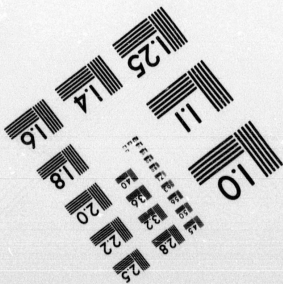
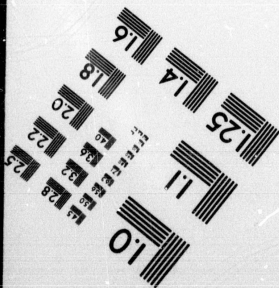
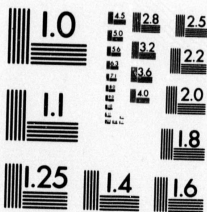


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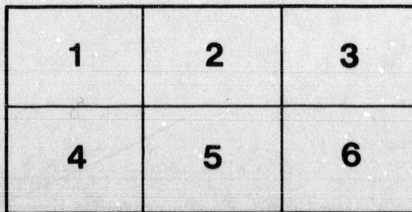
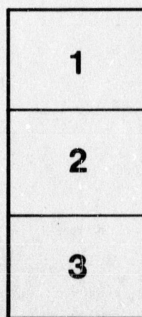
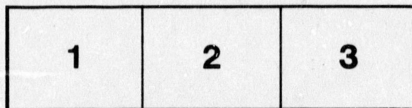
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# THORA

*MEMOIRS OF A NINETEENTH-CENTURY WOMAN*

FROM

"TOKIWA AND OTHER POEMS"

BY MRS.

ASHLEY CARUS-WILSON, B.A. LOND.

(*Née* M. L. G. PETRIE)

AUTHOR OF "CLEWS TO HOLY WRIT," ETC.

London

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The over-curious public may wish to be informed at once that "Thora" is not an autobiography. The critics, ever ready to pounce upon the improbable in fiction, may be glad to know that the incidents of one real life are here interwoven with a few incidents taken from other real lives.

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## THORA

### Introduction

I, MYRA, Randolph's wife, am legatee  
To papers, signed and sealed by the dead hand  
Of her who was my girlhood's dearest friend,  
Sought out as lovers seek each other out,  
The first of all not bound to me by blood  
Or dearer bond of wedlock. Why she gave  
Her heart in such large measure unto me,  
Who am not raised above the rest by aught,  
I know not ; for in Thora powers met  
That men had worshipped in a man, and owned  
Even in a woman. She would have me read  
Her story, making others read it too  
If it will guide or cheer a living soul.

Tears come not now as freely as they came  
In girlhood, but my eyes o'erflowed yestreen  
Reading it, when my dearest lord came in,  
His day's work done, and drew me to his side,  
And our lips met, as they meet every day,  
Though we are wed for many a merry year ;  
And since the hour my maiden love went out  
To meet the sweetest lover in the world,  
Tall lads and girls have filled our home, and  
Time

Has furrowed cheek and slackened youthful gait.  
Still we are lovers, lovers we shall be  
When eld has crowned our brows with arctic  
snow.

Devotion deepens, nestling in the arms  
Of the protecting love which shields my head :  
I could conceive that failing me as soon  
As I repenting that I gave away  
Myself, and sat to learn at Love's own feet  
One summer, nearly forty years ago.

But what am I, that life to me has brought  
Its best in such abundance, when for her  
Who had turned its sunshine into richer fruit,  
Such cloudy days made up a dreary year?  
I ask it, as I ask those glowing woods  
Why death must be their portion, when they  
stand

Most glorious in their gold and crimson robes.  
Thus Thora's noble character shone out  
Most noble, when she bowed her head in  
death.

Read me the riddle through an emblem true.  
"As a tree's days my people's days shall be,"  
Said a great prophet. Even trees take heart  
To pluck best radiance from the ageless sun  
Ere they without misgiving lay aside  
Their robes, and face the winter blast unclothed,  
Knowing they die not all, and Spring must come,  
When buds of hope will bloom and promise fruit.  
So man, who has For Ever, dares to wait.

## Part I

### *PARENTAGE*

AUSTEN, the earl's tall son, loved Adela ;  
But she could never give him love for love.  
They praised him, he was comely, well-endowed,  
Blameless withal, and born of high degree ;  
And none could gainsay aught of all their praise.  
She smiled on him, and not on him alone.  
Some reckoned her the sweetest girl they knew :  
While others, carping, saw in sunny speech  
That asked for praise and sunny speech again,  
A soul by shallow liking whilome stirred,  
Where deep, devoted love could never shrine.  
Yet might a kindred, higher soul have changed  
Light girl to tender woman, had one made

Her heart beat quick for him. Here Austen  
failed.

"I find no fault. Nay, he is good, too good ;  
But I could never love him." "Were he old,  
Lowborn, or evil, I would urge thee not,"

Her mother said, "but I would die content  
Could my girls' faces win me five such sons.  
Maids that are too nice often die unwed."

"Better keep hand than give without the heart,"  
Cried Adela. "Schoolgirl romance, have done!  
When thou hast followed three fair brides to  
church,

And none hath led thee to its altar veiled,  
Thou wilt be wise too late. Thy cold esteem  
Is the dull sheath where folded petals sleep  
In darkness now, that wedlock will call forth  
To perfect bloom of sober, wifely love.  
But girlhood's passing fancy kindled swift  
To passionate love is like untimely bloom  
Preventing its own foliage, when raw winds



Beat their chill wings on the bare boughs of

March ;

Bloom that will lie unheeded, trodden, soiled,

When patient blossom wakes 'neath kinder skies.

Leave then the figment of the fairy tale

For facts, as childhood's whims are left for life."

She faltered, till the devil came and said,

"Austen is rich. Let pomp and ease be yours."

Then Austen asked again, and had to wife

Her who could take Love's sacred name in vain.

And never blither bridegroom fitted ring

On whiter finger. He indeed was rich

As men count riches ; in high places set,

Though not in highest ; he had wooed and won

Knowledge, which brought him fame, and fame

brought friends.

Yet he was poor in greater things than these.

His mother gave him life which cost her death ;

His father died ere he could shrink from death ;

His brothers went their ways that were not his.

He, yearning vainly to be all to one  
Who should be all to him, gave Adela  
Frankest affection, trusting her reserve  
Mantled a heart as ardent as his own.  
Had she not sworn to love him utterly?  
Men marked them as a happy man and wife.  
“Good fortune follows some from dawn to eve :  
Austen, who had so much, has won yet more.  
How well her neck becomes his heirloom pearls !  
How well she fills his hall with willing guests !  
How smoothly runs his life ! How fine the brood—  
Two sons, three daughters—who adorn their  
home !”

