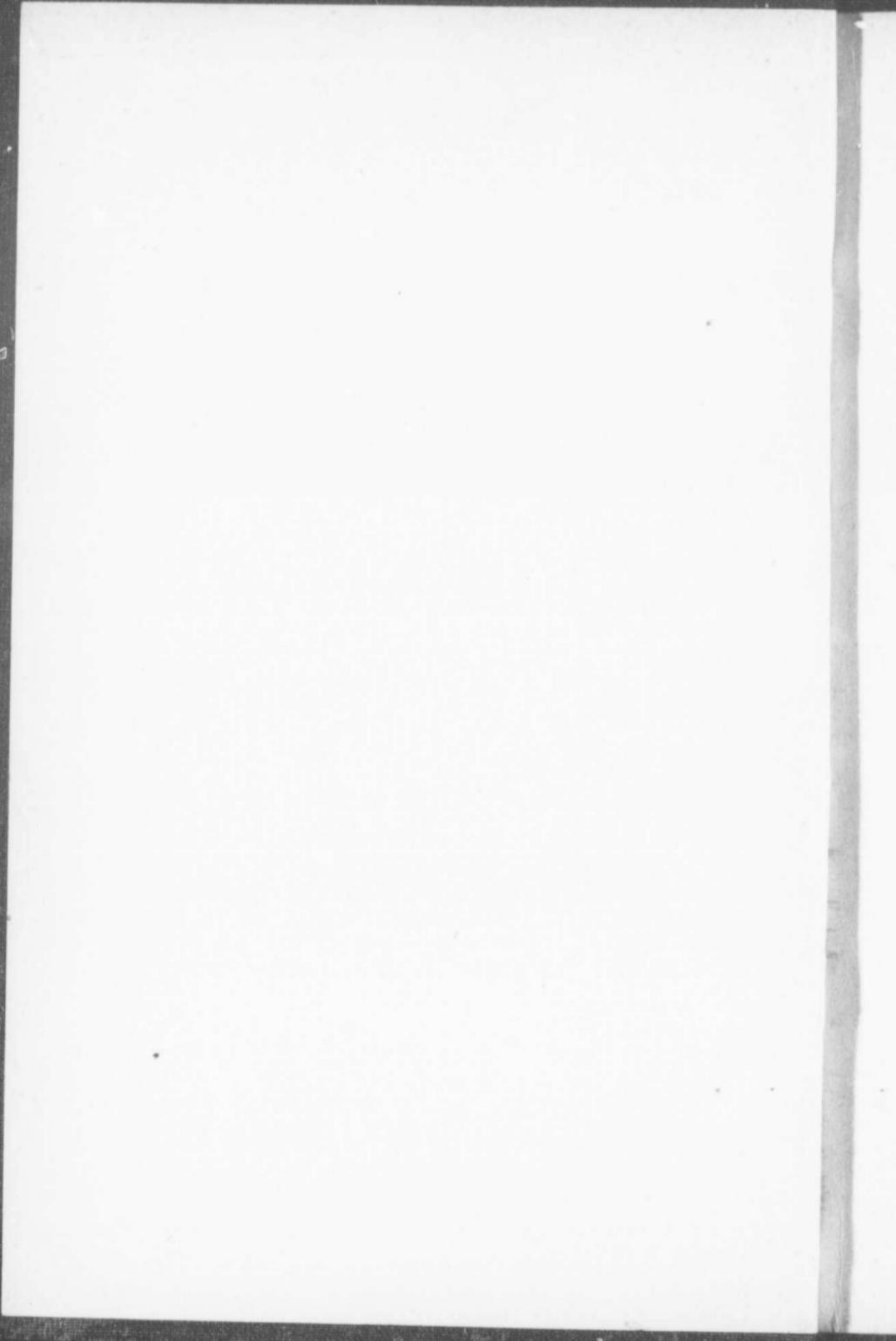
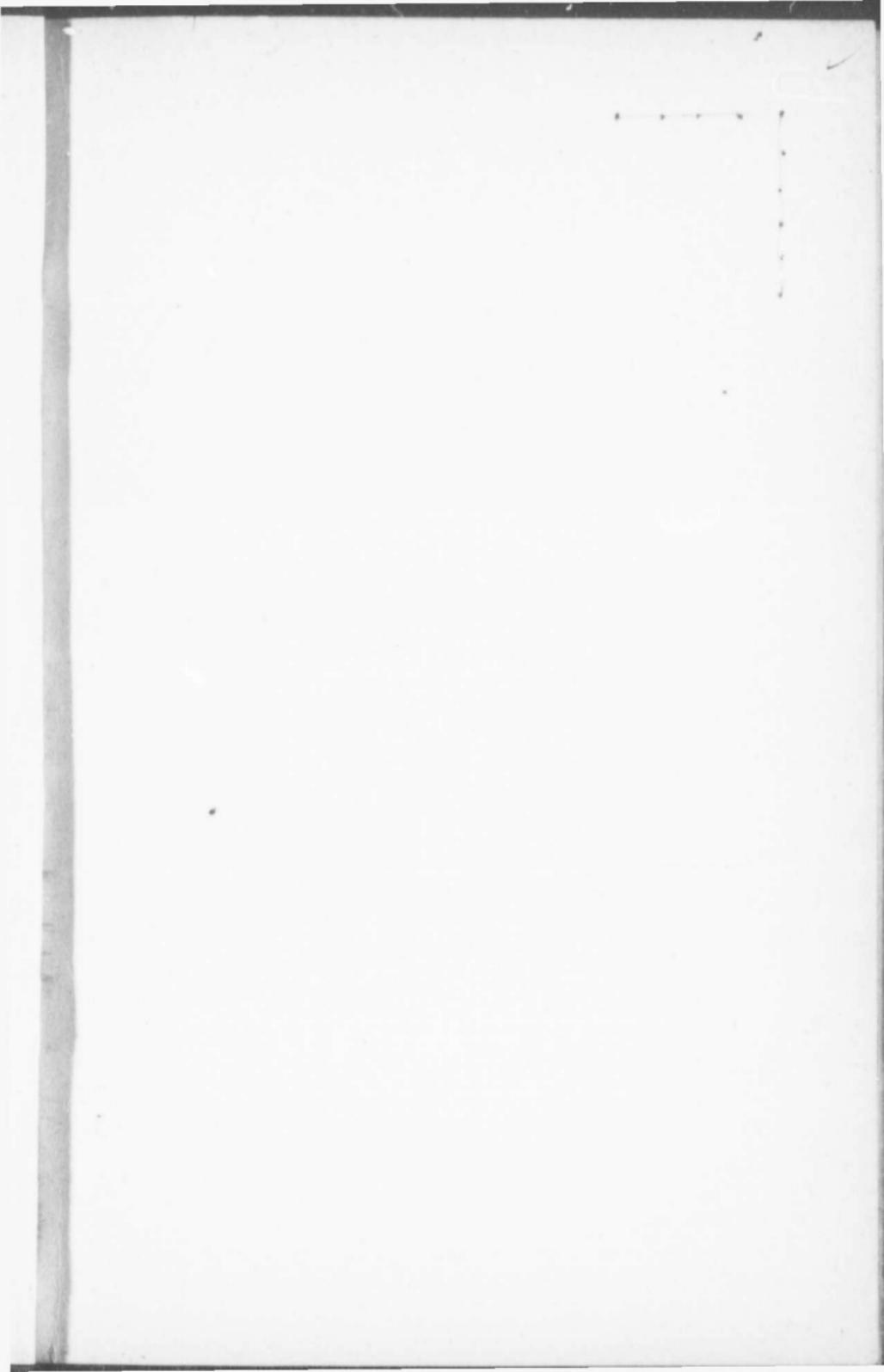
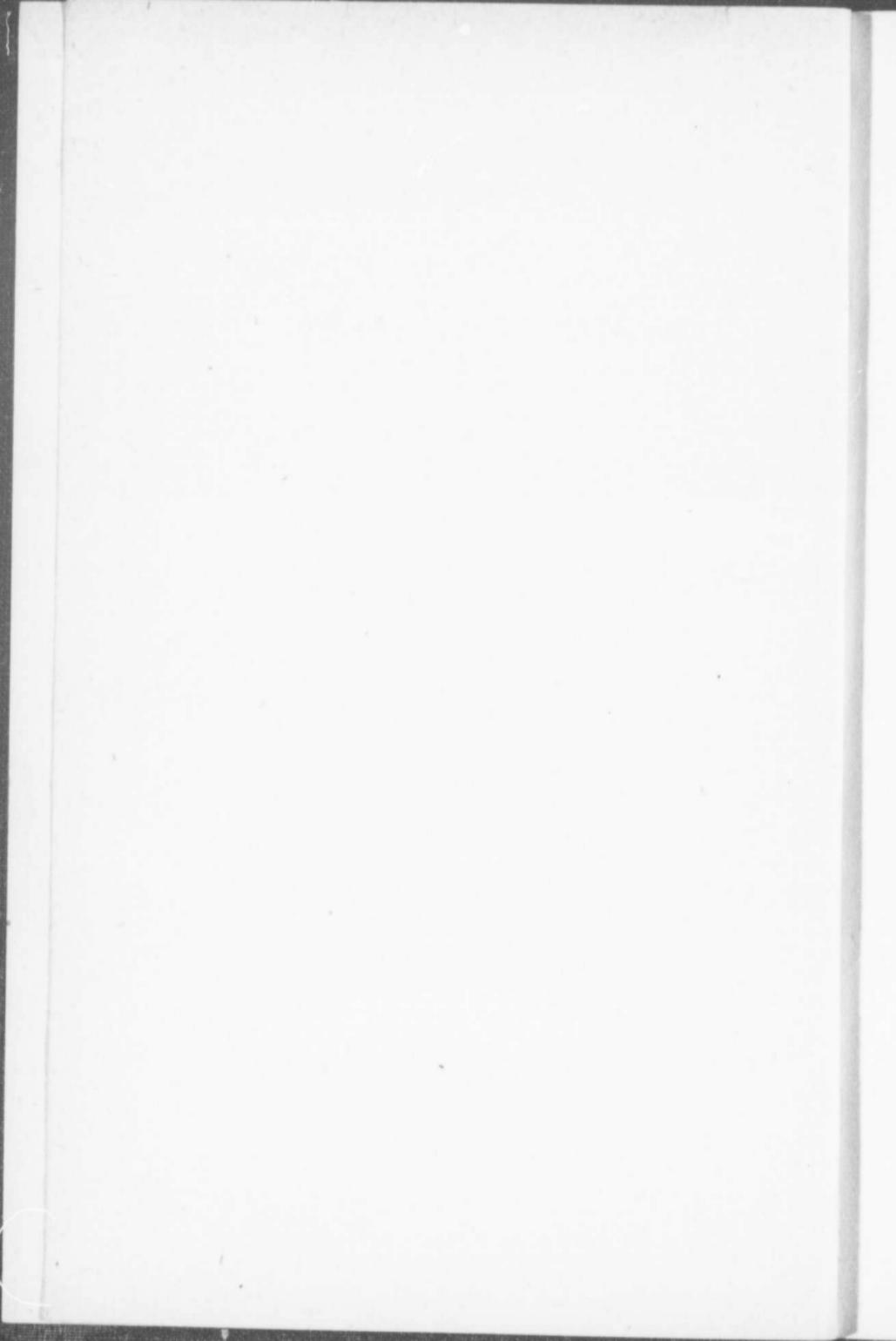


NYSSIA

MILK & BUTTER







J. D. Logan

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NYSSIA.

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Ob 9n

An Old World Story.

By M. C. O'BYRNE,

*Author of "Song of the Ages and Other Poems." "Upon This Rock,"
"Love and Labor."*

La vie est vaine,
Un peu d'amour,
Un peu de haine,
Et puis, bonjour !

La vie est breve,
Un peu d'espoir,
Un peu de reve,
Et puis, bonsoir !

(Montenacken.)

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1905.

