

Rays of a mighty circle, weaving over
That various wilderness a tissue of light
Unparallel'd. On the other side, the moon,
Half melted into thin blue air, stood still,
And pale and fibrous as a wither'd leaf,
Nor yet endured in presence of his eyes
To induce his lustre; most unlovely-like,
Since in his presence full of light and joy,
And giving light to others. But this most,
Next to her presence whom I loved so well,
Spoke loudly even into my inmost heart
As to my outward hearing; the loud stream,
Forth issuing from his portals in the crag
(A visible link unto the home of my heart),
Ran amber toward the west, and nigh the sea
Parting my own loved mountains was received,
Shorn of its strength, into the sympathy
Of that small bay, which out to open main
Glow'd intermingling close beneath the sun.
Spirit of Love! that little hour was bound
Shut in from Time, and dedicate to thee:
Thy fire from heaven had touch'd it, and the earth
They fell on became hallow'd evermore.

We turn'd: our eyes met: hers were bright, and mine
Were dim with floating tears, that shot the sunset
In lightning round me; and my name was borne
Upon her breath. Henceforth my name has been
A hallow'd memory like the names of old,
A centred, glory-circled memory,
And a peculiar treasure, brooking not
Exchange or currency: and in that hour
A hope flow'd round me, like a golden mist
Charm'd amid eddies of melodious airs.
A moment, ere the onward whirlwind shatter it,
Waver'd and floated—which was less than Hope,
Because it lack'd the power of perfect Hope;
But which was more and higher than all Hope,
Because all other Hope had lower aim;
Even that this name to which her gracious lips
Did lend such gentle utterance, this one name,
In some obscure hereafter, might inwreath,
(How lovelier, nobler than!) her life, her love,
With my life, love, soul, spirit, and heart and strength.
"Brother," she said, "let this be call'd henceforth
The Hill of Hope;" and I replied, "O sister,
My will is one with thine; the Hill of Hope."
Nevertheless, we did not change the name.
I did not speak: I could not speak my love.
Love lieth deep: Love dwells not in lip-depths.
Love wraps his wings on either side the heart,
Constraining it with kisses close and warm,
Absorbing all the incense of sweet thoughts
So that they pass not to the shrine of thought.
Else had the life of that delighted hour
Drunk in the largeness of the utterance
Of Love; but how should earthly measure mete
The heavenly-unmeasured or unlimited Love,
Who scarce can tune his high majestic sense
Unto the thunder song that wheels the spheres,
Scarce living in the æolian harmony,
And flowing odor of the spacious air,
Scarce housed within the circle of this Earth,
Be cabin'd up in words and syllables,
Which pass with that which breathes them? Sooner
Earth
Might go round Heaven, and the strait girth of Time
Inwreath the fullness of Eternity,
Than language grasp the infinite of Love.

O day which did enwomb that happy hour,
Thou art blest in the year's divinest day!
O Genius of that hour which dost uphold
Thy coronal of glory like a God,
Amid thy melancholy mates far-seen,
Who walk before thee, ever turning round
To gaze upon thee till their eyes are dim
With dwelling on the light and depths of thine.
Thy name is ever worship'd among hours!
Had I died then, I had not seem'd to die.
For bliss stood round me like the light of heaven,
Had I died then, I had not known the death;
Yea had the Power from whose right hand the light
Of life issueth, and from whose left hand floweth
The Shadow of Death, perennial effluences,
Whereof to all that draw the wholesome air,
Somewhat the one must overflow the other;
Then had no stemm'd my day with night, and driven
My current to the fountain whence it sprang—
Even his own abiding excellence,—
On me, methinks, that shock of gloom had fall'n
Unfelt, and in this glory I had merged
The other, like the sun I gazed upon,
Which seeming for the moment due to death,
And dipping his head low beneath the verge,
Yet bearing round about him his own day,
In confidence of unabated strength,
Steppeth from Heaven to Heaven, from light to light,
And holdeth his undimmed forehead far
Into a clearer zenith, pure of cloud.