And yet soul-hunger wans his placid face.  
That which he had in form and hue was like  
The bread he craved for, but it proved a stone ;  
Whose unappeasing hardness thus he learned.  
One day, his arm about his new-made wife,  
He told her how he wept himself to sleep  
In lonely crib, seeing another child

Laid by a mother's kind, strong hands to rest,  
His prayer murmured at her knee, his lids  
Sealed for their careless sleep by her fond kiss.  
Then Adela said, "'Tis strange to recollect  
What paltry joys and woes made up our life  
Ere we had put our childish things away."  
Bankrupt of love, she'd live without a tear ;  
While he would long to die. Her bond to pay  
Him love was paper promise to the end ;  
And all his aims and hopes were strange to her.  
He planned, 'mid murmuring pines and new-mown  
    hay,  
For joy in sunshine shared by singing birds,  
A haven from turmoil of their London life.  
She planned to fill that new abode with guests,  
For her perpetual quest of life's delight.  
"Have I not earned the peace of solitude ?"  
"Nay, we shall find it passing dull alone."  
He pled for leisure to bring forth a book  
Germinate in the darkness of his brain,

A darling sprout of fancy, ripe to shoot.  
She doubted not 'twas clever, 'twould be praised ;  
But she, who never read, believed the world  
Was over-full of books, and time was scant  
For literary idlesse : duties throng,  
When sons must be advanced and daughters wed,  
And clamouring society satisfied.  
The world called her " good mother " not amiss,  
True daughter of her mother, whose own girls  
Edna and Dona like herself would grow,  
Though wilful Thora, youngest of the flock,  
Might disappoint. Her tale is written here  
For who would learn the story of her soul.

## Part II

### *CHILDHOOD*

THORA was five when Austen found the child,  
With trace of recent tempest on her face,  
Hovering near his study. He, her friend  
And champion ever, bore her off to bliss  
Beside him, hearing that the time had come  
When she, who had already learned to love  
The language of the printed page, must know  
Language of ivory keys she could but hate.  
Her uttered hate had been rebuked : "Come back  
At noon in better mind and take your task."  
But noon long past, she sat at Austen's feet ;  
And as warm airs and ruddy hues return  
To the discouraged scene when clouds drift off,

Lightened of rain, and leave the sun unveiled,  
Her smiles brake forth. "Oh, mother, could you  
guess

The moth wore feathers like a downy dove ?  
Through these great eyes has father shown them  
me."

But Adela entering, greeted thus, replied,  
"What dost thou here, wasting thy precious time,  
Thy father's, and thy teacher's? Hence, forthwith!"

Then to her husband, "Thora will not learn.  
'Apt pupil' sayest thou? Nay, I spoke of things  
Worth learning for a girl whose dower of face  
Is poorer than her sisters'. Little boots  
Knowing a beetle's legs are six or eight ;  
While girls who play and sing can always charm."

Then Austen, "Said Petruccio, Kate for me  
Rather than smooth Bianca, and said well."



### Part III

#### *GIRLHOOD*

THORA at fifteen yielded beauty's praise  
To Dona, her fair mother's fairest child,  
And Edna, who with white, well-moulded arm,  
Swept harp-strings into winning melody :  
Not humbly wooing music as an art,  
But leading captive an accomplishment  
That promised finer captives in its train.  
Serene in self-contentment with their caste,  
Their faultless features, and their faultless guise,  
Were both. They reckoned as their breath of life  
The dainty adulation which blows round  
Womanhood fair and young and rich ; claimed this,  
Even as they claimed soft couch and sheeny robes

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And hothouse blossom for their jewelled throats  
Life gave them all that life can give to such.  
And they were gracious to their friends, and kind  
To needy ones who crossed their flowery path,  
Nor checked their progress. Dona's sweetest smile  
Was given to twenty friends, who each believed  
Herself its only owner. And they said,  
"So gentle and affectionate a maid  
Will be a loving wife ere long. 'Tis well  
Strong-minded Thora weds her books so soon,  
For she is cold and strange and hath scant charm."  
They said so, looking on her ruffled hair,  
Shy bearing, fixed blue eyes, and mobile mouth's  
Thwarted expression. She already longed  
To make the world anew, and find a scope  
For untried powers fellow-men might need.  
"I can do something: much is there to do."  
And those who saw her kindling at such words  
Called her lit face the fairest of the three.  
While her few friends were grappled to her soul

Once and for ever. Austen's long-starved heart  
Proved hers the warmest he had ever sought.  
She loved to browse among his books and brood  
On questionings hard of action and of thought.  
The grave professor, with his thin grey locks  
And scholar's stoop, who talked to her an hour  
Of Sophocles and Plato (while the rest  
Wondered what two who could not tune their  
tongues  
To topics of the moment found to say),  
Deemed her the best of comrades in discourse,  
Joining man's earnestness to woman's wit.  
Then his last essay on the true import  
Of great Athene Glaukopsis he gave  
And she took, blushing deep with eager joy,  
Panting for knowledge : till another guest  
Laid hold of her and catechised her thus :—  
" Say, are you fond of music ? " " Dona plays,  
Not I. " " Then do you sing ? " " I must begin  
Next year, I fear. " " Then is your pencil skilled ? "

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"Nay, Edna is the artist of our group."

"So you have no pursuits. We cannot all

Be clever." Thora meekly held her peace,

Weighed and found wanting in the worldling's  
scale,

And heard a verdict harder still to bear.

"Thora is clever, not like other girls ;

She should have been a boy." Then Thora took

Indignant "Wherefore?" to her happiest haunt,

Where Austen, having given to the state

His morning hours, gleaned from the social eve

Time for the self-set task that is not toil.

His gathered lore of many climes and books

Were shaping forth a volume on the use

Worldwide of Lions as heraldic signs.

There Thora, when her tale of bricks was told,

Piano, sketching, dancing, singing, French,

Stole to her father's window-seat and mused ;

Lived in the age of chivalry, and read

Of fearless, stainless Bayard, as the sun

Shed last rays on the knighted window pane ;  
Or gazed upon one helmèd marble head—  
Pallas Athene—with her soul aflame  
To learn the language of those godlike Greeks,  
Key to the storehouse of the world's best thought.  
“ What saith Athene to my pensive maid ? ”  
Asked Austen. And she burst forth, all aglow,  
“ Why, if the Greeks, the wisest of mankind,  
Called Wisdom goddess and not god, do men  
Refuse the tree of knowledge unto us,  
And grudge to women all the joys of fame ? ”  
“ Not so ; for wise Hypatia's pupils found  
Her Pallas in the flesh ; and Rome's best king  
Was tutored by Egeria the nymph ;  
Learned Apollos sat at Prisca's feet ;  
And, in Bologna, students flocked to hear  
Professors erudite as they were fair.  
Strong women have been gladly owned as strong,  
Since Deborah and Hatasu bore rule ;  
And social queens were queens of culture too

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When great Elizabeth made England great."  
"Why was I born out of that happier past?  
I have a mind that craves for solid food,  
That I may gird me unto worthy work.  
But blind convention gives me husks for grain,  
And bids me sit aloft and idly sing,  
Mocking the toilers amid unknown ills,  
That surge and seethe below and will o'erwhelm  
Toilers and singers unredressed at last.  
They shut us out from the wide world of thought,  
Then blame our trivial hopes and petty aims.  
Oh, could I win for women lore that men  
Take not when offered! Had I Vernon's chance,  
Think you I'd call it sacrifice to make  
Some leisure from the oar for 'those old books'  
That are withheld where craved? Oh, to amend  
The scheme of gentle life that rules to-day!"  
"Self must be mended ere we mend the world,"  
Said Austen. "Thora, you shall seek and find.  
My book accomplished, I will teach you Greek,



Filling your basket with good grain to grow  
Unto good harvest if you sow aright.  
For flattery as woman, you shall earn  
Honour as human being, using well  
The powers God has given to my child."

