

Of passing forms and faces of the street,  
But these he heeded not. For eagerly,  
With faltering lips made only to be kissed,  
He strove to conquer some perplexing sound,  
An echo of the nursery ; perhaps it was  
A brother's name or sister's—still 'twas sweet.  
And at each repetition the old man  
Himself pronounced it from his aged lips,  
And an amused expression lit his face  
To hear the child repeat it with a laugh.  
And whether in the end he mastered it  
I know not, as I mingled with the crowd.  
But afterwards for a long time I mused  
How human speech could bridge the gulf of years  
Dividing Infancy from distant Age,  
And weave the bonds of human sympathy  
Across the chasm. But as I wandered on  
I met a child wheeling an invalid.  
And as I gazed I saw the withered hand  
Drop helpless down ; which, when the child perceived,  
She raised it tenderly upon her lap,  
And silently looked up with pitying eyes.  
No spoken word expressed her tenderness.  
A deeper meaning lies in the desire  
Of Age to mix with Infancy. There are  
Two havens guarded from the shuddering seas  
That storm the midway martyrdom of life.  
The one where weariness craves peace awhile  
And seeks some rest before the long repose—