

Through days of sorrow and of mirth, 25
 Through days of death and days of birth,
 Through every swift vicissitude
 Of changeful time, unchanged it has stood,
 And as if, like God, it all things saw,
 It calmly repeats those words of awe,— 30
 "Forever — never !
 Never — forever !"

In that mansion used to be
 Free-hearted Hospitality ;
 His great fires up the chimney roared ; 35
 The stranger feasted at his board ;
 But, like the skeleton at the feast,¹
 That warning timepiece never ceased,—
 "Forever — never !
 Never — forever !" 40

There groups of merry children played,
 There youths and maidens dreaming strayed ;
 O precious hours ! O golden prime,
 And affluence of love and time !
 Even as a miser counts his gold, 45
 Those hours the ancient timepiece told,—
 "Forever — never !
 Never — forever !"

1. Herodotus, in speaking of the Egyptians, says: "At their convivial banquets, among the wealthy classes, when they have finished supper, a man carries round in a coffin the image of a dead body carved in wood, made as like as possible in colour and workmanship, and in size generally about one or two cubits in length; and showing this to each of the company he says, 'Look upon this, then drink and enjoy yourself; for when dead you will be like this.'"