Thora received her Greek books at the time  
Trees and young maids adorn themselves for play.  
Then pretty Dona donned a dainty robe  
Snowy as is the one soft cloud that hangs  
Alone in June's deep blue, and knelt to kiss  
The sovereign's hand, returned elate, and cried,  
" Oh, Thora, long you not to go to court ?"  
Blunt was the answer, " I would rather go  
To college." " What? To waste your brightest  
days  
Painfully gaining dusty lore, which gained  
Is vain, unless you mean to die ' old maid ' ?"  
" I mean to prove us born for higher things  
Than pleasing all men for a little space,  
To be the slave of one's caprice for aye."

" Well, let me not provoke the world to say  
My learning left me lonely." Edna scoffed.  
And Thora, blazing, mentioned her who wrote  
" Aurora Leigh," and her who mapped the heavens.  
Had ever two such women died unwed ?  
Then went off proudly gleeful for her first  
And last Greek lesson, at her father's side.  
The birds were singing in the dawn next day,  
When Austen, racked with anguish, said farewell  
To kith and kin, to all he had achieved,  
To infant schemes and projects yet unborn,  
Seized suddenly of Death. His children slipped  
Asunder like unthreaded beads henceforth.  
And his unloving wife harsh mother proved  
To Thora, crude, imperfect creature, loth  
To bow to her perfection ; problem strange,  
She cared not to unriddle. One short word,  
Like thistledown, revealed the north-east wind.  
The sisters sat around a lamp one eve,  
Which Thora's quick impatient movement felled :

Her sleeve rushed up in flame, but she was saved ;  
Thanked God first, and sought out her mother next.  
And Adela said only, "Heedless girl !  
Dear Edna has been shaken with alarm."  
Her firstborn's paltry fear weighed with her more  
Than the dire peril of her youngest child.  
Poor Thora, youth's unbridled hopes immersed  
In measureless despair, laid down her head  
On the closed Greek books in her father's room ;  
Thought of her visioned volume, dedicate  
To him who led her from the common plain  
Toward breezy uplands of a larger life ;  
And sobbed, " Oh, father, not one word of love  
From thee, who hadst my heart before all else,  
Shall I hear ever on this side the grave !  
Mother and sisters love me, I must fear,  
As little as they understand my soul.  
So I have only God, vast, distant Love,  
Needing a mirror in some human heart  
Ere we can feed our hungry hearts withal."

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## Part IV

### *WOMANHOOD*

THORA at twenty-five was one of three  
Peopling the nest that once had compassed seven.  
The gallant Walter perished, face to foe,  
Widening the wide bounds of Britannia's rule ;  
Adela, two years widowed, mourned him sore.  
Vernon had cure of distant village souls,  
Living in credit days with no strong hue.  
While of his sisters one was wedded wife.  
Hugh, with fat rentroll, sought a gentle thing  
To soothe his feebleness of gathering eld ;  
A pretty thing to adorn with all his gold ;  
A thing to fondle by his calm fireside ;  
And found all these in Dona, and for these

Gives name and lands and rich attire, and adds,  
Since woman must some helpless fondling have,  
A milk-white greyhound in a silver chain.  
Rachel preventing Leah chafed the soul  
Of Edna, and she fastened on a youth  
Who paid a casual homage at their house,  
And let them say that she had been betrothed.  
Thora was no more the unlessoned girl,  
Openly scorning common social aims ;  
Talking of Pallas with an aged don  
Beneath the pitying eyes of kith and kin ;  
Beating her foolish head 'gainst the blind bricks  
Of dull convention that closed in her life.  
She had reached after many things withheld,  
Groping towards ideals far too vast  
For her embrace, and yearning to outsoar  
On wings of knowledge the confining wall.  
Now, slowly learning that to stretch out wings  
Were swift uncertain gain, so we must climb,  
Being unwinged, and footsore win our way,

By brake and cliff and bog to baffling peak,  
If none can show us where the paths are cut ;  
She climbed alone, in patient diligence,  
Climbed with no boisterous blazon of her toil ;  
But as we curtain o'er the imaged face  
Of one we love, that those share not our sight  
Who share not our affection, Thora hid  
Her soul, and conned the art of trivial chat ;  
Crude scorn of marriage passed her lips no more ;  
She shrank from common banter on that theme,  
As she had shrunk from those who laid rude hands  
Upon the Holy Table of the Lord.  
She shunned unlikeness to her kind in aught ;  
Proving more like them than she guessed one day.

    Recused on her birthday morn by countless birds  
Twittering " Good-morrow " to the earliest sun  
Of June, from slumbers healthful as their own,  
She from her open window watched the trees,  
Swaying untarnished branches each on each,  
And drew in draughts of fragrant morning air,



Till her whole being pulsed with joyous life.  
The lawns, that drank their fill of grateful dew  
Through the short night, sparkled with countless  
    gems

As the sun sifted out his threefold light  
To countless dewdrops, and the hidden lark  
Poured forth a torrent of wild melody ;  
No wordless song, but echoing one name,  
The sweetest human lips can utter—Love.  
“He loves me.” Dare she dream so bright a  
    dream,

Throbbing from head to foot with ecstasy,  
First rapture of a holy, happy love,  
Too vague to utter even in prayer to God ?  
Yes, there was one for whom she lifted up  
The veil that wrapped her from the common gaze :  
Gerald, her father's kinsman, kin in mind  
As in his noble lineage, lately come  
From travel earned by gleaming college palms.  
She felt his eyes upon her in a throng,

And grew more beautiful beneath his gaze.  
She found him waiting patient at her side  
For chance of talk beyond the weary round  
Of "He did," "She said," "They were surely here."  
Gossip of mere acquaintance was not theirs,  
Nor trifling flattery 'twixt man and maid,  
But earnest converse of two human hearts,  
Wherein God placed eternity, as saith  
Kohleleth : \* how to find out conquering truth,  
So that our life be more than meat, our joy  
Greater than ease. She told him that she yearned  
To sit at Plato's feet ; and then he brought  
His well-worn Plato, and to "Phædo" turned,  
Asking her to accept a bust of him  
Who into the profound of human thought  
Had dropt so deep a plummet ; bringing too  
A porcelain toy for Edna, and vague words  
Of pleasant evenings spent with Adela ;  
Worshipping still the virgin pride which made

\* Ecclesiastes iii. 11. Revised Version.

More clamorous love presumption. Thora found  
Converse with him the richest she had known  
Since Austen's cultured gentleness had passed  
Out of her life, and reckoned up the days  
To promised sojourn 'neath his mother's roof.  
All else was in a luminous haze that hid  
The fair Manoa whither she drew nigh,  
That golden city some have found on earth,  
That some have scorned, and many sought in vain.  
Till snatch of handmaids' gossip reached her ears  
Touching herself and Edna. "Goods that lie  
Beseeching purchase in the sun and rain  
Are oft unsold, while others are fetched forth  
For pleading buyers from the inner store.  
Miss Thora will be first to wed, and rule  
The castle that she visits ; if my lord  
Has his way she will be my lady soon."

