



The Unknown.

Out in the sleeping forest, 'neath the stars,
When winds are still, and Nature void of life,
A dry twig sharply breaks : and in the house,
The lonely watcher in the breathless night
Hears the door creak or untrod stair complain,
No mortal power lending cause thereto—

Is there some pebble on the road of space
O'er which the huge world jars? Or doth the heart
Of fire that throbs beneath her rocky ribs
Beat over-strongly in the loose of sleep,
And stir her antique frame? Nay, who can say
What angels or what demons or vague forms
Of mindless force upon the earth contend,
Beyond the reaches of our utmost thought!
'Tis not alone the harp-strings of our souls
That hum and quiver at a viewless touch,
But things inanimate bear witness strong
Another world stirs closely round our verge
With moth-like eyes on Life's material flame,
And sudden, aimless flickerings through its gleam!

The charlatan who claims to call such host
Turns white and speechless if it truly come;
The proved soldier of an hundred fields,
Whose eye hath sternly scanned the face of Death
At arm's-length, quails and shrinks in ghastly fear,
And cries to God if such a foe seem near.

CHARLES CAMPBELL