We trod the shadow of the downward hill;
We passed from light to dark. On the other side
Is scoop'd a cavern and a mountain hall,
Which none have fathom'd. If you go far in
(The country people rumour) you may hear
The moaning of the woman and the child,
Shut in the secret chambers of the rock.
I too have heard a sound—perchance of streams
Running far on within its inmost halls,
The home of darkness; but the cavern-mouth,
Half overgrown with a wanton weed,
Gives birth to a brawling brook, that passing lightly
Adown a natural stair of tangled roots,
Is presently received in a sweet grave
Of plantines, a place of burial.
For lovelier than its cradle, for unseen,
But taken with the sweetness of the place
It makes a constant bubbling melody
That drowns the nearer echoes. Lower down
Spreads out a little lake, that, flooding, leaves
Low banks of yellow sand; and from the woods
That belt it rose three dark, tall cypresses,—
Three cypresses, symbols of mortal woe,
That men plant over graves.

Hither we came,
And sitting down upon the golden moss,
Held converse sweet and low—low converse sweet,
In which our voices bore least part. The wind
Told a love-tale beside us, how he woo'd
The waters, and the waters answering lip'd
To kisses of the wind, that, sick with love,
Fainted at intervals, and grew again
To utterance of passion. Ye cannot shape
Fancy so fair as in this memory.
Methought all excellence that ever was
Had drawn herself from many thousand years
And all the separate Edens of this earth,
To centre in this place and time. I listen'd,
And her words stole with most prevailing sweetness
Into my heart, as thronging fancies come
To boys and girls when summer days are new,
And soul and heart and body are all at ease:
What marvel my Camilla told me all?
It was so happy an hour, so sweet a place,
And I was as the brother of her blood,
And by that name I moved upon her breath;
Dear name, which had too much of nearness in it
And heralded the distance of this time!
At first her voice was rather sweet and low,
As if she were afraid of utterance;
But in the onward current of her speech
(As echoes of the hollow banked brooks
Are fashion'd by the channel which they keep),
Her words did of her meaning borrow sound,
Her cheek did catch the colour of her words.
I heard and trembled, yet I could but hear;
My heart paused—my raised eyelids would not fall,

But still I kept my eyes upon the sky.
I seem'd the only part of Time stood still,
And saw the motion of all other things;
While her words, syllable by syllable,
Like water, drop by drop, upon my ear
Fell; and I wish'd, yet wish'd her not to speak;
But she spake on, for I did name no wish.
What marvel my Camilla told me all
Her maiden dignities of Hope and Love—
"Perchance," she said, "returned." Even then the stars
Did tremble in their stations as I gazed;
But she spake on, for I did name no wish,
No wish—no hope. Hope was not wholly dead
But breathing hard at the approach of Death,—
Camilla, my Camilla, who was mine
No longer in the dearest sense of mine—
For all the secret of her inmost heart,
And all the maiden empire of her mind,
Lay like a map before me, and I saw
There, where I hoped myself to reign as king,
There, where that day I crown'd myself as king,
There in my realm and even on my throne,
Another! then it seem'd as tho' a link
Of some tight chain within my inmost frame
Was riven in twain: that life I heeded not
Flow'd from me, and the darkness of the grave,
The darkness of the grave and utter night,
Did swallow up my vision; at her feet,
Even the feet of her I loved, I fell,
Smit with exceeding sorrow unto Death.

Then had the earth beneath me yawning cleft
With such a sound as when the iceberg splits
From cope to base—had Heaven from all her doors,
With all her golden thresholds clashing, roll'd
Her heaviest thunder—I had lain as dead,
Mute, blind, and motionless as then I lay;
Dead, for henceforth there was no life for me!
Mute, for henceforth what use were words to me!
Blind, for the day was as the night to me!
The night to me was kinder than the day;
The night in pity took away my day,
Because my grief as yet was newly born
Of eyes too weak to look upon the light;
And thro' the hasty notice of the ear
Fell Life was startled from the tender love
Of him she brooded over. Would I had lain
Until the platted ivy-tress had wound
Round my worn limbs, and the wild briar had driven
Its knotted thorns thro' my unpadding brows,
Leaving its roses on my faded eyes.
The wind had blown above me, and the rain
Had fall'n upon me, and the gilded snake
Had nestled in this bosom-throne of Love,
But I had been at rest for evermore.