As Thora from her window leaned that morn  
Light fell on much that had been dark before.  
She thought of the loved father she had lost,

Of the cold-hearted mother whom in vain  
She tried to love, and how against her will  
Edna had made her strange. Then dreamed of life  
Lighted by hourly lavished love of one  
To whom she was supreme in all the world.  
Womanhood woke within her as she knew  
'Tis sweet to take and sweeter still to give  
Bounty untold of all the love we hold  
Dammed up for lack of outlet till it seethes.  
" Oh, let me lose myself, to find myself  
In one far greater ! Let me spend my days  
To halve his loads and double all his joys ;  
Till two lives welded each to each shall shape  
Both incomplete unto a perfect whole ;  
Each raising each by mutual love and trust,  
Till both become what each deems each to be.  
Till the lone stream that forced its troubled way  
Through tangled channel and o'er boulders rude  
Glide into the still lake, and happy flow  
Embraced by wider waters than its own."

Souls grow by such new thoughts and such sweet  
dreams,

Though the awaking be to dreary day.

News! He whom Edna claimed as all her own  
Wedded another. Edna gave one cry,

"I have lived long enough," and hid herself

I' the turret chamber. Two hours later came

A scared handmaiden, who had plucked her back  
From the bare ledge whence she would hurl herself.

So saved her for this world a further space

Who had untimely dashed against the doors

That shut out the encompassing unknown,

In midst of which we live our little lives.

Dim doors, whose hinges ever hither turn

To let the dying crowd pass out thereat ;

But never turned they thither that the dead

Come back, save once when One drew nigh to  
them,

The only one of all the sons of men

Who died because He willed to die, since Death

Could never claim Him who was sinless else.  
Then those dread portals fell before His might,  
And souls that fluttered on the threshold passed  
Out into sunlight ; and He filled that realm,  
Where spirits dwell unseen, with such a ray  
From His pure presence that He left it bright  
To all for whom He conquered Death henceforth.

Edna, snatched sudden back to life, returned  
Slowly to reason ; but that maddened deed  
Could never more for Thora be undone.  
See her now proved and humbled in the vale  
Of her decision, when she paced the lawn  
Pondering this letter : " Thora dear, we count  
Upon your promised visit. Come alone,  
If Edna's recent illness leaves her weak."  
Things seen and heard and guessed whirled through  
her brain :

Adela's mother passed from sight of all  
In Thora's childhood ; her abode was veiled  
In vaguest phrase ; nor was she greatly wept



When she deceased, because her body lived  
Too long, a prison-house of aspect drear  
That mocked the purpose of the informing soul.  
The taint of madness oftener passes on  
To children's children than to children ; so  
Dona in dawning womanhood had gone  
To strange seclusion ; 'twas explained at last ;  
Together with that word concerning her,  
Departing bride, " She'll be a childless wife,  
'Tis well." She thought of Edna's wild weird  
ways,

And of the gusts of passion sweeping o'er  
Her own soul, only to be calmed by prayer.  
Now, should she let that seedling plant of love  
Grow till he asked and had, and she should bring  
Upon the honoured house of him she loved  
A curse for dowry? Should he ask in vain,  
And deem her heartless since she could not say,  
" I love not," nor disclose that secret dread?  
The lips of all who knew were sealed with gold.

" Oh, Gerald ! do I love you now so well  
That you must never utterly love me ;  
And must we never meet again, lest love  
Grow up between us irreversibly ? "

She stood as on a Highland ridge that parts  
A smiling pasture grazed by happy flocks  
And set in murmuring woods and waving corn,  
Yellowing 'neath tranquil sunshine, from a moor  
Bare save for horrid rocks, where gathering clouds  
Empty them pitiless on the barren ground.  
Free at that moment, never free again,  
To go down either slope ; her choice of life  
Before her. Then she poured out all her soul  
In throbbing prayer. " O God, our wills are weak,  
Our flesh is weaker than our wills. Give grace,  
And I will dash the untasted cup of joy  
From my dry lips, if 'tis not filled by Thee. "

But Gerald's mother grieved to miss her guest  
And grudged that she must travel forth to please  
Adela's whim for selfish Edna's health.

So Thora made her ready to depart  
For two years' exile, glad to crowd her days  
And leave no space for thought. They brought  
to her

A letter from her girlhood's dearest friend  
As she put out to sea, wherein she read  
Myra in three short months will be a bride.  
" She will go down the sunny side of life,  
While roses pouring o'er the garden wall  
Bend fragrant clusters toward her as she moves  
Amid men's benedictions, in the light  
Of one great love that is her own for aye.  
While I go down the shady side alone  
For evermore, and withered leaflets torn  
From trees autumnal ere the summer ends  
Dance in my path before the stripping wind.  
Oh, let my love for her be strong enough  
To cast out envy ! I rejoice for her,  
Hiding my heart from the harsh world that sees  
In me a scorner of the holiest joys

ght

That fall to woman ; while the years stretch out  
To the blank future, and my surging thoughts  
Die childless, as I die, no kindred mind  
Quickening them into purpose. Once I cried  
In girlhood, I had only God, and longed  
To know His love through human love ; but now  
In unrecorded sacrifice to right,  
I cast away the dearest thing on earth,  
Suffering loss of love for love's sweet sake.  
Then God shall be my All, so He but use  
My life in work for Him and His, and fill  
My craving heart with His unmeasured love."

## Part V

### *FAME*

THORA was thirty-five when she attained  
Her childhood's dream of fame for man's work  
done

And man's reward achieved. There are who hold  
No woman should be sung, whose golden dawn  
Has passed into the greyer sky of noon.  
Rightly, if woman can fulfil her end  
Ministering to the lower self of man.  
If houri for his pastime, let us sing  
Peach bloom and sparkling eyes of earliest youth.  
If squaw to ease him of life's lowlier tasks  
And roast what he hath taken in the chase,  
Sing of her youthful strength and scorn her age.



But if the man and woman are alike,  
Undying spirits lodged in fleshly tents  
That each lift other to a higher life,  
Then added years are added gain for both.  
So we who tell the story of a soul  
Writing its record on an aging face,  
Note peach bloom withering in the taint of that  
Which maketh for unrighteousness, or else  
Transfigured into beauty ne'er attained  
In half-awakened, untaught girlhood's days ;  
Drawn upward by no formless Power for good,  
But by the Being who alone is good,  
And made His creatures unto holiness.

Thora grew homeless when she might have won  
A home for all her days, and wept farewell  
To Austen's study, sweet with memories,  
Gathering her heritage from out its shelves.  
Then wandered with her kindred, wandering still,  
Wherefore they knew not, when to port they  
steered ;

Roaming through many lands with open eyes,  
Learning new races and new languages,  
Waiting for news that, Gerald's fancy spent,  
He made another happiest wife on earth.  
So five years passed, until she stood again  
A stranger in the greatest City's throng,  
Bidden by a friend she made beyond the seas  
To a strange house to meet an unknown  
group.

