

## THE BALLAD OF READING GAOL

And thus we rust Life's iron chain  
Degraded and alone :  
And some men curse, and some men weep,  
And some men make no moan :  
But God's eternal Laws are kind  
And break the heart of stone.

. . . . .  
And every human heart that breaks,  
In prison-cell or yard,  
Is as that broken box that gave  
Its treasure to the Lord,  
And filled the unclean leper's house  
With the scent of costliest nard.

Ah ! happy they whose hearts can break  
And peace of pardon win !  
How else may man make straight his plan  
And cleanse his soul from Sin ?  
How else but through a broken heart  
May Lord Christ enter in ?

. . . . .  
And he of the swollen purple throat,  
And the stark and staring eyes,  
Waits for the holy hands that took  
The Thief to Paradise ;  
And a broken and a contrite heart  
The Lord will not despise.