure
'Midst youth's temptations, or a childish heart
To soothe and please, accounting rightly nought

The Soul's Development

The bond itself), if you through all your days
Kept boyhood's trust inviolate with her.

CARTWRIGHT.

How long the pledge endured is known to you,
For we were friends throughout our Oxford days,
Though time had somewhat changed us.

MORVEN.

Yes, my heart
Was far away, abroad on sea and land :
One place alone where soul and flesh were free—
Wide earth—my home !

CARTWRIGHT.

It moves you even now !
Your eyes have kindled, on the chair erect
There sitting, and the blood warms in your cheek.
Me never did the rover's fever seize ;
I prized my books, to lead a student's life,
By love made sunshine, was the dream I cherish'd.
Why was a hope like this through all denied ?
God knows, not I !

MORVEN.

Does that perplex you still—
The foolish part in boyhood play'd by you ? . . .
What weeping stripling on the staircase stood
To let me pass ? The light, subdued and tinged
By the long painted window facing West,
His rich brown curls a moment glorified.
The comely visage in a faint, strange way,
Seems to suggest your childhood.

A Soul's Comedy

CARTWRIGHT.

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

MORVEN.

I half divine your purpose towards the lad.
Well, if the pledge was broken, he remains.
Who'd chide you ? The wild vow was void as air !

CARTWRIGHT.

I held it binding, and I broke it, Morven ;
And like a goblet shatter'd in the hand,
The splinters spear'd my spirit. . . . Had I made
Some bond with you and then repented it,
You would not hold me chain'd through life thereby :
Would she judge harsher who to-day sits crown'd ?

MORVEN.

I think such scruples must, by reason's lance
In flight dispersed, have left your conscience free,
But all hope vanish'd when your father died—
That lone recluse, held widower by all,
Whose lips made never mention of his wife,
Had wife no less, though dead indeed to him.
The man whose life by treason thus became
Embitter'd and divided from itself,
Reveal'd at last his wrong, and all of grief
The same had wrought him ; then with earnest words,
In failing tones, he begg'd his boy to bear
Such tale in mind, to take in time therefrom

The Soul's Development

A wholesome warning for his weal and peace,
And not to wed, but all his days devote
To kindly deeds, making the orphan's love,
The love of widows in their wants relieved,
Sufficient, and to fix his heart on God. . . .
A moment pause, the method and the aim
To analyse—whether a thought in spleen
Conceived, or whether a paternal wish
The boy by his experience dearly bought
Should cheaply profit.

CARTWRIGHT.

In the speech he died
My heart was wrung within me, by that form,
Whose face shone ghostlike through the gloom of night,
In silence kneeling. How the kindly man
Had, uncomplaining, borne his wrong through life
In secret, till it wore his life away!
And then my spirit, to its maiden vow
Recurring, started with a ghostly thrill;
I saw the sacred nature of the pledge
Proclaim'd before me in my father's words,
Pointing one path in life. . . . O wayward heart,
Which set alone upon a certain course—
Whate'er may rise to threaten or dissuade—
Grows stronger in rebellion! Every voice
In earth and heaven may plead in vain therewith,
The soul itself may plead, all sense cry out;
From each opposing force its purpose gains
More stubborn strength. O blindness passing all,
O miserable folly, evermore
To fate transform'd!

MORVEN.

False conscience stings you still!

A Soul's Comedy

CARTWRIGHT.

If I had married as a man mature
From no mean motive of desire or gain,
But purest love; if where my heart was set
The Queen of Virtue dwelt with flowers around
Of gentlest feeling, bloom'd the Rose of Love,
You dare not think a grievous weight of woe
For this would crush me to my life's last day,
And on my child devolve in burning shame? . . .
That scornful gesture answers—Hear me then!
My friend, spurr'd on by misery within,
Some refuge vainly seeking from myself,
I wander'd wide and far. If I had stay'd
In college—had I pass'd my life at home,
And kept to books, by effort of the mind
Controll'd the restless spirit, not myself,
Within me enter'd—had I sought relief
From bitterness in hard, in manual toil,
Gone forth to serve my country, all were well
This day with me, but I assumed your part
And went wayfaring.

MORVEN.

That ill-chosen course
Has wrought perchance your ruin, and my own
Makes night within the spirit. I, who sought
A refuge from the misery of hope
Deferr'd, turn'd student in my call's despite:
Have fates misplaced become a curse to each?

CARTWRIGHT.

Weak hearts are wilful, and I never yet
Had loved a woman—since that maiden died
In my first youth. It was the curb I chafed at,

The Soul's Development

The pledge which tortured, drove me on to meet }
Misfortune else impossible, and spann'd
A separating gulf of earth and sea.
The ocean cross'd, I reach'd the Western World,
And, faring far, one place remote and wild
Where over loom'd my baleful star of life
In ominous ascension. There were rocks
And wilted meadows, near the lonely sea—
One mile of stubble, then the shore's thin strip,
Of yellow surf-strewn sand. The hamlet dream'd ;
Fair stood the white-wood cottage, long and low,
With bright green lattices and orchard ground ;
Ripe peaches dropp'd unvalued : there she dwelt.

MORVEN.

What boots it to describe her ? Spare yourself !

CARTWRIGHT.

The maid indeed was beautiful. . . . My friend,
Is that the night descending ? . . . Still my soul
Stands like a phantom in the porch alone
Of that far distant cottage, and can count,
Each waning leaf on yonder mangrove tree !
I roam with Mary there : comes evening, falls
The twilight round us, on the heath we pause ;
The moonbeams striving with the Autumn clouds
Cast light on her pale, spiritual face ;
On grey eyes shining softly as a ghost's ;
On her tall, graceful figure, by the mist
Dilated ; on the simple robe of white,
Like samite shining, and the grey, wide shawl
About her shoulders folded. Now the mist
Clears as we walk, and far before I see
The shallow tide upon the level shore,
In little bays shine in the early moonlight. . . .

A Soul's Comedy

The maid indeed was beautiful ; it seem'd,
Despite my vow, a good and lawful thing
That I should win her, as a man my part
Fulfilling, she a girl so pure and fair :
And so we loved. . . . Bear with me, friend, is that
The night descending ?

MORVEN.

Be this curtain drawn—
The western clouds in horizontal lines
Of livid purple, stratified and still,
Behind the foreground of that line of elms,
Do brood and dream and brood. A moment more—
The evanescent sorcery of light
It's broken spell withdraws ; through one wide mouth—
With livid lips, far-parted, jagg'd and loose—
The tide of fire flows back. It closes now,
The livid purple into black resolves,
The spent lark drops.

CARTWRIGHT.

And having loved, my friend,
I set my heart against an inner voice,
And wedded Mary North. A child was born ;
We moved from Lyme to Newport on the sea,
And there we dwelt. I may not say with truth
That I was happy in the inmost heart,
For one thorn rankled ; yet my end was reach'd—
A student's life, love-brighten'd, leading there.
When on the lonely coast at eve or night
I issued, when I roam'd with Mary there,
When from my study to the lawn I pass'd—
(Thou striving sun, before thy bourne be reach'd,
Shoot one long beam of light through broken clouds
Along thy yearning world!)—and so stood long,

The Soul's Development

While sea-winds cool'd my head, while all my thoughts
Like crystals settled, then indeed it seem'd
That God in mercy bless'd my broken vow,
That no light thing should stand 'twixt man and bliss,
And least of all that trifle light as air
Whose phantom haunted still my weaker moods.
Such musing sooth'd me on a morn in March,
As round me sea-birds wheel'd with flashing wings,
While the sea's azure by its starry crests
Was varied ever, and ever the rising tide
Broke in crisp ripples, above the sea-breeze lifting
Light voices distant, murmurous and prolong'd.
I said :—My spirit with Thy peace, O God,
Is fill'd this day : Thy comforts smooth my life,
And not less bright than on this open main
The spring sun shines, Thy blessing falls on me.
I trust that ways as yet by lust unstain'd,
Though great in nought, atone my broken vow,
If aught displeased Thee there. I cast henceforth
My care away, this weight of false remorse ;
Thy grace and favour visibly impress'd
On all things round me here my choice confirm ;
It shall not trouble me, nor grieve me more :
I thank Thee, Lord !

Again the house I sought—
There waited dole and doom !

MORVEN.

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

CARTWRIGHT.

When I met Mary first in parson's house,
She dwelt, companion to the parson's wife,

A Soul's Comedy

And spoke but little of the past at best,
Or early friends. An orphan girl was she,
And though refined in manners as in mien—
A cultured mind—her youth, I know, was hard.
She dwelt with pain thereon—I trusted her—
I loved her well, and all my soul within
Bore loyal witness to her virgin worth.
If she were beautiful and bright and pure,
You would not count it as a grave neglect
I did not sift the miserable past,
The dry dead past to learn her mother's name ;
If she had strutted in the London streets,
For that was Mary less the Child of God ?
My friend, a name—one name—the meanest thing,
But, as the acorn holds the oak within,
It held a world of ruin. Hear me still.
An elder brother who had gone to sea—
Unheard of long—my Mary mourn'd as lost ;
But scarce the prayer upon my lips had died
When he was standing, clasp'd in Mary's arms,
Who, though rejoicing in his safe return,
Still seem'd in secret trouble. For her sake,
And for the hardships of a sailor wreck'd,
With honest warmth I welcomed and refresh'd
And rested him. He told his strange sea-tale,
Ask'd next of us, and how we came to wed ;
Then as the day went by to long past times,
And Mary's youth, reverted ; once or more
To some disgrace or tragedy which both
Recall'd unwillingly. In pure amaze
I ask'd his meaning ; starting then he cast
One glance upon his sister. She was pale
With agony, and shrank ; he answer'd me
No word, his manner changed to moodiness.
I left them thus together, till I heard
The sounds of weeping ; with a thousand doubts.
Distracted I return'd ; all pale and stern

The Soul's Development

He stood before me ; Mary pass'd me by
With tearful face averted ; then John North,
In his blunt fashion and deep, earnest tone,
Said, fear or love had prompted some deceit
In his poor sister towards me ; had he known
He might have kept the secret for her sake,
But having spoken in unguarded mood,
Both thought it better on his doubtful words
To place a plain construction. Love for me
And fear to lose my love, then lately gain'd,
If she confess'd there was a stain in birth
Upon her, had impell'd her to conceal.
So, with no further preface, in plain words
He told how one, herself a lawful wife,
Had fled from England with her husband's friend,
And in this distant country borne a girl
And boy to him ; how these were Mary North
And he, John North ; that till their father died
She shared his fortunes—then with want unhinged,
One summer evening sent the children out,
And ended life with poison.

MORVEN.

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

CARTWRIGHT.

Can you think my love,
Whose force had broken through a vow's restraint,
Could long be troubled at a secret kept
To save me pain, or else insure a heart,
By woman's modesty and grace and worth
Insured already, had the maid but known ? . . .
Pass all the rapture by her pardon caused,

A Soul's Comedy

Pass my confession, pass my vow reveal'd—
My vow kept secret long for Mary's sake ;
Then, later still, to bind us more and more,
My father's tale, my mother's flight from home.
North started then ; I saw his face grow white,
Before me, as he sat in silence there,
With one foot resting on the hearth and one
Set on the ample rug—those shoulders broad
A little bent, bent too the massive head
With its dark hair ; a full beard swept his chest.
An awful doubt had seized that keen-ey'd man,
Making him muse and ponder—starting now
And then, aghast, I doubt not, at the dread,
Half-guess'd calamity those darksome tales
Had flash'd upon him by their parallels.
“Cartwright!” he said at length, “Cartwright—that
name !”

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

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

The Soul's Development

I cried. "The father bred him, I suppose ;
She never heard," said Mary. "And the name—
And the true name—your mother as a bride
Received?" I shriek'd in tones so wild and hoarse
They startled her. "I know it not!" she cried,
"I never heard it! . . . Do not fix your eyes
So wildly on me!" added, with a wail,
The frighten'd woman. "But I know too well,"
Said John North, rising with his arm outstretch'd ;
"I heard it once—once only—and the name,
Most wretched and unfortunate of men,
Was yours ; while she, the mother of your child,
Your wife—O course incredible of Fate!"—
Groaning he paused. . . .

In that most awful hour,
What power preserved us, not alive alone,
But still retaining reason, still through all
Some hold retaining on my former life?
In retrospection I could see my heart
Was blithe in boyhood—how I play'd, and sang,
And shouted—how in all the genial months
We rose at early morning and swarm'd down,
Half-dress'd, to bathe—how through the winter nights,
In that long schoolroom, round the blazing hearth,
We met to weave romances—how we lean'd
Over each other, reading ancient books,
Of noble knights, of battles hardly fought,
Of lonely, long-enduring, perilous quests.
Who singled me in that mine early day
For boldness, or for beauty, from the rest?
Did aught foretell the fate for which my life
Was fashion'd, or the path apart from all?

MORVEN.

I counsell'd you—perchance my voice prevail'd !
Had that first quarrel by the roadside hedge,

A Soul's Comedy

Over the starling's nest, been left unheal'd ;
If when the angry heat of envy died
I had not hover'd in the twilight round,
Where, with your head upon the desk bow'd down,
And "Lancelot" lying with its dog's-ear'd leaves
Dropp'd on the floor at random, you lay still ;
And when the early moon began to sink
And look'd in on us, with entwining arms
We had not sat, the breach of friendship fill'd
With foolish tears ; perchance this pain were spared.

CARTWRIGHT.

No voice without, the fierce unrest within,
That only wrought on me. My broken vow
Was punish'd in the breaking. . . . Let me tell
In simplest words, the best, how Mary died.
She lay some days in lethargy, and then—
Twilight had fallen, and a fitful, cold,
Uneasy wind moan'd on the main without.
Black clouds across the naked, early moon
Were flying, and the rain in sudden gusts
Drove hard against the window—I say, then
She rose, sat up, and with both hands she drew
Her tangled, raven tresses from her face ;
Like two grey stars, I saw her awful eyes
In the dead twilight shining, as the flash
Of sudden thought kindled the soul within.
"I die," she said, "but darkness leaves my mind ;
Your vow was little, and my secret, yes,
That too was little, but immense the woe
Which comes upon us. Do not count it then
As punishment—calamity alone,
Which must be borne with patience, sent indeed
By God some end beyond our thought to compass.
And, therefore, though it has outworn our strength,
And with the burden one heart breaks at least,

The Soul's Development

I hold Him just," she cried, "and hope in Him !
And I who made you, as I trust, a true
And faithful wife, who would have also been,
Had God permitted it, I think, a true
And loving sister, do not die devoid
Of hope, not only for myself but you,
Like me resign'd. A sacred charge I leave—
That child whom God for purpose great and high
Has let me bear you. Do not shrink from him,
In whose regard God will Himself fulfil,
And see you hide from him his shame through all."
When the end came, we parted—North and I—
After long thought ; he to his old sea-life
The burden of a bitter and wounded heart
Took back ; I shipp'd to England, and in this
My father's house I dwelt, a broken man,
Who saw beside me here the boy grow up,
Clothed in the scarlet of a tell-tale beauty,
Whose blush betray'd. Our life like fever-dreams
At times went by—at times with even pace,
As down some mountain's bare and burning side,
The molten lava flows, a silent stream.
One Autumn night—some comet in the sky
Had hush'd the winds with terror, and the moon
Shone blurr'd and bloody, not a star but Mars—
While pacing lonely corridors, remote
From Jasper's room, across my mind there flash'd
The dread conviction that Avenging Fate
Had not yet finish'd with my work and me ;
That out of Nature's violated laws
A life inimical to peace and law
Alone could issue. . . . These unholy thoughts,
With life departing leave me clear and cool ;
His future fills my mind. Why did I yield
To morbid dreams ? If from this haunted house
To some far school I had sent him long ago—
Had he been hardly used and grown up rough,

A Soul's Comedy

With something even of the vice of boys,
It may be, tainted, better had it been.
He has not sinn'd, he cannot mate with men ;
He is too beautiful for girl or boy ;
For years his eyes in every star look'd on me ;
I've seen the damask of his tawny cheeks
In every sunset rose ; it has fill'd the world
With its strange, spiritual redness. What
Will come to him ? . . . But like a ghost evoked,
You stand beside me. . . . Will you take the lad—
It is not charity I seek but love ;
My will provides—and act in his regard
A kindly part, more natural, more just,
Though not less tender than the man who seeks
This boon in death, and thus for your assent
Expected, blesses you in tears beforehand ?

MORVEN.

Learn further, friend, how matters fared with me—
Those years of bondage. Refuge sought in books
From hope deferr'd, a fever in the brain,
I sought the basis of our human faith
In things unseen. Through ten long years my soul
This search pursued, again through ten prolong'd ;
And in the end—recall once more that time
When we were boys, and in distasteful tasks
You help'd me ! Was I one that cared for books,
Or one, you'd say, to ripen into man
Of order'd thought?—I, seeking truth, lost God,
And go through life, and move from place to place,
With frozen heart. I speak in cheerless mood ;
I have not truly lost, the worst is known ;
I take my place amidst the course of things,
A portion of the Cosmos. I am ruled
By its great laws ; the debt from all things due
I pay and murmur not ; with stars and suns

The Soul's Development

I stand united in the common bond
That all things die. But I have also dream'd
In Arcady; if I am wiser now! . . .
Yet, like a wintry mist upon the wide
And mournful sea, grey age involves my vain
And aimless course. If you have faith in dreams,
Pause before giving into hands like mine
A boy's young life.

CARTWRIGHT.

Did Furies, ere his birth,
Combine against him? Or does Perfect Love,
In darkness shape its ends, yet wisely and most well? . . .
Thou hast not spared me Whom I trust, O God,
Whom she too trusted, nor in death wilt grant
That peace she died in, fail'd this final hope!
Dost Thou still try me? Ah, my faith is full!
Take him, O Lord, and multiply for him
Disaster, disadvantage, if Thou wilt!
When evil most combines to work him harm,
And when his soul's destruction most seems sure
And imminent, Thy providence I'll hold
As then most vigilant, his final weal
Most certain. In Thy hands this passing soul
I now commend, as in your own, O friend,
His will I place; God raises only you:
My soul accepts the ruling and is dumb.

BOOK II

SCENE I.—*A Library in a house at Highgate.*—MORVEN,
STEPHEN GILP, *schoolmaster.*

TEACHER.

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

MORVEN.

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

TEACHER.

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

The Soul's Development

MORVEN.

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

TEACHER.

Sir, I have !

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

A Soul's Comedy

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

MORVEN.

You mistake me, sir!

I do not mean the boy to walk in hard
Commercial paths, for subtlety, deceit
And politics, nor the Church even. He
Need never on the struggle for mere bread
Be enter'd. Therefore, on this score alone
I seek to set before his youthful mind
Some high ambition which may rule his days,
Lest he grow selfish, lest an easy life
Should down the slope of self-indulgence lead
The lad to sin. I look, my friend, to make
His life all sunshine, poetry and peace;
But when such happy influence has work'd
Its full effect, to all things pure and high
Attuning him, I purpose next to set
The suffering world before his favour'd soul,
And with the pure, unselfish love thereof
Inflame it. So the pity of his heart
Shall prompt him ever for its weal to work—
With no reward in view, save that the soul
Must ever find in noble ends achieved—
Because his brothers on the earth toil hard
And suffer much, while all his days are his;
And he is gifted, keen and clear of sight,
And he can help them.

TEACHER.

We may not live to see—
Nor you, nor I—the issue of your plan,
But never failure on the face of things

The Soul's Development

Was written plainer. Trust a thinker versed
In practical philosophy alone,
Who claims no higher wisdom, but therein
Finds all sufficient for the needs of life :
I have known boys spoil'd by kindness but not led.
This for your method : for the end in view,
Your strange Utopian tactics bear the same
Relation to true life and the world's way
As dreams to daylight. On a course so vague
All reason's lost, yet hear a warning voice !
Don't seek a nature to restrain by love,
When freedom makes it to itself a law,
Nor by a regimen of roses train
To grasp at any object, great or small,
Which thorns encompass.

MORVEN.

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

TEACHER.

Good night, sir ! If your scheme be immature—
It bears the mark of it—my own is tried.
I shall be happy to receive the youth,
Should your plan fail you, as it must and will.

MORVEN (*going out into the balcony*).

The night has fallen, yet the genial warmth
Of this bright day still lingers, like the long
And lovely lines of light which fade how slowly
Amid the western clouds ! And now the moon,
Above the mists of London large and red,

A Soul's Comedy

Begins to rise ; but not till midnight chimes
From yonder church her zenith will she reach,
With all the busy multitudes of men—
Beneath that dim light shining far away—
Hush'd into sleep. . . . Is it the evening wind's
Low murmur, or the city's distant hum? . . .
How awful is the sleep of a great town !
The overwatching stars observe above
More solemn vigil. On the windy waste,
And the reposing hamlets, the sea's self—
That even—the stars seem dreaming, but above
The solemn sleep of cities an intent
And steadfast watch for ever they maintain.

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

MORVEN.

My dearest boy,
How pass'd my three hours' absence? There's some tale
In that flush'd face and in those glist'ning eyes.

JASPER.

O, sir, I am so happy ! I have heard
The grandest music—the sea spoke through all,
As I first heard it on that glorious day,
One month ago.

MORVEN.

Your tears fell then, my Jasper !

JASPER.

It told such solemn secrets, every wave
Speaking great things ; but I was brave to-night,

The Soul's Development

Though my heart swell'd. All brightest things on
earth,
That I love best, the sundawn and the night,
The Queen-Moon and the stars, with all my thoughts,
Seem'd—in such music—to have found a voice.

MORVEN.

Where did you hear it?

JASPER.

In a church at hand.

MORVEN.

And has your memory lost its hold so soon
On that first visit, when a solemn chant
Charm'd us to enter: I was with you then.
The bare walls chill'd, the high, unsightly pews
Repell'd us, and the preacher's chiding words.

JASPER.

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

A Soul's Comedy

MORVEN.

My boy must think !
I need not doubt the lad deserves your love,
Our grief is not to know him.

JASPER.

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

The Soul's Development

And Heaven's great gate unbar."—"Will you be here?"
I ask'd. "O, always," he replied, "I serve
Before the altar!" "Will you be my friend?"
Said I. He answer'd, "I will love you always,
If you will only come." So then we kiss'd
And parted. I came home, and here I am,
One great boon praying—to be friends with him;
Then let us both belong to God's True Church.

MORVEN.