There, 'mid the clash of music, she o'erheard  
The hostess welcoming her guest of guests,  
"Give me the joy of bringing face to face  
Two clever friends. I trust she still is here."  
And then came tones that thrilled her through and  
through,

"My fair kinswoman. Has she then returned?"  
Louder the music clashed, and through it rang  
A voice, "Stay but a moment till it cease.  
You yet may be the happiest woman born.  
Let not a baseless scruple wreck his life."

That voice prevailed not. From the house she  
passed,  
A lonely woman, lost in London's sea.  
And the world wondered Gerald did not wed.

Then five more uneventful years rolled on,  
And she grew lonelier. Vernon brought a bride  
To an ivied parsonage; and Adela  
Ended her days beside his hearth, well-pleased  
That Edna had attained her goal at last,  
By wedding one younger in years than she,  
Though older than she named herself to him,  
Donning her girlish bridal bravery,  
In days when Thora likewise reached her goal.

She sits among her books, with Plato's bust  
For sole adornment of her busy room.  
Her letters come, kindling her face with joy.  
"My book, the darling offspring of my thought,  
Sells fast, and they commend it; better still,  
It promises to light in this world's gloom

A little candle that the wayfarer  
May bless me for, who else had lost his road.  
Again—and yet again—they ask for more  
From the bold pen that wrote on "Woman's Call,"  
And claimed for her what Time shall yet concede.  
I have done more than I had hoped to do.  
So has God turned my loss to higher gain  
For other women, and I live to prove  
There may be room and honour in the world  
For the unwed whose lives are fruitful found."  
Fair Myra entered as she thus rejoiced,  
Bringing her smallest son and fragrant flowers ;  
" For you must know that praise of Myra's friend  
In all men's lips is Myra's happiness.  
We, who could never think your clever thoughts,  
Are proud a woman thinks them, envying you."  
So Myra ever like the sunshine fell  
On Thora's path, reflecting from her face  
Tranquil felicity of homely life,  
Lived out by those the world will never name ;

Yet envying the famous, not with dumb  
And sullen envy, nearly all blind grief  
You should have that I taste not nor deserve ;  
But generous envy, nearly all pure joy  
Outspoken, that your cup is brimming o'er,  
Be mine or full or empty, since I love  
You, with the love that longs to give, and longs  
That others likewise love and give to you.

Now, while they talked on the exhaustless theme  
Of Thora's book, the child had fallen asleep ;  
Whom Thora gathered in her arms at length,  
And bore, scarce wakened, to his little car.  
Then, when its wheels went echoing down the  
street,

A strangely sudden cloud o'ercast her sky,  
Cloudless an hour ago. So I have seen  
A lake, as gentian blue, as mirror calm,  
Turn in a moment, when the envious grey  
Rolls from the hilltop, into leaden-hued  
And restless ripples. Thora bowed her head,



Weeping the unheeded tears of lonely grief.  
Sudden uplifting often searches out,  
Like sudden sorrow, tracts left unexplored  
In common days. She read herself anew  
In a new light from those blue eyes, half-veiled  
By sleepy lids, that flushed cheek on her face,  
And those warm arms laid trustful on her neck.  
“Envy me! She, to whom that nursling cried,  
'Mother,' and leapt from out my arms to hers!”  
Then waters bubbled from the deepest fount  
Of her emotion, whence the stone was rolled.  
“O Myra, radiant in your growing joy,  
I deemed you happy when your love was won ;  
Yet happier when I met you, new-made wife,  
Amid the chestnuts at Fiesole ;  
Yet happier when the tardy spring had come  
To mild San Remo first, where oft we saw  
That pretty babe whose pale young mother died,  
At sight of whom I marked your beaming face  
Lit with the secret of a coming joy,

Beautiful, beautifying motherhood ;  
Your being ripened by strong love called forth,  
Renewing youth once more as each new babe  
Cried to you in its gladly succoured need.  
While faster than its wont the fleeting bloom  
Of maidenhood we women prize did fleet  
From lips that never knew a lover's kiss,  
And cheeks that dimpled fingers ne'er caressed.  
Mine is an unwept loss, and yet methinks  
One greater than the loss they bade me weep,  
Telling last week of four Septembers past.  
The first when Gwennyth showed upon her hand  
Love's glittering pledge, and playful pity claimed  
For all her sisters, ' Whosoe'er they wed  
The noblest of mankind is mine alone.'  
The second when a plainer pledge turned troth  
To wedlock, and farewell to girlhood came.  
The third when two linked lives made common  
joy  
Over the new life given to their charge.

The fourth when death did part till death is past  
Those whom God joined, and severed for a space  
To knit again the ravelled web of love  
When all is made anew for all whose death  
Is but the portal to a larger life,  
A deeper love and an abiding joy.  
Weep for her! She has been a happy wife,  
She is a blessed mother still, and knows  
Our Lord's own symbol of intensest bliss.  
'Poor Gwennyth!' do they idly say? I cry,  
'Rich Gwennyth!' If I must bemoan a lot  
Let it be Brenda's; note her empty past  
And dreary future, blank of human love.  
A rich man's child reared to be rich man's wife,  
Untaught in aught that teaches, but equipped  
With flimsiest accomplishments for show;  
Drifting from flower to flower in balmy spring  
Of thoughtless youth, until her plumes were  
dimmed  
By fresher butterflies that shared her lawn.

Her father died ; her brother took a wife ;  
She left the spacious home with all its mirth,  
Lived in a little house a narrow life,  
Narrowing each season, tended by a maid,  
Two songsters and a cat for company ;  
The dew of youth and morning all exhaled,  
The chillier dews of evening not yet fallen ;  
Not poor enough to find in daily bread  
A summons to attempt, nor rich enough  
To roam the world in quest of new delights ;  
Ignorance and conventions of her caste  
Cutting her off from joy in enterprise  
Of deed worth doing ; waking morn by morn  
To aimless days ; and longing all in vain  
That she were needed by one human soul.

“ When a man, strong in self-control, lives out  
A single life, owning no woman's love  
Save his inheritance of mother's kiss  
And sister's calm affection, when his lips  
Have never met the warmth of other lips,

Chosen from all the world and wooed and won,  
His love goes out on some great work for man,  
For God's sake and his brother's ; wedding this,  
As did the prophet priest of Anathoth,  
Or Plato, or Saint Francis long ago,  
Or Melanesia's martyred bishop now ;  
Then all men honour his devoted zeal.  
And even if he marries humbler toil,  
And his dull days and strangled cravings prove  
It is not good that man should be alone ;  
None judge his choice of life nor hold him cheap.  
But all will point the ready gibe at her  
Who dies ' old maid,' departing undesired,  
Like Joram, who outwore his people's love.  
Gone is the simple happiness of old,  
When each young maiden was besought of some,  
And each might hope to make a home and know  
A husband's care and children at her knee.  
But now the lads go even beyond the bounds  
Of our world-girdling empire, from the isle

Too narrow for adventure, work, and gain,  
Laying foundations in some virgin soil  
For future homes when unborn maids are wived.  
Meanwhile the maids these wanderers might have  
won

Shrivel at home, like plants in cellars reared,  
Wherein the sun and air can take no joy,  
Their love unclaimed, their lives devoid of aim.  
And modern gaslights shame the tender glow  
Of mediæval lamps that lit the brows  
Of maids with worshipped radiance all their days.  
Ah! those old times when God's world first shook  
off

License of Paganism, as a man  
Shakes off a glittering snake whose guileful tongue  
Plays in his bosom with intent to wound,  
Exalted mere virginity as first  
Foothold to sainthood, and with mystic zeal  
Wove round the Virgin who bore God fine wefts  
Of legend, fair and fleeting as the veil



Of summer gossamer, wherein they saw  
(Fond fancy) fragments of Our Lady's shroud,  
Dropped earthward when she was upborne to  
Heaven,

The crowning day of Christian womanhood.\*

But we have wakened ; these dim dreams are fled,  
And holy wedlock claims its rightful place

As symbol of the mysteries of God ;

With awful obligation, Give away

All that thou hast, and yield thee body and soul,

Heartwhole surrender thou hast vowed to one,

Fearless, undoubting in thine utter trust ;

Then take the untold wealth of unguessed love

That can enrich thy life beyond all dreams.