TO
HERMAN C. UTHOFF :
A TOKEN
OF OUR FRIENDSHIP,
AND
A MEMORIAL
WHEN THE NIGHT SHALL COME.



Preface.

THE story of Gyges and Nyssia is an old, old story, belonging to what Giordano Bruno termed the youth of the world of man. It was first told by Herodotus ("Clio," VIII.-XII.), and since then has been re-told by many who have found a psychological interest and study in this historical development of what Gibbon defined as "the soft insinuation of an odious idea"—the idea being murder and regicide.

The name of the guilty queen, parent of this idea, is not found in Herodotus, but has been preserved by Hephaestion of Alexandria. The legend of the magic ring comes to us from Plato, a truly respectable source. A somewhat similar story to that of Nyssia is told by Gibbon, in Chapter XLV. of the "Decline and Fall," concerning Rosamond, wife of Alboin, king of the Lombards, and the armour-bearer, Helmichis. Unlawful passion and ambition have in all ages found kindred manifestation, and it is especially true that, as Horace puts it, in a passage ("Sat.," I. iii. 107-110) not to be translated here, in every such tragedy the historian finds the key only when he has found the woman. But, despite section II. of this poem, the main burden of the iniquity may not always be hers. *Not always*,—it is better to think so.

My own proper excuse for taking a theme so hoary is that, as I believe, it is here treated from a new standpoint, where whosoever will may take his place beside the author, and question the theory of retribution when used as an auxiliary to the decalogue.



The Myth.

ONCE on a day man's mother stood beside
A pool's green margin, and her downcast eyes
Beheld her own reflection. With surprise
She recognized her beauty : " See ! " she cried,
" I am God's fairest creature ! " Flushed with pride,
Stooping she notes each single grace, and tries
Her artless wiles and postures. Then the wise
Progenitor of those that creep and glide,
The serpent tempter, spake her : " This thy gift
Of beauty shall be fatal to mankind,
Till from the tree of knowledge man shall lift
The veil of ignorance, and free the mind
From passion's sway ; then shall thy sex retrieve
The fall from grace that came with thee, O Eve ! "

* * * * *

We call him Child of Man who should be classed
As Child of Woman, for she doth enfold
Mankind within her being, as of old
The firecloud held the forces which have passed
From form to form unceasing, till the last
Of life's slow palimpsest shall be unrolled :
Could we but know how best to shape the mould
In which man's soul and character are cast !
Yet shall she come as in her spotless youth
She came to Eden, Eve regenerate ;
Whose smile shall quicken virtue, foster truth ;
Whose frown shall quench the flames of lust and hate ;
In whom Cornelia's matronhood shall meet
The love whose tears were poured on Jesu's feet.



Nyssia.



Δόλος ἦν ὁ φράσας, ἔρος ὁ κτείνας.

It was cunning that counselled, love that killed.

(*Electra*, 198.)

I.

CANDAULES, last of the Godsons, last of the Heraclids bold,
In Sardis, his royal city, sat on his throne of gold ;
Candaules, son of Myrsus, sat with his royal bride,
Nyssia, belov'd of the Lydians, Nyssia the queen by his side ;
Nyssia, the fairest of women, whose virginal sacrifice (1) led
A king to the shrine of Ashtarte, a queen to the Heraclid's
bed.

Wisdom and beauty and valor, these are all present to grace
The Lydian court and its monarch, Candaules, last of his race.

II.

Toying gently with her hand,
He, the lord of that fair land,
Looked into her eyes,—

(1) Herodotus, "Clio," 199.

Orbs that, like the midnight sea,
 Deeply shroud the mystery
 That within them lies.

Contented gladness, rev'rence, pride,—
 O seers ! whose gaze can pierce the wide
 And star-isled realm above,
 Say, doth Candaules fondly dream
 That Nyssia's eyes reflect the gleam
 Of his pure, loyal love ?

Bootless the art of seer or sage
 To penetrate the mystic page
 That hides a woman's soul ;
 The wide-browed Chaldees of Shinar,
 Whose eyes "dismount the highest star,"⁽²⁾
 Interpret not that scroll.

Trust thou *Ægæum*⁽³⁾ when it sleeps
 Beneath the wine-crowned Lesbian steeps,
 Or Vulcan's fire-built isle ;⁽⁴⁾
 Trust thou zephyrean airs that bring
 O'er winter snows the pledge of spring,—
 Trust not a woman's smile.

Lest on thy head thou bring the doom
 That sent the Argive⁽⁵⁾ to the tomb
 Prepared by lust and hate ;

(2) George Herbert. (3) The *Ægean* Sea. (4) Lemnos.

(5) Agamemnon.

Lest thou, too, join the ranks of those
Who dread to stand beside their foes
Or neighbors in the gate.⁽⁶⁾

The transient thought thy reason spurns
She nurtures till the monster burns
Its impress on her soul ;
She plays with peril as a child
With embers, till the flames leap wild
Beyond its weak control.

Perverse of will, her last caprice
Scorns every check, bids prudence cease,
Calls circumspection odd ;
Froward of heart, her fond conceit
Dethrones Hyperion from his seat,
And makes a satyr god.

Her vagrant fancy what can bind ?
Her aim or impulse who shall find ?
Wayward from youth to age,
The springs of prurient appetite
By interdiction grow in might
Into the torrent's rage.

In morbid consciousness her weak
And errant nature turns to seek
Forbidden fields, where Fraud

(6) Psalm cxxvii. 5.

Plants scarecrows on the heights above ;
In the same breath she sighs for love
Of man and coaxes God.

Fitful alike in love or fear,
An infant's grief will bring the tear
Responsive to her eye,—
The eye that yet will flash with glee
And light with hell-born joy to see
The gladiator die.

Give her but cause,—a wish, a whim,
A robe of fur, a hat to trim,
And Pity hides her head ;
The feathered warbler mourns her mate,
Alaska's isles are desolate
Where meek-eyed seals once bred.

In austral climes, with beads of bone
She decks her limbs ; with sparkling stone
Of light solidified
In courts, where heightened charms displayed
By generous matron, ripening maid,
Enkindle lust and pride.

Too weak to stem the flood she frees,
Or stand against Temptation's breeze,
She dares the hurricane ;
Inflammable, she plays with fire ;
Connects her heart with Passion's wire,
And braves its lightning chain.

Her yielding gentleness, her glance
 Of coy misgiving, all advance
 Her empire o'er the mind ;
 Seduced within her fatal ring,
 Man abdicates his place as king,
 For passion makes him blind.

Facile with pledge of love and truth,
 Crabbed in age and sly in youth,
 Studious of every wile,—
 Trust thou, O man, Iscariot's kiss,
 Tread boldly where the vipers hiss,
 But never trust her smile.

As dull of soul, to beauty blind,
 Train thou thine eye and eke thy mind,
 Then shalt thou always dwell
 In peace, oblivious of the snare
 That long ere Helen ⁽⁷⁾ made the fair
 Dædalian earth man's hell.

In modest beauty, pure and meek,
 She yet shall come, the Eve we seek,
 Who, guileless as the dove,
 Shall walk unstained where lepers tread,
 And pour upon the martyr's head
 The spikenard of her love.

Down where the human wastrels glide,
 Broken, along life's dreary tide
 Toward the gulf called Death,

(7) Horace, Sat., lib. I., sat. iii., 107-110.

She waits and works to do God's will,
 Maid, wife, and mother, ready still
 As once in Nazareth.

Urania, heaven-born, full of grace,
 Like unto her whose gentle face
 Bent o'er the manger child,—
 Such shall she be when love and truth
 Return and man renews his youth,
 Sinless and undefiled.

* * * * *

Toying gently with her hand,
 Candaules, lord of that fair land,
 Deems Nyssia half divine ;
 What Nyssia thinks she hideth well,
 What Nyssia thinks no man can tell,
 For Nyssia gives no sign.

III.

Lo ! the Chamberlain advancing
 With measur'd pace adown the hall ;
 Treads he straightly, never glancing
 Or right or left, his footsteps fall
 On the marble as the snowflake
 That lightly sleeps on Tmolus' breast,
 And waking finds each crag at daybreak
 A silvery plume on Tmolus' crest.

Straight unto the throne he tendeth,
 And kneeling waits the monarch's nod ;
Low before the throne he bendeth,
 As bends a votary to his god.
"Speak, Adrastus !"

 " Lord and master !
Phraortes, captain of the guard,
Stands without, with him the Pastor
 Who feeds thy flocks on Hermes' sward."

Dark with menace grew Candaules,
 And swift his gesture, swift and stern :
"Go, Adrastus, go and call this
 Bold varlet hither ; we will learn
Who hath set him thus to chatter
 Of things forbidden : thou wilt bring
Pastor Gyges, though the matter
 Is meeter for a priest than king."

IV.

Well-greaved and helmeted Phraortes stands
 Before the throne, a mighty man of war ;
The chosen leader of the chosen bands
 Who guard the Heraclid's great house and bar
The way that leads to royalty : behold,
 O son of Myrsus, this thy captain here !
As bright Pactolus shows its floor of gold,
 His honest eyes reveal a soul as clear.

With shining brass and corslet of bright steel,
 And towering helm, whose blood-red plume curves out
 Like some great charger's mane where squadrons wheel
 And nostrils quiver at the battle shout ;
 His trusty sword in line with hip and thigh,
 The stratiarch's truncheon in his strong right hand :
 Cautious of speech, but vigilant of eye,
 The brave Phraortes bides his lord's command.

And with him Gyges,—see ! the languid queen
 Awakes to life and living sympathy !
 For, lo ! yon captive shepherd hath the mien
 And beauty of the sun-god ; when to Thee,
 O Attys,⁽⁸⁾ Sardis rears another fane,
 Be this the model of the youthful god,
 This graceful giant, sprung from Hermus' plain,
 Where corn and crocus clothe the fertile sod.

Lo ! Nyssia looked on Gyges, and a wild
 And carnal admiration seized her there,
 The while with haughty listlessness she smiled,
 And smiling masked her interest ; for where
 The tide of passion sweeps her yielding soul,
 The craft of woman smoothes the surface down,
 As the full mere may seem to sleep whose roll
 Shall wreck the valley and lay waste the town.

Lo ! Nyssia looked as one who did not see,
 Or seeing marked not, the full length of limb,

(8) Or Atys, the Adonis or Eros of Phrygian and Lydian mythology.

The flexuous nerves upspringing from the knee,
The compact vigor, pliable and slim :
From brain to heart, from heart to brain, a spring
Of sudden passion circled with her blood ;
Alluring fancy, borne on wanton wing,
With quickened impulse urged her being's flood.

Unfeeling schoolman, fashioned to thy rut,
And thou, O classifier ! to whom all
That walks or creeps, or swims or flies, is but
Museum substance, could ye hear the call
That telepathic Nature sends along
The warm conductors of impetuous youth,
Then might ye read the motive of this song,
And learn how Passion sometimes wars with Truth.

And thou, O wide-browed lord of thought ! to whom
The universe is but a speculum,
That gives thee back the weavings of the loom
Of thine own consciousness, say, canst thou plumb,
O stern philosopher ! the secret springs
Of this our little world, and therein find
A model of the type the future brings
Of man the animal subdued by mind ?

Of man the animal by mind subdued
To see in woman other than a toy
Of living, yielding, clinging flesh, imbued
With subtile ichor, odors that destroy
Man's equipoise of reason ; she alone
Can purge man's grosser vision, she of whom

He dreams impurely,—not till she has grown
 Above her passions shall she change her doom.

Lo ! Nyssia looks as one who doth not see,
 Lo ! Nyssia hears as one who doth not heed,
 The while, obedient to his lord's decree,
 The shepherd tells him of the brazen steed.
 Nor scorn of him who fondly hears the tale
 In stupid admiration, nor surprise
 That rustic cunning can so far prevail
 Stirs the dark oceans of her tranquil eyes.