So has my Jasper found besides a friend
The One True Church?

JASPER.

Indeed, the censer-boy
Declared it so!

MORVEN.

Convincing proof indeed!
Amazing logic!

JASPER.

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

MORVEN.

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

JASPER.

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

A Soul's Comedy

MORVEN.

I cannot promise you my leave to join
The Romish Church, because you have found a friend
Who sets the sunbeam trap of his fair aspect;
And snares unwitting; on his welcome here
Count still, my boy. But now the moon is high,
And in this garden will I think awhile.
So to bed with you! May your dreams be fill'd
With visions of this mass-boy! Peace! Good night!

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

MORVEN.

We settled here at Highgate. Like a map
The city lies beneath us and absorbs
His thoughts full oft. Then we go down at times
By coach, not train, and merge into the crowd.
We take long walks and visit distant towns;
We roam by woods and waters; we buy books
Of strange adventure; by the hearth at night
We sit to read them. The ruddy fire-light glows
On his bright eyes, that forehead by the rich
Brown, waving hair—cut crisply—shaded over;
And like the flames will his bright soul leap up
Full oft to animate the face, and eyes
Speaking like lips, for diffident reserve
Has pass'd as mists at morn from running streams;
And so the sparkling current of the boy's
Precocious mind flows brightly, while my words,
Like winds, weave music in it, or make dance
A thousand playful wavelets of pure wit
And boy-like fancy free.

The Soul's Development

JOHNSON.

Your picture shines :
No less your plan to school him will not work.
You have no faith, and on this score alone
I look for future trouble. You must choose
Between two courses, and from both, I know,
Your nature shrinks—to cheat, of purpose set,
A youthful heart by teaching what your mind
Rejects as fable, or with your reason's creed
That faith dispel without which saving aid
Mere virtue wavers in a time of need.
I sent you Gilp, that you might shift the choice
From off your shoulders, yet fulfil your duty.

MORVEN.

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

JOHNSON.

That hope is vague ! A necessary choice—
Mark well my words—is here evaded only.
There are two courses open, both have dangers—
Which will you take? You hesitate and doubt,
And then—"Eureka ! I decline the choice :
What seed is planted now may thrive or die ;
I'm saved the onus, yet my secret wish"—

A Soul's Comedy

Since in your heart you hate your creed as I do—
“Its life would favour; therefore I invoke
Kind chance, blind chance, to rain its dew and sun-
shine!”

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

MORVEN.

At my weakest point
You strive to strike me. I have dream'd indeed;
I too have hoped: now hope and dream are over!
But I can never in my life forget
How it was with me in my boyhood once
Before I took to books; how all things wore,
Without that ghostly school, the seal of God.
I had the Great Companion by my side;
He was above and round me; He fill'd the world.
At times God smil'd and there was Heaven reveal'd,
At times He chid, but still His voice was sweet;
He was a father, yet a friend as well—
A guardian, yet a brother. My good friend,
You have not gauged me with that insight keen!
I would my childhood's dream were truth indeed,
Or some good warrant in the world of thought,
Which does not fail us in analysis,
Could countenance and strengthen faith in God,
For Jasper's sake. I would that gentle life
Were not the brief, fortuitous result
Of certain elements combined in due
Though mystic measures. Could I lead him forth
And say that all things round may pass away—
The sun which sets, as fades its western splendours,
That pale blue sky, like its swift-moving clouds,
Trees, as the leaves upon them, seed and fruit,
The wind that moves among the pines and poplars,
The earth itself beneath—yet life is his—
True life—for ever, and the joy thereof

The Soul's Development

Increasing in him ! But if this be dream,
I may regret the base is laid in air,
Yet none can help it. For the rest my plans
Are plain enough, this point at least resolved :
To rear a boy with every natural grace
And virtue, who'll devote his future life
To serve his kind with no reward in view.
I do not hold myself in duty bound
To take from him the pleasant faith in God.
I'll keep his motives from his faith apart—
His motive, man—religion, but his dream,
Shall bear the same relation to his life
As poetry may bear and pure romance.
But since you wish me from your heart to shift
The burden off, a path has open'd now :
Come, let me have your candid views thereon !
"Kind chance" already has declared herself !
Look down this garden walk ! What meets your eye ?

JOHNSON.

Why, I see Jasper with a friend at play !

MORVEN.

Approach and listen !

JOHNSON.

Will they notice us ?

JASPER.

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

GABRIEL.

What will you ask for, suppliant ? All is yours.
I would I were in Heaven, for your sake !

A Soul's Comedy

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

I should return, and tell Him all my love
Had done to shield you! So, if you love me, come
Again to church, come often! Father Paul
Will reconcile you; and all your sins will die—
Mine too, because I make you Mary's child!
So shall you wear a purple cassock and white
Cotta, lace-trimm'd as mine is; we will bear,
By turns, the thurible and incense-boat,
And be so happy serving both before
The altar. Then because I brought you thus
To the true Church, and am myself from birth
A child of Mary, I will ask of her
That when we die with all our sins wash'd out,
We may go up to Heaven, but not sit there
On shining thrones, and be like kings so high
And solemn; but since in Heaven there is
An altar, may we both be servers there,
And never part, but love through all our days!

The Soul's Development

MORVEN.

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

JOHNSON.

What does this mean ? Who is that fair-hair'd lad
That talks so strangely ?

MORVEN.

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

JOHNSON.

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

MORVEN.

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

JOHNSON.

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

MORVEN.

How now ! You'll never in the world dislike
So brave a plan !

A Soul's Comedy

JOHNSON.

I think it base and hateful.

MORVEN.

What! not have Jasper in the Christian faith
Brought up? Not have me shift the burden off
You call so hard and difficult to bear?
You never mean it?

JOHNSON.

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

MORVEN.

Confess, the pope's a Christian!

JOHNSON.

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

MORVEN.

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

JOHNSON.

God judge your wickedness in that or this!

MORVEN.

My friend, delusion has, of course, degrees
And Rome may cherish more than England loves,

The Soul's Development

But I gaze down on with profound contempt
The petty quarrels which divide each day
That Christ you worship. I was testing you,
And find the canker of sectarian spite
Has sapp'd your charity! I paused, I own,
When Jasper ask'd to join the Roman Church,
Till that which ruled within him rose at length
A star to light me. What effect on him
Would the creed have, that merest form of words?
While if I check'd him now, the seed once sown
Might blossom after when I least should wish.
My scruple vanish'd, and the point became
Of all objective stripp'd. . . . O anxious friend,
If children play at proselyte and priest,
Why should we tear our hair? They'll change their
game:

To-day its prisoners' base—to-morrow, kites. . . .
And then, my friend, I have my weaker side,
Some tender feeling for his dream of faith;
So why prevent it if he tricks that dream
In silks and satin, not in Quaker's grey?
Then when the lad kneels down, at morn or night,
And prays in words which others taught, not I,
There's something pleasant, something strikes a chord
Deep in the heart, where seldom Reason's reign
Is quite establish'd. Soon the course of thought
Shall loose such bands and leave his reason free
To fix its purest hopes on earth, not air.

JOHNSON.

You will not let the boy be placed beneath
A wholesome rule, let honest Christian men
Bring up the boy in honest Christian paths,
And yet a mischievous and pagan faith,
With scheming monks, may set their snares for him!

A Soul's Comedy

MORVEN.

To please two children to their dream's content
My plan proposes only : I am pain'd
To find it cross a crony, whom I count
More child than either in his prejudice.

JOHNSON.

Well, Morven, time will shew ! I grieve for Jasper,
Who thus has fallen in disastrous hands—
All utterly unfit to train a lad.
I've sent my son this day to school at Gilp's—
We'll watch what comes.

MORVEN.

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

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

FATHER PAUL.

High will our Lady count her Gabriel's zeal,
A crown in Heaven be yours ; for those who bring
Poor souls to God will save their own from death
And cover up a multitude of sins.

GABRIEL.

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

The Soul's Development

FATHER PAUL.

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

GABRIEL.

But be sure I will not fail !
And I shall go to him again this day ;
I saw his father, and have spoken with him,
He ask'd me many questions on my faith ;
I did my best to answer well and clearly.
He bade me come as often as I pleased.
Suppose we win them both ! But he looks cold—
There's something scornful in that smile of his,
When I make Jasper kiss the Cross I wear,
Or sign himself. He call'd it play one night,
And then we argued, but he laughs at me,
And pats my cheek, and says I shall be pope
When I grow big—I do not mind his jests !
I had a dream last night which Mary sent,
As good as vision. I saw Jasper there
With light all round him and a crown of stars,
But he look'd nobler and a man full grown—
What did that mean ?

FATHER PAUL.

I hope, my child, it means
That Jasper some day, by a grace from God,
Will reach the perfect measure of the true
And glorious stature of a man in Christ !

A Soul's Comedy

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

JOHNSON.

You are a weak man, Morven. We are friends,
But knowing Cartwright from his early youth,
His orphan also has a claim on me—
A word may help: I bid you search yourself.
Why did you let your father's selfish whim
Your best days darken?—That was weak in you!
He had no right to keep you bound at home
When all your mind and heart were bent abroad.
You were no hair-brain'd boy, mad for the sea;
A useless, idle, melancholy life—
With open eyes—that's what he doom'd you to;
And you submitted, for the harm of both.
Since then your weakness in the life of thought
Is proved by entrance into ways where none—
Not strongest men—can through the shifting sand
Reach solid ground. Now lastly, this mad course
You take with Jasper lays your nature bare,
And proves it weak—weak to the last degree!
Because you lack the needful strength of mind
One day to see him with a tearful face,
Which Nature ever in a lad like him
Will dry to-morrow, you seek to humour Jasper,
And, vex'd yourself—I read you—all the while
His fancy takes this form, you seek a refuge
In cheap-jack scorn of warring sects and creeds.

But now, farewell! We shall not meet for long.
The eyes of Jasper haunt me night and day—
The Scarlet Woman winds her flaming robe
About his body in my dreams at night,
And I wake groaning. I have gain'd myself—

The Soul's Development

Who feel through Jasper's face Thy call, O God,
To preach Thy word in those unchristian lands
Where Rome now reigns ! So I go forth erelong
To spend what's left me of my mortal life
In earnest work for Thee. . . . The thought that souls
As bright as Jasper's perish day by day
Has wrought like flame within me. Though I fail
To rescue him, who is foredoom'd by you,
My spirit with a firm conviction fills
That I'm raised up to save in place of one
Some thousand souls. . . . Father in Heaven, decree
That since the goodness and the grace of Jasper
Have prompted in me—in a certain sense—
This zeal divine, that he may work in me :
I need no merit, in Thy hand I lie.
Shed down Thy grace and light, that ere too late
This dreadful error of his early ways
May dawn on him—the gulf beside him shewn.
If there be merit in his goodness now,
Which prompted me, the God that made him change
Such early virtue into saving faith,
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

MORVEN.

Forgive my jests !

You shock me truly with your earnestness !
I might have paused, but it's too late ere this,
And then you profit ; another lease of life
Your zeal has brought you. I rejoice indeed
That Jasper's presence turns for good to all.
His father gain'd by him, though crazed so long,
I too am better for the boy beside me,
And his young friend, that microcosmic priest
Has lived more truly since their love began ;
You now confess the happy influence :
My heart accepts the prophecy—be his

A Soul's Comedy

This part for ever, on all he meets to shed
His gentle nature's vivifying light,
Till all shall bless that presence. Had there been,
My friend, some blemish upon Jasper's birth,
Had he drawn being from some fraud on Nature,
So that his parents and myself once doubted
Why Nature brought him forth—forgive the fancy!—
This day the problem would be plain to me! . . .
So you go forth, like Matthew, turn'd from gold,
You mint on 'Change, to coining gold for God
From out the spiritual dust and dross
That lies around you, by the Tingeing Stone,
The Corner-Stone of Christian alchemy!
Speed well, my friend! Your faith as naught I hold,
But not your zeal; the world wants earnest men!

BOOK III

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

MORVEN.

What ails you, boy, that you stand weeping there?

JASPER.

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

MORVEN.

What grief is this?

JASPER.

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

MORVEN.

Who said that dreadful thing?

JASPER.

You, only you!

MORVEN.

No, Jasper, never in my days to you!

A Soul's Comedy

JASPER.

I heard you speaking in this garden lately
With friends apart.

MORVEN.

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

JASPER.

And is there then no God?

MORVEN.

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

JASPER.

I pray you tell me all, for you've read much
And studied. What you told them must be true,
But if not true, why did you speak it, father?

MORVEN.

I think there is no God—perchance I err,
But if not, Jasper, then the truth is awful,
And hence it comes that I have kept it back.
Now that you know, be brave, my child, and bear it.

JASPER.

I think I never shall be brave again!
If there be no God, there can be no Heaven;
Where then is Gabriel?

MORVEN.

He is dead, my boy.

The Soul's Development

JASPER.

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

MORVEN.

I cannot tell you ; my heart bleeds for you.

JASPER.

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

MORVEN.

Where would you take me ?

JASPER.

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

MORVEN.

Yes, alas !

JASPER.

Let us approach it ; this is Gabriel's altar ;
His face smiles on us out of that bright frame,
He wears the white dress of an acolyte.
Before the picture of my saint this lamp
Has burn'd by night and day—a pale, small lamp,
Ring'd with red glass, as in the Sanctuary.

A Soul's Comedy

It must not burn here more, since there is now
No Gabriel—look, I have extinguish'd it! . . .
See too this censer, with its silver chains!
Three times a day I offer'd to my saint
Sweet incense in it; nevermore I'll do so—
Here is a picture only! . . . Holy water
Stands in this stoup, drawn from the deep blue pool,
Which God made like the eyes of Gabriel.
My altar—as at the *Asperges*—daily
I sprinkled with it—let earth drink it now,
See, I have pour'd it out!—My saint is dead.
Now let me, lastly, from their vases take
These fragrant roses, these late violets,
These blue-veined speedwells, St. Joseph's lovely lilies,
And the first poppies in the cornfield gather'd.
All these I scatter at the altar's foot,
And with this veil I veil the face of Gabriel.
Do you weep now like me? . . . Is God dead, father?
Shall I pick up these bruised and broken flowers?
Shall I relight this lamp? Shall I unveil
The face of Gabriel? Shall I cross myself,
And pray once more, and offer incense here?
And will you kneel beside me? Like a priest—
I'll sprinkle you, if you can say God lives.
Is there no God? . . . You will not answer me! . . .
God's dead!

MORVEN.

The uproar of a broken spell
Rings in my ears alway!

JASPER.

Let us return!
Night falls, the birds are still, a busy wind
Steals whisp'ring through the grasses, the green ferns
And tree-tops. I suppose, a God lived once

The Soul's Development

Who made these things, but **He** is dead, like Gabriel.
Who will renew the Spring and make trees grow?
The night is cold without, and in the house
I see no lights: stretch forth your hand to me;
My limbs are trembling, father; lead me home!

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

TIME.—*Two years later.*

MORVEN.

We parted last in London; it is well
That we meet here. Rejoice, my friend, with me
To stand once more and watch the sea wash in,
All in the glare of noontide! Smooth it lies,
Blue, green and yellow, with the sky's deep light
Across its waste suffused; but here inshore
Breaks every wave with grand, majestic roll
Into a cloud of foam. . . . And so your plans
Succeed like magic; I am glad for you!
Good luck goes mostly with the strenuous man. . . .
How well you look, brown'd by the summer sun,
And hale, and stout! . . . May fortune favour still,
May you continue still converting men
From death to life by changing creeds outworn
For one your energy and faith contrive
To dower with life renew'd, as Jasper's face—
This hope awaking—to yourself gave life!
I prize such work just for the life it gives;
A saving virtue dwells indeed therein,
Whatever crotchets in a creed take form. . . .
And so you pray for Jasper night and day—
Believe me, Johnson, I have faith in prayer!
I think the energies of zeal-spurr'd minds
Produce effects, though miles may stretch between,

A Soul's Comedy

On whomsoever they fix the force of will,
For good or bad. I thank you : pray with strength—
Be sure, the boy will benefit thereby !

JOHNSON.

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

MORVEN.

There is no wind : what secret force uplifts
The vast green billows, rising, curling thus,
A moment poised, then crumbling breakers cast
With measured, concentrated, awful strength
On the beach vibrating under? . . . All is well :
Like young Apollo has the boy grown up ;
The little acolyte he loved is dead,
And what remains of Jasper's early faith
But dreams as I predicted? To his mind
No shred of doctrine or of dogma clings :
He throned his friend in majesty and light
'Midst saints and angels and the Queen of these,
Then offer'd incense to his memory.
That too is past—I'll tell you how and why ;
Or wiser, bury it : old ecstasies,
Old tears, rise up, like shadows from their urns
Of memory. One point emerges clearly :
What groundless fears were yours—you own it now !

JOHNSON.

If faith were poetry I'd say—all's well !
You train the lad for Nature, Art and Man,
But not for God. O let me take him, Morven !
Let him come with me to the hills of Spain,
Where I've my work cut out ; in five years hence
We'll both come back, he shall be all you wish for,

The Soul's Development

Plus faith in Christ and God. Don't shake your head—
I'll teach him honestly that love to man
Is his first duty after love to God!
He'll find good friends among the bright-eyed boys
We have in training at our Baptist school,
And work as well: we teach them all a trade.

MORVEN.

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

JOHNSON.

I bow to God's decree;
His will be done!

MORVEN.

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

JOHNSON.

Yes, let me hear him read.

MORVEN.

Cast one more glance upon the gentle sea!
Perchance we never in the world shall stand
Like this together in the day's rich light,
And gaze thereon. Renew your youth with work,

A Soul's Comedy

But I feel old ! Ambition's dream for me
Sank like a wounded bird into the marsh.
I have soar'd high and fallen ; hope has fail'd me ;
Youth passes swiftly like a pleasant morning,
And, lo, the evening of one's life is near—
Without the evening's splendour ! . . . Once again
To feel the innocence of boyhood mine,
To see the first companions of my youth
Approach in boyish beauty. . . . They embrace me !
We wander by the ocean as of old,
The sea-winds breathe around us. No one comes
Intruding in such sanctified domains
But those we love, the brothers of our hearts.
We roam together in thyme-scented dells,
The sunlight is upon us, we shout in glee ;
The nuts, the blooms we gather as we go,
And through the woodland, up the winding ways
Which fall and rise, or out through rustic gates,
Which open on green uplands, prospects fair,
We travel hand in hand. . . . Come in, my friend !
How goes your boy ?

JOHNSON.

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

BOOK IV

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

FATHER PAUL.

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

MORVEN.

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

A Soul's Comedy

Unsought to truths unwelcome at the end,
Or love misplaced which shaped my days to sorrow.
If I blame anything, my weakness chides
One grand mistake, the choice of single life
To nurse my disappointment and my spleen.
If I had wedded in my early youth,
Sought wealth, gat children, striven to found a name
And family, done anything but turn
My mind to books, I had not then lost God,
And, well supported by the common bond
Of that divine deception, fair and false,
I had not known the horror which the heart
Feels when the end approaches, when it sinks
Down to the gulf of nothingness, when all,
All, all is over, life and thought and love :
I had not then in this so early day
Of hopes so bright deprived the child I cherish.

FATHER PAUL.

But months have pass'd since that most fatal time,
And all the while about the fatal words
The boy goes brooding—it is there you err'd.
Your course of subtle thought and wayward search
I will not blame, nor ask what evil mood
Down paths so wrong directed. You, I see,
Have suffer'd much in agony of mind,
And God, not man, can read your inmost soul,
And God alone can weigh that soul's intent—
To Him I leave it. But here, my friend, I stand,
A humble man, the servant of my God,
And in His service at the call of each,
While I have taught boys in my time, can read
Their hearts, and oft have managed them when all
Have fail'd before me. Why not send for me?
The remedy you needed in my hands
Was held unused. I would have taken him

The Soul's Development

To serve before the altar, would have placed
The cassock and the cotta of his friend
Upon him, would have put into his hands
The boat and censer held by Gabriel,
And in the benediction and the Mass
At our new Church he should by night and day
Have offer'd incense ; so by slow degrees
I would have built his faith up fair and strong,
Which now seems ruin'd. He is cold and strange
And silent, walking—as we once have done—
Along the coast together. He will not speak
Of Gabriel ; he said my well-meant words
Were torture to him, and a faint, pale smile
Died on his lips, when at the end of this
Our only walk, he said : “ I have found at last
Another friend, and he is dear to me
And faithful, but he is not Gabriel !
If you believe that Gabriel lives indeed,
An angel bright, since you are kind and good,
Pray that these eyes may look but once on him,
To know he lives.”

MORVEN.

If you have trust so strong,
Let that support you ! If a God rule all,
Will he not shape to Jasper's lasting weal
This chance that you're deploring ? Had I faith,
I would not grieve for Jasper—well content,
Whatever comes, within the faithful, sure,
Unfailing hands of Heaven's Almighty King
To leave him. Friend, the end is clear for you—
O faith sublime, O privilege supreme,
O priceless heritage, from sire to son,
From son grown sire to son, a perfect trust
Transmitted, I have lost thee, I have sold
My birthright, and received for a return
Less even than Esau's pottage. I have stripp'd

A Soul's Comedy

Life's tree of blossom and of fruit alike ;
Now all its green has wither'd, now the trunk
Remains alone ; the soul departed leaves
The world a corpse, dead even if infinite.

FATHER PAUL.

Your tortured soul is striving back to God,
It starves and cries for Faith. You feel its pangs :
Suppose your search was thorough and well plann'd
To find out truth, upon the face thereof
It must be failure still, from this one fact—
That it deprives your mind's imperious need
Of all supply. Your search has wanted something,
Your method somewhere has a secret fault ;
We may not hit precisely where it lies,
But there it is, by all results is proved,
For what belies our nature so stands judg'd.

MORVEN.

