

Burnt-out its transient, dull, terrestrial fires,
Expended all its darkling, dense desires,
It perishes in dust.

To be re-fashion'd in some farther sphere,
Orb after orb and space o'er space, beyond
The wasting bands of finite being here,
The clay-cold forms of kinship once held dear,
Or fellowships more fond.

Are then Earth's kinships dead?—In very truth,
There was no Earth; for change is Being's law,
So kin with kin shall meet again, and youth
Renew the old time pledge of love, in sooth,
Love's ring without one flaw.

We come, we know not whence; anon, we go,
We know not where, nor choose we time or place;
We know not how the seasons ebb and flow,
We know not how the blossoms, fragrant, blow,
Nor whence the sunbeam's grace.

Swift falls the snow, its flakes are number'd not,
Breaks the chill blast on purpling peak and plain,
Blooms clothe with raiment rare some desert spot,
Leaves of the wilderness bud, bourgeon, rot,
Descends the rippling rain.

But who't interpret Nature's varied change,
Reading the Sphinx like *Edipus* of old;
Or, sapient, counsel souls that outward range
To read with eyes scrupulous themes less strange
Than earth's brief tale when told?

Creeds cannot force the constant guarded gate,
Their votaries grope from dark to dismal dark,
Each deems itself the oracle of Fate,
Yet fails to solve the mystery;—too late
Man feels his sense embark.

For further voyage to a viewless realm,
Ere deem'd a possible yet far-off dream,
But who to hold the now relinquished helm,
Mid strifes that rend and seas that overwhelm,
And fires that downward stream?

Reason alone with Hope the pilot star,
To guide across the ebbing tide of doubt,
Pointing the path o'er storm-toss'd waves afar,
And shedding light on breaker, beach, and bar,
That else had faded out;

Out to the blackness of the night profound;
"We are" the guarantee that "we shall be,"
Another cycle of life's mystic round
Holds in its wider, yet concentric bound
No deeper mystery

Than "Now"—Am I not man? The womb
Of hours,
Pregnant with life, had waited for my birth
From out the everlasting vales of flowers,
Shined on by suns, and wet with dews and showers
Of some unending earth.

Earth! What is earth? 'Tis heav'n—and yet
It holds within its husk the germ of hell,
The Sun of joy is in the zenith set,
But e'en the lids of pristine day were wet
With tears that somewhere fell.

And heav'n is earth; no paradise more fair,
More full of love and deep contentment's plan
Can bourgeon in the empty fields of air;
Nor minstrel angels passive, vacant stare
On nobler work than man.

Ay, nobler work than man!—His giant heart
Pulses in space upon God's anvil shaped,
Temper'd by time in fierce contention's mart,
Angel and man he stands, and still in part
A god in glory draped.

In *His* own image fashion'd, deathless great,
Omnipotent—shall death or hell destroy,
Or fetters chain him to the wheel of fate

That rolls through black Oblivion's gate,
Annihilation's toy?

No, no! There is no death, another strand
Awaits the earth-worn spirit, formless, fled;
One central life, with ever varying band
Of constant souls that fluctuate hand in hand;
But no, there are no dead!

For what were death but end of Nature's all,
Sunbeam and starlight, dusk and dewy dawn,
Heaven's mantling blue but a funereal pall,
As *I*, alone, on this revolving ball
Am living, sentient, born!

For life is but a universal *I*,
Each in himself, commingled, one and one;
When Being's pageant, finite, passes by,
And *I*, impassive and insentient lie,
The universe is done.

Eternity is dead; the present, null; the past,
A broken web, by brief sensation spun;
But if one soul in life's conception cast,
Rises supreme o'er dissolution's blast,
All life is but begun.

And Faith survives, with joy and changeless Hope,
For Doubt is render'd harmless of its sting;
Buoyant the spirit flights successive cope
'Gainst destinies, where weaker fledglings grope
As yet with untried wing.

But soon to be translated, true and strong,
Steadfast in fix'd triumphant trust of right,
Above the sordid scenes of wreck and wrong,
'Borne by the drift of deathless days along
Through an unending light.

