

And time, that seemed so long, is fleeting by,  
And life is more than life; love more than  
love;

We have not found the whole—and we must  
die—

And still the unclasped glory floats above.  
The inmost and the utmost faint from sight,  
For ever secret in their veil of light.

Be not too hasty in your flow, you rhymes,  
For Margaret is in her garden bower;  
Delay to ring, you soft cathedral chimes,  
And tell not out too soon the noontide hour:  
For one draws nearer to your ancient town,  
On the green mount down settled like a crown.

He journeyed on, and, as he neared the gate,  
He met with one to whom he named the  
maid,

Inquiring of her welfare, and her state,  
And of the matron in whose house she stayed.  
"The maiden dwelt there yet," the townsman  
said;

"But, for the ancient lady,—she was dead."

He further said, she was but little known,  
Although reputed to be very fair,  
And little seen (so much she dwelt alone)  
But with her nurse at stated morning prayer;  
So seldom passed her sheltering garden wall,  
Or left the gate at quiet evening fall.

Flow softly, rhymes—his hand is on the door;  
Ring out ye noontide bells, his welcoming—  
"He went out rich, but he returneth poor;"  
And strong—now, something bowed with  
suffering.

And on his brow are traced long furrowed lines,  
Earned in the fight with pirate Algerines.

Her aged nurse comes hobbling at his call:  
Lifts up her withered hand in dull surprise,  
And, tottering, leads him through the pillared  
hall;

"What! come at last to bless my lady's  
eyes!

Dear heart, sweet heart, she's grown a like-  
some maid—

Go, seek her where she sitteth in the shade."

The noontide chime had ceased—she did not  
know

Who watched her, while her ringdoves flut-  
tered near;

While, under the green boughs, in accents low  
She sang unto herself. She did not hear  
His footstep till she turned, then rose to meet  
Her guest with guileless blush and wonder  
sweet.

But soon she knew him, came with quickened  
pace,

And put her gentle hands about his neck;  
And leaned her fair cheek to his sun-burned  
face,

As long ago upon the vessel's deck:  
As long ago she died in twilight deep,  
When heaving waters lulled her infant sleep.

So then he kissed her, as men kiss their own,  
And, proudly parting her unbraided hair,  
He said: "I did not think to see thee grown  
So fair a woman,"—but a touch of care  
The deep-toned voice through its caressing  
kept,

And hearing it, she turned away and wept.

Wept,—for an impress on the face she viewed—  
The stamp of feelings she remembered not;  
His voice was calmer now, but more subdued,  
Not like the voice long loved and unforget!  
She felt strange sorrow and delightful pain—  
Grief for the change, joy that he came again.

O pleasant days, that followed his return,  
That made his captive years pass out of  
mind;

If life had yet new pains for him to learn,  
Not in the maid's clear eyes he saw it  
shrined;

And three full weeks he stayed with her, con-  
tent

To find her beautiful and innocent.

It was all one in his contented sight.  
As though she were a child, till suddenly,  
Waked of the chimes in the dead time of the  
night,

He fell to thinking how the urgency  
Of Fate had dealt with him, and could but  
sigh

For those best things wherein she passed him  
by.

Down the long river of life how, cast adrift,  
She urged him on, still on, to sink or swim;  
And all at once, as if a veil did lift,  
In the dead time of the night, and bare to  
him

The want in his deep soul, he looked, was  
dumb,  
And knew himself, and knew his time was  
come.

In the dead time of the night his soul did  
sound

The dark sea of a trouble unforeseen,  
For that one sweet that to his life was bound  
Had turned into a want—a misery keen:  
Was born, was grown, and wounded sorely  
cried

All 'twixt the midnight and the morning tide.

He was a brave man, and he took this thing  
And cast it from him with a man's strong  
hand;

And that next morn, with no sweet altering  
Of mien, beside the maid he took his stand,  
And copied his past self till ebbing day  
aled its deep western blush, and died away.