Christ and His Church are shadowed by such  
bonds.

But loveless life is like a torrent bed,

Barren and dusty, till the prisoned spring,

\* In accordance with this mediæval fancy, "Gossamer  
to be a corruption of "God's mother."

Yearning to lose itself in ocean's deeps,  
Gush sunlit from the heights, and warble down  
The dry defile, making it laugh with bloom,  
Primrose and grass and fern and scented thyme.  
Such might have been my life, and none had  
blamed

Save God's own voice of conscience in my soul.  
Now the harsh world thinks I would dare contemn  
Unoffered blessings, as I pitied once  
The pretty face, light heart, unfurnished head,  
And low ambition of the average girl.  
Are there not tears that soothe and tears that  
sting?

And mine are tears that sting. O mocking Fame,  
Your dazzling phantom lured me once ; but now  
'Twixt me and you a golden childish head  
Tells me that Shakespeare's fame were not enough  
To fill a woman's heart, or match the joy  
A toiling peasant knows whose ruddy babe  
Coos for caresses when her work is done.

And yet there is who casts her babe aside  
To hirelings, wearying of her last new toy,  
So that it grow up one more useless man,  
One more ungrateful mother's lost reward,  
While all the unused passion of my soul  
Lies strangling with abiding sense of loss.  
God, feed the hungry hearts that Thou hast made,  
Or we go starved and feeble all our days !  
Christ, comfort me, who unto one meek Maid  
Once gav'st the purest joy of motherhood  
That ever woman knew on Thy sad earth !”

“ Yes, you have laboured unto weariness,  
Lay pen aside and leave the unquiet town,  
Then health and spirits will again be yours.”  
So Thora took this counsel, and retired  
Whither her father ofttimes loved to go,  
And bade them lay him for his last long sleep,  
In God's calm country, whose slow rivers slip  
By undulating mead and dusky copse.

'Twas evening on the day the faithful keep  
Sacred to Christ, risen from death thereon.  
And Thora worshipped in the little church,  
Beneath the semblance of her ancestor,  
Who poured out gold and blood to serve the King  
When rude rebellion shook the fevered state.  
The murmured music of the evening hymn  
Floats o'er the churchyard from the opened panes,  
And as they leave, glad faces tell of hearts  
Lifted by prayer from earth. The peaceful scene  
Swims in the radiance of the westering sun,  
Till even common things are glorified.  
Then Thora threads, waistdeep in yellowing corn,  
The little path across the hill, and sees  
A village lad and maiden, arms entwined,  
Tasting the Paradise young lovers know,  
As all the woe that grew from Adam's sin  
Were a bad dream they had awakened from.  
While lonely Thora, on whose love none leaned  
Since Austen died, was passing to her grave,

Where love and hate alike are quenched in gloom,  
With none to ask the love she had to give.  
Now came she to a cot beset with clumps  
Of cheerful, homely flowers ; creepers flung  
Bright petals o'er the casement ; in the porch  
Rested a blind and aged village dame,  
Her toilworn hands folded upon her knee,  
In this still sabbath evening of her life.  
And on the doorstep sat three little maids,  
Singing a hymn for childish joy of song.  
" Yes, Jesus loves me," was its glad refrain.  
The love of God had been in Thora's ears  
Since first she learned the simple text with glee,  
And bore the sermon on it, deadly dull,  
Envyng the flies that o'er the tablets buzzed  
And danced while she sat still in the tall pew.  
And in her chamber hung a picture, limned  
By an early master, of the Cross whereon  
God stooped to save, Man lifted up mankind.  
Knowing that this great Love had been, she made

Her prayer at morn and eve ; but the child's song  
Flashed on her as a heaven-sent bird might shoot  
Into a fog-encompassed atmosphere,  
Which only ravens haunted heretofore,  
Its plumage painted by the lavish sun  
Of far-off tropics. To her heart of hearts  
The message reached, and bore her on the tide  
Of high emotion, echoing the words  
Of Shulamith, the humble village maid,  
Besought by the great King of Israel  
(Bright in the undimmed splendour of his youth,  
Whom all men did beseech), for stately neck  
As white as David's tower, soft doves' eyes,  
And feet that shone in Mahanaim's dance,  
The lowly object of a lofty love,  
Fronting that homage, humbly proud to say,  
" Lo, my Beloved is mine and I am his."  
Thora's heart sang : " I go not undesired,  
The infinite Redeemer asks my love,  
And deigns to need the meanest He has made."



## Part VI

### *WHEREUNTO?*

THORA is forty-five, when once again  
We meet the sisters of our lengthening tale,  
Maid, wife, and widow. Edna cries as wife,  
Vainly desiring she were still a maid,  
" May I be widow or he widower soon !"  
Now she had married for the matron's name,  
Ralph to repair his fortunes with her gold.  
Each object was attained ; then, why lament  
That what they sought not was not likewise  
found ?

But if 'tis woman's highest lot to find  
Nobler ideal in a noble real,  
Moulding the real by her faith and hope

And love to that ideal day by day,  
Till latent evil dies and latent good  
Springs forth triumphant ; 'tis her deepest woe  
To sell herself for sustenance or pomp,  
Vowing the utter fealty of wife  
To one scarce known, or honoured not at all.  
If holy wedlock is in Heaven made ;  
This wedlock's fetters must be forged in hell.

Near Hugh's tall mausoleum Dona's days  
Flowed on uncounted in their placid ebb.  
She trod life's highway, worn by million feet,  
With dainty step and delicate garb, and men  
Praised that she walked the lower path so well.  
While Thora flung aside the gauds of ease,  
Breasted the lonely mountain, stumbling oft  
And halting on the rugged, pathless side,  
Yet ever climbing toward the wider view.  
And half the world exclaimed, " Why climb at  
all ?"  
And half, " Why climbs she not more cunningly ?"

