

Before the bridegroom's feet of fire we sail !—
 "O true as beaten brass ! O trebly tried
 As adamantine plates of linked mail !
 Sleep'st thou, or ponderest what the prophet cried ?
 Wherefore should we then live ? The athlete's crown ;
 The warrior's brow with bay leaves glorified ;
 Seats at the hearth-stone of our mother-town ;
 To round and ring the whole, an honoured tomb ;
 These hopes are ours. Were it not well to drown
 These good things in one best ? to pluck the bloom
 Now perfect of young life and love, that ne'er
 Can fill her cup again of pure perfume
 Or spread fresh petals to the nourishing air ?
 This flower once gathered will not die ; no rime
 Shall nip the delicate leaves ; no storm shall bare
 The anthered gold ; no treacherous sap shall climb
 The fragile tubes with husk of hardening fruit
 To choke the fretwork of the fiery prime.
 Who knows—forgive me, Love !—what little root
 Of bitterness might rise to mar our joy ?
 Dimmed eyes, chilled hearts, dry lips with languor mute,
 The years that wither, and the years that cloy,
 These come to other lovers : shall we stay
 To suffer chance and change, our souls destroy ?
 Did not Patroclus die ? Achilles pay,
 Though goddess-born, his life, a little price,
 For love made sure, for fame that flouts decay ?
 Why linger ? Why turn back ? Fix steadfast eyes
 There on the goal of daring ! Is it nought
 That thus fulfilling a fair sacrifice,
 The peace of Athens by our blood be bought ?
 Nought that we shine for ever in pure gold
 At Delphian altars ; that our tale be taught
 On songs from lips of mighty poets rolled,
 To lovers and to longing youths afire
 With sorrow that our sacred dust is cold ?
 Oh ! with what ardent hearts, what proud desire,