The country lad believes that London streets
Are paved with gold, till on some rainy day
He enters there amidst the smoke and mud :
His dream, my friend, through many a dismal week,
Perchance he'll mourn in moods as dark as mine,
But it were mad to build that dream again,
And in the midst of mean and crowded ways
Still to believe the city paved with gold.
That's just my case ! I've probed the source of faith,
And it's impossible and mad for me
To cherish its delusions ; yet their want,
At certain times, I needs must feel acutely.
What grieves me therefore most in Jasper's case
Is not the loss of faith, but that so keenly
He takes this loss to heart. I most lament
That I've allowed him to indulge in dreams

The Soul's Development

Till dreams become a part of life to him.
Now, when they've grasp'd him fairly, built him up,
They're suddenly torn upward by the roots,
And, like a net, the wither'd parasite
Clings round him still, no more his soul's support,
His chains, his tortures. It is now, perforce,
I wish those dreams were true, those falsehoods facts,
Yes, I wish anything on earth or sea—
Such is my weakness, sir!—should come to pass
Which would make Jasper happy. That's my mood
This day, perceiving your effect on him;
But when you reason, then my strength returns,
And it seems better, as a fact, than not
That he should suffer, for he lives the more;
And still my plans will work—I've talk'd with him
And find him ready in the cause of man
To spend his life, with no reward in view;
He will crush down, I feel, this "child's first grief,"
And then be bolder in the strife for it.

FATHER PAUL.

Have you so spent your life? Do you feel now
Like one in heart establish'd, strong, secure?

MORVEN.

He does not mope; he mixes much with boys,
Through all the village; he is brave and kind,
He shares their sports, he grows and learns apace;
You would not think he nursed a secret grief,
Unless you saw him by a chance alone,
And then—but there, my friend, he hides it well.

FATHER PAUL.

You speak of plans—recall your words to me
When once on Highgate Hill we walk'd awhile:

A Soul's Comedy

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

MORVEN.

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

FATHER PAUL.

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

MORVEN.

Some final spasm of a force nigh spent—
But I forbear ! . . . I have not known you long,
And now indeed a long, most long farewell
Will bid you. When you visit here again

The Soul's Development

And ask for me, the servant's face will fall,
A voice constrain'd, it may be sad, will say—
Our master's dead ! And I have school'd my heart
To meet with due serenity of mind
My lapse into first elements. I have
A certain faith, moreover, knowing well
The many errors of the human mind.
I may have look'd upon the world and life
Through lens perverted, and believe, if so,
That God will not reject an earnest seeker
Who fail'd to find but still has loved the truth,
And more of sorrow to himself has wrought
Than harm to man by failure. So, farewell !
I would that I might speak with you again ;
I would my life could be prolong'd beyond
The space allotted ; but regrets are vain
And childish. In the evening mist I stand
And wait with folded arms. Beyond me now,
Down in the valley, over the still stream,
And slowly, slowly creeping up the slope
There comes a sombre shadow shrouding all.
Past those dark folds I hear no answering voice,
No dim and muffled echo murmuring far
And wasting into silence, as I stand
And shout uncertain on the lonely road.
The stillness of nonentity is there,
The darkness of an old, unruffled night,
Or if beyond it there are plains and hills,
Heart's dreamland, living pastures of the soul,
Sweet voices calling from the border-land,
And white arms beckoning, I do not know,
And if there be the stars I cannot see them.

FATHER PAUL.

What do you mean ? You are not ill nor old ;
You look pale truly, and now I think of it

A Soul's Comedy

A trifle wasted, but your frame seems strong
And firmly knit : why, you'll survive us all !

MORVEN.

Here in this heart—an agony at times !

FATHER PAUL.

What then will come to Jasper if you die ?

MORVEN.

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

FATHER PAUL.

If Jasper died ?

MORVEN.

The money would revert
To William Morven.

FATHER PAUL.

If an evil will
Possess your brother, he may harm the lad.

The Soul's Development

MORVEN.

My brother is a hard and grasping man,
Yet moral; he is old too and unwed.
Watch over Jasper if you will, my friend,
But I must trust my brother!

FATHER PAUL.

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

MORVEN.

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

FATHER PAUL.

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

MORVEN.

The asp already in his Eden walks,
While he goes forth, and in the world without
He weeps like Adam, though no sin be his.
You do not see that Fate on all your plans
Has written Failure; it is branded there!
How can I force consent, how twice connive
At his deception? Could you lead him, friend,
I would not take his hand to hold him back,
But none shall drive him. In my will already

A Soul's Comedy

I have set down most plainly, that himself
Shall choose which faith he'll follow ; in his choice
I wish him happiness and bliss complete,
And faith's most perfect crown, a soul at ease.

FATHER PAUL.

To leave a boy like that the choice in faith
Proves your indifference and scorn thereof.

MORVEN.

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

SCENE II.—*The Library at Morven House.*—WILLIAM
MORVEN, JASPER. TIME.—*One year later.*

WILLIAM MORVEN.

Is that you, Jasper ? you have grown apace,
And look quite well, though somewhat pale and
slight.

The Soul's Development

You'll not go back to that north-country school
Against your will, for I'll engage instead
A tutor here to teach you.

JASPER.

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

WILLIAM MORVEN.

But not me, Jasper?

JASPER.

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

WILLIAM MORVEN.

And thought me doubtless somewhat hard and
cold ;
Boy, so I was ! displeased, I own, to find
A stranger here, and from my youth till now
I never cared for children, least for lads,
While I had hoped to end my days in peace
With James, my brother. But he died, and then
His will displeased me, so my heart each day
Grew harder towards you, till I pack'd you off—
Far out of sight. Mayhap, the school was rough,
The season cold, and the place bleak at best ;
But as the buds unfolded and the sun
Stirr'd all life's pulse, I felt, I know not why,
My old heart soften towards you, and the more
That I grew worse, for in my bones the pains
More often vex'd me, till I scarcely leave
This " old arm-chair," but wheel'd from room to
room

A Soul's Comedy

Follow the sun to warm me. Then, I say,
It seem'd to me a good and cheerful thing
To hear a boy's blithe voice about the house
The whole day ringing, and a boy's light feet
About the stairs, and in the room at times
A boy's bright face.

JASPER.

So then you sent for me.

WILLIAM MORVEN.

Not, Jasper, then, though long the thought I
nursed,
But with the early spring a stranger came
To see you.

JASPER.

Was it Miles, sir?

WILLIAM MORVEN.

Who is he?

JASPER.

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

WILLIAM MORVEN.

No, Jasper.

JASPER.

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

The Soul's Development

WILLIAM MORVEN.

No, not Jack.

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

JASPER.

In my brain

Floats a faint image.

WILLIAM MORVEN.

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

JASPER.

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

WILLIAM MORVEN.

Did you not sail it once—that gleaming main?

JASPER.

Three weeks the magic circle spell'd us round.

A Soul's Comedy

WILLIAM MORVEN.

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

JASPER.

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

WILLIAM MORVEN.

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

JASPER.

It is the sea which takes my thoughts away.

WILLIAM MORVEN.

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

JASPER.

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

WILLIAM MORVEN.

A ship was anchor'd in the Downs last week,
Which held your uncle. . . . I attract you. . . . He—
The stalwart man I speak of—North by name,
Call'd here to see you, so it grieved me then
You were so distant, Jasper !

The Soul's Development

JASPER.

And me too,
It grieves me greatly, for to speak with him
Would please me much. Perhaps he would have made
A sailor of me, who commands himself,
I doubt not, that fine ship which anchor'd there,
And I can picture how it pass'd with wide
White sails all spread and bellied by the breeze
Swan-graceful up the channel.

WILLIAM MORVEN.

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

JASPER.

Will he come here again ?

WILLIAM MORVEN.

Perhaps in years to come.

JASPER.

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

WILLIAM MORVEN.

To learn how fared
The world with Jasper—was he tall and strong,
A bright, good boy, and happy in his heart ?

A Soul's Comedy

And then to leave a gift in charge with me
Against your manhood, to be kept till then
A precious secret, since your tender years
Would fail to recognise the worth of it.
That same shall prove to you a star of fate,
And it were well if your best dreams at night
Should make you tales about it. Not for this
Alone I call'd you from your northern school,
But I must shape myself your heart and mind—
That on the boy grown man the prize in store
May have exactly the result I wish.

JASPER.

It seems my uncle is some great Sea-king,
So very often of his gift to come
Shall I think, sir, and many tales most fair
In fancy make about it, then perhaps
Compare them with the truth when I'm a man. . . .
They've taught me a hard lesson in the North,
And I am glad indeed to come back home ;
Where I can bathe with Alfred and with Jack,
And all the summer sail upon the sea !
Dear sir, farewell till evening ! Alfred, ho !
Yes, I see Alfred passing in the road
And there's Jack with him, Jack's return'd from sea—
How tall he's grown, a strong and handsome lad ! . . .
I've hailed them both ; they see me ! Alfred, ho !
Ho ! for the beach, the fresh sea-wind blows past,
The wind and sea for ever : shout it, lads !

BOOK V

SCENE I.—*A drawing-room.*—FATHER PAUL, MARY,
JASPER. TIME.—*One year later.*

FATHER PAUL.

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

JASPER.

If I should win
Such favour, lady, I will be your page,

A Soul's Comedy

And faithfully will serve through all my life
My starbright mistress.

MARY.

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

JASPER.

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

MARY.

May that name
Jewel your soul's crown through eternity !

JASPER.

Your thoughts are kind and lovely ! Let me kiss
This hand, sweet lady !

MARY.

Sit you there awhile ;
We'll talk anon ! . . .

Good priest, your *protégé*
Has a strange face, yet handsome, and his speech
Is like a youthful Amadis ! Your will,
So please you, father, in the boy's regard ?

FATHER PAUL.

He leads a lonely, isolated life ;
His parents both are dead, his guardian—

The Soul's Development

A strange forbidding man, with evil heart—
Nurses, I fear, some malice towards his ward ;
And help of woman's company the lad
Has scarcely known. He was first brought to me
When twelve years old ; a little altar-boy
Found him in church after the evening service,
In darkness kneeling alone and wonderstruck.
He made friends with him, by sheer force of love
Caused him to join the Church, and then, as though
His earthly mission were fulfill'd, the boy
Died suddenly. Our Jasper took to heart
That loss so much he too seem'd nigh to death.
He dwells here now and here, alas, has lost
The faith I taught him—he will tell you how.
Be friend to him ; let him walk out with you
And see you sometimes ; do your best to lead
This lost sheep back into the fold of Christ !

MARY.

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

FATHER PAUL.

That is good,
My daughter, a bright thought ; the very same
I told to Gabriel. I remember well :
We stood together when the wind of evening

A Soul's Comedy

Was creeping round St. Joseph's sloping grounds,
The vesper service over. He had hung
His surplice in the sacristy, but still
The cassock wore ; I saw his earnest face
Shine in the twilight, lit by gentle eyes
Of golden hazel. . . . Well, my task is done,
And so friend Jasper in your charge I leave ;
You'll let him lunch this morning with your aunt
And you : to-morrow I will call again
To learn how much you like him, and what love
Your kindness wins.

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

JASPER.

You are my queen and I will give my soul
Into your keeping ! I will tell you all
My starry dreams. It shall be thus with you
And me, most dearest ! I am pledged to build
A mighty turret by the sea, all earth,
All waters wide commanding. I shall bear
My queen thereto ; a jasper throne will be
Prepared against her coming, such a crown
As in the Master's treasure-house is stored,
With a white samite mantle, for her soul's
Eternal crowning. Then some magic art
Shall make me worthy to be peer of yours,
And so sit throned beside you, who am now
The faithful page that pines with love for you. . . .
But when that page has grown a valiant man,
All fill'd with chivalry and lofty hopes,
My sailor uncle, a most bold Sea-king,
Who knows the spells which govern all the winds,

The Soul's Development

While all the treasures of the deep are his,
Shall send his gift surpassing mortal skill,
Fit for a king, to crown me. It is kept
Against the day your bondsman comes of age,
Lest he should lose it or misuse it now.
Star-queen, moon-lady, maid of all the land,
My gentle mistress—I shall ask no leave
To kiss you then, to take this hand as now,
Nor lean on you; but I shall fold my arms
Like this, sweet lady, round you, and a head,
Love-heavy, then shall rest upon your warm
And gentle breast, to hear the flutt'ring wings
Of a dove-heart beneath it; and you too
Will softly kiss with kind and lingering lips
This hair one white hand smooths—most blessed
hair,

Which holds the fragrant coolness all the night
Of these oft-passing fingers! Such a scent
The gather'd lily to the dell's green moss
Bequeathes in parting. O, what page of old
Was ever half so favour'd! Lift me up!
How like a heap of roses in your lap
Do I lie helpless! Lift me, stoop to me!
One kiss, one kiss, to soothe this yearning
mouth! . . .

Ah! head, if I should roughen with my hand
Curls beyond price so precious, pardon me!
Pardon it, shapely head! How pale and wan
Your features grow with passion for your page,
Dead-white himself, and with unearthly light
What eyes shine resting on me! Is your heart
Fill'd up with love for Jasper, chalice-like?
Ah! warm and maiden lips, ah! love, those eyes,
These most fond arms, that heart surpassing all:
I am lost in love for you! . . . But now your face
Turns from me, your arms loosen, you indeed
Are angry.

A Soul's Comedy

MARY.

Nay, not angry but afraid,
Lest all-unconscious innocence should draw
My page to his destruction!

JASPER.

You destroy,
Whose love enravishes with life of life
The humblest plant admitted to the reach
Of its all-fertilising influence! . . .
Blue eyes and gentle mouth, crisp auburn hair,
My lips are tired with praising; warm white hands,
Whose wandering caresses never fail!
Ah, faith beyond all faith, ah, love which lives
For ever, from its own beauty life's increase
Assuring it! Your kisses fall on me,
As fall soft petals of the autumn rose
Unheard upon the grass, and your kind arms,
In the warm summer air, encircle me;
The benediction of your voice enrings me,
A golden sunbeam circling all my head,
And like a gleaming ripple on the sea
Your eyes' smile lightens round me. Their sweet
glance
Has enter'd into all things, and gives all
Surpassing beauty, while the dreams which bless
One faithful page have trick'd you in return
With bright selected beauties of the sky,
New-swept by wind and rain; all charms which
earth
Wins from the lingering sunset's amber light;
The presence and the beauty and the joy
Of the free open ocean in that mood
Which summer moons make mildest. You are life
And poetry and beauty—you destroy!

The Soul's Development

MARY.

Love blinds you !

JASPER.

Love has quicken'd !

MARY.

Love betrays !

JASPER.

But all its treasures of unfailing bliss.

MARY.

My Jasper, you were given me for the soul's
Reclaiming, but I steal your heart away,
And lose mine in you, while our love each day
Goes hurrying onward towards the gulf of sin.

JASPER.

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

MARY.

May it still be thus !
For ever thus with you, the pure of heart,
Till God shall take you for completer guard,
A vestal, to His bosom !

JASPER.

Now your eyes
Grow dim !

A Soul's Comedy

MARY.

Indeed I cannot see you well,
For my tears hide you.

JASPER.

Does true love unseal,
Or hidden sorrow, those so crystal streams?

MARY.

O, when was sorrow from deep love divorced?

JASPER.

Ah! Morning Star, who married them—unfit
To mingle, who meet only in the night
Which falls on love forgotten or betray'd?
If you would save my tears, make haste and press
Dear kisses on my eyelids.

MARY.

Evermore
To kiss you, Jasper! If it thus could be,
If it might be!

JASPER.

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

MARY.

The one change
In life alone to pass these lips from off
An Eros mouth to eyelids.

The Soul's Development

JASPER.

And this, to raise
My lips up to love's eyelids and her mouth !
So all is well between us once again.

MARY.

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

JASPER.

You will return it by all love made brighter.

MARY.

We should part, Jasper, we should part indeed ;
I am too old for you to love me thus,
And all too few your summers !

JASPER.

You indeed
Are older, and some knowledge of the world
Is yours ; but yet you tell me a hard thing !
Why should we part in life ? What evil deed
Or thought has pass'd between us ? Loving words
And kisses ! Are these sins in the world's eyes ?
Does God forbid us kisses and kind words ?

MARY.

If I should leave you, would the gentle heart
Break in that bosom ?

A Soul's Comedy

JASPER.

Have you seen, dear saint,
Beyond the melancholy marshes sink
An autumn sun, then starless night succeed,
While a cold, subtle wind through all the place
Wakes mournful sounds? What shadows haunt
the marsh!
What desolation dwells in all its waste,
Exhaling ghostly mists beneath the sky,
As if some spirit which informs the world
Went out with day therefrom! . . . It would be
thus
With this unhappy and forsaken page.

MARY.

If I should love you ever!

JASPER.

Only keep
Your arms around me, lest I die with joy—
Now speak those words, most loved one!

MARY.

Put your face
Against my cheek! How beautiful you are!
Could I do anything but love you?

JASPER.

Feel
Your page's heart, feel how it throbs for you;
Now kiss my life away!

The Soul's Development

MARY.

O late, too late !
The brief day wanes and both are far from home.

JASPER.

Why do you start so quickly ? How your steps
Outstrip my own which hasten in your track !
Wait for me, Mary, let me take your hand !

MARY.

It is dark, Jasper, I am cold.

JASPER.

Your arm
Is warm and trembling. What is dark ? We
stand
With woods behind us, and the wide fields slope
To Kingsdown village ; in the autumn sun
Its red tiles glow.

MARY.

You will not speak of this,
Nor tell to any one that I love you—none
Must know : it must be secret as the grave.

JASPER.

Whom should I tell ? Your aunt is cold and old !

A Soul's Comedy

SCENE IV.—*The Sandhills and the Sea.*—MARY,
JASPER. TIME.—*A few weeks later.*

JASPER.

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

MARY.

My dark-eyed handsome page
(Seventeen, and yet so young in the world's ways),
How is love's passion strangely blent in you
With Eden's innocence! I repent indeed
This evil thing.

JASPER.

Ah, do not sigh like this!
I am not sighing, I am glad, look at me;

The Soul's Development

In truth I smile ! If we have sinn'd, sweet lady . . .
But I remember my delight with you,
And yours so great with this poor love-sick page,
And thrust it back from me. Of all sweet things
The truly sweetest is my choice henceforth,
And that is you !

MARY.

These words are like sharp knives !
How bright a soul is blacken'd by the love
Which thus undoes you. Let me go from you !

JASPER.

You shall not go ! You cannot mean it ! I
Can never live without you ! I shall lie
Cold through the night, and evil dreams will haunt me ! . . .
All my protecting spirits abandon me !
Is that the sea's low murmur, or the rush
Of angel wings departing ?

MARY.

They named me Mary well,
The bitterness and saltness of the sea
Have drench'd your heart !

JASPER.

What shall we do ? The storm
Gathers.

MARY.

The sun is darken'd.

JASPER.

A cold wind
Has risen.

A Soul's Comedy

MARY.

The vex'd sea chafes

JASPER.

And the bleak hills

And all the land look grey.

MARY.

God's face is turn'd !

It was my sin, not yours.

JASPER.

O kneel and pray !

MARY.

Where were your angels when I saw your face,
Why did their wings not veil it ?

JASPER.

Gabriel—

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

MARY.

No, we shall meet no more !
Not on the high cliffs, when the morning sun

The Soul's Development

Burns the dry grass ; not in the pleasant shade
Of broad old trees ; not in the cool dark caves ;
Not in the room at twilight, when the book
Grows dim before us ; nor at night together,
When our lips blunder, mouth seeking mouth in vain—
We shall be parted far, and nevermore
Will one house hold us ; a most weary space
Will our familiar lips make strangers utterly !

JASPER.

What high prophetic spirit speaks in you ?
But that was not your voice, too like the wind
Wailing in lone sea-caverns ! Aye, so deep,
So sad, so hopeless ! What has power on you ?
My tears fall o'er you, and those lips, which shriek
This dirge of love, seem love's indeed no more !
The eyes are blinded, trembling hands pass over
Your visage, and are damp with tears or blood ;
What thorns have torn this brow that blood should fall ? . . .
Your grasp is tight'ning on me, a strange look
Dawns in your eyes, while now a sudden cold
Has seized me. . . . A dark, ragged cloud bespreads
The sky. . . . The wind has veer'd a point or two. . . .
There is an ominous murmur in great waves,
As they fall seething, sucking down the stones !

MARY.

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

JASPER.

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

A Soul's Comedy

Recites his daily office—sit by me !
He will not see us—he will pass anon !

MARY.

You cannot face him now, alas, poor friend !

JASPER.

Don't move nor whisper ! If he found us thus,
What would he see ? That I'm contriving here,
With skilful fingers, just a paper boat
This pool to sail. So Mary, help your page
To launch his ship upon the stormy sea !
Fair winds compel it, and with gold bring back,
That I may forge your brows a gem-set crown,
When I wed you !

FATHER PAUL (*to* JASPER).

Your face is flush'd and strange,
Why do you loiter here ?

JASPER.

My ship sets forth ;
My Argo sails to seek the Golden Fleece,
To deck my lady's shoulders when we wed.
I think the merry peal of marriage-bells
Is sounding now ; I soon shall see you put
A long white surplice on to marry us.
You do not know my lady's face is pale,
And she is crying with averted head,
Because she tried through all this morning's length
To win my spirit to the Virgin's shrine,
To worship there. But I will now forget
My father's words and all my guardian's scoffs,

The Soul's Development

If we may kneel before you, hand in hand,
And you this day will wed us.

FATHER PAUL.

Mary Blake,
You are pale truly; though your face is turn'd,
I read it rightly; to your home go back
And weep therein, with penitential tears,
Weep, if you can, your sins, your life away!

JASPER.

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

FATHER PAUL.

Rise, wretched boy! Alas, I know too well
What snare has trapp'd you!

JASPER.

I can never more
Look in your face, two fierce, eternal flames
Burn in my cheeks, my shamed eyes shrink from you!

A Soul's Comedy

FATHER PAUL.

Wreck'd is the Temple of the grace of God.

JASPER.

My limbs have lost their vigour, like my heart ;
My heart to tears has melted like my eyes,
And in my head a swift and searching pain
Goes circling round and round.

FATHER PAUL.

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

JASPER.

Let me hide
Thus on your arm this flush'd and flinching face :
It was my sin, not hers. Bright, beaming Sun—
Thy clouds have scatter'd for a moment—light
The yielding sand impress'd by Mary's feet !
O Mary, Mary, stay ! We fly to you—
Our father comes to pray with, pardon both.

A SOUL'S COMEDY

PART II

THE SOUL'S RENUNCIATION

“Tu siquidem, ut es scrutator cordium, nobisti
meum propositum, cogitationes et vitæ studium,
quod nimirum mundana hæc bana et somniis
similima æstimem, meque tibi consecratum mente
exoptem, si tu modo et velle et posse, hoc est,
omnia concedas.”—MICHAELIS MAIERUS.

BOOK I

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

JASPER CARTWRIGHT, MILES. TIME.—*Four years later.*

JASPER.