Yet she held on and cut a path, and then  
Our sisters followed her, till climbing grew  
A common thing, and one brave life aimed high  
Had lifted higher many another life.  
While in her children's childhood ever young,  
Fair Myra bent again and yet again  
Over the cradle filled with such rich freight,  
Time writ no envious wrinkles on her brow.  
That gracious, gentle woman was a tomb  
For scandal, and a sounding rock for praise.  
Thora stood sponsor to her eldest child,  
The eager Una, sending her at length  
To the College she had share in shaping forth  
And ruling, latest fruit of the new age ;  
Glad that the longings she had longed in vain  
Were satisfied for happier girls than she.  
But Una never guessed her mother lived  
Six months ere Thora saw the light, so worn  
And faded looked the old maid by the wife.  
The autumn of her life drew on, that hushed

The joyous carol of the summer birds,  
Soaring on light wing into clearest heaven.  
And born of August's thirsty heat came forth,  
With restless buzz, myriads of stinging gnats,  
Unnumbered stings of vain regret and buzz  
Of countless petty cares in middle life.  
Youth's dreams die hard, but find a grave at last  
In silence, as the noiseless years move swift,  
Each swifter than the last, till all is still.  
Dusty routine dulls mind and heart, and life  
Grows tame, as the great river's final reach  
Far from the foam and fury of its rise  
Among the hills that look towards the sun.  
She has outlived girlhood's desire to know  
And keen enthusiasm for high thought ;  
She has outlived the hungering to do  
Deeds that should echo down the aisles of Time ;  
And even the craving for the cup of love  
Dashed from her lips ere sipped, the dumb heart-  
ache

Missing man's love to lean on and child's love  
To lean on her, a woman's deepest need.  
She has not what she might have had ; worse  
loss,

She is not what she might have been. They say,  
Marking ungainly harshness in old maids,  
Like o'er-ripe fruit that shrivels up unplucked,  
"None would desire such women." Rather say,  
"Theirs was the unlit sky of solitude.

Such women wedded prove as perfect souls  
As others mellowed by warm suns of home."  
And faded was the vision of God's love  
Shining upon her on that holy eve.

Life's best was not her lot, but hers was much  
Which other women, missing what she missed,  
Possessed not : well-filled purse and wide repute,  
High place, congenial work, and friendly friends.  
So sought she sisters poorer than herself ;  
Ellen, for instance, with her scanty means  
And toilsome life despite her gentle birth.

Thora and she breathed first in one bright June ;  
But she, the village parson's eldest child,  
Made honest effort in a little groove,  
Shut out from much that girls deserving less  
Took as bare right—of culture, luxury,  
Leisure, and adulation—nor complained ;  
Patient bread-winning filling all her days,  
In Myra's cheerful schoolroom mainly spent.  
Until her slender stock of lore and health  
Ran dry, and all her kinsfolk passed away,  
And Myra sent their youngest child to school,  
Finding for her a pension and one room.  
Now thither came, as to a sanctuary,  
Souls held in debt or bondage or distress ;  
Comfortless trouble of the needy won  
Hearing and soothing ; and a benison  
Flowed forth on many whom she humbly deemed  
Were blessing her by visiting her couch.  
Of such was Thora, pointed to by men  
As one who made the new age what it is



Whose "Woman's Call" had proved a powerful hand  
To lift the car of progress from the ruts  
Of time-worn custom, till the Toy and Drudge  
Of centuries become the crownèd Queen.  
Thora was one of many a moving force  
Acting on many ; Ellen for a few  
Was the impelling power of their lives.  
And Thora loved her well, and told to her  
At length, one day, the story of her life.  
Then she who never chose the words that sound  
Sweet to the hearer, murmured with a tear  
And kiss, "'Twas truly, nobly, rarely done.'  
And Thora lived upon that comfort long.

"Honours list headed by a woman : " text  
For a discourse from Thora's facile pen  
Till daylight languished with her thoughts thereon.  
Then she stepped forth, the lines upon her brow  
Writ deep with trace of quest unsatisfied,  
For heartening converse with the gentle friend

Whose pallid face said, "Peace and joy have come  
As inmates, not as passing guests to me."

Ellen in deepening dusk she found alone.

"'Tis double joy to see you on a day

I have not crossed the threshold." "Well I know

Dear friend, whose ailing grieves me to the soul,

That, be it here or with the church's choir,

When twilight comes, you sing your evensong."

"Ay, song indeed, for when I go to God

Praise must prevent petition, as I name

The loving-kindness He hath given me

According to His mercies, finding still

Far more to thank Him than to ask Him for."

(They sat in darkness, talking with hearts bare,

As chiefest friends bare not their hearts in light.

"Ellen, you shame my praise perfunctory.

We both have missed the woman's highest joy ;

Otherwise, life has had few pangs for me,

And many pangs for you. Yet from your lips

A daily pæan of thanksgiving swells,

While I can seldom reach a mere content."

"Is there indeed a worse and better lot,

When all our lots are shaped by Love Supreme?"

"The All-wise Potter maketh not to mar,

But surely we may thwart God's purposes,

Failing to see or heedless of His Will."

"Nay, Thora, you are loyal to our God."

"God's service has been in my lips and thoughts,

But all I tried to do had still been done

To happier issues through a nobler aim

Had I ne'er been. The girlhood of to-day

Grows on the new-cleared soil, but my rash hand,

Plucking up weeds, has haply torn away

Some modest but most fragrant flowers too :

Gentleness, tenderness, meek piety.

They called me learned Thora, but methinks

The meanest woman who has loved and known

Husband's companionship and borne a child

Hath wider outlook upon real life,

Learning in schools whose doors are closed to me.

I, doing good work ill, have hindered those  
Who else had done it well. I fondly dreamed  
God hired me for the service of His world,  
But He may yet disown my faulty task."

"I too have plied for hire through weary hours,  
Until in bondage I found liberty.

The hireling's task and meed were all too mean  
For God to give His servants." Thora said,

"Unriddle this dark saying, O my friend."

"I can but say the lesson God has taught  
Line upon line in simplest words to me,"

Said Ellen. "Know the hireling owns himself,  
Selling his labour at his will for wage.

The bondman cannot sell himself or his ;  
Being purchased by another, all his life

Is ordered for him, all his service due  
When, where, and howsoe'er his owner wills.

O depth of misery when man to man  
Is bondman ! But what height of bliss when we,  
Bought by the blood of the Unspotted Lamb,

Yield ourselves wholly unto God's good Will,  
To use as God can use the wholly given ;  
Leaving us free to give or to withhold,  
Since sovereign will is that which makes us men !  
Now to His greater glory and our joy,  
He works His loving purposes for man  
Through man alone, using the yielded soul.  
Were all His servants given thus to Him,  
Soon all on earth would do our Master's will."  
Said Thora, " Means to accomplish, seen results,  
Are not true measure of our work for God.  
While I have burnished candlesticks and shaped  
More cunning lamps within God's holy House,  
You have made human hearts true ' Ariels,'  
True ' hearths of God,' \* by kindling altar flames  
From fires aglow within you evermore."  
" God's ways are not our ways. When first I gave  
Me wholly unto God, and power asked  
To serve Him more than ever heretofore,

\* Isaiah xxix. 1, R.V.

n !  
He laid His hand upon me and removed  
My only riches, health to earn my bread.  
So I was like the king who cried of old,  
'Lord, I would fight for Thee. But how go forth  
Shorn of the mighty army I had hired  
With all those toil-won talents for Thy war ?'  
And still the man of God said, 'Go. Be strong,  
With God to friend, for He can give much more  
Than all that host to thee.' So has He given  
New wealth of friends, new work of comforting  
Sad hearts with comfort that had heartened me.  
For God is ever better than our hopes,  
And saves us from the fears He puts to shame.  
Give yourself wholly into His dear hands,  
And He will bless you with best work for Him."

