

LABOUR.

The cost of life is labour : men are born
To work, not live : to act, not to exist.
Our errand here is writ on ev'ry hand ;
Each sun proclaims not day but work begun ;
The costly light is wove for labour's dress.
A blush did ne'er betray a baser deed,
Nor penalty pursue more daring fraud,
Than abject shirking of the common fee
Which Nature lays on those who sit around
The green-spread table of our Father—God.

A straw for destiny ! It is a stream
Whose course lies through the present and may be
Directed as we will. Our acts forecast
A surer future than the horoscope.
Toil gives a fortune augurs durst not tell,
And fate is written as our deeds dictate.
What realm where Labour's credit is not good ?
What current things doth lack his signature ?
What peaks his airy footsteps have not pressed ?

This is the Power that did weld the worlds,
And fathom down the star-lit gulfs of night.
Tall as ambition he, strong as the force
That drives the circling planets on their course.
As from the sterner regions of the north
The chilly Mississippi issues forth,
Flows, widening, down 'mid scenes where Nature's hand
Forever raised doth bless the smiling land;
So toil, from harsh privations that distress
The winter-world, tends onward to success.
And as the gulf stream's felt far out at sea
Our labours here affect eternity.