O Pastor Gyges ! weigh thine every word ;
 Poor trickster thou and rustic wonderman !
 Bethink thee, pastor, this thy tale is heard
 By other ears than shepherds' ; if thy plan
 Be to beguile the simple king, that he
 May give thee some advancement, use thine art
 To learn that yonder graceful mystery
 Like plastic wax can mould thy master's heart,

And woman's wrath is fearful while it burns,
 Albeit when quenched compassion takes its place :
 Thy doom hangs in that balance, as it turns
 So shall it be, O Shepherd ! and the race
 Of Lydia's Godsons, peradventure sped
 By one frail woman's impulse, see the fate
 That shamed Alcmene and Amphitryon's bed
 Bring retribution to their palace gate.

Secure he stood, all calm and self-possessed,
 Before that golden court's high bravery ;
 No twitch of lip or eye or heaving breast
 Denoted fear or conscious knavery.
 In modest accents musically clear
 He tells the story of his bold emprise ;
 Led by the muse, we too may haply hear
 And read the issue in a monarch's eyes.

* * * * *

THE ROCK AND THE RING.

"Life to the king ! Be all thy enemies
 Like unto grass when the Mæonian breeze
 Wilts corn and crocus, mulberry and vine !
 Father of all thy people, may the Queen
 Mother of Heaven keep thy days serene !
 Glory and joy, great Heraclid, be thine !

"I keep thy sheep on Hermus. On a day,—
 It skills not when, it skills not where,—I found
 A rock-cave near by Sipylus, far off
 Beyond man's habitations, where no sound
 Of human voice, no plaint or note of joy
 Is heard, save when the night-winds bring the wail
 Of one lost spirit from the mountain top,
 Where she, the Hittite maiden, turned to stone,⁽⁹⁾

(9) The rock-carved image on Sipylus, now known to be a work of the Hittites.

Beholds unmoved the rolling centuries.
 Above me and around were frowning crags,
 Before me one whereon old hands had graved
 Signs that thy priests may haply read, not I.
 These only might I read—war chariots, drawn
 By mettled horses ; on each car there stood
 Three warriors, peaked of helm, their faces shorn
 Of that which marks the Lydian man of war,
 As in thy captain here, who, ere he drew
 The bossed and plated cincture round his loins,
 Was doubtless smooth as Attys.

There, O King !

I saw a rough, rude portal, such as well
 Might harbor wolf or jackal, lynx or bear.
 Awhile I stood irresolute ; at length
 The question pressed me : Gyges ! dost thou fear
 Where love and duty bid thee to advance,—
 Love for thy flocks and duty to thy king ?
 Art thou not long of limb and lithe and strong ?
 Breathes there a man,—save one, thy king—whose
 frown

Can blench thine eye, or cause thy cheek to pale ?
 Thus was I shamed by mine own thoughts, and then
 Came resolution : he who fears to fear
 Will face the lion rampant and submit
 To paw and tooth and fœtid breath ere he
 Will cede a handsbreadth to the king of beasts.

With staff advanced,—my trusty crook, well shod
 With half a span of tempered iron ground
 To keenest point,—I stepped within the jaws

Of the grim cavern. Cautiously I strove
 To pierce the sudden darkness whiles I moved
 Adown a winding passage ; twice methought
 I should have fallen when some deadly fume
 Or vapor bred of darkness overwhelmed
 My senses ; still I turned not : sooth to say,
 O King ! I feared to turn, lest haply some
 Grim creature of the silence might spring forth
 And drag me unresisting to my doom

Thus went I on, how long I may not guess,
 Stumbling and stooping as the passage grew
 Contracted on each hand and overhead,
 Widening at last upon the very brink
 Of a bright pool, whose crystal bosom gleamed
 With iridescence from some cleft on high
 That poured a golden shaft of moteless light,
 The blood of Attys, in this sparkling cup.
 Beyond the pool, whose breadth from marge to marge
 Exceeded not ten paces, was a grot
 Larger than this thy palace hall. The gods,
 Or Cybebe,⁽¹⁰⁾ the mother of them all,
 Whose footstool is the lion's head, had here
 Builded a refuge for the dying boy,
 It may be, or Agdistis ⁽¹¹⁾ had contrived
 A secret shrine wherein to lay the pine.

Sounding the basin with my staff, I found
 An even floor ; the water nowhere rose
 Waist-high to me, but, oh ! 'twas deadly cold :

(10) Probably the Lydian name of Cybele.

(11) Another name of Cybele, proper to Phrygia.

So cold, great King ! I thought my heart was chilled
When, shivering, I stood within the grot,
Reflecting that, to reach the light of day,
I yet again must cross the deadening pool.
Scant time for thinking thus had I, for lo !
Mine eyes, accustomed to the dark, perceived
An altar, whereon stood a brazen horse.

My lord ! I am not other than I seem,
A simple shepherd, with a shepherd's soul.
Great enterprise is not for me, nor deeds
Like those the minstrels sing by winter fires.
And so I scruple not to own, O King !
The terror that came o'er me when I saw
To what goal had I come,—a secret shrine
Perchance of Ashtoreth, whose mysteries
The Hittite here had witnessed long ago,
When priests, self-immolated, drained their red
Life current o'er the altar flame, or drew
Unweeping mothers to the holy place
Where Melkarth feasted on their offspring : still,
O King ! I wavered not, but held my breath,
As one who in Pactolus dives with hands
Prepared to scoop the glistening grains that glow
Like sunset flashes on its quiet bed.
And so I reached the altar : good my lord !
To speak my honest thought, the things we fear
Are inbred fictions ; all realities
Approved by sense are commonplace enough ;
And so methinks the gods have wisely veiled
Themselves in mystery, lest man should dare

To subject things divine to human search,
As housewives sample raiment. Lo ! I touched
The brazen charger, and my courage grew,
So that, adventurous, I raised my staff
And smote the image on its nearer flank,
And smiting found it hollow. Briefly, then,—
The more because the tale grows wearisome
To her whose eyes are Lydia's light and thine,
O royal master !—briefly, then, the horse
Was but a tomb ; my single strength sufficed
To raise its hinged and jointed back ; within,
Preserved I know not how from all decay,
Lay one who living might have ruled the land
That owns thee king, O Godson ! or, mayhap,
One who in life had stood between the gods
And men, averting fury,—though I deem
Such doctrines barbarous, for what high god
Will take the blood of innocence and waive
Thereby the punishment of guilt ? To all
Comes proper retribution. Let my sin
Spring from long purpose or from sudden rage,
I in myself receive the recompense ;
And when my offspring draw from me the taint
Infective, to pervert their proper lives,
'Tis part of my purgation,—but I stray
To unfamiliar regions. Dread my lord !
Awestruck, I bowed before the majesty
Of that sage face where Death had set his seal
Long ages since, congealing with the clay
The dignity and greatness of the soul

That erstwhile dwelt therein ; his hands were crossed
Upon his breast, and looking I descried
A circlet of dull gold, in which was set
A dark green gem, besprinkled as with blood.

I touched the ring. Lo ! then, O Godson ! fear
Swooped on me as the eagle swoops adown
To where some weakling lamb bleats for its dam,
That stands anear all impotent to save.
For when my finger fell upon the ring
The very cavern started into life
With sounds incredible ; one mighty voice
Rang like a thunder-peal above them all —
“ With that ring go dominion, life, and love ! ”
This did I hear, and hearing lost all sense
Of time and place and circumstance. How long
I kneeled beside that altar, dread my lord !
I know not. When again I woke to life
In nothing was there change : cave, altar, corse
Were as they had been. Springing to my feet,
My gaze fell on the ring, and then my mind
Rehearsed the mystic saying, word by word :
“ With that ring go dominion, life, and love ! ”
I waited not to reason, not to ask
What I, a shepherd, needed to ensure
Obedience from my flock beyond my crook
And patient kindness for the gentle beasts :
This was and is my sole dominion ; more
Than this I crave not, more will ne'er be mine ;
While, for my life, that resteth with the gods.
My love ? Ah ! royal master, none have I,

Save that the shepherdesses now and then
Throw coy or saucy glances when I pass.
I waited not to reason : lo ! I drew
The circlet from the finger of the dead.
This done, I longed to breathe the outer air,
To see above my head the vault of heaven,
To hear the bleating of my lambs and ewes ;
And so, with cautious, steady foot, I made
My passage from the cavern, till I stood
With thankful heart among my sheep again.

And this, O royal master ! is my tale,
In nought exaggerate, and with no part
Of pertinence secreted from thine ear.
Among the shepherds and the villagers
These things when known,—as I have not concealed
The fact of having witnessed wonders ne'er
Revealed before to mortal,—these have spread
A false renown and caused mine enemies,—
For lowly folk are marks for evil tongues
No less, perhaps, than courtiers,—to traduce
Me as an innovator, one who seeks
To play the meddler and disturb the state.
For this cause am I here before the throne,
Accused by whom I know not nor of what.
The gods, to whom all hearts are open, know
That I am guiltless. Lo ! the fateful ring,—
If that so small a thing can govern fate,—
I humbly lay, with favour, at the feet
Of Lydia's queen, that haply it may aid
Her beauty and her majesty to knit

Her heart and thine, dread lord ! in bands that fate
 Is powerless to sever, so that Time,
 That sunders others, shall behold amazed
 His office and his function modified
 To that of one who makes each circling year
 Add richer bloom to Lydia's king and queen ! ”

VI.

O gift divine of mind-alluring speech !
 Second alone to that high heritage
 By which the Mind Creative gives to each
 Poetic spirit light for every age.
 O golden tongue, how potent is thine art
 To wreck a kingdom or corrupt a heart !

The wizard spell, mark how it seizes all
 The listening throng when some great tribune hurls
 Impeachment through the senate's stately hall,
 Or where the mob in brutish fury whirls
 And raves in blind impulsiveness to wreak
 Licentious hate and vengeance on the weak.

Mark how they thrill and animate and burn
 Their fiery impress on the patriot's soul,
 Those eager words of hallowed zeal that turn
 To paladins the peasants, who enrol
 Themselves as willing martyrs, glad to stand
 A living rampart round their native land.

Lo ! youth and manly grace and eloquence,—
More seldom found in courts than cots perchance,—
Combined in Gyges were a full defence
Against traducers. Who would dare advance
His petty charge 'gainst one whose speech and mien
Won favor with Candaules and his queen ?

For so it was that when the monarch sought
Her comment on the shepherd's artful tale,
He saw with rapture the recital brought
Unwonted radiance to the cheek so pale.
Gone was her languor, gone her cold repose,
And Lydia's lily now was Lydia's rose.

O loyal heart ! O royal heart so frank !
O soul sincere ! too artless e'er to read
A heart's enigma, none may hear thee thank
The gods for this ; but in thy simple creed
There is a eucharist that all thy pride
Conceals not from thy courtiers or thy bride.

O faithful heart ! he takes the proffered ring,—
A bleeding jasper set in virgin gold,—
And for the nonce he sits not Lydia's king,
But only Nyssia's lover : " If the old
Prediction claim fulfilment from above,
To thee I give dominion, life, and love.

" Ah, no ! not love, for that I gave to thee
Long since, dear heart ! and giving that I gave

Dominion also, for thou hast in me
A loyal subject and a willing slave.
For this cause, Nyssia, wear the mystic ring :
As I rule Lydia, rule thou Lydia's king.

“ And thou, O shepherd specious ! well we wot
Thy sweet simplicity is for the court :
Among thy sheepcotes haply thou hast wrought
Deception and rude artifice : such sport
May be too dearly purchased when it brings
To wanton rustics the regard of kings.

“ Thy talents, Gyges, ask a larger sphere
Than Hermus' plain, for sheep thou shalt have men
As consorts ; and, if heedfully thou steer
Thy course, if faithful, bold, and loyal, then
No magian's gift can hasten or retard
Thy master's favor and thy sure reward.

“ Go thou, Phraortes ; lo ! he is thine own
For discipline and culture : mark him well,
Of all the guardians of the Lydian throne
Know'st thou of one whose attributes excel
The promise of this youth in eye and limb ?
Nature hath saved thee half thy task in him.