Behold the sign to faltering, fainting souls,
To-day, the morrow's loud, resistless plea,
Doubt, dark and death are but life's transient goals,
The everlasting Future somewhere rolls
Into a sentient sea!

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THE FOG ON THE BLUMLIS ALP.

Though there was a tragedy to be played out presently up there beside the dazzling snowfields of the Blumlis Alp, both the players were unaware of it as yet, and only one of them knew that the ground plan of a tragedy was laid. George Heriot knew this, it is true, and Basil Gordon's wife, who was waiting for them below at Kandersteg, knew it also; but Basil Gordon himself knew nothing. If anyone had come and told him that his companion and friend whom he trusted had done him the wrong that a man must not pardon even if he will he would probably have knocked him down first, and asked for an explanation afterwards. So no one did tell him, though many guessed the truth, and, it may be, he would never have discovered it, had not an accident revealed it to him, and a stray puff of wind among the mountains caught up the written proof of Ella Gordon's shame, and laid it fluttering at her husband's feet.

The two men had come down together over the Dunden Pass that leads to Kandersteg from Lauterbrunnen. It is quite an easy pass; there are no snowfields to plough through, no yawning berg-schruuds to cross, no tangled ice-falls to thread, no narrow ledges of rock to creep along. The only difficulty consists in choosing, towards your journey's end, the one particular grass slope among many which does not lead over a thousand feet or so of precipice into the Oeschinen See. It is a pass, indeed, that you can make quite easily without a guide, provided that the weather holds good, and you know

the way. Otherwise, no doubt, there might be trouble. But George Heriot knew the way—there were few Alpine high-ways or bye-ways that he did not know by heart—and Basil Gordon had trusted his knowledge and agreed to make the journey with him.

They had crossed the pass itself, and were sitting down to rest on the ridge of the lateral moraine that towers above the Blumlis Alp glacier. The hour was growing late, and a white mist was blowing up towards them from the lower reaches of the valley; but, as they were tired, and as George Heriot claimed to be able to find the way down to the shores of the Oeschinen. See blindfold, it did not frighten them into hurrying. And it was while they sat and rested there that the accident happened through which Basil Gordon learnt the truth.

The last of the cold meat, and Gruyère cheese, and Alpine honey was eaten, and the last bottle of white wine emptied, and they filled their pipes to smoke. While George Heriot was fumbling in his side-pocket for matches he carried loose there, he accidentally pulled out a letter and dropped it over to the ground. A gust of wind blew it over to the place where Basil Gordon sat. He reached out his arm and picked it up, to hand it back, and noticed that it was in his wife's handwriting.

There was nothing extraordinary in that. Gordon would almost certainly have returned it, without comment, never supposing it to be anything but an old invitation to lunch or dinner, or some other equally innocent communication, written at his own desire. But the quick, peremptory tone in which the other claimed, "Gordon, give me that letter, please," impelled him, almost involuntarily, to throw a casual glance over it.

The few words that just caught his eye were sufficiently surprising to induce him to read further, more especially as his companion repeated his demand:

"Gordon, I asked you to give me back that letter."

"I have a right to read this letter, Heriot," he answered, "and I mean to do so."

Basil Gordon was a strong man, albeit a indifferent mountaineer, and if it came to a physical struggle for the possession of the document, there was not a question that he would get the best of it. George Heriot was conscious of this, so he made no resistance, but waited in terror for the inevitable thunderbolt to fall. Slowly, from the first line to the last, Basil Gordon read the letter through. Unless there were a forgery—and for such a forgery no motive was imaginable—it left him absolutely no room for doubt. The truth—the hideous truth—that he had never so much as guessed or dreamed of—stood out before him in all its glaring nakedness. He felt like a man dazed, and pressed his hand against his forehead, doubting the evidence of his own senses. But, when he had read it through a second time, at last he realized the fearful discovery he had made. Then he tore it in two, and put the pieces in his pocket, and stood up in his wrath and faced the man who had betrayed him.

The fog that streamed up the valley was thickening around them. Already, though they were standing only some six or seven feet apart, they could barely distinguish each other's figures in the dimness.

Basil Gordon wasted neither breath nor time in reproaches or recriminations. He blurted out and passionately began—

"You scoundrel!"