Long time enthrancement held me. All too soon
Life (like a wanton too-officious friend,
Who will not heed denial, vain and rude
With proffer of unwished-for services)
Entered all the avenues of sense
Past thro' into his citadel, the brain,
With hated warmth of apprehensiveness.
And first the chillness of the sprinkled brook
Smote on my brows, and then I seem'd to hear
Its murmur, as the drowning seaman hears,
Who with his head below the surface dropt
Listens to the muffled booming indistinct
Of the confused floods, and dimly knows
His head shall rise no more; and then came in
The white light of the weary moon above,
Diffused and molten into flaky cloud.
Was my sight drunk that it did shape to me
Him who should own that name? Were it not well
If so be that the echo of that name
Ringing within the fancy had updrawn
A fashion and a phantom of the form
It should attach to? Phantom!—had the ghastliest
That ever lusted for a body, sucking
The foul steam of the grave to thicken by it,
There in the shuddering moonlight brought its face
And what it has for eyes as close to mine
As he did—better that than his, than he
The friend, the neighbour, Lionel, the beloved,
The loved, the lover, the happy Lionel,
The low-voiced, tender-spirited Lionel,
All joy, to whom my agony was a joy.
O how her choice did leap forth from his eyes!
And how her love did clothe itself in smiles
About his lips! and—and not one moment's grace—
Then when the effect weigh'd down my head
To come my way! to twine me with the cause!

Was not the land as free thro' all her ways
To him as me? Was not his want to walk
Between the going light and growing night?
Had I not learnt my loss before he came?
Could that be more because he came my way?
Why should he not come my way if he would?
And yet to-night, to-night—when all my wealth
Flash'd from me in a moment and I fell
Begger'd forever—why should he come my way
Robed in those robes of light I must not wear,
With that great crown of beams about his brows—
Come like an angel to a damned soul.
To tell him of the bliss he had with God—
Come like a careless and a greedy heir
That scarce can wait the reading of the will
Before he takes possession? Was mine a mood
To be invaded rudely, and not rather
A sacred, secret, unapproach'd woe,
Unspeakable? I was shut up with Grief;
She took the body of my past delight,
Narded and swathed and balm'd it for herself,
And laid it in a sepulchre of rock
Never to rise again. I was led mute
Into her temple like a sacrifice;
I was the High Priest in her holiest place,
Not to be loudly broken in upon.
Oh friend, thoughts deep and heavy as those well-nigh
O'erborne the limits of my brain: but he
Bent o'er me, and my neck his arm upstay'd.
I thought it was adder's fold and once
I strove to disengage myself, but fail'd,
Being so feeble: she bent over me, too;
Wan was her cheek; for whatso'er of blight
Lives in the dewy touch of pity had made
The red rose there a pale one—and her eyes—
I saw the moonlight glitter on their tears—
And some few drops of that distressful rain
Fell on my face, and her long ringlets moved,
Drooping and beaten by the breeze, and brush'd
My fallen forehead in their to and fro,
For in the sudden anguish of heart,
Loosed from their simple thrall they had flow'd abroad,
And floated on and parted round her neck,
Mantling her form half way. She, when I woke,
Something she ask'd, I know not what, and ask'd,
Unanswer'd, since I spake not; for the sound
Of that dear voice so musically low,
And now first heard with any sense of pain,
As it had taken life away before
Choked all the syllables, that strove to rise
From my full heart.

The blissful lover, too,
From his great hoard of happiness distill'd
Some drops of solace; like a vain rich man,
That, having always prosper'd in the world,
Folding his hands, deals comfortable words
To hearts wounded forever; yet, in truth,
Fair speech was his and delicate of phrase,
Falling in whispers on the sense, address'd
More to the inward than the outward ear,
As rain of the midsummer midnight soft,
Scarce heard, recalling fragrance and the green
Of the dead spring: but mine was wholly dead,
No bud, no leaf, no flower, no fruit for me.
Yet who had done, or who had suffer'd wrong?
And why was I to darken their pure love,

If, as I found, they two did love each other,
Because my own was darken'd? Why was I
To cross between their happy star and them?
To stand a shadow by their shining doors,
And vex them with my darkness? Did I love her?
Ye know that I did love her; to this present
My full-orb'd love has waned not. Did I love her,
And could I look upon her fearful eyes?
What had she done to weep? Why should she weep?
O innocent of spirit—let my heart
Break rather—whom the gentlest airs of Heaven
Should kiss with an unwonted gentleness.
Her love did murder mine? What then? She deem'd
I wore a brother's mind; she call'd me brother:
She told me all her love: she shall not weep.

