

TO A WOUNDED TERN

I

YOU beautiful bird, whose tapering wings
Bore to heaven your lithe, frail form,
When, a messenger of the King of Kings,
And yourself the king of the storm,
You skimmed the white surf where old ocean flings
With a passionate, fiendish glee,
His strength on the beach, that echoing rings
With a wonderful harmony,
While your mates' shrill screech to my warm heart brings
A melody pleasing to me.

II

Your joy is no more, for a cruel ball
By a mischievous sportsman aimed
Has pierced your bosom so shapely and small,
And left you, O fairest one, maimed.
Alone, on a stone, too feeble to call
You are waiting for death's cold hand
Oh ! have I a heart in my breast at all,
If I pass you, or pitiless stand,
Nor help you to bear, nor throw on the pall,—
Ah ! sad ending for life so grand.

III

I clasp in my hand your fluttering breast,
Though I sigh as you struggle there ;
I close—a moment—and you are at rest,
Then I almost breathe a prayer
For your mate and brood in the lonely nest,
On the sand-dune over the bay,
As the wind blows cool, and the glowing west
Announces the close of the day.
[Must your plumage rest on a lady's crest
While your body moulders away?]