

In a poor cottage kneels a Jewish maiden,
With folded hands, and meek eyes closed in prayer ;
The wind steals in with balmy flower-scents laden,
And the slant sunbeams kiss her braided hair,
And yet she heeds not that the breath of morning
Is wafting perfume o'er her spotless brow,—
That Day's fair hands her temples are adorning
With radiant gems—all are unheeded now.

Pleads she for blessings on her late betrothal
To one most worthy of her gentle love !
Or, all forgetful of her glad espousal,
Breathes she of Him, long promised from above,
Messiah, Christ, foretold by holy sages,
By sacrificial types foreshadowed long,
The prayed-for, longed-for, of all vanished ages,
Her nation's Saviour from Oppressor's wrong ?

Aye, breathe thy prayer ! e'en now, God's angel stoopeth
O'er thy calm brow so slumberously fair,
And toward the earth, his face in reverence droopeth,
Awed by the solemn sanctity of prayer.
Aye, breathe thy prayer ! thou needest strength, frail
woman,
For the strange blessing soon thine own to be,
Almost as much as for the anguish human
Which in the coming years awaiteth thee !

The prayer is done : and lo, those eyes, unclosing,
Startled, affrighted, meet the Angel's gaze,
On whose calm face Heaven's radiance reposing
Bursts on her dazzled sight like noontide blaze ;
But, as the strange, sweet music of that greeting
Falls on her timid ear, with doubtful feet,
She slowly turns from her abrupt retreating,
To hear the waiting Angel's message sweet :—