

THE HOUSE OF RUINS.

Half down the lonely vale, where sunbeams creep,
Along the wild-grown grass one noonday hour,
The old house stands, enwrapt in dreams and sleep;
And through the gloom the ancient gables tower
Above the ivy clinging on its walls;
And on the mouldering eaves the martens sit
Through all the day, and when the twilight falls,
Out from the casements dark the black bats flit.

Upon the strangled path, should strange feet press,
And should a strange hand knock upon the door,
That creaks and whines in plaintive-toned distress,
A sound of feet might pass along the floor,
And ghostly voices fill the vacant halls;
Unwonted things might stare from out the gloom,
And murmurs creep along the sunken walls,
Bowed down beneath some long-forgotten doom.

Along the flowerless and the wild-grown lawns,
The thistle and the long-leaved mullein bloom;
And no bird carols while the morning dawns,
No vagrant flower gleams in the sunless gloom,
And no fruit flushes on the gnarled old trees,
Whose grey briarian branches now are grown
A brushwood tangle, where the sunset breeze
Forever wails its mournful monotone.