So in the middle of my course a hand
Drew certain veils, which open'd paths of life
Unknown, and changed the aspects of all dreams.
Now on the threshold of a great event
I stand and wait ; some secret, kept from me
Till man's estate, will open three days hence
Before me. I was taught to look thereto
From early boyhood, as to some bright star
The rover turns, who toss'd on stormy seas
Sails hardly. Yes, it is my Star of Fate,
It rules my fortunes, rules my future mode ;
I'll order life thereby—high Heaven approve !
I raise up eyes to its unclouded vault,
And straightway now the common sense of sight
Seems melted in me ; with the soul I see :
But this is vision, this is ecstasy !

MILES.

The pictures of a strange and dire event
Are dimly limn'd before me, and I know
That grief awaits you.

A Soul's Comedy

JASPER.

Whether grief or joy
That star will rule. It lit my boyhood's dreams,
And day by day my fancy brooded on it.
I stand thereby.

MILES.

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

JASPER.

Lo, the town
Beneath!

MILES.

The night has fallen, and the wind
Blows, cold and strong, at once from shore and sea.
Shall we go forward still? or choose this steep
Descent? or hasten to the town and find
Some lonely inn, where windows on the deep
Look forth?

JASPER.

Turn back, and we shall reach in time
The town, wherein my lodging is at hand,
And a bright hearth will cheer us.

MILES.

So I take
Your arm. The rain seems over. Far in front,
Behold the lanterns of the boats at sea.

The Soul's Renunciation

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

JASPER.

We part, my friends, to-morrow ; at a call,
Our paths divide ; you go your plans in life—
And I—to compass. One has led you long ;
Stand each henceforth alone, to lead in turn,
I do not doubt, some band of younger minds
On our old lines ! I pray you, let this night,
When on the threshold of an ampler life
I pause expectant, be in minds of all
Engraved indelibly by noble thoughts,
By hopes, by projects voiced ! Speak each in turn !
The wind has freshen'd, through this garden-ground,
With twilight falling, wafts from lanes without
Wild rose's and wild honeysuckle's scent
To mix with rarer fragrance. . . . See, one star
Looks down and listens !

BASIL.

Let us make a Dreamland
Each for his heart, then put the dream in words,
While, like a distant chorus, shall the deep
Sea blend its mystic voices with our own ;
So does the raptured longing of a boy
Keep time for ever to the wild romance
His eyes devour.

JASPER.

For that sweet word Romance,
Kind thanks be yours ! It kindles in the heart

A Soul's Comedy

A fervent bliss, some longing impulse leaps
Within us, sending fire through every vein.
We would be up and doing, we know not what;
The eyes gleam, the desire outpaces thought,
And thoughts in tumult follow trampling thoughts,
While the mind makes bright pictures, and dreams
dreams
Too lovely for deception or too deep !

MATTHEW.

Poor is the heart which has not made already
Its dream of life ! Tell that then, which alone
Has vital import, not from Fancy-Land,
But what—in highest moments and in best—
Souls shape and out of thought's world into life
Bid magian time evolve ! Who will speak first ?

JASPER.

Well counsell'd he who bade us keep within
Some secrets told to few, some thoughts too full
For common utterance ! The divine and high
Emotions of the soul, transcending sense,
The sudden flashes of revealing light,
Free-breathing moments, as of rousing winds,
Fresh-blowing over from eternal plains,
And scented, infinite seas—could these in words
Find meet expression, would the world pay heed
More than to voices of the rain and wind,
Which too have meanings ? Hide them, dreamers,
then ;
So with the solemn music of the soul
Still let them mingle, and around us build
A lasting rampart of harmonious sound,
To isolate from disenchanting things,
And, leaving lonely, as it well may leave,

The Soul's Renunciation

Still in that loneliness which spheres the stars. . . .
Well did he speak who bade us keep within
Some secrets told to few ! our life-dream one :
The true fulfilment justifies alone
Revelment. Should we empty rashly thus
Our hearts out, we might leave a void within
The dream itself perchance could fill no more.

MATTHEW.

A song were best ! Yes, fittingly reprov'd
I stand ; my life acknowledges the right
In those your words, who wear of all men most
An outer mask, expressionless and cold,
To hide the strife within.

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

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

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

*It's weight increases day by day,
It throbs and gives no peace,
Till from ourselves we hide away—
And think to buy release.*

A Soul's Comedy

*At length our own true self is lost,
Sunk beyond gage of sense,
Though sometimes still the mind is cross'd
By inklings rising thence.*

*These prove it lives retired apart
Where no false-seeming is,
In those deep caverns of the heart,
That unplumb'd soul-abyss.*

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

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

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

*Ah ! may high dreams, fulfill'd in each,
Reveal immortal youth,
The nature's reach, free spirit's speech,
And rest from quest in truth.*

JASPER.

Matthew, the soul sufficiently profound
To feel that doubt should have the power within
To answer it ; and yet my own responds
To your sad verse : the reticence is wise
Which first I counsell'd, yet to lengths too great

The Soul's Renunciation

Is often carried. Did the armour forged
For strife become the hero's daily dress,
His limbs would stiffen, and the cumbrous weight
Would wear the frame within. Veil then the soul !
Bind it not round with bonds of ice or steel,
Lest, cramp'd thereby, we grow false-seeming's slaves.
And let the veil itself be light and thin,
That gentle winds may in fair moments lift,
Kind hands remove it, soul with soul to join
In mystic marriage of ecstatic lips,
Whence noble thoughts shall spring, the sons of love.
Aye, let the veil be light and bright and thin,
That if a new hope kindle in the soul,
It may shine through us, that the soul at will
May cast veils up, and all our self be free !

MATTHEW.

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

ERNEST.

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

BASIL.

What is your aim ?

A Soul's Comedy

ERNEST.

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

BASIL.

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

JASPER (*to* MATTHEW).

Your thought has touch'd me! We should meet more
often;
Where are your evenings pass'd—at home, or where?—
With books?

MATTHEW.

Yes, mostly, since I make few friends;
I live alone; thus only can a man
Attain himself. The ocean and the stars
Are uncompanion'd, and, if not bless'd, are great.

The Soul's Renunciation

JASPER.

Basil's half-right ! Though passion wears the boy.
There is no misery so sweet as love :
Forgive it ! Ernest's aim seems mainly self,
Though most would praise it.

ERNEST.

I respect your mind's
High gifts, nor envy those, but I defend
My plans. Denounce me—you are wrong no less,
And I disclaim your judgment ! Judge in dreams,
But leave to me the facts of waking life !
Soar up, bright spirit, and invest yourself
With rainbow treasures, but the solid gifts
Of life attempt not in such fairy scales
To weigh ! Weigh gold of faërie—that is dead
Leaves in the daytime ! In my hands I hold
A magic purse which multiplies the more
It's drain'd ; that's commerce back'd with enterprise,
That's prudent speculation which luck backs,
Because the calculating mind controls
The vagrant dance of Fortune. Am I wrong ?
One man am I, beginning in the world,
Not rich, not strong, no genius, but I grasp
And don't let go ; but what I grasp is good
And solid. Give me space for my two arms
To move in, time for struggle, and, behold,
I'll top you all in practical success !
You count me little in your thoughts, I know—
Ten years, friends, then compare yourselves with me !
I look to dower the daughters of you all,
To start your sons, raise up your fallen fortunes,
While if success bring peace, and peace good health,
And health long life, I'll build your monuments.

A Soul's Comedy

(*To* JASPER.)

They should have sent you to that school of Gilp's
Where I was train'd; he turns no dreamers out.
When was home training anything for boys
But failure? They have marr'd your life for you,
Friend Jasper, to my thought. . . . But come to town
And hear the bishop—that's the boy Gilp train'd, sir!
We've backed him for the Primacy against
All England—a fine, sterling character,
Prompt, practical, good sense from head to heel,
And sound in doctrine—that's a man for me!

MATTHEW.

If gold be silence, you are wealthy, Miles!

MILES.

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

MATTHEW (*to* BASIL).

Who seeks, like Ernest, to improve in life,
Who longs like me for light, good aim and true one
Follows—God help him, lead him, sometime crown him!
But after selfish, sensual content
To seek alone! . . . I know the soul within
That dusky, earnest face, whose every line
Has force and meaning, to a noble height
Could reach—why thus degrade it? Why waste thus
Life's golden chances? Might I shame you deeply,

The Soul's Renunciation

I'd risk your anger, Basil—you who wear
Your follies and your vices with no blush
On that brow broad enough to throne some thought
Whose lustre lighting bravely all your life
Shall lead you to achievement.

BASIL.

You have said
You live alone, to emulate the stars
And sea—that thought befits you ! Like the stars,
You will move always in a formal line,
And lead like those a bonded, formal life,
And your life ever some cold and distant hope
Will follow, as the ocean does the moon.
Yet the stars burn, their hearts are fed with fire,
While yours is ice ; and if the sea be cold,
It is a passionate thing with stormy strength
Instinct ! You may become perhaps a dark
Star, or a stagnant lake, or a dead sea—
Not more ! So cover up your soul with calm,
Dear, great Unmoved ; so be that breast of yours
Cold as the snows are, barren as the sea,
And like the stars remote from human feelings !
To live, to feel, to prove the generous scope
Of human bliss, give leave in grace to me ;
From out that mental pride, that thin disdain,
No great thing, and no good thing, and no kind
Can issue ; love's excesses work at times
Their own redemption, vouching Nature's strength.

MILES.

Will no one sing to end this vain dispute ?
You dream, my Jasper ! Use your sacred gift—
A harp shall fill the pauses of the verse
With errant chords of melody. . . . Be still !
The inspiration fills our leader's soul.

A Soul's Comedy

JASPER.

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

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

*On thy throne's exalted height
Thou art seated, day and night ;
Thy most bright soul's bright array
Never waneth, night nor day.
Thy raised eyes grow soft or glisten
As the splendours pale or brighten,
And thy whole face seems to listen
And to lighten
When the shrill, sweet voices heighten ;
But the very life within thee dies away like a breeze
In the pause of the silver silences.*

The Soul's Renunciation

*The stars and the sea have met together
And mingled in thine eyes,
With the azure of far skies
In autumn weather.*

*Ah ! what have the angels done
To make thee look so fair ?
As if thy bliss but yesternight begun,
And it seem'd still so strange to breathe in heaven's air.*

*About thy golden hair
The clouds of incense make a dim
And ever moving aureole ;
Smooth is thy broad white brow,
And in thy samite robed art thou ;
Through thine eyes looks the spirit of thy soul.
Thy lips move sometimes, joining in the hymn,
But silent oft and statue-seeming—
While thy white hands on thy lap lie straight—
Dost thou sit dreaming
In unearthly state.*

*God looks on thee from above thee,
The white-robed martyrs love thee ;
The confessors one and all
See the sunlight on thee fall ;
Sunbeams kiss thy vesture's hem
And thy flower-bright diadem.
Thee the holy Mary blesses,
Oft a word divine will speak ;
Once she smooth'd thy gleaming tresses,
Once she kiss'd thy virgin cheek.*

*Is thy heavenly bliss complete ?
Hast thou now no more desire
For the love we thought so sweet—
Ere thy soul ascended higher ?*

A Soul's Comedy

*Thy blue eyes are deep, and deep
Their expression lies therein ;
They their inward counsel keep,
All their secrets shut within.*

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

*Who sprinkles the lilies that bind thy brow
With the dews that keep them cool and bright ?
Who folds thy garments white ?
What hand caresses and tends thy tresses,
And clasps thy golden girdle now ?
Who washes thy feet that are white and fair,
“ And dries them with his hair ? ”*

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

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

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

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

The Soul's Renunciation

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

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

BASIL.

Did you love Gabriel most for lips or eyes?
And were the eyes that charm'd you brown or blue,
Or golden-hazel, or that mild grey-green
Most deep of all, or that red-brown intense
Which makes you sigh to look on? Did your lips
Meet still in slumber, over and over kissing?
Did you love much and for that love lose much,
Loss counting lightly which could purchase love,
Whom gain ne'er bought? Tell me the whole kind tale
Of all you dream'd of, long'd for, sought and found,
When lost in love's delirium, like to die!

JASPER.

Ah, speak not lightly, these are holy things!
Let no adulterous and evil thought
Possess the sacred temple of that heart
Where love has enter'd and its glory reigns,
Where love abides and lights from day to day,
Or where the hallows of its former presence
Still consecrate a shrine deserted now,
But yet a singular and haunted place!

ERNEST.

What is the end for which you labour, Miles?

A Soul's Comedy

MATTHEW.

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

JASPER.

What moons have slipp'd since last I saw you, Miles—
How fare your Oxford studies? You have grown;
But eyes, once bright, are dim with midnight studies,
And cheeks, once fresh, are pallid. Does it seem
So long ago since we were boys, and bathed
At early morn together?

MILES.

Since you brought
Brave tales and flowers to please me when I lay
Sick of a fever, since in gratitude,
When I was quite recovered, and could strip
Under Heaven's eye, in the cool, morning wind,
With safety, I made over in return
The art of swimming. That is all, yes, all
I ever did to serve and help you, Jasper;
You train'd my backward mind, nigh all your own
Had grasp'd of knowledge to my humbler sense
Render'd in simple terms; and so I grew
More worthy of my teacher, to be known
And loved by him, and in the town be call'd
His friend—a butcher's son, who all day long
Wore the blue frock, the shop-floor scrubb'd, the meat
Took round, or call'd for orders in the cart.
I owe you all the difference from then
To now, for though hard study since has won
This Oxford scholarship, it was your hand
Which help'd me first to take the path whereby
I hope to reach distinction in my day.

The Soul's Renunciation

JASPER.

We stand together, do you mark me, friends?
All young, our sanguine spirits, full of hopes,
Are buoy'd within us, as the dancing boat—
In mellow moonlight anchor'd far away—
Is buoy'd on shining waters, by one rope
Restrain'd alone. What binds us? Look abroad!
Suppose we all this night should vow to start
On some high quest, a gallant band, together?
To all high thoughts, to all supernal aims
There comes, as prelude first, an exodus—
A going outward of the heart and mind
From self, and from the meaner forms of life,
Soul with the world-soul mingling. Unto this
Well if we add that lesser, yet most fair,
Outgoing, the rover's, when with eager heart,
Flush'd face and kindling eyes, he seeks in strange
And distant lands to satisfy the great,
Mysterious longing which impels him on,
Which brooks no rest, but "Onward, Onward!" cries—
Wherever faring, still a further field.

MATTHEW.

It is the sea which calls your fancy forth;
That beauty's silence and those voices both
Call loud on you! On me the mighty Past
Has laid her spells—wide as the sea this night
It spreads before. What pictures there I see!
What vanish'd crowds at my command come forth
And play their parts! The peopled vistas stretch,
Till lost in legend, as the main in mist,
All life dilated into symbols turns,
Fact into myth, and man himself to god
Is magnified.

A Soul's Comedy

JASPER.

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

BASIL.

There is no need to search the sleepy past,
Nor from the future to evoke with pain
The pre-existent souls of days unborn,
To gratify the senses or the heart.
Within the shining, sultry courts of Love,
In Love's own House, my soul elects to dwell;
Delight is there; yet should you tire awhile,
Cast up the painted windows, look abroad—
Behold, before you over the fair expanse,
What loaded vines of Bacchus!

MILES.

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

The Soul's Renunciation

JASPER.

*When will thy revel be done ?
When will thy brain at length
Free from the fumes of wine,
Thine eyes no more made dim*

*By the foes of sleep,
Thine aching heart no more
By turbulent passions and fires
Of fever and frenzy consumed,
Rise as a sleeper awaken'd,*

*Seeing things as they are,
The path of thy life before thee,
The lost, the forgotten, the true,
The upward leading path ?*

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

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

MATTHEW.

So therefore to the sea, ye neophytes !

A Soul's Comedy

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

WILLIAM MORVEN.

I hear a step upon the stairs without
Which sounds familiar, on the door a hand
Is laid, the latch is lifted: who is there?
Is that you, Jasper Cartwright?

JASPER.

It is I.

WILLIAM MORVEN.

And have you read the packet?

JASPER.

I have read,
And thought thereon.

WILLIAM MORVEN.

Well, what has brought you here?

JASPER.

I have revisited my house and home
For some old corners' sake, and most for you,
Poor man of malice.

The Soul's Renunciation

WILLIAM MORVEN.

Come into the light,
Where I can see you fairly. You are pale,
Your face has alter'd.

JASPER.

How your own has shrunk !
Those cheeks are livid, to a shade that frame
Reduced ; and do you evil to the end ?

WILLIAM MORVEN.

The twilight deepens—it is dense; the stars
Will on my corpse keep silent watch to-night.
The drawn skin whitens on my wasted cheeks,
But not with fear; and an increasing cold
Invades me. Why? Because the springs of life
Are failing. Yet my eyes' unflinching glance
Can fasten yours, while strange, complete content
Pervades my spirit as it thus surveys
The wreck of all within you—pride and joy.
Your nature, train'd to keenest sense of shame,
Unfolded by me in the forcing-house
Of sensibility and self-consciousness.
I gave you delicate and dainty tastes,
I strung your spirit with the tender chords
Of finest feeling—spun quick fancy's threads
To airy webs of gossamer—for what?
To crush the fairy fabrics built in dream,
To strike one dreadful note of dissonance,
Vibrating through that being evermore.
Your form is straight, your looks are proud and brave,
You do not shake in all your limbs as I,
Here on this couch, am waggled like a reed,

A Soul's Comedy

But in your spirit is the light of self
Put out, I know. I leave you loathing life,
While I depart, untouch'd by fear of death,
Into the endless blank, and take untold
My hatred's secret to molest you more :
You shall not know what roused it and maintain'd :
Because my brother in a will preferr'd
An orphan brat before him? Count it that ;
Or seek with subtlety a deeper cause ;
Conclude it malice out of madness sprung,
And still be wrong.

JASPER.

You fail at least in me.
That secret fill'd my spirit for a space
With burning shame, but now the dreadful tale
Has multiplied my nature's wonted strength
An hundred-fold. Henceforth my soul rejects
The lesser self, that part which shame alone—
Like this—can tarnish, and for evermore,
On its own true and individual height,
Stands up, self-poised, to contemplate below
The house of flesh, to feel with pride and joy
Their interests divided evermore.
Old man, I owe you this ! . . . You sink back now,
And in your eyes the light fades suddenly.
O die not thus with malice in the heart !
Stretch forth your hand ; be thankful this has work'd
My weal and triumph.

WILLIAM MORVEN.

Are you so great of heart ?
And shall I enter in the lists with you—
But that's too late—to win another prize ?

The Soul's Renunciation

JASPER.

I bid you mark that lovely line of light,
The last which lingers in the placid West !
I pray that God may kindle in your mind
Some thought as bright and beautiful in these
Your latest moments, and the same prolong
To shine through your eternity ! In truth,
I vanish now—O, do not turn your face
To that blank wall !

WILLIAM MORVEN.

I will not own in life
Your mastery. Some purpose known to none
Takes up the tangled threads of your strange life,
And deftly weaves. . . . Did furies ere your birth
Combine against you, or fore-casting Fate,
High doom decreeing for a nature high,
In darkness shape with care its prudent ends ?

JASPER.

The solemn problem solves at length itself :
I know what wisdom for what perfect end
Let Nature's clean and sanctifying laws
Be trampled. The false self has died in me ;
The spirit remains, to prove its high descent.
Lead, and still lead, strong spirit, as the moon
Draws seething on the billowy sea behind,
Which stagnant else, and prone 'twixt shore and shore
Lifeless would lie !

BOOK II

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

JOHN NORTH.

Is your name Jasper Cartwright?

JASPER.

Sir, it is ;

Command his service !

JOHN NORTH.

It is dark about you :
Come nearer, Jasper, let me study you !
What dims my eyes ? How tall and brave you are !
God love you, nephew ! Is it well with you ?
I am John Blake, your uncle.

JASPER.

That I know.

JOHN NORTH.

When last we parted what a babe you were !
Now your straight figure with its stately head
Stoops to the measure of my sea-dried form.

The Soul's Renunciation

JASPER.

Your voice is deep and searching, like the sea ;
In your bluff presence does the soul thereof
Take visible expression, yet your words,
O tann'd sea-toiler, seem no sailor's speech !

JOHN NORTH.

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

JASPER.

And mine expands within an eager breast,
As if your words invoked its noblest mood.

JOHN NORTH.

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

JASPER.

Your eyes are full of fire and prophecy,
As if your soul, like Enoch's, walk'd with God.
May God be with you ! My heart yearns towards
you ;
I swear your spirit, like a star, has ruled
In all my life, though you were far removed.

JOHN NORTH.

My ship is waiting in the Downs a wind
To bear her up the Channel, so I seized
This chance, the first, to see you. Where is he,
That lame, eccentric man, who guarded you ?

JASPER.

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

A Soul's Comedy

JOHN NORTH.

If I have wrong'd you, Jasper !

JASPER.

That were strange !

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

JOHN NORTH.

Let us walk awhile. . . .

Behold the sea before us !

JASPER.

It is now

Night, and a vast, amazing moon above
The deep has risen, circling towards the South,
Towards Walmer's cliffs, St. Margaret's fairy bay,
And Dover's looming heights.

JOHN NORTH.

I come this day

To know if you are happy : is that so ?

JASPER.

Look in my eyes ! What do you see therein ?

JOHN NORTH.

I think, some fathomless and timeless sea.

JASPER.

Hold well the question answer'd !

The Soul's Renunciation

JOHN NORTH.

Your face is pale.

JASPER.

The moonbeams fall thereon.

JOHN NORTH.

Your lips are white.

JASPER.

The wind is in the North and cold withal.

JOHN NORTH.

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

JASPER.

The wilderness of waters fixes them.

JOHN NORTH.

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

JASPER.

I repeat
That you, unconsciously and far away,
Have ruled my life. Now you are near indeed;
As star to star approaching, so your soul

A Soul's Comedy

Perturbs me with its presence—all things move
More swiftly in me, life and thought and love.

JOHN NORTH.

These words distress me with their doubtful meaning !

JASPER.

Your hand has led me to the heights of life ;
If from those summits I behold a fair
And ample prospect, if I see below
My meaner nature, if I live this day
As conscious of a Presence call'd God within,
As centred in the God Which dwells without—
I owe you this.

JOHN NORTH.

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

JASPER.

Wise are you !

JOHN NORTH.

Is that your case ?

JASPER.

