

Of a worm as it writhes in a world of the weak trodden down by the strong,
Of a dying worm in a world all massacre, murder, and wrong.

VI.

O we poor orphans of nothing—alone on that lonely shore—
Born of the brainless Nature who knew not that which she bore !
Trusting no longer that earthly flower would be heavenly fruit—
Come from the brute, poor souls—no souls—and to die with the brute—

VII.

Nay, but I am not claiming your pity : I know you of old—
Small pity for those that have ranged from the narrow warmth of your fold,
Where you bawl'd the dark side of your faith and a God of eternal rage,
Till you flung us back on ourselves, and the human heart and the Age.

VIII.

But Pity—the Pagan held it a vice—was in her and in me,
Helpless, taking the place of the pitying God that should be !
Pity for all that aches in the grasp of an idiot power,
And pity for our own selves on an earth that bore not a flower :
Pity for all that suffers on land or in air or the deep,
And pity for our own selves till we longed for eternal sleep

IX.

" Lightly step over the sands ! the waters—you hear them call !
Life, with its anguish, and horrors, and errors—away with it all ! "
And she laid her hand in my own—she was always loyal and sweet—
Till the points of the foam in the dusk came playing about our feet.
There was a strong sea-current would sweep us out to the main.
" Ah, God ! "—though I felt, as I spoke, I was taking the name in vain—
" Ah, God ! "—and we turn'd to each other, we kissed, we embraced, she and I,
Knowing the Love we used to believe everlasting would die :
We had read their know-nothing books, and we lean'd to the darker side—
Ah, God, should we find him ? Perhaps, perhaps—if we died, if we died !
We never had found him on earth : this earth is a fatherless Hell—
" Dear Love, for ever and ever, for ever and ever farewell ! "
Never a cry so desolate, not since the world began !
Never a kiss so sad—no, not since the coming of man !

X.

But the blind wave cast me ashore, and you saved me, a valueless life.
Not a grain of gratitude mine ! You have parted the man from the wife.
I am left alone on the land, she is all alone in the sea,
If a curse meant aught, I would curse you for not having let me be.

XI.

Visions of youth—for my brain was drunk with the water, it seems :
I had passed into perfect quiet at length out of pleasant dreams ;
And the transient trouble of drowning—what was it when matched with the pains
Of the hellish heat of a wretched life rushing back through the veins ?