“ We like them well, these men of mould and might,
Our house's bulwark, and we know that when
The added sense of loyalty and right
Imparts heroic essence, in such men

Kingdom and king find saviours by whose hand
The gods fulfil their purpose to the land.

“Time was, my queen, when I had been content
With poorer service,—ere she gave me thee
The gods’ great mother saw my days were spent
In glad concurrence that I was to be
Last of my race in Sardis, when I saw,
Or thought, unhappiness was heaven’s law.

“The poorest of my subjects, those who lie
Beside Pactolus in the market-place
And vex the trader with their doleful cry
Of alms for love of Attys, know the grace
That hope imparts to living : what can give
A charm to life, if man disdains to live ?

“For I had known, or deemed I knew, all joys
Of sense, and pleasure waited my command ;
Till one by one, as children slight their toys,
I turned soul-sated from the tedious band
Of sycophants and flatterers, who provide
The food for lust, the sustenance for pride.

“I turned from these soul-sated, and I sought
To pluck the fruit that grows on Wisdom’s tree,
Inquiring of the sages who have caught
The stars’ great mystery and the gods’ decree,
That I might learn why, in a world so fair,
Right yields to wrong, and death rules everywhere.

“ Alas, sweetheart ! the peasant churl spoke sooth,—
 In that his story pleased thee, he shall find
 That kings are not ungrateful, and the youth,
 Though rude in manner, hath a subtle mind,—
 Yea, truly said he that the gods are wise
 In hiding heaven from presumptuous eyes.

“ They gave me thee, twin soul, in whom concur
 All heavenly attributes, that I might learn,
 In loving thee, to love and worship her
 In praise of whom a myriad altars burn
 Diurnal incense, her whom mortals call
 The Asian Mother, cause and source of all.

“ So may I prosper, Nyssia ! as I keep
 The light of love aglow within my breast
 Till the Dark Angel summon me to sleep
 In the chill chamber where my fathers rest :
 Where thou too, dear one, lying by my side,
 In death, as now in life, shalt be my bride.”

VII.

None but the dead are free
 From thy cruel yoke, O Love !
 Blind tyrant of the blind,
 Who, woman-born, may find
 Exemption from thy sway,
 Whom even gods obey ?

Fatherless child of Night,
Author of appetite,
Only the dead are free
From thy tyranny, O Love !

Lord of the jewel Earth,
That Hyperion rates above
All gems in the wreath he wears :
The rosary that bears
Due witness of the grace
Creative that can place
Ten myriad worlds to shine
For thee, O child divine !
Man ! monarch and lord of earth,
Why art thou the slave of Love ?

Image and type of God !
Why shouldst thou succumb to love,
And yield to fond conceit,
Impelled by passion's heat,
Thy pride of place as he
In whom unite the three
Great essences divine,—
Idea, Thought, Design ?
Rise, thou incarnate god,
From the bondage of carnal love !

VIII.

O Lydia ! land of corn and wine, O Lydia of the sun !
 Where industry breeds wealth, and wealth bids youth
 and pleasure run
 A race with time, to catch the hour and force it to resign
 Its sombre vestments and confess Sabazius⁽¹²⁾ and the vine ;
 Where all may join the gay parade and bask in beauty's
 smile,
 Regardless of the gloomy gate through which the train
 must file ;
 O Lydia ! fairest of the realms that lie between the seas,—
 Unfriendly Pontus and the waves that wash the Cyclades,—
 Blest should he be whom heaven has made thy overlord
 and king,
 Candaules of the Heraclids, to whom the nations bring
 Ungrudging tribute, truly blest all other kings above
 With that supremest crown of life, a loyal woman's love.

* * * * *

Such prideful musings stirred the monarch's heart
 On that calm eve, the while his Sardis lay
 A silver city spread before his eyes,
 The cloudless sky looked like an azure field,
 In fess the moon,—indented with the strokes
 Of that fierce conflict when old Chaos fell,
 And Order came attended by his worlds,—
 Seemed hanging o'er the city by a thread.

(12) The Phrygian and Lydian name of Bacchus.

“ Is not this Sardis, where my shadow gives
Security wherein who will may rest
As in the circumspection of the gods ? ”

Ah, vanity ! Candaules, bid thy seers
Rehearse to thee the story of a king
Who, ere Izdubar⁽¹³⁾ twice a hundred times
Hath made the passage of the girdling twelve,⁽¹⁴⁾
Shall gaze on Babylon, God's Gate, and call
By arrogance like thine upon his head
Such chastisement that men throughout all time
Will make the lesson theirs to shun the sin.

Albeit, as viewed from this fair vantage ground,—
The lofty terrace of the royal house,—
The scene was one to please the strictest eye.
And so he felt who, waiting on the king,
With dutiful complaisance timed his steps
To strict accordance, Gyges of the guard,
Escort and warden while his master wooed
The evening coolness from the battlements.

Who dwells near princes, if he be but keen,
Alert, and sedulous, may climb with speed
To heights of confidence and secret trust.
Kings are but mortal, though so highly placed
That friendship's blossoms seldom thrive within
The plantless region of their majesty ;
And being mortal, needs must condescend
Below the snow-line girdled by the crown
To pluck the flower of human sympathy

(13) Izdubar, sun hero of the Babylonian legend of the deluge.

(14) The zodiac.

And taste the fruit of kindly intercourse,
The common aliment of humbler souls.
Discreet and unobtrusive, Gyges grew
Apace in favour ; even envy gave
A grudging attestation to his worth,
As one who bore with dignity the arms
And radiant panoply of Lydia's guard.
Grade after grade, until approximate
In rank to bold Phraortes, thus he rose,
So quickly that the veteran soldiers scarce
Had time to wonder at his swift ascent.

Of nicer penetration, Gyges knew
More than Phraortes how to reconcile
And blend the soldier's bluntness with the light
Astuteness of the courtier : when the king
Grew sportive and cast off his dignity,
With quips and jestings and frank merriment,
The whilome shepherd heartily concurred
In kindred mood, withal no touch of bold
Presumption caused him to o'erstep the bounds
Of homage and obeisance to the king.
But most his zeal and fealty were shown
When duty placed him near the stately queen :
No richer recompense or proof of grace
Than when Candaules chose him from among
His valiant watchmen to attend her train,
As one whose courage, faith, and loyalty
Insured her safety. Times there were when she
Was pleased to note his service and bestow
Approval graciously, increasing thus
The king's esteem,—largesse and honour flowed

Where'er she smiled, as well they knew who found
That smile a passport to their master's heart.

Roused from his mood exultant, lo! the king
No longer thinks of Sardis or renown ;
His gaze enraptured inward turns to where
A balustraded portico contained
His being's idol, Nyssia, and her maids.

Reclining on a cushioned pile, composed
Of richest fabrics gathered from all lands,
One rounded arm half lost within their soft
And yielding substance, where the elbow made
A buttress to support her royal head,
Which rested on the hand as in a cup
Of alabastrine clearness ; at her wrist
The admiring moon's reflected light revealed
The azure windings of her blood beneath
A skin so subtile that the eye could trace
The rhythmic throb of the quick tide of life.

O gifted brother of the sister art !
Whose inspirations touch the faithful eye,
And thereby leave their impress on the mind
In hoarded memories of experience,
Had I thy gift, then would I leave the muse,
At whose fair feet I worship, and attempt
To picture her in all her peerless wealth
Of regal loveliness : her raven hair,
Whose lustrous tresses glistened with the gleam
Of dark blue waters zephyr-stirred at night ;
The ebon brilliance of her thoughtful eyes,
Beneath their long-drawn arches' silky fringe ;
The proud repose of feature, and the full

Voluptuous flexure of her coral lips ;
 Withal a figure such as would beseem
 The predetermined mother of a race
 Of robust nation builders. Add to these
 A simple vestment, cinctured at the waist
 With purple baldric sown with golden stars ;
 Her arms, her neck, her bosom unconcealed—
 What art can reproduce them ? Blend the rose,
 The lily, and the tint that gives the pearl
 Its claim to beauty, mingle these with light
 From clouds zodiacal that gleam at eve,
 Then may'st thou, painter ! venture to translate
 Her loveliness in terms that all may learn,
 And learning know why once the Sons of God
 Relinquished heaven and walked on earth with man.

A galaxy of maidens stood anear,—
 The kingdom's fairest ; somewhat more removed
 Sat one more lowly, as her garb bespake
 And mien submissive ; resting on her knee
 A seven-stringed lyre proclaimed the singing maid,
 Aryenis, Milo's daughter, chosen from
 The sweetest melodists who touched the strings
 Upon a day when, by the king's command,
 A hundred skilled aspirants strove to win
 His consort's favour. Raised above the sphere
 Wherein her life had hitherto been cast,
 The shepherd's child was lonely and abashed ;
 The gods, who gave her genius, also gave
 Humility, that bids all genius blush
 And live on sufferance, happy to endure
 The world's contempt, if only it may live

And breathe in numbers or in harmony
The breath divine that animates the spheres
And stirs the æther like seraphic wings.

Three days and nights had flown since first she came
To Sardis, and but once her yearning gaze
Had fallen on him who, ere he left the plain
Of sunny Hermus and forsook the crook,
Had been her plighted lover : when she saw
The shepherd boy advanced to stand beside
The majesty of Lydia, then her heart
Was stirred within her, and the chilling fears,
Distrusts, and doubts that woman's insight brings
To life when love is slighted wrung her breast.

There, in the silvery pathway of the moon,
She now beheld him : Oh ! how far removed
In all his bravery from the youth whose lips
So oft met hers as 'twere but yesterday,
Whose hands had twined a wreath to grace her brow
At the spring festival of Omphale !
Would he remember ?

Lo ! 'tis Nyssia speaks ;

A truce to recollection !

“ Such a night
Invites to music and to thoughts of love :
Hast thou, Aryenis, aught in harmony
To help our aspirations and to lift
Our spirits to the realms where Attys dwells ?
Thy sweetest strain in welcome to the king !
Sing, maiden, sing ! ”

LYDIAN LOVE SONG.

The love-star shines on Hermus' plain,
The flowers requite her kiss,
And every ardent shepherd swain
Is dreaming now of bliss,
Is dreaming now of bliss.

So dream I nightly, love, of thee,
The while mine arms entwine
Thy graceful limbs in ecstasy,
Like tendrils of the vine,
Like tendrils of the vine,

And dreaming thus, heart beats to heart
In yearning symphony,
Till I methinks am but a part
Of thee and thou of me,
Of thee and thou of me.

Twin sparks of one divinity,
Drawn earthward from the deep
Wide ocean of Infinity
Their tender tryst to keep,
Their tender tryst to keep.

Prolong, sweet star ! thy silvery reign,
Delay thy steeds, O sun !
O tranquil night ! restore again
The dream that makes us one,
The dream that makes us one !

IX.

A seraph nuncio from the burning throne,
Resheph, who guards the lightning and the springs
 Whence flow the waves that break
 Throughout the empyrean lake,
Returning heavenward through the terrene zone,
Resting in æther poised his threefold wings.

Nine orders of the bright ones do His will
Whose glory they themselves may not behold ;
 Of these the seraphim,
 Powers, and cherubim
Stand third in rank, commissioned to fulfil
Just doom to nations as their fates unfold.

As some fair cygnet drifts along the mere,
And sees the landmarks that it loves to trace,
 So the staid seraph gazed
 Earthward and mutely praised
The Hand Divine that framed the jewelled sphere,
And spread pellucid cloud-veils o'er its face.

Enamelled tints of sungold tinged with green,
The world's own iridescence, gleaming white
 Where the opposing poles
 Restrain the sea that rolls
Between their bounds : O Poet ! thou hast seen
Like this thy home in visions of the night.

Most beauteous of the isles that stud the vast
And concave solar ocean, only He
 Who formed thee when His Word
 The glowing star-clouds heard
May know thy teeming energies amassed
From stores of thine own dead asleep in thee.