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

JOHN NORTH.

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

The Soul's Renunciation

JASPER.

They did not fail to tell.

JOHN NORTH.

I fail'd to find you—you were far away ;
But, Jasper, in the man who guarded you
I met an old acquaintance, one indeed
Whose life I saved at sea by risking mine.
He bade me welcome warmly, told me how
The charge his brother had accepted first
Devolved on him. I stay'd the night at Deal ;
We sup'p'd together ; he declared his wish
To act in your regard a father's part,
Till warming somewhat towards a man so long
Forgotten, full of pity for his lame,
Disabled body, longing to increase
His kindness towards you, spurr'd by more than these,
I told him something secret which concerned
Yourself—most sacred. I adjure you, say
If that religious confidence, reposed
Not wisely, may be, yet with pure intent,
Has been betray'd.

JASPER.

I cannot answer, No—
I cannot hide from you the pregnant truth :
I do know all. The man your faith reposed in
Betray'd his pledge because he hated me.
Your tale was cherish'd in his inmost heart ;
He gloated on it ; he brought me back from school ;
He train'd me softly, humour'd all my whims ;
And I grew up beside him delicate
In tastes and aspect, train'd to shrink from pain,
From all things gross revolting. Why was this ?
That on the nature thus refined with care

A Soul's Comedy

Shame's blow might fall more heavily. I reach'd
To man's estate, and taught, through all, your gift
To look for as my chiefest hope in life,
He sent my uncle's story. . . . Do not turn !
The tide before us rolls and thunders in.

JOHN NORTH.

Ah, Jasper !

JASPER.

Do not grieve, nor deeply now
Reproach yourself ; I do not now reproach you,
I do not grieve. My spirit in its calm
Is poised for ever as the moon in air,
And shall with measured motions like the moon
The sacred altitudes of life ascend,
Ambitious of its zenith. While it soars,
It strips the mists of passion, as the moon
Her veil of vapour. O, I swear that tale
Awoke to life soul-strength which long lay latent !

JOHN NORTH.

Your nature out of agony may thus
New force evoke ; the keen, observant mind
Is not by this deceived. I could not face you—
No, roughly school'd and rugged though I be,
I could not come with empty hands before you,
And find you thus divorced by word of mine
From boyhood's natural and healthy joy ;
Compell'd by effort of the mind within
To conjure up a strange, unnatural bliss,
Akin to madness ; and your wounded soul
To soothe and comfort so. I grieve indeed ;
My burning brain is whirling like a wheel ;
But still one thought supports me.

The Soul's Renunciation

JASPER.

Let my strength
Sustain you rather ; do not fear to tax me.
I have not grieved ; the mind is clear and cool,
While if my heart beats fast, it throbs with hope.

JOHN NORTH.

O stalwart heart, declare what moved in Morven
The hate which thus an unoffending lad
Pursued !

JASPER.

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

JOHN NORTH.

That was all ?

JASPER.

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

JOHN NORTH.

Before your father met with Mary North,
Before my wreck and rescue, Morven came,
Then in the prime of life—a striving man,
Pushing his way—to Boston. There he settled,
And, what with tact and what with enterprise,
Contrived to flourish. Soon he sought a wife,
And Mary's face entranced him ; her he woo'd—
Some love, more passion, in his stormy heart
Engraved her image. When the girl refused him—

A Soul's Comedy

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

The Soul's Renunciation

Not in loquacious mood but moved for you,
That I might utterly disarm his wrath
Against your mother, I reveal'd to him
How bitterly the girl he loved had suffer'd
For her sad choice. I thought him touch'd thereby,
And so I begg'd him to be kind to you,
And keep the secret, since the course of things
Had well avenged him. Was this weak in me?
But ever after on the stormy deep
I cursed my folly, often long'd to see you,
And learn how matters fared in your respect.
But when my heart was changed—I'll speak of that—
Much more this fill'd my mind; my plans I made,
And sail'd at length for England: here I find
My fears fulfill'd. Now, you are kind of heart!
You will not harbour an ungentle thought
Against a man who wrong'd you; but at times
Such thoughts force entrance, at the door of mind
In lonely moments, in desponding moods
In wakeful midnights, knocking. So I bear
A gift to bless you which shall silence these,
Shall wring confession from their backward voice
That I've atoned. I've watch'd its beauty wax—
And, Jasper, Jasper, to redeem my wrong
I bring you a most fair and gentle maiden,
My only daughter. If your heart be free,
Will this not please you? Will it raise your hopes?
Can you forgive me now? . . . My toil is done;
I look to end my days on English soil;
A week will take my ship to London docks,
And end my business there. That time elapsed,
I'll bring my daughter down to Deal with me;
Till I can purchase land and build thereon,
I look to tarry, if I may, with you.
But now farewell! I see your soul is moved;
Her name is Gertrude; she is fair and tall;
Her heart is clean, her lips, since early youth,

A Soul's Comedy

I've taught in prayer to name you day by day.
In one brief week expect us. . . . Pray till then!
I trust your soul has found—as mine at length—
The pearl beyond all price in Christ possess'd.
O may the bride elect I bring to you
In earthly life become, my lad, the sign
And human symbol of that pearl unseen,
Which with the mystic counter and the name,
And most of all the bright and morning star,
Are in the paradise of Christ and God
Before all time, I trust, prepared for you!

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

JASPER.

All our homeward way
Will scarlet sunset, fringed by stormy cloud,
Make splendid, and with speaking images
Invest the mind, while heaven's translucent vault
Is thinly sown above with gleaming stars.

GERTRUDE.

Your gaze, abstracted, draws you far away.

JASPER.

The sunset's flaming heart has fix'd my eyes.

GERTRUDE.

You are so cold, so strange, your soul so high
Uplifted; I can never reach to you!
We stand together, my hand slips in yours,

The Soul's Renunciation

But you are distant still, and your clear voice,
As freezing winds from mountains far away,
Falls like cold snow. One terrible abyss—
Divides me ever from your grandeur, those
High dreams, the prospects which are blank to me.
There seems a nimbus round you. Let me kneel!
You have the face of Christ; I worship you,
But love you only as an unknown God,
With veneration of a mind devout,
Quite abjectly—with unimpassion'd love,
Mind-sprung, for noble things not realised.
My father pledged me as a child to you,
He stood the sponsor for my future love
To God, then you. How shall I pay the debt—
With both so far above me, man and God? . . .
To die for you—ah, that were worth the dying!

JASPER.

Nay, live to love me! That is worth the living.
My soul is ravish'd in a dream of you
In these abstracted moods. With constant love,
Pure, clear, profound and purged from things of time
I merge myself in you. . . . Fair, vast, and fresh,
Behold the sea, dear heart, the open sea! . . .
I fix my life in yours for evermore,
Soul gazing in soul-eyes of my beloved,
While with a gentle pressure of mouth to mouth
Sweet thoughts unspeakable pass and repass
In faint electric currents.

GERTRUDE.

When I pray'd,
Your picture fill'd my mind; I painted you,
But you were human, you were near me then;
I kiss'd you truly in my dreams at night,

A Soul's Comedy

But now my spirit cannot feel your lips,
As if we kiss'd through some thin plate of glass.

JASPER.

Sweet beyond sweetness, earth's foretaste of Heaven
And spiritual intercourse of souls,
The sacred doom which shapes my life to come
Has blest its labours by your ministry,
The service of your company and love.
All aspirations of my nobler self,
God-given, shall transfigure and inflame
Your gentle being, growing one therewith
Till my best hopes converge and centre there.

GERTRUDE.

Shall God's strong sons with mortal daughters mate?
I will not tempt you, Jasper, from the heights;
But eagles' nests sky-built on lofty crags
Are dizzy for a dove. In the green glades,
In simple life of earth, I'll love you well;
I cannot love you on the mountain-tops,
I tremble there.

JASPER.

My strength shall bear you up!

GERTRUDE.

Why was I made so small? Why stinted thus?
If I could follow you, dare all your flights,
Poise with still wings in breathless zones of thought,
High contemplation's spaces! I've no dream
To mate with yours, no aspirations, no
Great plans for man; I can only wait and pray,
Love too—you do not dream how I can love!

The Soul's Renunciation

Turn your eyes on me for mine own are dim,
And overcharged with tears I fain would keep
From falling; put your arms about me thus!
If I could win you down to dwell with me
In simple life of thought, in homely paths
Where all men travel—I am tempting you!—
Cleave close to Nature, cleave to natural love;
'Twill soothe and satisfy two constant hearts!
When harvest breathes its soul of fragrance round,
We'll mark the contrast made by dark green trees
Against a vivid and illumined sky
Ere night one hour has fallen.

JASPER.

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

GERTRUDE.

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

JASPER.

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

A Soul's Comedy

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

JASPER.

Shall I stand with you, Miles—dear friend—as now,
By some wide open window, when your hair
And mine are grey, when all your youth, like mine,
Has vanish'd, when the dark and lonely night
Descends on meadows where the mists exhale,
And the dim, shrouded, solitary moon
Drops down unnoticed—with the night and rack
Striving, drops down—into the deep abyss?

MILES.

Your silence chill'd me; now these mournful words
Breed darker thoughts within me. Age is distant;
Life's vistas offer us a noble space
To work and reign in—may our stars ascend!

JASPER.

If something call'd me from my home and you!

MILES.

You must not dream it, Jasper.

JASPER.

But I see
The future like a plain where our two paths
Diverge for ever.

The Soul's Renunciation

MILES.

Will you go from home?
Good friends are round you, and your future bride
Dwells with her father here; here have you found
A scope for kindly actions. Where is more?
What calls you forth?

JASPER.

A voice for many moons
Which bids me seek abroad an ampler field
Of inward thought and action.

MILES.

God forbid
That I should check you. Though I love you well,
And though my spirit, like a thirsty stag,
May vainly seek refreshment, the bright angels
Shall not reproach me that my need or love
Should thwart such wings, should check such bold ascent.
I bid you still remember her to whom
Your faith is plighted; will you leave her, Jasper?

JASPER.

Come forth abroad, the wind is cool and strong,
The clouds have gather'd; to the sea come down,
Where oft as boys we bathed—recall it now!—
By Sandown Castle's shelt'ring wall of white
And crumbling stone. The crested wave which broke
About your body in the sea's rough sport
Batter'd my own. Now we are boys no more,
Nor evermore shall we, at morn, stand stripp'd
And shivering side by side, nor walk at noon
On winter mornings miles along the beach,

A Soul's Comedy

Among low sand-hills. . . . The white sea-gull's
wings
Flash'd far above. . . . We shall do thus no more.

MILES.

Heaven clears ! there is a promise in the stars ;
Their manifold, mild eyes gleam over us :
Star-watchers number them, but none can count
The years before us—wherein our souls will live.
What do the stars foretell me ? Life together,
Life ever—life for you and me together !

JASPER.

If I were gone from my accustom'd place,
Miles, lives there anyone on earth this day
Who in my place would love, with love like mine,
One maid forsaken ? All your face, I see,
Turns white and ghostly : is the wind so cold ?
What makes the breath within you come and go
Because we never in our lives may stand
Like this together in the night and wind ? . . .
You do not answer ! Have I loved you, Miles ?
And is there anything my hands this day
Can do to crown that blameless life of yours ?
You seem my own creation ; in my hands
Your early boyhood's raw material
Was placed by Providence, to shape and cleanse ;
I think this night before the throne of God
My soul could lead your own in holy pride,
And beg some blessing of the all-Father's lips
On a complete creation. . . . It is done—
One thing remains, to find a star as bright
To mate your spirit in the heaven of love :
That star is Gertrude ! Do not shrink from me ;
Long did you strive, with agony of mind,
To check an honourable, worthy love.

The Soul's Renunciation

I know that Gertrude also loves you well,
And though the sense of duty binds her now,
Her spirit little to my own responds.
I will not hide, when this was first reveal'd,
That sorrow fill'd me; now my stronger self
Reclaims supremacy: the last gift may well
Be worthy its receiver, gentle friend!

MILES.

My life is ever divorced from all its joy!
On my soul's faith and perfect love for you,
I never spoke with Gertrude! Did our eyes
Meet ever? Did those speak, and shew, unbidden,
What both have striven perchance to hide from self?
You bring to burning lips with friendly hand
A sacred wine of life; I dare not drink,
But evermore with deep desire thereof
My heart will thirst.

JASPER.

Within your hands, dear Miles,
I leave it—may it be the wine of life!
I see the future like a shining sea
Spread out before me: I have work therein.

MILES.

May sacred angels guard your kingly soul
Call'd to ascend! My thoughts shall fix on you
Their earnest strength, and you shall rise through all,
While they through all shall like a rampart high
From harm enclose you! Yea, my prayers and blessings
Shall not in vigilance and might be less
Than your high angels to defend a soul
Rising to native stars.

A Soul's Comedy

JASPER.

Your valiant eyes
 Have brighten'd suddenly, as a clouded sea
 Whereon the moonbeams rifting heaven's grey veil
 One moment dream and gleam.

MILES.

In yours I read—
Ah, yet a little while and all is well
With you, my Jasper!

SCENE IV.—*The Sea-shore*.—FATHER PAUL, JASPER.

FATHER PAUL.

You should have wealth.

JASPER.

My uncle squander'd it.

FATHER PAUL.

Where is the money that your father left you ?

JASPER.

Its bulk is small ; invested here and there,
One hundred guineas in the year it yields.
But I go forth, and have no fear for me ;
I feel the strong hand of Almighty God
About me tighten ; my appointed part
I shall fulfil.

The Soul's Renunciation

FATHER PAUL.

For all the brave resolve
God bless you, lad ! My soul above itself
Seems lifted now ; I shall remain to crown
Your life with gladness. Take these words to heart !
In toil and pain recall them. They shall grow
True by the power of will.

SCENE V.—*A Glen.*—MATTHEW, BASIL,
MILES, ERNEST.

MATTHEW.

The darkness falls round Jasper's speeding ship,
Grey waves, now winds have freshen'd, break in foam
On its strong sides ; a passing shower of rain,
On decks and canvas, low, fast driving clouds
Precipitate. Illimitable, cold,
Forlorn, the desolating ocean lifts
A pain'd, inquiring voice, which fills the wind,
Till stars take shape upon the phosphor vault,
And like a phantom, pale and grandiose,
Through mists dispersed breaks forth the silent moon.

MILES.

God guard him there, encompass all his path !
Our prayers that follow on his forward flight
Be stars about him in his hours of gloom,
A thousand lights enkindling. . . . Is there one
He has not served ? Let him stand forth and speak
On whom the generous spirit of the man

A Soul's Comedy

Diffused no happy influence! Speak him
Who is not better for his gracious sight;
Who is not cleaner for his hand's strong grasp,
Clear, searching voice, eyes' light, mind's altitude;
Who is not truer for the words he spoke;
Who will not prove to man and angels both,
By noble course, how Jasper works in us,
Turns all to good. Make answer, sailor lad
He saved from drowning in a winter storm;
That youth he nursed in fever; the blind girl
He read to; those two brothers whom he taught,
And from a vicious and a vagrant life
Converted; the abandon'd wife his purse
Supported; her five children whom he fed;
The honest tradesman whom an evil chance
Had threaten'd, but his help in time restored. . . .
One fine, dark face lights suddenly, the blood
To cheek and brow comes flushing.

BASIL.

For his sake,

The world and pleasures of the world will I
Renounce completely, pray through all my days,
A priest, for Jasper, unto God most High
The clean oblation offer all my life.
I had some hopes and plans—on these I trample;
I had strong passions—and here root up all;
From early boyhood with an eager thirst
I craved for pleasure; in a month or less,
I thought to wed the woman that I love,
Whose face will haunt me in my fasts and watches
With fair, reproachful eyes. But all I leave—
That God may crown him, Mary smile on him,
Bright angel-bands watch over him, high saints
For him make intercession. May each prayer
Bring one new angel for his faithful keeping!

The Soul's Renunciation

MILES.

I'll not forsake the world for Jasper's sake,
But take it more completely to my heart,
Spend life, die for it, unto all do good,
Love all, serve all. Be his the recompense !

MATTHEW.

He loved the light ; to this my days are vow'd.
For Jasper's sake with more devoted faith
I'll follow where it leads—for truth's pure light
Live I ! I swear it, I will love the light !

ERNEST.

Because my reason, though respecting Jasper,
Must deprecate impracticable schemes,
I will be twice as faithful to myself,
And never put another's whims or wishes
Before my own advancement and success—
I will be true to self ; I swear it, friends !

A SOUL'S COMEDY

PART III

THE SOUL'S RECOMPENSE

“Non dubito multos bonæ conscientiæ et voluntatis homines illud donum dei clanculum possidere.”—NOVUM LUMEN CHEMICUM.

PROLOGUE

A Poet's Walk.—AUSTIN BLAKE, *solus*.

The frost is white upon this winding road,
And on each bare thorn hangs the melting rime,
A thousand gems which in noon-sunlight gleam
And quiver. Already in the roadside ditch
A tender shoot is lifted here and there,
Prophetic of the green spring's gracious time.
This morning, early in the year's first month,
There is no cloud—there is not one white cloud—
In yon blue zenith, soft with light suffused !
So I return to thee from my wild dreams—
From lofty, fever'd dreams to thee return—
Soul of the world, Queen Nature, thrice divine !
(A sparrow flits across my path and now
His chirp sounds in the thicket.) Raise once more
Thy seering glass ; I have the eyes to see :
(Is that the wren upon the paling perch'd ?
God bless thee, Jenny, on some darker day,
Among the barren flats that fringe the shore,
By Worth, I saw thee last.) My dreams return,
Their pictures shine within me ! (Thou hast come
To greet me, Robin, of the bold, black eye
And breast that makes thee beautiful—all hail !
An early spring thine ample joys increase !)
Nature, thy cause is mine ; that bond proclaims
A common origin, a kindred soul,
A heart in energies as great as thine.

I see the kindly hand of God draw back
Those everlasting gateways of the West ;

A Soul's Comedy

Some storm-clouds gather as the sun descends,
But, all suffused and sanctified with light,
There shines the eternal blue. Through senses dim,
Through veils of space and time, do chosen eyes
Behold the light of spiritual realms,
Angelic spheres impinging on our own,
The soul's bright home behold, and so find rest.
I gaze in wonder, standing awed and still,
Most sacred voices as of choirs divine,
The starry harmonies of heaven afar,
Seem floating towards me over gulfs of time,
Till all the music of mere earth grows faint,
And every beauty of the natural world
Turns pale and cold, and emptied joys of sense
Are ghosts alone which haunt a fever'd dream.

O world unknown, beyond the reach of man,
O heritage of happiness supreme,
The purer moments of our human hearts
Are golden glimpses of thy life and light ;
But doubt and fear come darkling through my mind,
While surging tides of passion flood the soul,
And drain each source of spiritual strength.
Those pure ambitions of an earlier time,
That innocence of heart which clothed the trees,
Green country lanes, wide prospects seen from hills,
Illimitable heaven and open sea,
With light and beauty borrow'd from within,
Are now no more, beyond all hope seem lost ;
This unresponsive heart no answer gives
To gentle calls which came so oft of yore.
The sweet attractions of ennobled life,
That inner joy, that spiritual faith,
All these have fail'd me ; round me wind and cling
The bonds of flesh, world-darkness dense and deep,
And sense-delights—mere dregs of holier bliss.

The Soul's Recompense

The sun sinks down beneath the verge; and night—
With all her silent majesty of stars—
Resumes her reign, serenity prevails
Over the face of Nature; as of old
The rising moon diffuses tranquil light.
But visions fade, old voices sink and die,
The tumult only in my soul remains—
My soul which strives among the rocks and gulfs
To find a way through Life's mysterious maze,
Or sunk in day-dreams dreads to wake and find
All lights gone out, all sacred shrines left bare,
Phantasmal Edens desolate and waste,
And overtaken by eternal night.

SCENE I.—*A Lodging in London.*—AUSTIN BLAKE,
OTWAY, WILLIAM, ARNOLD.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

For the last time amidst your kindly hearts,
My friends, I stand. I waited you awhile
Here, in my lonely lodging which commands
This noble spectacle of wharf and rail;
And waiting thus, pacing the floor, this book
Held in my hand, two fingers in the leaves
A place retaining, through my eager mind
Came crowding sundry honourable themes
For friendly converse with congenial minds
On this wild evening. Now all my thoughts confused
Quite fail me. . . . I go from you to the coast;
God knows, good friends, when next we meet—too well
The future holds her secrets! . . . Help me out!
What shall we speak of? Not of parting yet—
Postpone that loss! . . . Day wanes; three hours or
more

A Soul's Comedy

Pale sunshine—striving with the smoke and mist—
Made dingy nimbus round this roaring town ;
Now clouds blown onward by the icy blast,
Inwrap the fair, faint blue. Comes tempest. . . . Hark !
That shrill, fierce wind ! Lost Spirit, wailing voice,
Defiant still, my spirit to your tones
Makes answer ! Is there nothing in the wind,
Brave friends, which drives to power's sublimest heights
Your valiant souls ? I see some lonely shore,
A bleak, long scourged, most solitary shore,
With barren arms ring the mad, striving sea ;
I see the desert's driving sand, whirl'd upward,
Move like that column'd cloud which went by day
Before the hordes of Israel. And when
These eyes turn inward, in my soul I see
Wild wastes and waters by the wind's wild voice
Torn into shreds of tempest. . . . Arnold, speak,
And William Arthur ! In God's name I ask you
What great ambition have your thoughts struck out—
With mighty mallet—from the cold, grey stone
Of daily purpose ? You are weak, and I,
O I am weak indeed, save when my soul
Is lifted into frenzy ! But I stand
This night before you—see, the night descends,
While the sky darkens more with storm than night,
And all this hour a rising wind about
The narrow street is driving, seeking space,
Space like the sea, space like a Libyan waste,
Space like some world of chaos, only space
To strive and storm in. So my soul would rend
Its frame, through bounds of narrow channels bursting ;
The earth, the universe of stars and space
Would fill with self, would be in all a part,
Including, bounding all. Insensate thought ! . . .
I stand this night before you, while my hopes
Dilate my being, and with outstretch'd hands
I cry to you, adjuring—Do not go

The Soul's Recompense

Down to the grave wearing your lives away
With the mean, trivial, miserable cares
Which furrow half these faces of mankind !
Make for yourselves some care, some hope, some high
Ambition, that your souls may groan beneath,
And groaning greaten ; be not worms which writhe
Beneath a fallen twig. I swear to you
Your nature's scope under ambition's weight
Shall stand like Atlas, Earth's incumbent star
Supporting. O to stand and see the world,
One surging concourse, chase the gilded straws
Blown by some wind of fortune ! How they pass
And pass before the windows of my soul !