The brightness of a burning thought, awhile
In battle with the glooms of my dark will,
Moon-like emerged, and to itself lit up
There on the depth of an unfathom'd woe
Reflex of actions, Starting up at once,
As from a dismal dream of my own death,
I, for I loved her, lost my love in Love;
I, for I loved her, grasp'd the hand she lov'd,
And laid it in her own, and sent my cry
Thro' the blank night to Him who loving made
The happy and the unhappy love, that He
Would hold the hand of blessing over them,
Lionel, the happy, and her, and her, his bride!
Let them so love that men and boys may say,
"Lo! how they love each other!" till their love
Shall ripen to a proverb, unto all
Known, when their faces are forgot in the land—
One golden dream of love, from which may death
Awake them with heaven's music in a life
More living to some happier happiness,
Swallowing its precedent in victory.
And as for me, Camilla, as for me—
The dew of tears is an unwholesome dew,
They will but sicken the sick plant the more.
Deem that I love thee but as brothers do,
So shalt thou love me still as sisters do;
Or if thou dream aught farther, dream but how
I could have loved thee, had there been none else
To love as lovers, loved again by thee.

Or this, or something like to this, I spake,
When I beheld her weep so ruefully:
For sure my love should ne'er induce the front
And mask of Hate, who lives on others' moans.
Shall Love pledge Hatred to her bitter draughts,
And batten on her poisons? Love forbid!
Love passeth not the threshold of cold Hate,
And Hate is strange beneath the roof of Love.
O Love, if thou be'st Love, dry up these tears
Shed for the love of Love; for tho' mine image
The subject of thy power, be cold in her,
Yet, like cold snow, it melteth in the source
Of these sad tears, and feeds their downward flow.
So Love, arraig'd to judgment and to death,
Received unto himself a part of blame,
Being guiltless, as an innocent prisoner,
Who, when the woeful sentence hath been past,
And all the clearness of his fame hath gone
Beneath the shadow of the curse of man,
First falls asleep in swoon, wherefrom awaked,
And looking round upon his fearful friends,
Forthwith and in his agony conceives
A shameful sense as of a cleaving crime—
For whence without some guilt should such grief be?

So died that hour, and fell into the abyss
Of forms outworn, but not to me outworn,
Who never had'd another—was there one?
There might be one—once other, worth the life
That made it possible. So that hour died
Like odor rapt into the winged wind
Borne into alien lands and far away.

There be some hearts so airily built, that they,
They—when their love is wreck'd—like Love can wreck—
On that sharp ridge of utmost doom ride high
Above the perilous seas of Change and Chance;
Nay, more, hold out the lights of cheerfulness;
As the tall ship, that man a dreary year
Knit to some dismal sand-bank far at sea,
All thro' the livelong hours of utter dark,
Showers of slanting light upon the dolorous wave.
For me—what light, what gleam upon those black ways
Where Love could walk with banish'd Hope no more!

It was ill done to part you, Sisters fair;
Love's arms were wreath'd about the neck of Hope,
And Hope kiss'd Love, and Love drew in her breath
In that close kiss, and drank her whisper'd tales.
They said that Love would die when Hope was gone,
And Love mourn'd long, and sorrow'd after Hope;
At last she sought out Memory, and they trod
The same old paths where Love had walk'd with Hope,
And Memory fed the soul of Love with tears.