Thy emerald dyes, the verdure of thy meads,
Are mortal relics fertilized with tears ;
 Thy graves alembics filled
 With man's heart's-blood, distilled
With flux of sin and sorrow and the needs
And agonies of twice ten million years.

Thus Resheph mused, when suddenly his ear,
Attuned to register all sounds that float
 Throughout God's universe,
 Heard the sweet voice rehearse
Love's lyric to the night in tones as clear
As those that thrill in Philomela's throat.

And sighing, lo ! the seraph spread his wings,
In grief reflecting on the fleeting breath
 Of human love and hate
 In this our mortal state ;
Alike to him who weeps and her who sings
The couch extended bodes the sleep of death.

X.

The sweet strain ceased, and lo ! like a refrain
The queen's clear voice echoed the glowing wish :
“ ‘ The dream that makes us one ! ’ Have dreams such
force ?

Come hither, maiden ! what, thou art in tears ?
Some rustic heartbreak : come, thou shalt confess
To me, thy mistress. Fear not, little bird !
I know a lure to bring the wanderer back,
If that he be inconstant. Tell me, then :
Some fickle shepherd slights thee while he toys
With wantons more complaisant ? Nay, deny
Me not thy story ; thou shalt have redress,
Or he, thy swain, shall serve to illustrate
A woman's vengeance till the world shall end ! ”

Who might resist her bidding ? Not the maid
Who, kneeling there in fluttering fear and hope,
Half deemed the queen had power to read her thought ;
Or, as of old the fabled cockatrice
Could charm the feathered songster to its doom,
Perchance Aryenis yielded to some spell,
Which later men should learn to call by name
Of that Heraclean stone from Sipylus,
The force magnetic. And so Nyssia learned
The simple story of a maiden's love
And Gyges' perfidy. Awhile she paused,
Then, slowly rising, bent towards the maid.

“ Aryenis, when the gods destroy a man
They overheat his fancy and expand

His self-conceit, which having done they know
 His own rash feet will hurry him to heights
 From which to fall is ruin. Women are
 Predestined to worse fate : they first endow
 Their passion's idol with the qualities
 They hold the greatest, and then sacrifice
 Themselves on their own altar. Hear thou me,
 And hearing heed : this Gyges is no mate
 For such as thou. I bid thee put away
 This childish fancy ; know'st thou not that he
 Stands high in favour of my lord the king ?
 And higher yet must he advance to whom
 The gods have shown election. Therefore, child,
 I bid thee cultivate humility.

Thus shalt thou be my handmaid, and my love
 Shall shelter and o'erspread thee, for I take
 Thy future in my keeping. Mark thou this :
 I look for thy true service ; thwart my will,
 And I will give thee to the basest groom
 In Sardis ; but I count upon thy faith,
 As thou with confidence may'st trust in me
 To be thy guardian. Henceforth will I keep
 Thee near my person till the day shall come
 For mating thee with some true, loyal heart,
 Where love and not ambition finds a home."

Thus having said, she raised the gentle maid,
 And gazing with strange pity in her eyes,
 As Mesha may have looked upon the son
 He gave to bloody Chemosh, kissed her brow ;
 Then, ere her wondering virgins scarce could ask

What meant this sudden favour, Nyssia turned
And led the way back to her royal house,
Heedless, as knowing not, that her great lord
Stood there without the portico. Too late
Candaules saw her purpose ; with a sigh
At this miscarriage of his will, the king
Advanced and threw himself at length where she
Had all so recently outshone the night.
Before him, leaning on his spear, his guard,
Like some tall statue cast in bronze, displayed
The tact of silence, waiting for his lord.
In that same instant, lo ! a shadow drew
A veil o'er Sardis and concealed the moon :
A moment's shade, and once again the face
Of Earth's scarred satellite shone with the smile
That dotage bears when seated in the nook
Of some snug ingle, and the Yule blaze shines
Full on the wrinkles. Brief as was his flight
In point of time, came then Asmodeus,
The chief of tempters, he whose lust of blood
Deprived the maid of Rages,⁽¹⁵⁾ one by one,
Of seven young goodly spouses ; came he then
And stood unseen beside the king, to work
The fellest purpose ever yet contrived
Since Satan, walking up and down the earth,
Resolved the ruin of the man of Uz.
Thus prompted to his doom Candaules spake :
" O son of Daskylos ! 'tis said of thee
That thou art proof 'gainst all the wiles of love.

(15) Book of Tobit, iii. 7, 8.

I do bethink me some such fault they found
 With bold Phraortes, till, in evil hour
 For this his reputation, bruit was made
 Of certain passages which went to prove
 That underneath his corslet beat a heart
 Susceptive to the love-god's fiery touch.
 Yet thou art wise to tarry : know'st thou not
 Who first discovered what was in thy mind ?
 In sooth, good Gyges, I, thy king, descried
 The man in thee where others saw the churl.
 Well pleased am I to note in thee desert
 Combined with modesty ; when youth can bear
 Swift elevation without dizziness
 Or show of arrogance, the gods have set
 Their seal on one who shall in riper years
 Give heeded counsel in the courts of kings.
 Thou hast not loved ? Ah, Gyges ! somewhere there
 In yon blue vault, though now unseen because
 The nearer moon usurps the throne of night,
 Thy star is mated with another orb
 That sways her fortunes whom Medeus⁽¹⁶⁾ chose
 To be thy bride ere yet thou wast conceived.
 He knows it all, for all is but his thought,
 And we ourselves but fleeting spectres, parts
 Of one great Life embracing all that is.
 Hast thou not felt his breath and heard his voice
 Within thee calling thee to worship him
 At times like this when, compassed by thy sheep,
 The grassy plain thy couch, thou saw'st the hosts

The supreme god of the Lydians.

Of twinkling witnesses possess the sky ?
 So felt mankind, it may be, in the days
 Our singers tell of,—strange it is that they
 Have clearer vision than the oldest seers,—
 The golden days before the world had priests
 To multiply their altars and their gods.
 There is but One, and him I would call Love,
 And all things beautiful are altars where
 His universe for ever chants his praise,
 The chief being woman, his most perfect work.

Tell me, Sir Gyges ! is she not beyond
 Compare of other women, Lydia's queen ?
 Thine answer, man ! lives there a lovelier dame ?”

Thus challenged,—for Candaules' tone was harsh
 And peremptory,—Gyges said :

“ My lord !

Were she a peasant and not Lydia's queen,
 I yet would swear, and swearing so maintain
 With my good sword, her beauty is divine.
 So, too, the world esteems it ; far beyond
 Thy kingdom's limits hath her winsomeness
 And grace of feature been the daily theme
 Of those who dare the desert and who scale
 The world's great buttress⁽¹⁷⁾ in their zeal to find
 The realms where worms weave fabrics wherewith queens
 May deck themselves withal. To you, my liege,
 Save by report of others, fame is dumb ;
 But we thy servants mingle with the crowd
 In market-place and temple, there to learn

(17) Taurus, or perhaps the Tibeto-Himalayan ranges.

The thoughts, the motives, and the deeds of men."

To him the king responded :

" No such need

Were thine to mingle with the traders as
Thyself a trader hadst thou not bestowed
Thy magian's ring to win her clemency
Whose interest thine artful tale had won.
I do bethink me, thou hast since declared
It hath a magic property, that ring,
By which the wearer may, if so he will,
Himself invisible, go boldly where
He can find entrance. This shall be a test
Of thy veracity, sir captain. Thou
Hast spoken in good terms,—for which be sure
Thou hast my thanks,—of thy great lady's grace
Of feature,—man ! her beauty is not that
Which callow striplings find in brow and eye
And lip curved like unto the love-god's bow :
These hath she all, but add to these a form
So ravishing that Attys would allow
Agdistis less alluring. Thou shalt see
Her native loveliness ; aye ! by my word,
Now spoken in the silence of the night
And hearing of the Great One, shalt thou see !"

" My liege ! thy gracious bounty hath o'erlooked
Thy servant's faults, advancing him where he
Could nothing claim for merit ; but, my lord !
If aught thine eyes have noted that hath seemed
Born of audacity, withdraw thy grace ;
Send Gyges once again to tend thy sheep

On Hermus, but propose to him no thought
In derogation of the reverence
He owes to thee and also to thy queen."

Thus Gyges, half surmising that some dread
Phrenetic dæmon had usurped the seat
Of reason in his master's mind, opposed
Candaules' purpose ; but the weaker man
Therewith grew obdurate and firmer set ;
Like to some mountain rivulet whose path
Inventive peasants dam to whirl the wheel
From whose gyrations comes the daily grist,
And lo ! the petty current frets and foams
In tumid indignation, and o'erleaps
The feeble barrier. Fretfully the king
Made known his will :

“ Who art thou that would'st let
Me of my purpose ? If I beg the ring,
As anxious to explore what mystery
Of secret influence it hath that seers
May haply find, thou bear'st it with thee when
The queen shall seek her chamber, there shalt thou
Abide the moment when the envious robes
That mask her beauty shall be cast aside.
Unseen thus shalt thou see, that I, thy king,
May learn of thee if aught of woman born
May vie with her in symmetry. Be this
The test of thy devotion ; for I swear,
By Him whose greatness occupies the vast
Concavity above us ! if thou fail
To pleasure me in this thou shalt be sent

In gyves to Tyre to tug the dragging oar
 On some huge argosy, till, spent with toil,
 Thou find'st a grave on those bleak western isles
 Whose shores, tin-laden, wrapped in mist repel
 The light of sun or moon or twinkling star !
 What say'st thou, Gyges ?”

“ Naught but this, O King !

Thou knowest that in Lydia no disgrace
 Is felt more keenly than when man is seen
 Without the raiment proper to conceal
 What should be sacred from the vulgar eye.
 If this be so with man, 'tis doubly so
 With woman ; but thy mandate I obey,
 Despite my mind's misgiving.”

“ Have no fear :

Be cautious ; trust not wholly in the ring,
 Whose mystic virtue, time-impaired, may need
 Support from subtlety. Thou knowest how
 My custom is nightly to seek my couch
 Before the queen hath left her tiring-maid.
 Thanks to my guard and to my people's love,
 The portals of my chamber never yet
 Have felt the bolts of tyranny, and there
 Behind their sheltering folds keep thou thy watch,
 That so thine eye may teach thee that thine ear
 Hath heard no rede but truth from me thy king.”

XI.

Birthplace, abode, and bed,
Man's cradle and his tomb :
Sleeping within her womb
Earth holds her silent dead.

Silent, save when they give
Response to mortal quest,
When groans disturb their rest,
The grief of those who live.

Yet with triumphant voice,
When some lone poet creeps
Toward Parnassus' steeps,
They bid the world rejoice.

Because he dieth not
As men die ; filching death
May steal the poet's breath,
But not the poet's thought.

The songs he sings are part
Of this world's atmosphere,
Bloom-laden, quickening, clear,
The perfume of the heart.

Lo ! where the Shining Rocks
Defend the Delphic shrine
The Pythian maid divine
Unbinds her raven locks.

See how her serpent braids
 Writhe in the vapour's reek ;
 The god constrains ye, speak !
 Answer, ye mighty shades !

Travail and throe and pain !
 Her messenger awaits
 Within the temple's gates :
 Doth Nyssia love in vain ?

Speeding o'er land and sea,
 Her herald brings the word,
 And Lydia's queen hath heard
 The Delphian's decree.

THE ORACLE.

" Thus saith the Immortal : Half a thousand years
 Count not against the Present's hopes and fears ;
 Vengeance for outraged pride shall nerve his hand,
 Five generations rule the Lydian land :
 Ere Retribution shall the doom unfold,
 And the barbarian seize the house of gold." (18)

(18) Fulfilled at the capture of Sardis by Cyrus, 548 B. C. Cæsus was fifth in descent from Gyges, if we include Gyges himself.

XII.