Forgive me, friends, I do not count indeed
Your hearts among the common ! When we met,
Like kindred atoms, suddenly we join'd
Our souls together—one bright, crystal star
Of heaven-born shining. Was it well to meet ?
I centred thus, my individual life
Affecting yours ? Your glowing eyes respond
In silence. Therefore unto each and all
This night I cry—Ye souls, by light within
Raised up above the straw's worth, what bright hope
Is this which makes your shining ? . . . William, speak !
What is your first ambition ?

WILLIAM.

To compose
Some book that will live after me.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

What book ?

A Soul's Comedy

WILLIAM.

I know not yet ; at least my plans are secret.
If I succeed, you all will hear thereof ;
Should failure come, I'll meet it as I may,
And none shall know.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Declare the scope and aim !

WILLIAM.

Well, prose, not verse—you are our bard confess'd,
I would not snatch your laurels ; all my aim
To raise mankind.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

You, Otway, from a son
Of song divine descended—may the priest
Of Bacchus speak in you !—you stand forth there,
And on your ruddy, bearded face the eve's
Last light rests redly ! Yours the massive head,
Broad brow, and many questions do that brain
Perplex, on many subjects of the time
Bold are your thoughts ; you bear a light within you,
And in your time the Muse's sacred skirt
Has brush'd you, passing. God save you, Otway, speak !
What is your first ambition ?

OTWAY.

One with Scott's !
To found a noble family, and thus,
In this my native land, fair name and fame
Perpetuate in brave and gentle men.
Speak honestly, my comrades ! To beget

The Soul's Recompense

A line of heroes is a broader hope
Than making books.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Awhile, my friends, defer
The answer. And you, Arnold, musing there,
Your figure in the crimson curtain's folds
And twilight gloom involved—as much that mind
In dream is lost, with eyelids over eyes
Drooping so far—return, return amongst us !
God's smile your upright soul make beautiful !
What is your first ambition ?

ARNOLD.

To help you—
That is my hope and aim ; and, William Arthur,
To help you also is my aim and hope.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

God save you, Arnold, you have shamed us all !

ARNOLD.

I have my private views, as you must know,
Austin, full well ; and I indeed may write
A book some day ; I also, in my time,
Made high resolves that wait, through feeble health,
Fulfilment still ; but in my love for you
Sickness or health are nothing. You command
Heart, strength and purse, so far as small resources
Can meet your wants.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

My friends, three aims distinct—
Postponing Arnold's—three young hearts inform.
Mine's long declared ! But, think, who dares to hold

A Soul's Comedy

These hopes sublime? Look at me! What am I?
A thriftless student, worn with thought intense,
Consumed by mine ambition! What are you?
Speak, Otway, opulent in dreams! Your bread—
A city clerk—quill-driving, day by day,
The bitter bread we die from—this you earn . . .
Coarse fare, coarse clothes, a lodging in a mean
And dingy street, and you—my God!—therein,
Beside a lonely rushlight burning dimly,
Of stately halls, of acres wide and fair,
Where the wheat ripens and rich orchards yield
Their mellow harvest, and of a long, long line
Of heirs whose glory greatens with its length,
Are dreaming in a wealthy reverie.
I say your aim, my friend, is mad like mine;
I do not chide.

To William turn awhile;
His plans are vague—that's why he wraps them round
With mystery—his spirit at the curb
Of uncongenial labour, in a sense
Of bondage, has begotten in his heart
Deep hatred of our social order's false
Distinctions. Anything he'll risk to make
This world, which does not recognise him yet,
Stand still before him, into silence awed,
As the shamed earth was silent in the sight
Of one great Greek. Go back into yourself
I cry: make clear your thoughts, then strive with Fate,
And in despite of Fate and Fortune wring
The end you seek from the averted, closed,
Reluctant hands of opportunity!

Now, Arnold, what best words in your regard
To use? Our aspirations from ourselves
Divided, of such kindness we deserve
But little, having served you in no way.

The Soul's Recompense

To some more worthy end than that which love
Prompts in respect of Austin and his small,
Eccentric circle of high-fever'd hearts,
Rich days devote. Serene and sphered apart,
Your soul inhabits a more healthful clime
Than we, distracted spirits, ever yet
Have enter'd. The world waits you and much needs.
Be that your field, in its regard, not ours,
Make plans! Before me spreads your life in fair,
Unfailing sequence of immortal acts,
Not days alone! Unselfish purpose, high
And gentle heart, man waits you and much needs! . . .

Fair words I give you, bold and ardent hearts,
To help your plans; you pause on them; our speech
Drops suddenly to silence, while the wild,
Wild wind without grows louder, while the rain
Is swept against the panes, while more and more
The starless, frightful night, deepens without.
So in this room it deepens, where I see
Your faces only shining white and still,
Like spectres in the darkness; and as much
Within my soul the spirit of the night
Makes woful gloom. . . . You are not ghosts indeed,
Your warm hands clasp me; but a space so brief,
And in the future will my mind evoke
Your ghosts alone—phantasmal, silent, fair
Creations of the memory. Speak then—
Speak now—while still your voices in my heart
Make living music, give me also help!

WILLIAM.

Who can? Your spirit by a thousand hopes
Is rent within you, by a thousand plans
Your mind's absorb'd, a thousand strong desires
Make tempest in the human heart of you.

A Soul's Comedy

Such scatter'd forces in a single point
Collect, then, like the sunbeams by a glass
Drawn in one burning focus, they shall work
With tenfold force ! You cannot with two wings
Cover the breadth of heaven ; those two arms—
Outstretch'd—will never the great ocean waste
Encompass ! Be immortal in one thing !

AUSTIN BLAKE.

I thank you, gentle friend : in doubtful moods
So self chides self. There's wisdom in those words ;
But when bright hopes have pass'd before my mind
In fair procession, O I swear the least
Has dazzled with its beauty ! Can I then
Bid one come forth, rejected, from the rest ? . . .
Your plans this night I learn ; now hear my hopes !
I'll speak, as calmly as a burning heart
Makes possible, of dreams which—once achieved—
Shall ev'ry moment of existence fill
With deepest meaning, but frustrated leave
All life a blank. . . . Fame, pleasure, wisdom, wealth,
World-roaming, wild adventure, joy of love,
Supernal light,—should these my soul attain,
I still might miss the peace that passes thought ;
But what a royal harvest reap'd from life,
And what endowment for eternity—
Tremendous gifts ! The spirit strives and wins,
Exhausts the springs of pleasure, but no less
From wisdom's fount drinks deeply, does its strength
And noble nature prove in varied paths,
Sins too and suffers, makes of earth and all
Her wonders an inheritance, lifts up
The veil, resolves the secrets, and confronts
The dangers of the future, then seeks out
Untrembling, keen, triumphant, the next stage
Of its eternal pilgrimage, convinced

The Soul's Recompense

And certain, that but little in the last
Was left untried, that to the whole extent
Of high capacities and chance therein
It truly lived.

WILLIAM.

What would you ask of Wealth?

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Sufficient to pursue my high designs.

WILLIAM.

What is the Fame you covet?

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Say, the bard's,
The hero's, the world-pilgrim's—even more :
In every path I enter to achieve.

WILLIAM.

What would you seek in Pleasure?

AUSTIN BLAKE.

I would tax
Her whole resources and exhaust them all.

WILLIAM.

And now, what hope from Wisdom?

AUSTIN BLAKE.

To know all ;
My strong desire demands eternal truth,
To solve all problems and all doubts disperse.

A Soul's Comedy

WILLIAM.

What is your dream of love ?

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Love's self I ask !

Here in this heart a hungry gulf has long
Tormented me ! I'd fill it to the brim
With love. Not men nor angels shall forbid me
All love's delights—permitted or denied ;
I claim them all to satisfy my soul's
Illimitable craving ; that deep want
Shall justify, allow me, and commend
Me all !

ARNOLD.

I thrust myself before you now,
Eternally protesting ; your own soul,
Austin, protests within you !

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Well-a-way,

The single word unnerves me, torn within
And miserably buffeted about
By two conflicting natures. One is nursed
On royal aspirations, and at times
By God's High Light is brighten'd ; one is low—
Strong passion's fever and the lust for things
Forbidden revel in that dark domain.
Yet, strange and terrible, the lofty hope,
The thought exalted, and the hero-dreams
Of love most pure, the sacrifice of self,
The bold ambitions, with their glory tinge
Dark lust and hopes unholy. . . . For a word
In heat of fancy spoken, count, my friends,

The Soul's Recompense

This free confession an atonement fair ;
The time will come—nor seems remote in thought—
When I must rise and over self assert
Supreme dominion, the immortal mind
Henceforth alone, as monarch of the man,
Its ends achieving, whose transcendent light
From burning points unnumber'd, through all life
Diffused, and every point a noble deed,
Shall purge, I trust, the spirit and the heart
From a thousand stains.

ARNOLD.

The only shrine of love
Where man may worship, and be faithful still
To God and to himself, is purity.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

For those high words at your own shrine of thought
I worship, Arnold.

WILLIAM.

In the name of God,
How should we help you, O too stormy, strange
And wayward heart ! Beware—such hopes themselves
Are passions—lest your passion and the hope
Make shipwreck of your nature !

AUSTIN BLAKE.

There is none
Indeed to help me—to the world I turn,
Not one comes forward. Courage, heart of mine !
Thrill spirit, thrill within me ! Shape me forth
The glory and the wonder of my life,
Its dreams fulfill'd !

A Soul's Comedy

OTWAY.

A poet from the first
Were you ; don't linger, seeking in the way
To catch vague voices ; one has spoken clearly.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Recall me thus for ever when I stray.
And I go forth that I may write for you
The poem I have plann'd beside the sea,
Chief heart-inspirer. As the moon ascends
And brightens over city streets and parks,
The narrow gardens 'twixt the looming lines
Of silent houses, and the shining, still,
Serpent-like stream, this poem—like a star—
Above my soul sheds lustre, searching all
Its secret depths, and like a town the haunts
Of lesser thoughts—one populous domain—
Transfigur'd lie beneath.

But night grows late.
Come forth—the storm is over ! With the rain
These streets still shine, though now the wind is lull'd ;
Peeps out one star above us, and behind
The fitful January lightnings play.
Heaven brightens over us, but wrecks of storm
Are scatter'd round ; great slates and tiles blown down
Lie strewn about the pavement. . . . Did we mark
One star ? Look up ! Through that rent cloud you'll
count

A score. Yon clouded patch of phantom light
Shews where the moonbeams battle with the mist.
My friends, walk with me ; William, take my arm,
And on the left be Arnold ! It is well
To feel you thus support and prop me up,
Who soon depart and stand henceforth alone.

The Soul's Recompense

This is the week's last day. You see that street
Which crosses this; all in a crowded part
It winds; this night they hold a market there.
Hark, how the costers shout! Their trucks line all
The street—no passage but at walking pace
For horse to-night. Come down with me and see
The busy hive—one swarm—turn'd out to hunt
For forage. Do you love mankind like me,
Though seldom mingling with them? Do you merge
The lonely student, who, in dreams absorb'd,
Surveys from lofty pinnacles of mind
The strife and life of sense, in social man,
And, leaving quite the higher range of thought,
Take pleasure in the littleness below,
Mix even with vice, losing the dreamer's itch
To reconstruct society and make
The world anew upon a private plan,
Eclipsing all creation? I have sold
My golden hopes to rectify the age
For leave to study it in scenes like this. . . .
Don't heed my moods, which vary night and day!
Have I no mission? Am I false to that?
God judge me so! I'll die in the world's cause
Or win, by God! It needs us each and all;
Should one of you put out to any use
Save man's his talents, with a poet's curse
I'll visit him! . . . A boy, this street I paced;
And of one eve in summer, when the air
Was close and sultry—swifter then than now
The lightnings play'd—I think, who plunged in dream
Stray'd down and up. Of friendship, glory, love,
I dream'd that day, of friendship great as love,
Of glory won to magnify myself
In one boy's eyes. I know not when nor why
I came to love him, he to like me well,
Fast friends both vow'd henceforward. Oft we walk'd
These ways together, whiling half the night

A Soul's Comedy

With lightest talk, and each a score of times
Would half-way home his comrade safely see.

Proclaim the victory of "holy light" !
It breaks, it struggles, it prevails ; the moon,
Dispersing clouds, has clear'd an azure space
To shine and sail in. Ave, Heaven's bright queen !
In thy blue zenith, on thy height sublime,
How cool, how calm, art thou ! Thy one white star
Doth ever follow thee with even steps,
And thou thyself art stately, sure of foot,
And movest on for ever. Of thy light
Full fain is earth, the sea to meet it yearns ;
The strong sea follows on thy path for aye
With eager, moaning heart ; man looks for thee,
Each poet's nature, than the sea more vast,
Ascends in thought to thee. And thy light falls ;
Thou dost not pause, thy light alone is shed ;
Thy light makes answer unto earth and sea ;
The fever'd heart of man is still'd thereby,
And in the spirit of the bard it sows
The deathless seed of song, as thy soft dews,
Which fall to earth in silence, sprout ere morn
Into a thousand flowers !

OTWAY.

The poet speaks !

WILLIAM.

And now we mix among the motley throng ;
Our thoughts are lost in all the sights we see,
As in the crowd our forms.

The Soul's Recompense

SCENE II.—*The Sea-shore*.—AUSTIN BLAKE.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Strong sea, most bright, most blue, most beautiful,
The soul itself expanding! Speed the day
When I shall cross thee, make thy wonders mine
Through moons of wild adventure! How thy waves
Beckon like hands, how all thy voices call
My spirit, knowing it has faith in thee,
Faith never failing, knowing how it loves
Each of thy changeful aspects—never one
Did yet repel it! Soul on soul is calling,
Vastness to vastness; and thy mighty voice
Finds in my heart an answer as prolong'd,
As infinite. Great spirit, search in mine,
Search through; the same immensity is there—
Unplumb'd abysses, caverns where the light
Will never reach, a hunger as thine own
Unsatisfied, a craving never still'd,
A vast and homeless nature like thyself!

SCENE III.—*A Darkened Room*.—FATHER PAUL,
MARY BLAKE.

MARY.

Grey hair that once was raven, wither'd face
He loved for being lovely, eyes made dim
With weeping and again beyond themselves
Grown bright with fast and watching! You are right
To doubt it thus—how should you know me, father?

A Soul's Comedy

FATHER PAUL.

His rich voice haunts for ever ; the boy's form
Among the sandhills in the morning light
By the sea's marge ! A wind had swept the Downs,
Clouds from the West roll'd upward, on the shore
The high tide beat ; the pulses of their blood
Ran wildly, and the woman and the boy
Stood there together.

MARY.

Because I die this day,
Because the barren bosom of the beach
Lies stripp'd and dry, because the shining sea
Recedes, like life, because the heart is old,
And I have fasted long, watch'd and pray'd long,
And wept alone, one question : where is he ?

FATHER PAUL.

Old wrongs are now forgotten, and old sins
Hath God long pardon'd. O, if far away
That soul the mission of true life achieving
Fulfil the promise of his early youth,
And God's most holy will, if noble deeds
Have wash'd all stains away, if grace be Jasper's,
Mary, will this content you ?

MARY.

Once again
To hear that name—ascend, most gentle soul !
Ascend, sweet spirit, up the height of life,
My prayers thy shield !—and mine by you pronounced—
O bitterness and saltness of the sea !

The Soul's Recompense

FATHER PAUL.

My penitent and spiritual child,
Time's bitter turns to God's supernal sweetness.

MARY.

I know not, father—the shamed blood mounts swiftly
And the shamed eyes from your keen glance averted
To Mary's image turn unconsciously—
I know not, father, how from one so young
The thing was compass'd, but a boy was born.
He lived, he grew ; a youth beside the sea
He dwells this day ; most noble hopes he nurses ;
Fame in the future, with its proudest tones,
May celebrate his genius, and this land
The poems of the minstrel, Austin Blake,
May count as precious and as pearls preserve.
But not this life-long secret to reveal
Nor learn how Jasper fares—from what far height
His soul ascended shines o'er earth and sea—
Your early penitent, to death drawn nigh,
Has sent for you. More solemn cause impell'd.
In your kind, venerable hands I leave
The holy trust reposed before in me,
That self-same trust, to bring my orphan back,
Who makes a wilful shipwreck of his faith.
Within your charge I leave his priceless soul
As I shall shortly into God's commend
My own. Have mercy on myself in him !

Your patient, kindly eyes shine down on me ;
The dim lamp also on your features casts
Wan light ; not years have changed you, Father Paul,
Nor those white hairs—the same familiar face
Beneath them. So the mountain heights, by sun
Made green through all the summer, in the long

A Soul's Comedy

Mid-winter frosts, snow-cover'd, still present
Their former outlines. . . . Friend, you carry there
The holy oils ; you carry in your breast
The Christ we worship. Kneel and pray with me !
But pray not yet for my departing soul,
Nor Jasper's weal, for whom my midnight prayers
In life ascended ! First for Austin pray—
May the True Shepherd of the souls of men
To His one fold lead back that roving sheep !

SCENE IV.—*A Presbytery*.—JASPER CARTWRIGHT,
FATHER PAUL.

FATHER PAUL.

Sit with me in the sacristy ; the night
Is falling fast, and lately in the church
We chanted Compline ; still upon this hearth
The cinders of the sacred charcoal glow,
And all about the ceiling low and dark
Sweet fume of incense lingers. None will now
Disturb us, Jasper, for the church is closed,
And in its loneliness and silence fills
More with God's presence. I will leave ajar
This door, which opens on the Sanctuary,
And in the deep'ning twilight you and I
Can see the altar-lamp ; its dim red glass
Shines humbly, like a mild and saintly soul
Before her God. . . . That we should meet again
After these years, and you but late return'd
From such long travels ! Are now these roving done ?
Or will the fever seize and drive you forth
Afresh, none warning ? Will most friends in vain
Wait tidings from you, till some years gone by,
And expectation over, memory even

The Soul's Recompense

Relaxing hold upon the image of you,
All suddenly your star descends—your voice
Pervades the mind with a familiar tone,
And then we look into your eyes, and know you.
Tell me whence are you?

JASPER.

From the seas come over.

FATHER PAUL.

And you are lean and pale and poorly clad!
We sit here talking, while the wind and rain
Are wild without; cold is it, and most dark,
And it is long since we in any place
Have talk'd together.

JASPER.

Your familiar form
Dissolves me, and that venerable head!
It is so long since I have seen you—now
We sit together, and the whole space seems
A dream's length only. . . . Is it years in truth?

FATHER PAUL.

When last you left me, Jasper, strong were you,
Bold was your eye, a stalwart, noble lad!
And you were gifted both in face and mien
As God gifts few, while in the mind dwelt fair
And generous hopes beyond the wont of man.
Now are you gaunt and wasted; those strange eyes
Will haunt me in my dreams for many moons.

JASPER.

When last I left you in a far-off past,
I purposed in some service of mankind

A Soul's Comedy

My days to use, and nurse one light within,
Clear shining on a portal of the soul,
Till that should open—as I felt—on God
Throned in the soul.

FATHER PAUL.

Recount your work abroad.
Strange tidings reach'd us from beyond the sea
Which said you founded in the distant West
A little colony of orphan lads,
Who—after some new fashion of your own—
Were rear'd in simple precincts, full of joy,
To prudent labour, both of brain and hands.
Where now are these? How did the scheme succeed?
Have they gone forth—to manhood grown at length—
Equipp'd for human services? What since
Have your thoughts turn'd to? Ah, confide in me!

JASPER.

By works like these enlarging nature's scope,
I found my ark of refuge and retreat. . . .
The oil has fail'd; the light in the altar-lamp
Sinks down; strange errant shadows deepen round us.
What is that voice without? . . . It is the wind's,
The wild, world-wandering, homeless wind of night.

FATHER PAUL.

God save you, dearest son! What grief is this?

JASPER.

Have you stood ever on a field of war
And seen the midnight moon pour sadly down
Her spectral light on faces pale in death—
Distorted, cold? In suffering's cause, in man's
I've witness'd that. And have you paced at noon—

The Soul's Recompense

When from high zenith the torrid sun diffused
His burning shafts—a city struck with pest?
But fair white bodies—in a poison'd house—
Pang-drawn beside me, stiffen'd as they fell.
I heard one clock behind me night by night
Tick in the silence like a beating heart;
I heard the dread-struck passenger without
Fly past, with bated breath, the infected place.
Once when the dark sky lighten'd, when the thin
And livid lips of morning open'd writhing,
While from a saffron cavity within
Pour'd sickly beams, the spirit of the plague
Took dreadful shape before me: swooning there,
The pest reign'd in me. . . . It is cold and dark.
What is that bell, my father? The passing bell?
What soul has fled?

FATHER PAUL.

It rings for evening prayer.

JASPER.

Well, it was hard with me through many days,
On naked stones, the open field and road,
In swoons and fits of sickness and great cold,
Haunted and senseless. Then through weary weeks
Shaking I lay, upon the point of death,
In hospital by charitable hands
With kindness tended. Yet I live this day,
And something enter'd in the heart has turn'd
All woe to peace.

FATHER PAUL.

Your face with sudden heat
Flushes, then pales; and now your lips are white,
While those unearthly eyes with dreadful fire
Are glittering: what fever preys on you?

A Soul's Comedy

JASPER.

You question, friend : what profits it to speak
Of such things further ? Of my soul therein
Some refuge finding from itself and shame
Long since forgotten ? There are deeper wells
Of memory stored within ; on other ways
Than active service in the world without
The soul has doors which open. I have found
One gate and pathway : if I speak of this,
God's priest, white minister, through service grown
Into the likeness of His saints, think well
On that far past wherein you led my steps
And, whether near or far, by force of love,
Kept me within the altar's reach, between
The chancel rail and sanctuary lamp.
If on one summit of the soul since then
I ever stood, or found a place of light
In my own centre, count this term attain'd
As something once made possible by you,
Whose torch, uplifted from the first of things,
Through darkness shew'd the mystery of God.
I may be near to death, I may have seen
My service set to failure and complete
Its wreckage, but the dregs and lees of self
Were emptied so ; but service, sacrifice
Were made thereby sufficient to themselves,
From all their meed divested. The result ?
It drove me inward, and—past mere states of peace—
I found the unity and God therein.
Old friend, there are the dark nights of the soul,
Yet never can the soul forget when God
Has once been guest within her. The wasted frame
Brings dark nights also to material mind,
Yet the soul's light remains.

