

Been brought from what we were to what we are.
 Thus, and not otherwise, the chosen race
 Was fitted to provide a welcoming home,
 Such welcoming home! on earth, for Him from heaven—
 The only people of all peoples we,
 Among whom God could be Immanuel
 And be in any measure understood,
 Confounded not as of their idol tribes.
 And we—we did not understand Him so
 But that we hissed Him to be crucified!
 So little were we ready, and even at last,
 For the sun shining in His proper strength!
 After slow-brightening twilight ages long
 To fit our blinking vision for the day,
 The glorious sun arising blinded us,
 And maddened! We smote at him in his sphere,
 Loving our darkness rather than that light!"

Therewith as for the moment lapsed and lost
 In backward contemplation, with amaze
 And shame and grief and joy and love and awe
 And thanks, commingling in one surge of thought,
 At what he thus, in sudden transport, saw,
 Paul into silence passed, which his rapt look
 Made vocal and more eloquent than voice.
 This Stephen revered, but at last he said:
 "O thou, my teacher in the things of God,
 That riddle of wisdom in divine decree,
 Whereof thou spakest, the linking in one chain
 Together one fast bond and consequence,
 Of all the generations of mankind
 And all their races, for a common lot
 Of evil or good, yet speak, I pray, thereof,
 To make me understand it, if I may.
 Why should Jehovah on the children wreak
 The wages of the father's wickedness?"

"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

"Yea, doubtless, yea; but that—how is *that* right?"

"His way is in the sea," said Paul, "His path
 In the great waters! Would we follow Him,
 His footsteps are not known! Blessèd be God!"

"Amen! Amen! Forevermore amen!"

As one who bound himself with sacrament,
 Assenting, without interrupting, said
 Stephen, and Paul went on: "Yet this note thou:
 It is not on the children, such by blood,
 That God will visit the iniquity
 Of fathers; the children must be such in choice,
 As well in spirit, must be the father's *like*—
 And there another mystery! (For deep
 Sinks endless under deep to who would sound
 The bottomless abyss of God's decree.)
 The children ever, prone and prone, incline
 To follow where the fathers lead the way—
 The children, yea, must do the father's deeds,
 Then only share the father's punishment.