By chance he sinned, if that it were a sin,
Whose eyes beheld the chaste one while she bathed
Olympian limbs when heated by the chase :
An evil hap, indulgence dearly bought,
When metamorphosed, antlers down, the stag
At bay withstood the dripping jaws and fangs
Beslavered with the venomed foam that makes
The heated hound a foe more dreadful than
The hooded death that haunts the Indian's dream.

Unlike Actæon, Gyges fell through fear
And lack of resolution to oppose
His conscience to a tyrant's rash caprice.
As men count courage, none within the realm
Outbalanced him, as later annals prove ;
Yet on this fatal eve his manhood shrunk
And shrivelled as the reeds that grow beside
Pactolus shrink when the Mæonian gale
From the Scorched Plateau plagues the husbandman.
Heaven-storming Nimrod, and, in every age,
The raveners who follow him would scorn
To kill the quarry crouching in its form,
Perchance asleep or nourishing its young ;
Ere from the straining bow the shaft is loosed
They flush the fowl and warn the meek-eyed roe.
But he who dares to penetrate the shrine
Where trusting womanhood withdraws the veil
Of modest mystery, and gluts his eyes

Unbidden and presumptuous, is a base
Transgressor and invader, whose profane
Attempt excludes him from all claim to share
The benefits of commerce with his kind ;
Outlawed of virtue, on his brow the brand
Of sacrilege should publish his disgrace,
A miching leper to be shunned by all.

Shorn of his martial plumage, Gyges slunk
Behind the tapestry while Candaules slept,
As slept Endymion in the Latmian cave,—
The son of Zeus who wrought such lusty deeds
As for a time gave Hypnos doubt if he
Were Death's twin brother or a counterfeit.

And then she came against whose modesty
And sponsal consecration the weak king,
Uxoriously doting, had contrived
A plot so foul that the Eumenides,
Daughters of Acheron and Nox, demurred
To vindicate by such a plea the doom
Pronounced against the sons of Omphale.

Forbid it, Juno ! thou who dost protect
The stainless wife and matron, and preserve
To men their mothers' memories as types
Of purest innocence and sacred love !
Forbid the muse to dictate what he saw,
The trembling craven, in that interval
While Nyssia loosed her girdle and indued
Her nightly raiment. Placidly she moved
Toward her couch, unconscious of her wrong,
While furtively the wily lurker stepped

With noiseless feet forth from his hiding-place
Doorward in haste. Infatuate king ! what fiend
Caused her to turn just as the fleeting form
Stood at the threshold, and so seal thy fate ?

She spake no word, gave utterance to no cry,
But lo ! her aspect in the chastened light
Of that high chamber shone with an intense
Insight of resolution, as of one
Who, doubtful of his way on some dark wold,
Sees by the lightning's flash the index stand
Beside the cross-roads ; so looked Nyssia when
By the swift radiance of a woman's wit
She saw her pathway open straight and clear.
In that same moment inclination, poised
'Gainst loyalty and duty, overweighed
By augmentation of a woman's will :
Absolved and sanctioned by his crime who soiled
The scutcheon of a matron's dignity
To gratify his freakish, fond caprice,
Lo ! inclination grew compact and firm,
The shadowy longings hitherto controlled
Condensed into a purpose,—in that hour
Of sleep deferred the gods transferred the crown
From him who slept to him whose conscious guilt
And caitiff fear made sleep impossible.

XIII.

Great Sardis, rich in gold,⁽¹⁹⁾
 Lies sleeping at the feet
 Of guardian Tmolus, on whose bold
 And wrinkled crest the Lydian's hold,
 Bathed in the moonlight pale and cold
 Protects the Lydian's seat.

Sleep, Sardis, in thy pride
 And plenitude of might ;
 Sleep ! lest thou see the Furies ride
 Their foam-flecked, champing steeds beside
 The gold-floored stream whose waters glide
 Beneath the tranquil night.

For lo ! the hour is near
 When thou shalt woo in vain
 The dreamless sleep that knows no fear,
 The hour when thou shalt wake to hear
 The virgin's cry, to see the tear
 Bedew the cheek of pain.

Ho ! warder in thy mail !
 Resume thy martial tread ;
 Fear not because thou heard'st the wail,
 Borne lightly on the midnight gale,
 Of spirit voices bidding hail
 To the last Godson dead !

(19) Æschylus, *Persæ*, 46.

XIV.

“Aryenis,”—thus spake Nyssia to the maid,—
“I choose thee for my messenger because
I am well pleased with thee, thou art discreet
And heedful of my counsel: hark thee now!
Go thou to him, the captain of the guard;
With courteous greeting say the queen awaits
His presence here before the king returns
From sacrifice. Be thou his guide, but have
No further speech than this: when he hath come
Stand thou beside the door and wait my will.
See how I trust thy prudence, little maid,
In things of state! if that I raise my hand
When Gyges makes obeisance ere he leave
The presence chamber, thou wilt then rush forth
Beyond the gallery; should I give no sign,
He goes in peace to do my pleasure, then
Join thou my maidens, we will kill the time
Twixt then and noon in labour that becomes
The hand of woman. Go now to thy charge!”

With downcast eyes the maid of Hermus gave
The queen's behest, and when that Gyges sought
The brief delay of simulated joy
At meeting her she lingered not, but said:
“Come thou with me, sir captain! time is short,
And the queen bides thy coming.” Thus they went
In silence through the court and vestibule,
The soldier thoughtful and the maid no less,
For though a stranger to the court she knew

They walk on quicksands who commune with kings,
 And her heart's instinct told her that the sign,
 If given by Nyssia, meant for Gyges death,
 Whose ready ministers, deformed by man,
 Relinquished pity with virility,
 As if to break into the house of life
 Were recompense to one who could not build.
 Yet, when they stood beside the threshold, lo !
 There came a look of sadness in her eyes,
 And for a moment, ere she stepped aside,
 Her love o'ermastered terror : " Be thou ware
 Of word and deed ! "

And Gyges stands before

Incarnate fate, yet is he not confused,
 Shrinking, or timorous : the manly soul
 Grows calm when peril seems most imminent,
 And reason, albeit faltering at the first
 At phantom evils, now resumes her throne :
 Or death or life, or weal or woe, the man
 Casts off the simian and assumes the god.
 Perchance his sense of danger, or contempt
 Of that which goes with dying made him proud,
 Or that firm creed which fortifies the soul,
 And makes the churl a hero who believes
 His fate stands written in the stars that wheel
 Their silent course around the shaft of heaven.
 Yet, having bent before her dignity,
 He stood with courtly, ceremonious grace
 Waiting her will, all self-possessed and calm.
 Like to the basilisk, as fables tell,

Establishing his fatal influence
O'er some weak creature of the woods, her gaze
Immovably met his, as children test
In trifling contest their mesmeric strength.
He wavered not, mayhap the energy
That comes from sex distinction made him bear
The ordeal without flinching. Then she spoke :

“Thy magian's ring hath lost its ancient power
Methinks, sir captain, or the niddering soul
Of him who wore it yesternight depressed
The sprite it houseth. Dar'st thou stand within
My presence chamber unabashed, as if
Such outrage as no peasant wife hath known
In Lydia since the Hittite left the land
A queen must brook in silence? Answer me !”

“Not unabashed, O queen! My heart is torn
By thought of its own weakness : this alone
Shall be my exculpation,—if it have
No weight with thee, thou hast the means at hand
For retribution, and the chosen men,
The flower of Lydia's soldiery, would die
To win thy smile and deem their death repaid.
This then say I, and ask no mercy, queen :
I staked my life in pity for my life,
Which else were worse than forfeit, for my doom
Was Tyrian slavery at the labouring oar.
What canst thou do, what eunuch's dagger can
Do worse than this? a groan, a moment's pang,
And then good-night for Gyges. Yet, O queen!
Let sleep come when it may, before mine eyes

Are closed for ever and the curtain falls,
 Dividing those who sleep from those whose sleep
 Time but adjourns, the vision that I saw
 But for an instant waking will remain,
 And my last memory will be dearer far
 Than aught else of remembrance."

"Thou art bold
 In speech, sir captain : hark thee ! if thy mind
 Be of like nature, I will give to thee
 More than a passing memory. The wrong
 Thou didst and yet didst not ; upon his head
 Who sped the bolt I will the bolt shall fall.
 Thou hast a dagger ? Lo ! I take it, thus,
 And consecrate it to my purpose ! thou
 Shalt be my minister. Thou art a priest,
 The couch whereon he sleeps—thy sacrifice—
 Shall be thine altar ! falter not, and lo !
 Thou shalt be Lydia's king and I thy queen !"

As one struck speechless Gyges heard, as when
 Some deadening palsy blunts the nerves he saw
 The white hand pluck his dagger from its sheath,
 Saw the uplifted blade, saw it descend
 Upon her bosom, saw the red blood rise
 In protest, yet he moved not. When at length
 Her dreadful import swept into his brain
 The stalwart soldier reeled with arms outspread
 And eyes distended, as the players show
 The Theban hero⁽²⁰⁾ when he learns the fell
 Fulfilment of the sightless prophet's⁽²¹⁾ curse.

She saw his consternation, and she knew

(20) Œdipus.

(21) Teiresias.

He feared not for himself, but that the dread
 Alternative unmanned him. "Look!" she cried,
 "Thou hast no choice but to avenge my wrong;
 Therefore throw off thy weakness, be a man!
 'Tis but a blow, and lo! the dotard dies,
 And Lydia hath a king of other mould,
 One who shall spread her borders to the sea,
 And build an empire potent to dispute
 With Mizraim and the proud Assyrian.
 All this and more: I love thee! thou art mine
 Or dead or living, and the gods have shown,—
 I have the oracle,—that from us twain
 Shall come a line to whom the Heraclids
 Were but as children. Gyges! make thy choice!"

Scarce had she spoken when the trumpet's blare
 From Cybebe's high temple tower proclaimed
 The king's return. Came then the guilty queen
 And pressed her lips on Gyges' brow: "Behold!"
 She cried, "thou hast love passages with me;
 With me, thy queen, Candaules' consort! how
 Atone for this? his rage shall strike us both!"

And then he yielded:

"By th'eternal gods!
 It shall be as thou wilt. If that I fail,
 'Tis but a life the less, mine own; this hand
 At least can point the way to mine own heart,
 And leave thee scatheless!"

"Go in peace," she said,
 "Thou for whom fate hath greater things in store
 Than Tyrian oars or doting colloquies.
 Go thou in peace! thou that shalt wear a crown."

XV.

This is Candaules' natal day, the feast is at its height,
And over all the proud array the perfumed lamps gleam
bright ;

The glory of the Lydian land, wit, valour, beauty meet,
A gladsome and a glittering band, their gentle lord to greet.

All hail the Heracleon child !
Hail to the Godson mild !
Blest of the gods is he,
Offspring of Omphale !
Lord of the favoured land !
Lord of the lavish hand !

Fill high the golden beakers, princes and warriors bold,
And pledge your king and master until the night grows old !
Fill high the golden beakers, let wine give zest to mirth ;
Drink, loyal hearts, and praise the gods who gave Candaules
birth !

Ablaze with light the royal house shone forth
On Sardis bathed in glory ; envious night
Within the walls could find no place whereon
To rest a shadow, and the river flowed
As though by contact with its golden bed
The current were transmuted ; only high
Above the world the star-sown welkin gave
No sign but silence, where Arcturus kept
His outpost for the Seven who guard the pole,

And heaven's supremest brilliant, Vega, cast
Its blue-white coruscations o'er the Lyre,
A plectrum of celestial light whose touch
Made the rapt zenith dance in harmony.

Seen from the cosmic atom man calls Earth,
The ordered constellations tell us nought
Beyond our mind's suggestion,—happy he
To whom they whisper Purpose, Pity, Love !
His faith shall keep him anchored to the rock
Of God's benevolence through all the storms
Of frustrate hope, false friendships, outraged love,
Disease, ingratitude, the world's contempt,
And all of evil that man heaps on man.
He reads aright to whom the starry page
Hath but this legend : God is ! God is love !