II.
From that time forth I would not see her more;
But many weary moons I lived alone—
Alone, and in the heart of the great forest.
Sometimes upon the hills beside the sea
All day I watch'd the floating isles of shade,
And sometimes on the shore, upon the sands
Insensibly I drew her name, until
The meaning of the letters shot into
My brain; anon the wanton billow wash'd
Them over, till they faded like my love.
The hollow caverns heard me—the black brooks
Of the mid-forest heard me—the soft winds
Laden with thistle-down and seeds of flowers,
Paused in their course to hear me, for my voice
Was all of thee: the merry linnet knew me,
The squirrel knew me, and the dragon-fly
Shot by me like a flash of purple fire.
The rough briar tore my bleeding palms; the hemlock
Brow-high, did strike my forehead as I past;
Yet trod I not the wildflower in my path,
Nor bruised the wildbird's egg.

Was this the end?
Why grew we then together in one plot?
Why fed we from one fountain? drew one sun?
Why were our mother's branches of one stem?
Why were we one in all things, save in that
Where to have been one had been the cope and crown
Of all I hoped and fear'd!—if that same nearness
Were fatter to this distance, and that one
Vaincourier to this double? If Affection
Living sew Love, and Sympathy sew'd out
The bosom-sepulchre of Sympathy!

Chiefly I sought the cavern and the hill
Where last we roam'd together, for the sound
Of the loud stream was pleasant, and the wind
Came wooingly with woodbine smells. Sometimes
All day I sat within the cavern-mouth,
Fixing my eyes on those three cypress cones
That spir'd above the wood; and with mad hand
Tearing the bright leaves of the ivy-screen,
I cast them in the misty brook beneath,
And watch'd them till they vanish'd from my sight
Beneath the bower of wreathed exhalations:
And all the fragments of the living rock
(Huge blocks, which some old trembling of the world
Had loosen'd from the mountain, till they fell
Half digging their own graves), these in my agony
Did I make bare of all the golden moss.
Wherever the dashing rannel in the spring
Had liveried them all over. In my brain,
The spirit seem'd to flag from thought to thought,
As moonlight wandering thro' a mist: my blood
Crept like marsh drains thro' all my languid limbs;

The motions of my heart seem'd far within me,
Unfrequent, low, as tho' it told its pulses;
And yet it shook me, that my frame would shudder,
As if 'twere drawn asunder by the rack.
But over the deep graves of Hope and Fear,
And all the broken palaces of the Past,
Brooded one master-passion evermore,
Like to a low-hung and a fiery sky
Above some fair metropolis, earth-shock'd,—
Hung round with rugged rims and burning folds,—
Embracing all with wild and woful hues,
Great hills of ruins, and collapsed masses
Of thunder-shaken columns indistinct,
And fused together in the tyrannous light—
Ruins, the ruin of all my life and me!

Sometimes I thought! Camilla was no more.
Some one had told she was dead, and ask'd me
If I would see her burial; then I seem'd
To rise, and through the forest-shadow borne
With more than mortal swiftness, I ran down
The steepy sea-bank, till I came upon
The rear of a procession, curving round
The silver-sheeted bay: in front of which
Six stately virgins, all in white, upbore
A broad earth-sweeping pall of whitest lawn,
Wreathed round the bier with garlands: in the distance,
From out the yellow woods upon the hill
Look'd forth the summit and the pinnacles
Of a gray steeple—thence at intervals
A low bell tolling. All the pageantry,
Save those six virgins which upheld the bier,
Were stole from head to foot in flowing black;
One walk'd abreast with me, and veil'd his brow,
And he was loud in weeping and in praise
Of her we follow'd: a strong sympathy
Shook all my soul: I flung myself upon him
In tears and cries: I told him all my love,
How I had loved her from the first: whereat
He shrank and howl'd, and from his brow drew back
His hand to push me from him; and the face,
The very face and form of Lionel
Flash'd thro' my eyes into my innermost brain,
And at his feet I seemed to faint and fall,
To fall and die away. I could not rise,
Albeit I strove to follow. They past on,
The lordly Phantasms! in their floating folds
They past and were no more: but I had fallen
Prone by the dashing rannel on the grass.

