

In love with nature and in sympathy  
With pastoral life, and thought myself a man  
But tiring of the scene, I sought again  
The life of town, and Brussels for a while  
Enrapt my fancy, and I loved my art,  
Whereby I strove, yet strove in vain to place  
On canvas that which haunted me as type  
Of Gretchen, but no model pleased the eye  
Or fixt its image here within the mind.  
And as one day I watched the busy throng  
Of toilers hast'ning from their hard day's wage  
One face I saw among the mass, which seem'd  
A type of human beauty and of love,  
United in a girl of lowly birth  
Who paused, and all unconscious of her grace  
And perfect pose, stood motionless, and gazed  
To where the maiden-mother sat enthroned  
Above the Gothic arch.

Then all in haste  
And fearing I should miss her in the throng,  
I left the balcony and followed her  
Thro' winding streets, until at length she reached  
The Church of Mary, with its storied glass ;  
So rich in precious relic of the day,  
When art and zeal and worship sprang from love  
The love of an immortal, deathless fame ;  
And entering, knelt before an altar-shrine  
In prayer as to the Virgin in the skies,  
And in her upturned face I saw, the one  
True face, that might have been the Virgin's own,  
Which spoke of simple untaught faith, and of  
That freedom touching holy things, which has  
Half reverence and irreverence side by side ;  
Which makes the worship of the peasant seem  
Too much a form, altho' to him 'tis life.  
Then as she rose and met my gaze, I spoke,  
And in these words, " Have you a rosebud left,  
For by the basket at your feet, I deem,  
You bring the blossoms from your home to sell,"  
On which the girl, half frightened, made reply :  
" The flowers I sell not here, but take this one ;"  
And stretched her hand, and smiling, gave a rose ;  
Then, nodding, quickly turned to leave the place  
As half ashamed within the sacred walls  
To dream or breathe of aught, save of the saints.

Yet ere she left I called her to my side  
And said, " Come tell me, pretty one, thy name."  
" My name? Why, all the people know my name ;  
In Brabant, I am Bébée, where I dwell,  
And thither must I haste, for on this day  
I am sixteen, and children wait for me  
To share the good things which the day hath brought.  
Look here ! beneath these vine-leaves at the gifts,  
Red shoes, to wear on Sunday at the mass,  
Sent by old Gingoire. Oh ! how good it is  
To be sixteen and have so many friends !"  
Then, wondering at her child-like spirit, I

save in our parting in one long embrace—  
I kissed her, and in that one kiss her soul  
Went forth, her own no more, save linked  
And thus we parted, seeing that no more  
The future as the past could ever be,  
And lived but for my art, and soon the tale  
The world so covets hovered o'er my name  
Fame that was hers, for she it was who gave  
In her true face, the type I long had sought  
To place on canvas, and thus honor gain.  
Yet shared not with her; and I soon forgot  
The simple girl, till sickness came, and then  
One more within my ears her voice I heard  
Which rent the air as if in anguish sore.

And when I fain had called her to my side  
I found her not, but learned that she was  
But since more of her life you long to know  
I tell it as it came to me, tho' in  
A rougher shape, by an old man who lived  
Beside her from her earliest years, and loved  
In his quaint fashion evermore to dwell  
Upon the story of her life and death.

In Brabant stands a lonely little hut,  
Where once old Antoine tended to his floy  
In summer-time, by which a streamlet run  
In winding course between the grazing field  
And in the early summer, years gone by,  
As Antoine passed along its banks, he saw  
A tiny bundle floating with the stream,  
Caught by the lilies, and by lilies saved ;  
And rescued it, and brought it to the shore  
When out there peeped two laughing eyes,  
A babe of scarcely more than twelve month  
And being childless, he in pity took  
The child to his good dame, who nurtured it  
As 'twere her own, a gracious gift of God,  
To cheer the closing hours of fading life.  
And so the seasons passed, and came again  
And 'neath such kindly care the child soon  
To wander mid the flowers and tend their  
So like a flower she seemed herself that  
Might well believe that she was one of the  
And by and by, when eye was come, and  
Was laid aside, old Antoine on his knee  
Would take the child, and all in his rough  
Tell her of God so good and Virgin maid,  
Who loved in some mysterious way the po  
And blessed their flowers, and sent the sa  
Their lives from harm, if only they would  
And place the flowers before the altar sh  
And Bébée,—for 'twas thus they named her  
Her earliest lessons in this way, until  
The church, and Father Francis, her good  
Tried to impress her childish mind with a  
And more of reverence, touching holy thin  
But Father Francis, being himself untaug  
Whose wisdom in the world of letters ran