

only 'shades of Joy and Woe,' be 'rubb'd out' by death 'as they ne'er had been?'

'I ponder'd long on this weary life,  
And I cried, 'Are we what we seem?  
Or sail we here in a phantom ship  
In search of a vanished dream?—  
From deep to deep, from doubt to doubt,  
While the night still deeper grows?  
Who knows the meaning of this life?'  
When a voice replied, 'Who knows?'

'Shall it always be a mystery?  
Are there none to lift the veil?  
Knows no one aught of the land we left,  
Or the port to which we sail?  
Poor shipwrecked mariners driven about  
By every wind that blows:  
Is there a haven of rest at all?'  
And the voice replied, 'Who knows?'

Oh! why have we longings infinite,  
And affections deep and high,  
And glorious dreams of immortal things,  
If they are but born to die?  
Are they will-o'-wisp's that gleam  
Where the deadly nightshade grows?  
Do they end in dust and ashes all?  
And the voice still cried, 'Who knows?'

But dawn succeeds the darkest night, and hope and faith arise to him once more in gladness. The light has come again; rejoice!

'Then sing, for the dark veil at last is withdrawn:  
Rejoice in the light of the glorious dawn;  
We hoped against hope through the weariful past,  
But faith's superseded by knowledge at last;  
We stumble no longer 'twixt doubt and despair,  
For we know there's a region surpassingly fair,  
We know that the summer-land's shining up there.'

We have made these quotations from different pieces in 'Poems and Songs' to show the intensity of the gloom of doubt and despair into which the poet's soul has sometimes sunk; for that is one of the things which most persistently forces itself on the attention of the reader in the first part of the volume. The frequency indeed with which it appears amounts almost to morbidity. But it shows at the same time the thoughtful earnestness and power of the poet, and brings him into immediate sympathy with all who have pondered on the darker problems of existence, and been haunted with them, it may be, as by spectres of despair. The greater the soul, the deeper may be its plunge into darkness, and the more awful and agonising its troubles. But, on the other hand, when free from doubt, it may rise correspondingly

to heights of more rapturous joy. And so the soul of our poet is sometimes whirled into a wild ecstasy—a very madness of delight, in which he sees all Nature reveling with him in his gladness. We might give here in illustration his boundingly joyous and beautiful 'May,' which reminds us, by its words and spirit, of Wordsworth's glorious 'Ode on the Intimations of Immortality,' and which in some respects is worthy of being placed side by side with it. But not to multiply unduly our quotations, we pass at once to another feature of the Poems and Songs, and that is:—

That, notwithstanding the expression of doubts and perplexities, they bring the unseen spiritual world very near to us, and lift us up in sympathy to it; they tend, and that very powerfully, to make us feel a hallowing Power and Presence everywhere around us—that a sanctity broods around and rests upon the world, yea dwells in it throughout. For

'There's a presence in each stone;  
All the air is full of eyes  
Looking on us with surprise;  
Sympathies run everywhere,  
Thoughts are hurrying through the air,  
Bringing near related souls,  
Though asunder as the poles:  
Marvel upon marvel!—still  
Miracle on miracle!'

And so all material Nature becomes to the poet as a medium for the communication of spirit with spirit and ghost with ghost—a revelation of the Divine and Infinite to the eye and ear continually. 'These,' he says, when speaking of the flowers of earth in relation to their God and ours,—

'These Thy preachers of the wild-wood,  
Keep they not the heart of childhood  
Fresh within us still?  
Spite of all our life's sad story,  
There are gleams of Thee and glory  
In the daffodil.'

And in that spirit, and with that power of vision, he feels, when gazing upon setting suns, as in presence of the very shechinah where he can only kneel in silence and adore.

'But I cannot write of the marvellous sight  
At his setting last I saw;  
I can only feel, I can only kneel,  
With a trembling fear and awe.'