Always the inaudible invisible thought,
Artificer and subject, lord and slave,
Shaped by the audible and visible,
Moulded the audible and visible;
All crisped sounds of wave and leaf and wind
Flatter'd the fancy of my fading brain;
The cloud-pavilion'd element, the wood,
The mountain, the three cypresses, the cave,
Storm, sunset, glows and glories of the moon
Below black firs, when silent creeping winds
Laid the long night in silver streaks and bars.
Were wrought into the tissue of my dream:
The moanings in the forest, the loud brook,
Cries of the partridge like a rusty key
Turn'd in a lock, owl-whooop and dorkhawk-whir,
Awoke me not, but were a part of sleep,
And voices in the distance calling to me
And in my vision bidding me dream on,
Like sounds without the twilight realm of dreams,
Which wander round the bases of the hills,
And murmur at the low-dropt eaves of sleep,
Half-entering the portals. Oftentimes
The vision had fair prelude, in the end
Opening on darkness, stately vestibules
To caves and shows of death: whether the mind,
With some revenge—even to itself unknown—
Made strange division of its suffering
With her, whom to have suffering view'd had been
Extreme pain; or that the clear-eyed Spirit,
Being blunted in the Present, grew at length
Prophetical and prescient of what'er
The Future had in store: or that which most
Enchains belief, the sorrow of my spirit
Was of so wide a compass it took in
All I had loved, and my dull agony,
Ideally to her transferr'd, became
Anguish intolerable.

The day waned:
Alone I sat with her: about my brow
Her warm breath floated in the utterance
Of silver-chorded tones: her lips were sunder'd
With smiles of tranquil bliss, which broke in light
Like morning from her eyes—her eloquent eyes
(As I have seen them many a hundred times),
Filled all with pure clear fire, thro' mine down rain'd
Their spirit-searching splendors. As a vision
Unto a haggard prisoner, iron-stay'd
In damp and dismal dudgeons under-ground,
Confused on points of faith, when strength is shock'd
With torment, and expectancy of worse
Upon the morrow, thro' the ragged walls,
All unawares before his half shut eyes,
Comes in upon him in the dead of night,
And with the excess of sweetness and of awe,
Makes the heart tremble, and the sight run over
Upon his steely gyves; as those fair eyes
Shone on my darkness, forms which ever stood
Within the magic circle of memory,
Invisible but deathless, waiting still
The edict of the will to re-assume
The semblance of those rare realities
Of which they were the mirrors. Now the light
Which was their life bursts through the cloud of thought
Keen, irrepressible.

It was a room
Within the summer-house of which I spake,
Hung round with paintings of the sea, and one
A vessel in mid-ocean, her heaved prow
Clambering, the mast bent and the raven wind
In her sail roaring. From the outer day,
Betwixt the close-set ivies came a broad
And solid beam of isolated light,
Crowded with driving atoms, and fell
Slanting upon that picture, from prime youth
Well known, well loved. She drew it long ago
Forth-gazing on the waste and open sea,
One morning when the upbown willow ran
Shoreward beneath red clouds, and I had pour'd
Into the shadowing pencil's naked forms
Color and life: it was a bond and seal
Of friendship, spoken of with tearful smiles;
A monument of childhood and of love;
The poetry of childhood; my lost love
Symbol'd in storm. We gazed on it together
In mute and glad remembrance, and each heart
Grew closer to the other, and the eye
Was riveted and charm-bound, gazing like
The Indian on a still-eyed snake, low-couch'd—
A beauty which is death; when all at once
That painted vessel, as with inner life,
Began to heave upon that painted sea;
An earthquake, my loud heart-beats, made the ground
Reel under us, and all at once, soul, life
And breath and motion, past and flow'd away
To those unreal billows: round and round
A whirlwind caught and bore us; mighty gyres
Rapid and vast, of hissing spray wind-driven
Far thro' the dizzy dark. Aloud she shriek'd;
My heart was cloven with pain; I wound my arms
About her: we whirl'd giddily; the wind
Sung; but I clasp'd her without fear: her weight
Shrank in my grasp, and over my dim eyes,
And parted lips which drank her breath, down hung
The jaws of Death: I, groaning, from me flung
Her empty phantom: all the away and whirl
Of the storm dropt to windless calm, and I
Down welter'd thro' the dark ever and ever.