'Twas thus Candaules kept his natal day,
In revelry and feasting ; over all,
Seated apart, the king and queen looked down
On that great banquet-hall and led the feast.
Free from constraint, the joyous crowd deferred
All private cares and emulously strove
To prove its loyalty by pledge and toast.
The white-haired sage who stood beside the throne
In council, he whose words were weighed like pearls,
Now bandied jests with courtiers on whose cheeks
The down of youth was recent as the bloom
That guards the mellow ripeness of the peach ;
And the tried warrior on whose brow the crease
Made by his helmet spoke of stricken fields,
Of camps and vigils and the weary march,

Now dallied with the handmaid who supplied
His eager goblet with the rosy juice.
Loudest of all in high-wrought gayety
Were those her confidants whose minds the queen
Had sounded for her purpose and prepared
For what they knew not or but half divined,—
All but the great protagonist, on whom
The burthen of dissimulation laid
An incubus of torture that defied
Disguise or cloak ; gloomy and stern he sat
Below the royal table : suddenly,
As in a dream, he heard his name resound
Throughout the chamber,—“ Gyges, serve the king ! ”
As one awaking from a troubled sleep,
He rose unsteadily and seized the cup
Adrastus proffered, while a shout went up
In laud of him who honoured thus his guard,
And recognition of his worth whose name
The king had called to serve the sleeping cup,
The spiced and dainty draught to close the feast.
Deaf to the plaudits, like a blinded man
Went Gyges up the marble steps to where
The royal board transversely stood ; but when
On bended knee he held the brimming cup
Towards the king he stumbled and his hand
Ran red with wine : “ Ho ! captain ! ” cried the king,
“ The Lydian vintage keeps its old renown
And honours this occasion ; steady, friend !
Forgive him, Nyssia ! not alone the feast
Hath moved our trusty warder, he hath seen

Such vision as the gods but seldom grant
To mortal eye, seen it and yet survives.
The morrow comes, then will I question thee,
Sir captain, of that vision. Seek thy couch !
He keeps no ward whom good Sabazius claims
This night as his. Go, and good night, my friend !

Thus said the king and lifted high the cup,
When lo ! another voice was heard, the shrill
And quavering tones of age, adown the hall :

“ Drink not, Candaules, ere thine hand hath poured
Libation from the goblet on his head
Who caused the portent, but a single drop
Shall consecrate him to the wrathful gods
Who send this omen on thy natal day.”

“ ’Tis Harpanax, the soothsayer, heed him not !
He, too, hath lingered o’er the cup too long.
Drink, for mine eyes are weary, and I fain
Would seek my chamber : ” thus spake Nyssia, and
The pliant monarch tasted of the cup,
Then set it down beside her. “ Ere we go,
Call thou thy maiden with the angel’s voice
To sing a lullabye, that so the gods
May give us happy dreams. Is it thy will ? ”

Obedient to the call, Aryenis came
And sang this song to music of her lyre.

EUTHANASIA.

Where everything is dying,
It is no pain to die ;
Sad mortal ! Cease thy sighing,
Release and rest are nigh.

The rose thy breast adorning
Shall wither, maiden fair !
Before the breath of morning
Gives perfume to the air.

And he whose kiss the flower
Still carries in its breath,
Beneath the hostile tower
Shall find a warrior's death.

The speechless joy that, living,
Youth counts all joys above,
Who knows not that its giving
Benumbs the life of love ?

He neither mourns nor pities,
He of the Silent Land :
Lord of a hundred cities !
Thou canst not stay his hand.

His steadfast foot doth ever
Keep pace with thine ; he stays
An instant but to sever
The links that hold thy days.

Thou goest, and hereafter
Life troubles thee no more ;
Nor moans, nor tears, nor laughter
Attend thee to the shore.

Happy thy lot if drinking
Oblivion's draught shall stay
The fever-flush of thinking,
And leave thee senseless clay.

Gone as his trail who roweth
O'er a dark-gliding stream ;
Gone as the bubble goeth,
Gone like a morning's dream.

Sad mortal ! cease thy sighing,
Rest and release are nigh ;
Where everything is dying
It is no pain to die.

“ A novel ending for a birthday feast
The maiden gives us, yet her voice is sweet,
And what she sings is soothfast ; doubtless death
Is not the terror that our fancy paints.
The dread that haunts us through our life is but
The gods' device lest harassed man should seek
The tomb to end his labours as he goes
To bed when weary. Lady mine ! good night !
Lead on, Adrastus ! maid, thy requiem
Shall bring thee largesse. So good night to all ! ”

’Twas thus Candaules bade the world farewell ;
For him the night had come, the dark, long night

That hath or hath not,—who shall dare to say?
Its morrow's wakening. Yet 'tis good to sleep.

XVI.

“ Do not this deed ! thou shalt not do this deed !
O Gyges, hear me ! by the memories
Of childhood's days, of all the happy years
We passed on Hermus ! by thy many vows,—
Alas ! how soon forgotten ! let us flee.
There is yet time ; stain not thy soul with sin,
And such a sin ! thy master and thy king !
I prithee hear me ! Nay, I will not cease !
Say thou wilt go ; thou hast the pass, no man
May check thee in thy going. Haste ! Oh, haste !
The night is young ; long ere the dawn shall come
Thou wilt be past her vengeance : come with me !
Bethink thee, Gyges ! if thou do this thing
Thou seal'st thy doom ; ten thousand swords will leap
Against thee, and destruction fall on all
Thy friends and kindred. Hear me, Gyges, hear !
Fear not this she-wolf ; ere to-morrow's sun
Shall touch the border of the western sea
Her judgment will o'ertake her ; we will raise
Sardis and Lydia—”

“ Peace, Aryenis, peace !
Thou art beside thyself : what dost thou here
Untimely ? Lo ! 'tis midnight, and thy fame
Is dear to me, though fate hath intervened

To part us ; yet I swear that thou shalt be
Greater than all, save one, within this realm.
Thou art thyself a woman ; being so,
Thou know'st the measure of our lady's wrong,
The foul offence against true matronhood
Of him whose highest duty was to keep
Immaculate the shrine where only he
Might worship. Get thee gone ! thou can'st not stay
The gods' decree, or alter my resolve."

"I will not go ! Gyges, in other lands
Than Lydia there is refuge : who can trace
Thy footsteps ? Is there one to whom the plain,
The mountain pass, the caverned rocks, the dells
Are known as thou hast known them from thy youth ?
Come, then, while thou art innocent. Oh, come !
Thou shalt not do this awful thing ! My voice
Shall pierce the night and fright dull sleep away,
And summon hither all who love our lord,
Our gracious lord ! then shall the she-wolf find
Swift retribution !"

More than this perchance
She would have said, but that her throat was clutched
By servile hands, and the remorseless queen,
Forth stepping from the darkness, touched his arm
And said to Gyges, "To thy task ! He sleeps."
So regal was she, so imperious,
So captive he unto her iron will,
That without parley or of aught to show
Remorse or pity he obeyed her word,
Nor stayed to ask compassion for the maid.

Then Nyssia spake again : "The loyalty
 Of rustic ancestors is thine ; methinks
 I could have spared thee, but 'tis not my will
 That Lydia's king shall waste in dalliance
 With concubine or handmaid energies
 That ask a nobler use : therefore, farewell,
 Aryenis ! Thou, O eunuch, do thy work
 With expedition ; see she makes no sound !"

She made no sound : as one who sits unmoved
 The while the buskined player simulates
 His tragic horror, so the queen beheld
 The white neck crushed within that cruel grasp ;
 Saw the gnarled fingers tighten, saw the thrill
 Convulse the tender limbs, and saw her laid
 On the cold marble by some column's base.

Thus died Aryenis : scarcely had her soul
 Gone forth into the silence when he came,
 Her whilome lover, came with hands imbrued
 With blood of his own master.

"Lo ! 'tis done !

'Tis done !" he cried ; "now, Nyssia, am I king,
 If but a day, yet am I king, and thou
 My partner and sustainer !"

"Look !" she said,

"Take thou thy ring for aye ; bethink thee, lord !
 Its story hath been told throughout the land,
 Wherever tattling fools do congregate :
 It means for thee dominion, life, and love.
 And now to action ! for the Heraclids
 Have had their day. Call thou thy guard, that we

May hear them shout, Long live King Gyges ! I
Will be their teacher, so—Long live the king ! ”

* * * * *

So Gyges reigned in Sardis, and his fame
Surpassed all other kings' in peace and war :
Gyges the Great, first of the Merminad name,
Potent in arms, whose excellence the far
Euphrates murmured and the wavering Nile
Whispered to Pharaoh ; thrice ten years he wore
A ravished crown, by blood polluted, while
The Lydian border touched the western shore.
And Nyssia, yielding to the warrior's spell,
The charm of strength, grew gentle as a dove,
Well pleased at eve, her offspring near, to tell
How Gyges' ring brought Gyges rule and love.
Dominion, life and love : Unbounded Mind !
Is man thy toy ? and is his tragedy
Of sin and sorrow, birth and death designed
As sport for higher beings nearer Thee ?
If thus it be, Oh open Thou our eyes
To view the concourse of the heavenly host,
To note their transports when the vaulted skies
Repeat the slave's despair, the tyrant's boast !
O Retribution ! art thou but a dream ?
A fancy born of impotence ? lo ! they
Are changeful fortune's favourites who seem
To dare thee most, and daring thee delay
Thy coming and God's justice. Peace, my soul !

And ask no farther question,—this is sure,
 The Christ is coming who shall make us whole,
 And build the brotherhood that shall endure
 Until, his process ended, man shall cease,
 And Earth be one necropolis of peace.

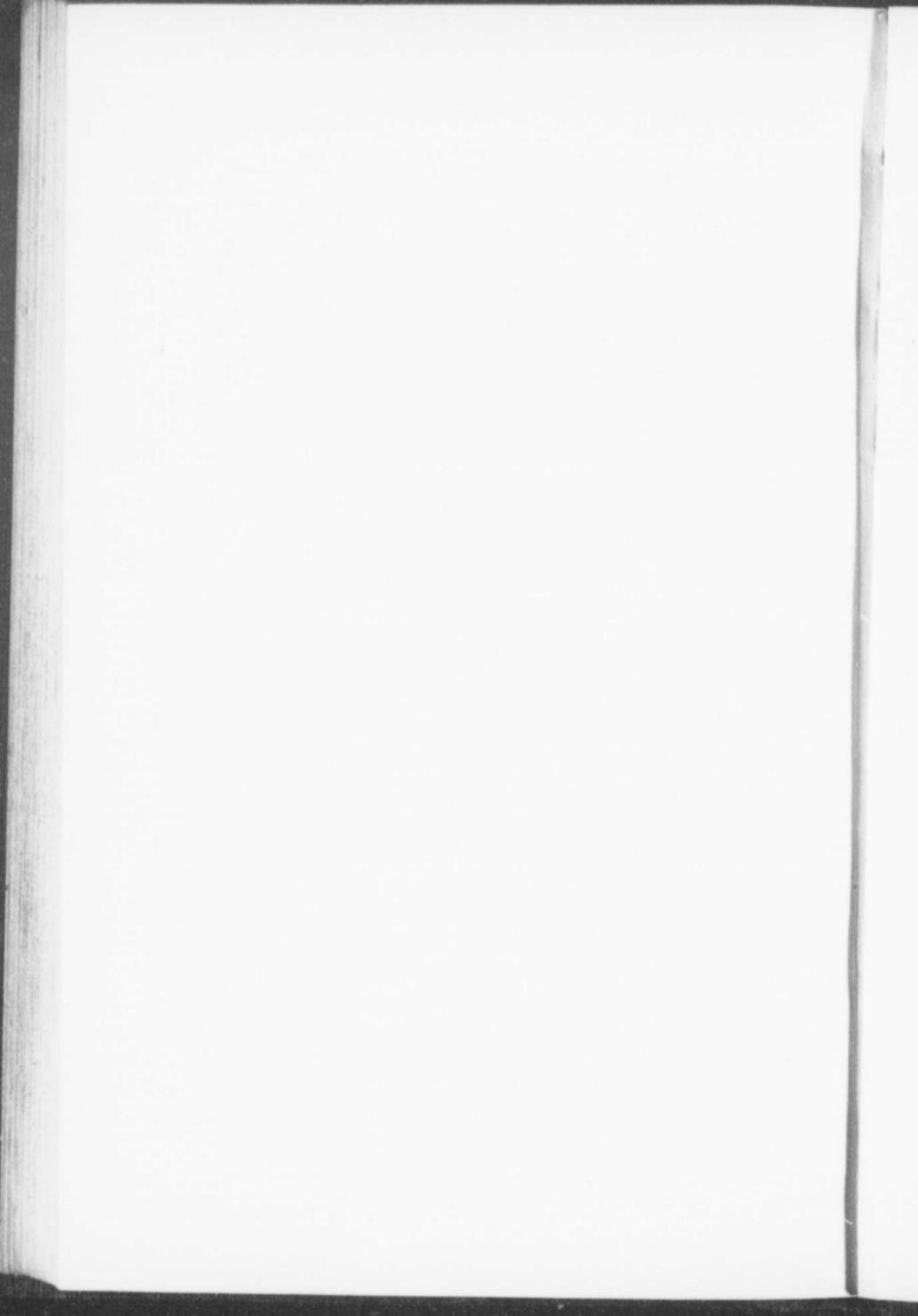
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The ant is a little thing,
 And its world is very small,
 And thy heedless foot may fall
 On its busy heap, and bring
 Chaos and ruin and death,
 And the tragedy be as great
 As when the poison breath
 And fiery rain swept o'er
 The bright Campanian shore
 To work Pompeii's fate.

