

*Contem-  
poraries.* The world applauds his words; his fame  
Is noised wherever knowledge be;  
Even the trader hears his name,  
As one far inland hears the sea;  
The lady quotes him to the beau  
Across a cup of Russian tea;  
They know him and they do not know.

I know him. In the nascent years  
Men's eyes shall see him as one crowned;  
His voice shall gather in their ears  
With each new age prophetic sound;  
And you and I and all the rest,  
Whose brows to-day are laurel-bound,  
Shall be but plumes upon his crest.

A year ago this man was poor, —  
This Alfred whom the nations praise;  
He stood a beggar at my door  
For one mere word to help him raise  
From fainting limbs and shoulders bent  
The burden of the weary days;  
And I withheld it — and he went.

I knew him then, as I know now;  
Our largest heart, our loftiest mind;  
Yet for the curls upon his brow  
And for his lisp, I could not find  
The helping word, the cheering touch.  
Ah, to be just, as well as kind, —  
It costs so little and so much!

It seemed unmanly in my sight  
That he, whose spirit was so strong  
To lead the blind world to the light,