The Soul's Recompense

FATHER PAUL.

Pray God therein
Has bless'd you truly ; the Church knows these states,
And the saints also knew ; the end is God
And His most blessed vision. But without
Her pale, she only prays and hopes for those
Who reach, or think they do, her ends by paths
From hers apart.

JASPER.

The soul is to herself
A witness.

FATHER PAUL.

God confirm it in the end. . . .
O Jasper Cartwright, does your mind still hold
The parting words I utter'd long ago—
Which promised gladness in the natural sense,
Speaking as man, not priest ? Your eyes respond ;
The thought within you quickens. Then go down
To your old home, my son, beside the sea,
And wait me there.

JASPER.

I will indeed go down
And rest a little. There is one therein
To welcome me.

FATHER PAUL.

O nevermore on earth ;
Direct your thoughts above where he sits crown'd !
The house is empty, it has pass'd to strangers ;
Your old friend Miles was drown'd a month ago ;
His wife, your cousin, has renounced the world,
And in a distant convent prays for him.

A Soul's Comedy

But do not grieve ! My heart is fill'd with joy
When I think on him, what a noble life
He led, his charity, his kindly heart,
His holy zeal for that new faith whereto
At length I led him. His pure, blameless course
Was closed in glory, like a mild May-day
Which sets with autumn splendour. (How your face
Has lighted suddenly !) One stormy night
A smack had grounded on the Goodwin sands ;
The life-boat straight put forth with Miles therein ;
They reach'd the sinking craft—the sea ran high—
The crew were saved, but in the act of helping
Its last man down, our friend himself was lost ;
Some high wave swept him past the reach of all :
A week went by before the body was found.

JASPER.

He died for others as he lived. Your tale
Has soften'd night itself. One star comes forth,
And, lo, the moon among the racing clouds
In witness shews her solemn face serene !

SCENE V.—*By the Sea.*—JASPER, ERNEST JOHNSON.

JASPER.

The blue, curved waves uplifted catch the light
And shine beyond endurance ; the sea lies
Beneath the sunshine in a swoon of joy,
Its surface spread that grateful, warm embrace
To feel in full completeness. Who has said
The sea sleeps ever ? When calmest, most it wakes,
When sooth'd as now by sunlight, then the sense
Of life is keenest. The broad fields at noon

The Soul's Recompense

Lie dreaming, and great forests by the night
Are hush'd into a stillness more than sleep—
Enchantment; but through all the sea retains
A conscious life, of motion, music made.

ERNEST.

Do you remember how we spoke together,
One summer twilight when your friends and mine
Were with us? On the threshold of man's life
We stood, projecting towards the coming time
Our eager thought. You challenged then my aims,
Till, somewhat stung with an implied contempt,
I cried—"Defer the question! I demand
The test of time; let ten years pass, and then
Compare your visionary schemes with my
More humble aims, and what has gain'd us most
Hold both in value." . . . In less scornful mood
You took my challenge.

JASPER.

I repent this day
That idle compact.

ERNEST.

Do you fear the test?

JASPER.

It has a poor assumption which my heart
Recoils from, making mere material gain
A standard to compute the worth of life.
But have your wish; contrast, if so you will,
Your ways and mine: are all the ends achieved?

ERNEST.

Look on me and compare yourself with me!
Or, first, contrast this present with that prime

A Soul's Comedy

Of youth when we debated, years ago,
On all our cherish'd plans and purposes.
You flourish'd then; the hope of high success
Inform'd your heart with strength to dare and do,
And you were beautiful; your mind full oft
Was visited by subtle and lofty thoughts,
While your estate might answer for yourself,
Though much embarrass'd by a guardian's debts.
I stood beside you as a meaner thing;
You scarcely knew the limit of your soul's
Resource, so ample seeming; mine was gauged
By all, and even by myself as well.
But your soul from its upward soaring brought—
What truly? Some bright light about the brow,
And some deep, far-off meaning in the eyes—
Not more? But check me. By degrees I rose,
Achieving all I purposed, and became
A wealthy merchant, married to the girl
On whom my heart was set from early youth.
I have a country seat and good town house,
Am of a happy home contented head—
Seven sons sprung from me. Now I see you thin
And pale and poor, and grief has fallen on you—
Your star seems set.

JASPER.

You do not know what star
Has risen over summits of the soul,
And in what sky a star-outshining sun
Springs upward. But the nimbus of its light
Is round me ever—mine the palm of life.
You have not won it, friend, of realms it rules—
Not even dream'd! You stand in earthly sunlight
Before me, and this manhood is alone
That youth grown riper; you are patient still
And kindly-hearted, with the world well-pleased;
Can so afford full gently and full long

The Soul's Recompense

To bear plain speaking from a man like me,
And with a bountiful and easy smile,
Your face turn'd somewhat, hear me calmly out. . . .
If pain assail'd you, could you bear it, Ernest?
If failure came upon you, and want after,
Could you bear those? If death should call for you,
Would you go willingly, with no keen pang?
That which your skill created for yourself
Is dear, of course; you do not wish to leave it.
Your life is crown'd with comfort and success,
And some few cares are better, to your thought,
Than things unknown, so, therefore, life than death.
But I have learn'd to suffer, to abstain
And die. My spirit in its pain and want,
My frame in toil, has lived, I think, more truly
Than yours has done, though all has prosper'd with you.
Forgive me, Ernest!

ERNEST.

Ah, how pale are you!
How your hand trembles, in the morning light
Uplifted, how you lean upon your staff! . . .
Our friends are dead, alone of all I stay!
Miles last we buried, who in death was true
To your great teachings. Would I win from you
A crown's least jewel? May I rather add!
I claim my methods have in mundane things
Borne fruit tenfold—for earthly life I plann'd;
If yours have brought you to the brink of want
They've failed, though only from my point, perhaps.
I do not doubt, yours looms the nobler part,
And nobler you; on all who knew you, Jasper,
Have you exerted happy influence,
And man is better for your birth in time.
Do I not feel how oft that face has haunted,
How it has prompted kindly deeds and thoughts?
And was not Miles himself a stone inert

A Soul's Comedy

Before your master-hand had fashion'd him,
And life infused? Then Matthew also, Jasper :
Spurred on by you into an earnest life,
He vow'd to follow with unselfish toil
His search for Truth, and gain'd at least from that
Patience in doubt and pain. I seal'd his eyes :
He said that ever, like a star in night,
Your image led him and abode with him. . . .
Remember Basil—in extremes of course !
When he turn'd Trappist he was saint thenceforth ;
He vow'd his life to God, my friend, for you,
And died in odour of all sanctity.
I melt you now.

JASPER.

(I thank Thee, gracious Lord !
Thou dost Thy servant bid depart in peace.)
If it should be that I could win your soul
To love that light which I have glimpsed from far
By no desert of mine.

ERNEST.

The light is good ;
But well-a-day, old friend, the time is short
And rest which follows on a life of work
Counts somewhat. For the messengers of light—
They cross my path, and even here at Deal
Shines one—perhaps a poet—Austin Blake
His name, a youth in years, whose fervid heart
Has higher promise than his songs, may be ;
But he'll do something by mere earnestness,
A fair chance given. Of him I speak no more,
For he comes yonder, striding over stones,
His eyes turn'd sea-ward, dreaming harmonies :
I doubt not you will like him.

The Soul's Recompense

SCENE VI.—*Green Lanes*.—JASPER CARTWRIGHT,
AUSTIN BLAKE.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

I've seen you once, and yet we greet this day
Like oldest friends, as if I knew you well ;
I speak out secrets, not as things told newly
But to your ears familiar. Why is this ?
We live in daily intercourse with some
For years, yet to each other's inner selves,
And all true feelings of the heart, remain
Like strangers ; then with others by a chance
Speak once, and in a moment is the soul
Laid bare.

JASPER.

We are strangers all till our hearts touch,
But ever after, whether late or soon,
We are friends, true friends.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Yet, being drawn to you
I babble on, while nothing of yourself
Is spoken.

JASPER.

We were speaking last of love.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

And I who am a poet have found none
To love—by some unhappy fate shut out
From Nature's circle of sweet sympathy.
A subtle current of attraction brings
The birds together, and the same blind sense

A Soul's Comedy

Moves in the meanest flower ; but I can draw
No soul towards mine. Does too much love repel
When offer'd ? Or has Fate thrust Nature back,
And her kind ministries, to shape some high,
Exceptional end in me, preparing thus
By pain for heights ? A little, and my soul
Will gather all her forces, will be nerved
Such state to bear, alone will stand or fall,
Nor seek a foreign solace and support.
But, overtaken by dependent mood,
A little while, a little, let me lean
On human love.

JASPER.

And must you then go forth
On that great quest ? I will not stay you, no,
Nor chide you, but the end too well foresee,
Who once myself along that sacred path
Went seeking soul-athirst. The hollow depth
Within you testifies in aching grief
To amplitude of nature, which in vain
Shall seek its complement where the level of life
Spreads out a shallow stream. The common soul,
Whose smaller scope a little of love demands,
A little offers, will receive a free,
Quick-coming answer, and content therewith
Conceives no deeper longing. The shoal stream,
Runs lightly down between its daisied banks,
And the rains feed it and the rills make full ;
In the bright sunshine sparkling, music-making,
It feels the joy of being. But the sea—
Wide, waste, unfathom'd—asks of earth and air,
With multitudinous voices, vainly ever
Some vast inclusive being its peer to be,
And silence listens. By a thousand streams
Fed daily, yet it chafes and hungers still,
And, last, in torment storming on the shore

The Soul's Recompense

It raves despairing ; seeking pity in vain,
Is pitiless, death seeking vainly, death
Inflicts, nor ever from itself is free,
Nor in an ampler being can lose its own.
You are no shallow stream with daisied banks ;
Capacity and passion of stormy main
Resound within you. Where shall the sea find rest ?
Say, in what void abyss pour'd surging down
At length no movement know through all its depths ?
Insensate search ! But as at times the sea,
Soothed by wind-stillness, smooth'd by gentle showers,
Feels all its longing dead, smiles and is calm,
And out of silence, which its rending voice
Vex'd with vain questions, may some secrets learn
Surpassing speech, from disappointment you,
And your unanswer'd longing, may gain at length
A secret. You have sought the love which few
Have power to give, but of that power possess'd,
Give you—no answer seeking, no return ;
Pour yourself forth ! Thus shall you win relief,
Thus shall the pent-up passion of the heart
Escape, and you find refuge from yourself.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

These words are as a prophecy, the heart
Constraining towards fulfilment.

SCENE VII.—*The Bridge at Sandwich*.—FATHER
PAUL, AUSTIN BLAKE.

FATHER PAUL.

Right on the threshold of your life to come
There stands a great event awaiting you.

A Soul's Comedy

I fain would lead you with a bright, white soul
Down the one path of safety, peace and joy
To meet it bravely.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

On the bridge we pause,
And look towards Thanet, where the sinking sun
Rich fields and pastures bathes in amber light.

FATHER PAUL.

I am an old, old man and soon must die,
Can I wish anything on earth for you
But your soul's weal? I have no cause to serve
But Christ's my Master. You are melting now!
The angels listen from their thrones to catch
Each broken word; the Queen of Heaven leans over;
The soft bright eyes of Jesus turn on you,
As once on Peter through a fringe of blood:
The Church herself, that spotless Bride of Christ,
In my poor person lifts extended arms.
Why will you stand in haughty pride apart?
She gave you once a bright baptismal robe:
What rags now wrap you? She invoked on you
The Spirit of God's uncreated Love:
What mournful spirit of the pride of life
Now reigns within you? As a boy, your soul,
God's shrine, transfigured by the mystic bread,
Partook of that Divinity Which once
Your human nature for the soul's dear sake
Partook of long ago: what idols now
Within you dwell?

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Your kindness has indeed
My whole heart melted, and your tears in truth
Have prompted mine. . . . My father, an abyss

The Soul's Recompense

Divides me ever from that fount of faith
At which your spirit drinks eternal life !

FATHER PAUL.

Ah, do not say so, do not speak thus rashly !
Think, Austin, think !

AUSTIN BLAKE.

I have thought long and deeply.

FATHER PAUL.

Pray, Austin, pray !

AUSTIN BLAKE.

And I have tried that also !
But my soul, father, is a stormy sea
Which the dove Prayer can scarcely brood upon.

FATHER PAUL.

That is because your heart is wrong with God.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

There is no meaning left in ancient forms.

FATHER PAUL.

Since you have lost their spirit !

AUSTIN BLAKE.

What are words ?
Your God can search this turbid heart of mine,
As stars search streams in silence night by night.

A Soul's Comedy

Pray ! I have pray'd, if it be prayer to stand
At night by the waste sea, and there groan deeper
Than that groans, beating vainly the deaf shore ;
Or midst lone meadows, when the world is sleeping,
To call on God, shrieking for God to soothe
My spirit's misery and madness. Say—
Is that not prayer ? O I have watch'd all night,
Pacing the city's streets, with my whole soul
Beseeching God to give me something great
To achieve for Him, beseeching God to burn—
With fire divine—all that is mean in me,
To save me from myself, to send His angels
That they may scourge me with unsparing hands
Till my soul frenzied seeks those heights of life
My purer moments free from mist and cloud. . . .
And the night falls, ah, father, the cold, still night !
The pale moon calmly from her face removes
The mists, and uncompanion'd, stately, slowly,
She rises up ; there is no haste, no fever.
The revolution of the sky goes on ;
The sea itself for ever comes and goes
With measur'd motions ; your own face is still ;
Your words are gentle ; there is rest all round me—
Mind-rest and stately movements ; only here—
Here in this heart—the fever burns away !

FATHER PAUL.

You have been sever'd from the source of peace—
From living fountains which alone your thirst
Can slake !

AUSTIN BLAKE.

There came to me a dream one night :
Some angel drew me upward to God's throne,
And bade me look in His eternal eyes.
So I gazed long with gaze of yearning soul,
And now bear witness, to my latest day,

The Soul's Recompense

I'll have no fear of God. If He come to me
With stripes and scourges or the Crown of Life,
In love or anger, still I fear Him not !

FATHER PAUL.

Strange thoughts are these, and in your soul I see
The sense of greatness ; those last words have thrill'd me—
What are you, Austin ?

AUSTIN BLAKE.

From my soul I cry—
A poet ! To be a poet is to bear
The weight of all men's woes ; it is to poise
The world upon one's shoulders, and to be,
Like Atlas, ever in that toil alone.

FATHER PAUL.

How all things shew their darkest side to you !
It is the long-neglected, starving soul
Which rent with anguish battles in that breast,
And sets that brain in fever. To its needs
I bid you minister, and peace is yours ! . . .
May God in mercy minister !

AUSTIN BLAKE.

And night
And stars, and solitude, and this vast sea,
Their ministry continue—all things great
Enlarge the spirit which responds to them !

FATHER PAUL.

A deathless nature turns from things of time
Athirst for the Eternal ; a large heart
Invokes the Infinite ; a soul seeks God.

A Soul's Comedy

Hold fast thereto, as when the sea sucks down
The roaring shingle, a wreck'd seaman clutches
The rough rock, slippery with slime and sea-weed.
Beyond the smiling continent of Faith,
With wealthy pastures and fair sloping uplands,
Shall, when the morning breaks, make glad your eyes,
Who in Doubt's sea now struggles, making land.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

The world of waters gives you images.
Behold, we pause before it, having cross'd
The melancholy marshes ! . . . Only think
How all the long night on the lonely coasts
The lone sea washes ; how it chafes and falls,
While all along the stony beach is still ;
How it speaks always ; how its voice pervades
The night, and there is nothing in the world—
There is no thing in all the waste, wide world—
To answer ! It is pitiful indeed
When in the darkness anything so great
As the great sea begins to weep and moan—
When things of majesty, like human souls
Or open seas, begin to moan and weep !

SCENE VIII.—*By the Sea.*—JASPER, AUSTIN BLAKE.

JASPER.

Mark, Austin, now beneath the gathering clouds
The sea's sun-brilliant azure slowly change
To yellow, green and grey.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

The wind is keen ;
That storm-rack threatens, in the North, to quench

The Soul's Recompense

A brilliant burst of sunshine on the sea.
The cliffs of France fade dimly far away ;
The boatmen cover up their boats and bear
The yellow nets to shelter.

JASPER.

You say that love has fled you, that you seek
In vain to win it. For a heart like yours
The grand arcanum is to love—to love—
And nothing more.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Pass out into the fields,
For now the sun's supremacy complete
Has been asserted. By the rising wind
The clouds are scatter'd, and the heaven once more
Shews white and blue, though pallid vapours still
Brood round the low horizon.

JASPER.

Let us walk
Among the sandhills. Though the trees be leafless,
It now seems summer, by some sudden change
Of natural magic, or at least late spring's
Sweet girlhood opening slowly to that full
And perfect womanhood.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Now we stand alone
Among these barren flats that fringe the shore !
The long North-Foreland's belt of gleaming cliff
Shews bright ; the tide into the bay between
Is rolling swiftly ; 'twixt the West and North
The town of Sandwich stands ; and straining eyes

A Soul's Comedy

The humble spire of Worth can glimpse among
The flat, ill-cultured fields and wilted green
Of sheep-cropp'd pastures. Think we now look forth,
From this far outpost, on the vast extent
Of solemn Faërie Land ! It lies spell-bound,
And all its folk are dreaming ; in the roads,
Be sure, grass sprouts ; upon the chapel-steps
The green moss gathers ; there from day to day
Abides the patient spirit of the place,
With fortitude unearthly waiting there
The worshippers. . . .

JASPER.

Beside this pool I stand !
Can the strong soul forget her history,
And chequer'd life its æras ? Only then
Can I forget you, Mary. Does the earth,
Our common mother, count you still her child ?
How has Fate finish'd the romance begun
Between us ?

[*A pause.*]

O my lost and gentle friend !
Do you remember how we wander'd here
On winter mornings when the sea was blue
And the wind balmy, while the white dream-ships,
With unapparent motion through the dim
Mists of the distance, beautiful as ghosts,
Pass'd on their course unknown ?

AUSTIN BLAKE.

A Kentish maid
Perchance your boyhood woo'd. A Mary too :
I am a Mary's son. From Saltwood came
My mother. In this town full long she dwelt,
Over these sandhills wander'd. . . . Can I walk
Among them, and not visibly impress'd
On every spot behold her memory ?

The Soul's Recompense

I pass'd among them in a dream this day—
Her girlhood's haunts, where Saltwood's soaring towers
Look eastward over sea. From Brockman's Mount
How oft her eyes have gazed on shore and main,
A prospect fair! On Eachend's further hill
Oft has she stood; a white and winding road
Ascends the eastern side—the rover thence
Looks down into a woodland vale, and there
A little stretch of undulating turf
Gives pleasant pasture to the dreaming kine.
And though these scenes will know her now no more,
Nor ever here her roaming steps return,
Who on a mission undeclared has gone
Forth into lands remote, there lingers yet
The memory of her presence. It fills my mind;
I bear it with me to the ocean's marge,
And its vast voices, seeking news of her,
Oft will I question; or to lonely lanes
Retiring, fir-clothed slopes and shelt'ring yews
In churchyard closes, wait the answering voice.

JASPER.

The wind is cool; the night approaches; see,
Betwixt the North and East, that cloud fire-tinged!
The naked masts of every anchor'd ship
Shine redly, and the steel-blue, shifting sea
Takes wandering lights and blushes. . . . Now the swell
Deepens. . . . His mother out of Saltwood came!
If this be true which on my mind has flash'd,
This thought supreme! . . . The twilight falls apace;
We spoke about your mother.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

Every word
Is lost upon me, who myself have lost!
This sunset which we linger'd long to see

A Soul's Comedy

Has now departed, all the clouds about
The West are burnt to ashes.

JASPER.

Draw that cloak
About your body. . . . Austin, where is he—
Is that the moon behind us? Turn! The moon
Shoots upwards from the ocean scarlet, vast,
All draped in lurid panoply, and leaves
A bloody blush upon the eastern sea
Perceptibly ascending! Where is he
That bore you, Austin? Do not turn, nor shrink!
Is that the ruddy moonlight on your face,
Or burning flush that mantles either cheek?
Speak quickly! With the shame in face and eyes,
Not with the lips, make answer! Is your birth
A secret to be whisper'd in the dark
By your most inward spirit to the mind
Alone? In mercy, for a space avert
Those blazing eyes! Keep silence, breathe it not!
Look round, look up! The night is round; the stars
Are over us; the moon within the mist
Is monstrous and amazing as one thought
Within my soul. This vast, mysterious thing
Before us is the ocean. Let us stand
A little and speak nothing, lest the life
Go suddenly from out us.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

I must speak,
Or madness intervening ends with cries
Intolerable silence.

JASPER.

Mary Blake,
Was she your mother? Do not answer! Strive

The Soul's Recompense

To meet this sudden, unexpected thing
As something old, familiar, long fore-dream'd !
Be it between us now as it may be
To-morrow in the morning, when the truth
Is twelve hours old, when we can meet and say—
My son !

AUSTIN BLAKE.

My father !

SCENE IX.—*A Room in an Inn.*—JASPER,

AUSTIN BLAKE.

JASPER.

Throw up the window, let the breeze come in !
What is the day like—this my latest day ?
Describe it, poet !

AUSTIN BLAKE.

A mist is on the sea,
But the sun breaking southward kindles now
On its calm breast a blaze of golden light.

JASPER.

I have not lived in vain who have found that key
Which opens wide the Palace of the King.
I know that inward path which leads to life's
Supernal heights.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

I hold it surely true
That on some high soul-eminence is hidden

A Soul's Comedy

A lamp of God, miraculously fed.
Unwaning, pure, the solitary flame
Makes beautiful the mountains of the mind,
Its home. Each mist of passion and evil thought,
Ascending, hides from the inferior self
Those saving rays, which still transmit below
Some fitful shafts. Their transitory gleam,
Made variously manifest, we call
By various names—prevision, the gift of faith,
The inspiration of the seer and bard,
A revelation from the world beyond
In flashes and reflections to the soul.
And these half-words, the swift-extinguish'd light,
Beyond all speech, have thrill'd the heart of man,
Have waken'd thoughts beyond all thoughts profound,
Deep longings fed, and shaped from dream and deed
High aims and hopes sublime, the stars of life !

