

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 ?