From their mansions in far-away spheres
 So may gods look down on thee,
 Nor knowing thy wants nor heeding thy tears,
 When the foot of blind Law ends thy hopes and thy fears,
 And thou goest forth to the sea
 Whence no voyager hath come back,
 Whence no voyager shall return,
 Where never a barque shall leave its track,
 Or ever a pharos burn.

Like to the yellowing leaves we fall,
Earth-strewn with every gust,
And vespertilian death brings all
To ashes and bone and dust :
When hopes and fears are sped ;
When the warrior's sword is turned to rust,
And lover and loved are dead.

Power and wealth and fame and love,
These are the pride of life :
Tell us, O Mind above !
Is the premium worth the strife ?
Hath man no joy beyond the thrill
Of realized desire,
When function, sense, and fervid will
Kindle and feed the fire ?
O God ! if life hath but this to give,
Is it, we ask thee, worth while to live ?



El Requiem.

(First published March 1, 1898.)

I

SING, ye winds that thrill the wave
 O'er Havana's waters blue ;
 Sing the requiem of the brave,
 Sing the requiem of the true.

2

Lo! the anchor watch is set,
 And the sleeping crew forget
 ' Bloody Spain ;
 And the tropic stars look down
 Through the æther past the town,
 Where El Morro's turrets frown
 On the "Maine."

3

Stars whose vision has not failed,
 Stars whose gaze has never quailed
 Since the day
 When the blood-stained Spaniard bore
 Desolation to the shore,
 And the current red with gore
 Dyed the bay.

A Requiem.

4

The bay where now she rides
On the tranquil, constant tides,
 She that bears
Hearts within her iron breast,
Hearts the truest and the best,
Hearts of steel to stand the test
 Of the years.

5

While in dreams the sailor-boy
Sees his native Illinois,
 And his soul
To the land where all are free
Leaps across the bounding sea,
As the steed springs o'er the lea
 To its goal.

6

Wife and mother, comrade, friend,—
Sweetest memories that blend
 Into one
Precious picture of the home,
Far away beyond the foam,
Where proud Tremont's* golden dome
 Greets the sun.

7

Softer mem'ries, too, that move
Every pulse to thrill with love,

* Boston.

In the bliss
Of that last, that long farewell,
When the lips they loved so well
Sealed the tale they blushed to tell
 With a kiss.

8

Dreaming thus, they found their doom;
Loving thus, they found their tomb
 In the wave,
When the demon hand set free
The caged spark of destiny,
And the "Maine" sank in the sea
 To her grave.

9

Martyrs they whose blood shall rise
In swift witness to the skies,
 While we swear,
That the freeman's flag shall stand,
Planted by a freeman's hand,
Floating o'er a ransomed land
 Free as air !

10

Sing, ye winds that thrill the wave
 O'er Havana's waters blue ;
Sing the requiem of the brave,
 Sing the requiem of the true.

Manila Bay.

(First published May 11, 1898.)

PART I.

I

SHIMMERING through the tropic night
 Shone the stars on Point Luzon ;
 Gently rippling in their light,
 As the sea breeze urged them on,
 Broke the wavelets on the shore
 Of the isle Corregidor,
 Where the Spaniard held the door
 Of the bay.

2

On Limbone's guarded wall,
 Lo ! the iron warders wait,
 Grimly silent ere they call
 That the foe is at the gate.
 Pacing slowly to and fro,
 Patient sentries come and go,
 While the gunner waits the glow
 Of the day.

3

Morn and eve they hail the sun,
 When Manila's towers gleam
 In the dawning, and the gun
 Peals a welcome to its beam.

Meanwhile, to and fro they stride,
Andalusia's sons in pride,
And the silent currents glide
 Still as death.

4

Dreaming of La Mancha's shades,
 Or Sevilla's orange bowers,
Where the dark-eyed southern maids
 Yield to love the languid hours ;
To the seamen, fancy free,
Every breeze across the sea
Brings home whispers gratefully
 With its breath.

5

Little recked the Spaniard then
 That the wrath of God was nigh ;
Fancy free, he lived again
 Spain's old life of chivalry.
Stood by Diaz de Bivar,
Rodrigo el Compeador,
On Valencia's field of war,
 By his side.

6

Stood by Colon when the light
 On Guanahani twinkled low ;
With Medina saw the night
 Enshroud the Armada's sails of snow.

Manila Bay.

Dreaming of the days of old,
 Admiral, captain, sailor bold,
 Swinging near Cavite's hold
 With the tide.

 PART II.

I

Chime! chime! chime!
 Eight bells and the First of May!
 It has come at last, and Time
 Hath one more reckoning day,—
 A day of judgment and doom,
 And a day of righteous wrath;
 For the angel of death speeds through the gloom
 To clear the Avenger's path.

2

Chime! chime! chime!
 It is midnight by each bell;
 Lo! the pale moon veils her face,
 For she knows Spain's day of grace
 Hath passed away, for God on high
 Hath heard the long and bitter cry
 Arise from Cuba's hell.

3

On the forward bridge he stands,
 The man with the dauntless mien.
 Whose name throughout all lands
 Shall evermore be green.

“Steam ahead!” and the waters gleam
As the war-dogs force their way
Silent and fateful through the stream
That flows from Manila bay.

4

They have roused the Spaniard now—
Hear him thunder from the shore!
“Keep on!” not a single prow
Shall halt till the task is o'er.
Now cheerily, hearts of steel!
Remember your comrades slain
When the hell-blast struck the keel
Of the unsuspecting “Maine.”

5

See them, each man at his post,
They, from the freeman's land!
Never, I ween, was a trustier host,
Never a hardier band.
God's men, the pride of the world,
Valiant and brawny and true,
Lo! where their flag is unfurled
Nations shall mark what they do.
See them, the gallant and bold,
Children of heroes of old,
Saxon and German and Gael:
Sons of the New Land,
Sons of the true land,
Heroes who know not to fail.

6

It has come, it has gone,
They have humbled the proud Don.
Waving proudly at each peak
This our banner ; could it speak,
Could it find a tongue to tell
Of the liberated hell
When the war-cloud broke and Death
Smote the Spaniard with his breath,
It would sing our nation's story
On this latest field of glory ;
It would publish to the world
That when gallant Dewey hurled
Shot and shell and hurtling doom,
That with every cannon's boom
God's own voice rang out to call
Serfs and slaves to break their thrall ;
God's own voice proclaiming right,
God's own hand in vengeful might ;
God's own people, in their wrath
Bidding tyrants clear the path ;
God's own country, great and free,
Thundering for liberty.

7

Wave ! wave ! wave !
Flag of the forty stars !
Wave where the tyrant bars
The road to freedom ! wave

In triumph o'er the grave
Of cruelty and wrong ;
Wave till the poet's song
Shall rise to heaven's high throne above
Proclaiming universal love !



Lullabye.

(MORITURUS LOQUITUR.)

I

Now I lay me down to rest,
Mother Earth ! upon thy breast ;
As she lies, the one who bore me,
As they lie who lived before me,
Lived and loved and died.

2

Clasp me, mother, in thine arms,
Safe from all the world's alarms ;
Where no friendship can deceive me,
Where no woman's guile can grieve me,
Mother, let me hide.

3

Wrap thy vesture o'er my head,
Slumb'ring in my quiet bed,
Where no envious hate comes ever,
Where no woman's love can sever
Me from thy great heart.

Lullabye.

4

Sprung from thee, to thee I go,
 Weary from life's storm and woe ;
 From fierce Memory's constant burning,
 From the Thought-curse to thee turning,
 Nevermore to part.

5

One with thee, as thou art one
 Cognate speck with star and sun ;
 Part and portion of the vision
 Granted man in dumb derision,—
 Seen and yet unknown.

6

Part and portion I of thee,
 Thou of star-cloud, galaxy :
 Art thou conscious, too, O mother ?
 Know'st thou aught of any other
 World than thee alone ?

7

Trav'ler in ethereal light,
 Know'st thou man, thy parasite,
 Born to wax and wane and wither,
 Vainly asking whence and whither,
 Know'st thou him, O Earth ?

8

Wayward sport of joy and pain,
 Desolating greed of gain ;

Lucre grasping, hell defying,
Cringing, fawning, cheating, lying,
Recreant from birth.

9

Man and serpent spring from thee,
Each to each a mystery ;
Each a fratricide, each hating
Each with hate that knows no bating,—
Cause them both to cease !

10

Living, they defile thy face ;
Thought and poison-tooth displace
God's high mercy seat ; the heaven
Of man's will makes hell of heaven,
Storm and strife of peace.

11

Alma Mater, lo ! I wait,
Worn and weary, at the gate,
At the gate where Death stands warder,
Where Oblivion's waters border
Lethe's sterile plain.

12

Warder Death, I grasp thy hand,
Swing the postern, let me stand
On the brink of that dark river,
Place me where no dart can quiver
In my breast again.

Lullabye.

13

Here, fell Life ! thy thrall is done,
 Here, lone heart, thy goal is won :
 Wrongs endured and wrongs inflicted,
 Evil wrought and good restricted,
 Swept adown the flood.

14

Gone the I for evermore ;
 Broken mirror, nevermore
 Shall the panoramic story
 Fall on thee of deeds of glory,
 War and lust and blood.

15

Welcome Lethe's silent stream !
 Welcome sleep that knows no dream,
 Knows no waking for the morrow,
 Knows no antepast of sorrow !
 Welcome, kindly Death !

16

Placid waters close above
 Mem'ry, longing, friendship, love :
 Lo ! I vanquish Life in dying,
 Iron hoofs of Fate defying
 With my final breath.

17

Worlds may shiver, suns grow dim,
 Nought shall ever harass him,

Him who recks not of man's burden,
Glory's call or honour's guerdon,
Empires' rise or fall.

18

Therefore hail to thee, dark king,
Royal Death ! who yet shalt bring
Rest to Nature racked with feeling,
Bring mankind thy gift of healing,
Nothingness to all.

19

Like some conscript called to strife,
All unsought of me came life ;
All unsought the mind perceiving,
Doubting, striving, loving, grieving,
Asking God for rest.

20

Standing now beside my bed,
Fold thy wings around my head ;
Touch me with thy soothing finger
Where the last pulsations linger
In my troubled breast.