JASPER.

To give all, seeking nothing ; to be faithful,
Though all were faithless, that's the way to peace
And liberty of spirit ! To lose self,
The lesser self, in service and for love
Of others, in God's most holy name and theirs,
Without condition, is the one true way
To find our nobler self which dwells alone
On unattempted summits of the soul !
This is God's blessed secret and the truth
My own life's tale has bodied forth to me.
Choose leave to serve and love, not love's return,
Whose mercenary principle demands
On every gift repayment. Let those lips
Seek no responsive kisses, the white brow
Pressing alone, whose cool and smooth expanse
Takes all, returning nothing. Let that tongue
Most gentle words, most soothing balm of speech,

The Soul's Recompense

On your elected pour ; from them seek none.
And be all life (for these in joy so rich)
By such devotion beautified alone ;
But when devotion ends, when service fails,
Take love within, for—carrying all the keys—
It shall the secret temple of the soul
Open, and there the Lover of the soul—
God on His throne—behold. And He is Thou.

AUSTIN BLAKE.

I set my heart upon the nobler hope
And fight with Nature. . . .

Ernest Johnson sends

A final message ; you have conquer'd him !
He vows himself through all his days remaining
To work with zeal for man, because of you.
He hopes to found a hospital and schools ;
One son will follow in the course he takes :
He looks to greet you in Eternity.

JASPER.

Thou dost Thy servant bid depart in peace !

[*A long pause.*]

I see you stand before me, a bright soul ;
Your eyes shine in the sunlight, your dark hair
The yellow sunlight brightens ; you are brave,
And towards the future will a stalwart front
Present ; your life has purpose fair and high,
Has golden dreams, and growing in your heart
Has sense of mission. . . . What shaped that life and
mine

Has out of folly, out of shame, a fair
And holy end led forth—I ask no more.
And now the matter in your hands remains ;

A Soul's Comedy

All rests with you to whom the chance is given.
Look to it, Austin, the chance with life is given !
Forth to the strife, my hero ! Poet, forth !
The world is waiting ; the world calls you, go !
God with you, in you ! Prove the god within !
And by the sacrifice of meaner self
Your own transcendent nature's endless life
Insure for ever ! My life dissolves away
In your life's light. Look to it, Austin, look !
Son of the morning, it is in your hands—
All rests with you, to fail or to fulfil !

[Sic transit anima sacra.]

AUSTIN BLAKE.

*I bow, my God, to Thy decree,
I will not dare to question Thee :
Henceforth in early hours and late
To this high aim be my days dedicate ;
With all my strength and all my skill
I will Thy plans fulfil.
Thou givest me the golden keys
Which open gates of light,
But contemplating these,
And that immortal height
My soul must scale, I pause and tremble at the sight !
My deeds are known to Thee,
My weakness Thou dost see,
O Lord, Thy will be done—
How shouldst Thou favour this rebellious son ?
This child of earth and fire,
Say, wilt Thou choose to work out Thy desire ?
High hopes I held, and many a lofty aim :
These had redeem'd my shame,
These proved my strong defense.
But I have waived the starry claim
To work delight of sense.*

The Soul's Recompense

*Mine aspiration saves my soul from death,
For that descends from Thee ;
Thou wilt not cast it in the abyss beneath
Of meanness and obscurity.
Now dost Thou kindle loftier trust,
Hast raised me from the mire and dust,
Set facing heights sublime,
Wherefrom the eternal stars look down
On all dim wastes of time.
And Thou hast bidden me climb,
By stony paths, to reach the mystic town :
My soul turns breathless towards that wondrous
goal ;
If glory dazzles me, and the silentness
Of those high places here my heart oppress,
Being unworthy Thine illumined spheres ;
I cry no less, and, lo, mine ears
Are ringing with Thy promises !
The dark clouds quiver and roll,
They pass from off my soul,
The Light Divine falls o'er me.
The road is rough and long,
But it may be smooth'd by song ;
The arm of my Lord is strong :
I see God's life before me !
I turn, I take my way ;
O hope so brave and bold,
My steps shall nevermore delay
Through weary paths of old !
The years are rich in Destiny,
The stars of Heaven do beckon me and bless ;
Set on the watch-towers of futurity,
The beacons of immortal fame
Burn with a stedfast flame ;
While as I forward press,
There is a promise in the passing hours,
A whisper in the leaves and flowers ;*

A Soul's Comedy

*The smallest bird that sings
Reveals me secret things ;
And day and night, and night and day,
The promise never dies away
Miraculously written in the skies :
The very winds are full of prophecies !*

EPILOGUE

By the Sea.—AUSTIN BLAKE.

A book for mine elected, telling all
My life is theirs to use or lose for them,
As best may serve them, telling that I love
Above the world their beauty. Is there one
Who reads this book, whose bright eyes light a face
In truth most lovely? Let him come to me,
On him my faith is fix'd, I choose him now,
My soul's true friend. And if his heart be pure,
His am I for the serving evermore;
But if not pure, if it at least be kind,
His am I for the serving evermore;
And if not kind, if it be brave and true,
His am I for the serving evermore;
But if not brave, since he is beautiful
His am I for the serving evermore.

This book to mine elected, to the souls
In life's fair morning, whom I love, this book!

Is that the night upon the sea, my friends,
Descending? What have multiplied above?—
The stars! What breaks and brightens in the East?
It is the moon, the mother of the gods,
Heaven's queen ascending! Is there one this night
Takes up the wondrous story? . . . Who is this
Stands forth? My one believer, who alone
Accepts the poem! It is well; for thee,
God knows, I wrote it—thou hast heard—enough!

A Soul's Comedy

My soul embarks for mystic coasts unknown,
From all sea-roads which cross the main of mind
Remote. Thou knowest I am strong to bear
And braced for every venture. Morning Light,
Most royal lily and azalean queen,
MIRANDA, promise of the time to come,
I battle ever for the truth and thee,
For man I work in thee. All joys be thine! . . .

O solemn spirit, to the distant stars
Thy glance directing, may that earnest glance
Triumphant search the altitude remote!
I see thine eyes' light span the gulf of space;
And space the final veil, the rarest, pass'd,
I see the Absolute reveal'd before thee. . . .

Go forth, O Poem, to the Star of books
I leave thee! Thou art written; my soul's child
Must aid me now to bid the life of self
A long farewell. Command me therefore now,
All ye to whom I dedicate this book;
Command me in your service evermore!

O Light Divine, lead onward still this mind's
Supernal story, to the end lead on!
I give thee thanks, supreme and gracious God,
For Thy great mercies. In Thy holy hands
I put the high romance. On mountain heights
Be its next scene, I pray Thee! Thou hast school'd
On wintry plains beside a scourging sea
Thy chosen son. To-day the call has come—
Beyond the mountains—from a height undream'd;
I follow on the mandate, only lead!
Lead Light which is unsearchable, lead God
Most holy, named yet nameless, ever more
Reveal'd, yet ever hidden and unknown;
O'er wide sea-waste I follow, plain and hill:
I follow to the mountain of the Lord!

A VALEDICTION

THESE poems are offered as the confession of a man who knows that there is only one character of true excellence in human life, and that is the seal or character which expresses the sanction of eternity. They are the work of a writer who, after trying many paths of experience, has become conscious in part of the mysteries which environ us, and it is obvious that they must appeal, chiefly or only, to those who have been awakened after the same manner. Such persons constitute a kind of secret school, or united but unincorporate fraternity, which independently of all stipulated means of recognition and communication do no less communicate and recognise one another without hesitation or hindrance in every part of the world.

The school in question confesses only to a single necessity, which embodies one interest held in unity thereby. It is a necessity of desire and attainment, the desire of the Great Quest, fulfilment of the Great Experiment—in vastissimum divinitatis pelagus navigare. For the members, external or internal, of this sodality, in the light of this end, it may be said truly that the whole universe bursts forth into a flame and blossoming of parable, symbol and sacrament. All things minister thereto, all things proclaim and manifest it, within their proper measures; the desire and its fulfilment receive their earnest and demonstrations everywhere. Everywhere there is the ringing of bells, ever the passing of Hosts, the smoke of incense, the acclamation of the cosmos to urge and encourage the quest.

How this outward world has thus been efficient to the needs of one mystic and sacramentalist is shewn forth in

A Valediction

these volumes, which are offered by the writer to his brethren, ut adeptis appareat me illis parem et fratrem, as proof positive that he is numbered among them, that he is initiated into their mysteries, and exacts recognition as such in all houses, temples and tarrying places of the confraternity.

"As a mystical poet, as an exponent of the transcendental in life and in literature, Mr. A. E. Waite has won for himself a position of high authority. He stands almost alone to-day in his single-minded devotion to the less frequented paths of literary adventure. His confession of faith is to be found in a score of volumes of real attainment, critical and poetical."—*The Sunday Times*.

"Mr. A. E. Waite is one of the profoundest and most gifted among modern students of mysticism and a poet of fine imaginative power."—*The Aberdeen Free Press*.

"He has considerable instinct for form and colour in verse."—Mr. G. K. Chesterton in *The Speaker*.

"It is sufficient that Mr. Waite does fulfil his purpose, and in these poems of his more or less clearly and beautifully shadows forth in living words something of the inner spiritual life and meaning that is mystically symbolised to the seeing eye in every manifestation of Nature. . . . There is true gold of poetry in the book, and often more of real thought and suggestions in a single page than would go to the making of a whole volume of average minor verse."—*The Bookman on A Book of Mystery and Vision*.

"The many learned works of Mr. A. E. Waite are testimony enough that the Hermetic science is still to be reckoned with. . . . Mr. Waite must at present be accounted our most learned and important writer upon those subjects which lie 'between the desert and the sown' of occult and mystic science. . . . Always serious, never sentimental or fatuous, Mr. Waite's dicta upon mysticism are often brilliant and profound."—Miss Evelyn Underhill in *The Hibbert Journal*.

"Mr. Waite's doctrine is, at least, poetical, it has one element of divinity which lends it grace."—*The Yorkshire Post*.

"It can be by no ordinary strength of natural impulse that he so consistently translates the gorgeous pageantry of the material universe into 'signs and omens' of such felicity."—*The Pilot*.

"Mr. Waite must be well known as a learned and enchanting Mystic ; even those who are not mystics or even thyrsus-bearers hold him in respect."—*The Daily Chronicle*.

"Throughout one comes in touch with a fine spirit, alive to all the glory of the world and all that charms the heart and sense of man, yet seeing past these with something of the soul of Galahad. The book is a very striking one, nobly mystic, and rich in memorable verse and significant thought, so closely wedded to emotion that each seems either."—*The Glasgow Herald* on *Strange Houses of Sleep*.

"Mr. Waite is known to all students of mysticism—and happily they are an increasing band—as one of the few competent writers on this fascinating subject."—*The Irish Times*.

"A sacred work, depicting the stages of the soul in its pilgrimage through the world of shadows."—*The Forecast* on *Strange Houses of Sleep*.

"Mr. A. E. Waite stands unrivalled in this department of obscure research."—*The Quest*.

"Mr. Waite . . . has also earned himself an honourable name for sincerity in such matters."—*The Athenæum*.

"Mr. Waite has penetrated very near to the heart of his subject."—*The Saturday Review* on *Studies in Mysticism*.

"The poetry is of a high order, and, apart from its more spiritual aspects, remarkable for a passionate appreciation of natural beauty and for pictorial treatment. . . . *Israfel* is one of those rare books which are part of the salt of the earth ; but it is not for all readers."—*The Graphic*.

"Mr. Waite is an expert on mystical subjects and knows more than their outward seeming."—*The Guardian*.

"There are few better authorities on the subject of mysticism than Mr. A. E. Waite."—*The Weekly Sun*.

"Mr. Waite really is a poet ; some of his lines are beautifully wrought, and there is an air about most of his work of complete mastery of the technique of his art."—*The Morning Leader*.

"Mr. Waite, who would seem to be the chief English authority, has not only concentrated his attention on the doctrine of magic, but has been honestly desirous to lay the results of his extensive investigations before elementary readers in comprehensible terms and in accessible volumes."—*The Edinburgh Review*.

"The well-known mystic and student of mysticism, Mr. A. E. Waite."—*Nature*.

"Mr. Waite is learned in the occult, as everyone knows."—*The Observer*.

"Mr. A. E. Waite, the well-known mystical poet and occultist."—*The Manchester Courier*.

"Mr. Arthur Edward Waite . . . is perhaps the greatest authority in the world on all things occult."—Mr. Arthur Machen in *The Evening News*.

"No one could be more fitted for the task he has undertaken than Mr. Waite, who holds a foremost position in the literature of the higher mysticism."—*The Sunday Special* on *Obermann*.

"Mr. Waite is a deep-voiced, imaginative, cunning rhymers."—*The Daily Chronicle*.

"A brilliant writer, a master of recondite lore. . . It will be a revelation to follow Mr. Waite in his historical investigations, and to think his high thoughts after him. . . . He brings to the execution of his task a rare mastery of the whole history and literature of the subject and a deep insight into its hidden spiritual aspects. . . . Among the students of Christian mysticism Mr. Waite occupies a place quite his own."—*The Glasgow Herald*.

"Surely this volume must mark an epoch in the annals of that most spiritual of arts—poetry—for rarely . . . has any poet sung so beautifully and mystically."—*The Occult Review* on *Strange Houses of Sleep*.

"Pages of exposition written with admirable lucidity and with an earnestness of spirit to which every reader will respond."—*The English Review* on *The Secret Tradition in Freemasonry*.

"Mr. Waite has made his reputation as a writer on occult subjects."—*Literature*.

"Our author combines the grasp of scholarship with the sympathetic attitude and the deep-lying knowledge of hidden things."—*The American Freemason*.

"Apart from his well-known credentials in the world of letters as one of the most learned and prolific authors upon mystical and occult subjects, [he] has the advantage of first-hand knowledge of all ceremonial systems of initiation now working, as well as the possession of, or access to, many that are now in abeyance. The whole craft is deeply obligated to him for presenting it with so admirable a mirror and exegesis of its own doctrine."—*The Freemason*.

"Since the publication of *The Secret Tradition in Freemasonry*, no excuse is any longer possible for ignorance of the fact that the long-lost word of Freemasonry has been recovered—which word is 'the identity between the root-matter of Masonry and that of the other Mysteries'; the 'Secret Tradition,' which is the immemorial knowledge concerning man's way of return whence he came by a method of the inward life."—*The Quest*.

"This author stands pre-eminent among mystic writers for clearness, coherency, and a profound spirituality. . . . We can but yield to the witchery of his theme and style. . . . It is as a real mystic and as a real Mason that Brother A. E. Waite can be here presented to his brethren. . . . A profound scholar, he has freely opened to us his vast stores of learning. . . . Our conductor has the spiritual view. For him the material things are windows through which he may look upon broader fields of spiritual and intellectual truths. And of these sights, transcending outward sense, our author has rare power of interpretation, bringing some matters of holiest meaning to the common ken. . . . Brother Waite is author of many books, each of which has been a great undertaking, and every one accepted as authority."—*The American Tyler-Key-stone*.

"Few living writers possess so extensive and scholarly a knowledge of the history of the different ritual societies that have helped to carry on the 'secret tradition.'"—*The Morning Leader*.

"He has given us a work which should be received with gratitude, and which is not likely to be rivalled—far less surpassed."—*The Sheffield Daily Telegraph* on Obermann.

"As a writer on mysticism and the mystics, Mr. Waite's skill and competency are freely acknowledged."—*The Literary World*.

"Among non-Jewish students of the Kabalah and Jewish mysticism, Mr. Waite certainly holds a high place."—*The Academy* on *The Secret Doctrine in Israel*.

"Mr. A. E. Waite is a profound scholar and a distinguished writer on metaphysical and occult subjects."—*To-Day*.

"The literature of occultism has few more learned students than Mr. A. E. Waite."—*Literature*.

"In Mr. Waite we have, on the one hand, a scholar of his subject who is keenly alive to the necessities of a thoroughly scientific literary criticism, and on the other a writer who is entirely sympathetic to all that is good in a sane mysticism."—*The Theosophical Review*.

"His learning is extraordinary, and his experience in this kind of inquiry no less so. His style also is a noble one, not at all after the manner of these days."—*The Daily Chronicle*.

"Mr. Waite has produced a poem very much above the average of poetic merit. . . . Jasper Cartwright's struggle against the circumstances which have combined to ruin his spiritual existence, and his final triumph over them, are powerfully portrayed. . . . Scattered at intervals throughout the volume are passages of more than ordinary beauty."—*The Spectator on A Soul's Comedy*.

"*A Soul's Comedy* is a very extraordinary composition. . . . The story of this poem is in some respects very repulsive, and yet told with great delicacy and beauty. . . . If this poem were recast in the sense that we have indicated, we venture to think that it would be entitled to a high place among the poems of the day."—*The Guardian*.

"The main idea of Jasper's origin is so horrible in its pathetic tragedy as to rouse reminiscences of Ford's masterpiece, and the after-episode of Mary Blake is little less distressing; but out of these seemingly compromising materials Mr. Waite has evoked a tale of human sorrow, struggle, and final triumph such as must appeal to the heart of every true man. . . . The poetry rises at times to unusual heights, as, for instance, in the description of Mary's death, the Benediction in the monastery chapel, Austin Blake's prologue to the third part, or, best of all, the scene where Jasper resigns Gertrude to his friend."—*The Graphic*.

"Mr. A. E. Waite has gained deservedly high distinction by his labours . . . a reputation as one of the foremost authorities on occult and mystical subjects."—*Light*.

"No one who knows Mr. Waite will question his fitness to deal with any subject of a mystical nature. . . . Mr. Waite's careful and systematic labour is beyond all praise."—*The Seeker*.

"Whatever be the reality and significance of Mr. Waite's mysticism, there is no doubt that he has a great deal of poetry in him. . . . The verses themselves are often very beautiful."—*The Standard on A Book of Mystery and Vision*.

"His gorgeous word-painting and incessant use of fine imagery always intoxicate and often convince. The wild beauty of most of his hyperbole also compels admiration."—*The Theosophical Review*.

"Mr. Waite has been among the foremost to promulgate the doctrines of the mystical fraternity which acknowledges the singular importance of man's ultimate destiny as apprehended by and through the sacra-

mental pageantries of external life. . . . The pathos and rhythm of Mr. Waite's verse are both opulent and appropriate, and the general style will be felt to express his mind with accuracy. . . . It has been finely said that idealism is an hypothesis to account for Nature by means other than those of carpentry and chemistry, and to accept this definition is to admit that Mr. Waite is Nature's ideal interpreter ; for in every changing aspect of the world he finds distilled a spiritual elixir ; he declares the eternal beatitude, and over and throughout all apparent disorder he discovers the . . . seal of God. We are conscious of no inconsistency when we assert that Mr. Waite has realised the spiritual fulness of which all natural phenomena are but the mere externals."—*The London Scotsman*.

"Mr. Waite has a keen perception of that moss which grows on ruins—a fine understanding of the new life which is yet the oldest of all —the *Rex quondam, Rexque futurus* who cannot reign until the usurping Mammon is dethroned."—*The Candid Friend*.

"Mr. Waite is a genuine mystic, and has that note of authority which mystics may love or may resent, but from which they do not turn away. . . . Our great writer on mysticism. . . . By far the deepest and most accomplished writer on mysticism among us."—The Rev. Sir William Robertson Nicoll in *The British Weekly*.

"Everywhere in the poems . . . the common objects and experiences of human life are transmuted to pageantries, emblazonments, gorgeous rites and Eucharistic feasts. The effect is often sumptuous, and it is the lavish use, within artistic limits, of Roman symbol and ceremonial which gives Mr. Waite's verse its peculiar charm ; just as, if it be permissible to cite in this connection so diverse a singer, the secret of Mr. Kipling's strength in his finest poems lies in his apt employment of the language of the Bible. The poems are the most remarkable and, on the whole, the most successful attempt to sing the mysteries of mysticism since Blake wrote his 'Prophetic Books.' . . . Mr. Waite's mystical poetry glows with ardour, thrills with rapture, pulses with passion."—Mr. James Douglas in *The Star*.

Mr. Waite shows himself a brother of the literary craft by all possible tests. . . . He is valiant, wise, and self-controlled."—The Rev. William Barry in *The Bookman*.

"Mr. Waite, by far the most learned modern scholar of occultism, has said of alchemists, in a noble sentence, 'they were soul seekers and they had found the soul ; they were artificers and they had adorned the soul ; they were alchemists and had transmuted it.'"—Mr. John Masefield in *The Quest*.

“Mr. Waite’s message is not sporadic, but systematic. He writes always with and from the open vision, and with his feet upon the rock of knowledge and tested, first hand, spiritual experience. His voice is that of one who has climbed to certain heights above his labouring fellows and shouts down to them an assurance that the path upwards is safe and sure, if severe, and that beyond the wreathing clouds he has seen peaks that will repay the climb. He is expositor, and encourages, as well as seer and poet. . . . And thus it comes about that with ‘the glorious company of the apostles’ of poetry who have striven to express the mystical Ideal in verse . . . it may be claimed that Mr. Waite is to be marked as one who speaks with a confidence, and perhaps with an experience, that is excelled by none, and with a variety of expression and form attained by few. In *The King’s Rendering*, a superb poem, presaging things that shall be, he gives us the vision of the return of the mystic King from Avalon with the Graal. . . . This is poetry at its noblest, but Mr. Waite’s implication is that there remains something nobler still—namely, the personal realisation of what that vision implies. . . . His work carries with it a claim to that tribute which is due to the servitors and illuminators of humanity.”—Mr. W. L. Wilmshurst in *The Occult Review*.

“Undoubtedly one of the most original and remarkable books of verse published for many years. . . . His language is the language of true poetry, his words beautifully chosen, his cadences full of melodious expression, and his themes such as are seldom touched on and still more seldom comprehended in these modern times. He is conscious of mysteries around us, and through the veil of environment he catches the glimpses of distant truths, of secret meanings, and of the goal which gleams afar and towards which men of thought and research are travelling. . . . His verse is often of ecstatic quality.”—*The Birmingham Daily Gazette* on *A Book of Mystery and Vision*.

“Of Mr. Waite one need hardly speak at this late day. . . . Of all living exponents of Mysticism, he is the one who speaks most surely ‘with authority and not as the scribes.’”—*The Presbyterian*.