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Then Thora went her way and sat alone,  
While epoch-making thoughts whirled through her brain ;  
Till midnight hush had fallen upon the town.  
The archer sleeps not with his bowstring taut.  
So Thora, ere she laid her down to rest,  
gave



Seeking for aught to bear her thoughts away  
From self and daily work and London's air,  
Opened a book at random on this tale,  
From o'er the Atlantic fifty years ago.

“ Two thousand souls throng in the market place,  
Keen buyers and a curious crowd at gaze ;  
And in the midst a maid exceeding fair,  
In the first radiant dawn of womanhood.  
Great eyes whose passionate appeal shines out  
Through lashes on a rich-hued velvet cheek ;  
A tall, lithe form instinct with health and grace.  
Marble one moment, fear has stiffened limbs  
And snatched away her breath ; the next, a tide  
Of crimson shame mantles her queenly neck.  
For know one sixty-fourth of all her blood  
Is African, and for that helpless sin  
Food of those hungry pitiless eyes she stands,  
Sold like a filly or a heifer, mould  
Of flesh and blood for pleasure or for gain  
To whoso pays her price to the harsh hag,

Jealous of her handmaiden's winsomeness.  
That price goes up till none can bid again  
Save two—a short-necked man with forty years  
Of slavery to sin writ on his face,  
Who eyes her like a beast of prey, with skill  
Of serving Satan which the beasts have not ;  
And a young man whose still pale face conceals  
His thoughts upon that peerless damsel's doom,  
Unavenged outrage, unrequited toil.  
She cannot suffer wrong, since cruel taint  
In her proud English blood leaves her no rights.  
He hears the coarse appraisal of her charms,  
Flinching. These traffickers in human woe  
Call themselves Saxons, Freedom's only heirs !  
Call themselves Christ's, released from swaddling  
bands  
Of superstition into broadest day !  
Half his whole wealth is staked upon his bid ;  
The dealer bids again, an evil smile  
Of triumph on his lips ; the trembling girl

Grasps air for aught to let the life-tide out  
From her white side before he calls her his,  
And agonising like a drowning wretch,  
Turns her dark eyes upon the younger man.  
Once more he bids, the dealer leers and flees ;  
And as her buyer o'er her swooning bends,  
The seller says, " Well, you have got her cheap.  
What will you do with your fair bargain now ? "  
Then, with the light of Christ upon his face,  
That true knight answers, " I shall set her free." \*

Next morning Thora rose betimes and went  
To meet Christ in the hush of His own day.  
And kneeling at the banquet of His grace,  
Sighted a summit of the hill of God  
Unseen at lower levels of the ascent.  
" I cried in wayward girlhood, ' God, be mine ;  
God, make me happy, I will serve Thee well.'  
In womanhood, I took the love of God

\* See *Review of Reviews*, September 1891. The incident took place in May 1834, and was related by the Rev. Calvin Fairbanks.

For my rich, satisfying heritage ;  
And from the soils that fed them not I plucked  
My fibres of affection painfully ;  
Praying that they might root in the rich earth  
Of God's great lovingkindness unto me.  
But now, as Shulamith's first rapturous cry,  
'Lo, my Beloved is mine and I am his,'  
Led to a deeper joy and higher life,  
'Lo, I am my Beloved's and his desire  
Is toward me,' so I learn a better prayer.  
'Give' cannot bring the blessing brought by  
'Take.'

Doubly Thy creature—born Thy child, since Thou  
Art Father of our spirits ; bought again,  
Since Thou art our Redeemer—I am Thine  
By deed of gift I sign and seal to-day.  
Take me and use me where and how Thou wilt ;  
Work out Thy will through my surrendered will.  
Rapt in devotion, Thora hid her eyes,  
But through the reverent quiet of the church

The bitter cry of bartered flesh and blood  
Rang in her ears ; the vision of the mart  
Haunted her eyes, with all once heard or read  
Of wrongs to helpless, dusky sons of Ham,  
Shipped into toilsome exile by the greed  
Of men more savage and more strong than  
they,

Their bodies given to whip and manacle,  
Their souls to dumb revenge and baffled hate  
And lawless impulse, raging uncontrolled  
In men degraded by unlawful bonds.

“ 'Tis one of earth's huge sorrows, buried now.  
Ere I was born their cry went up to God,  
Who hates oppression, and defends the poor.  
Loudly He spake to Britain, and she rose  
And cut that cancer from her commonwealth.  
Later, a sister-nation purged the blot  
By awful war of kin 'gainst kin, in strife  
Righteous as when the sons of Levi ran  
Through Israel broken loose and likening God

To ox that eateth grass, with blades whence  
dripped

Their brethren's blood for sacrificial gore.

But is not Britain to dark Africa,

Which she made darker, deep in debt henceforth?

And what is darkness, for mankind or man,

Save God unknown, sin seated on the throne,

Here fair and cultured, foul and savage there,

With misery and death for its viziers?

Light and salvation, for mankind or man,

Is God known, and His will that all were saved

From sin, known also. Sin, with its desire

Towards man's ruin, coucheth at the door,

But Christian man or state rules over it,\*

For Christ and righteousness are on the throne.

What part of Britain's debt is paid by me?"

So Thora asked "Who goes to Africa

To disannul her covenant with death?"

And stilled her heart's importunate appeal

\* Gen. iv. 7, R.V.



Filling their hands with gold for their crusade.  
Then, waking as from dream to daily work,  
"Uses of higher culture claims my pen.  
They say the world is over full to-day  
Of learned women. Where can all find scope  
Whom culture goads to storm the towers of  
thought?"

She halted, as she sought for a reply.  
Then came the summons, "Hear what God has  
wrought  
Through heralds whom your gold sent on their  
way."

She followed secretly her secret gift,  
Not daring to believe that those who tread  
In footsteps of the honoured Twelve to-day  
Are more than untaught, misled fanatics.  
The world knows not its heroes, and the Church  
Blinded by dust of strife has failed to see  
How Christlike 'tis to seek the furthest lost.  
But how they shamed her poor, unworthy thoughts,

Those heroes, telling the unvarnished tale  
They knew not for heroic, of men's hearts  
Hungering for God and satisfied in Christ,  
And witnessing anew for His great Name,  
y lives transformed and households born again.

She heard of perils faced in dauntless quest  
Of souls, and cried, "Oh, would I were a man,  
To do and dare and suffer thus for God!"

She heard of true yokefellows to these men,  
Women who laboured in the gospel too.

And cried, "Would I were young and could go  
forth!

Life were worth living unto such an end."

She heard appeal, "Come, give ye to the work  
Not yours, but you. We need more men to  
preach ;

Yet more we need the women to instruct  
Women and children as they only can.

We need the vigorous youth for enterprise,  
The ripe experience that may ease our toil

By care and counsel, Here is work for all."  
Thora bowed head, "I am Thine handmaid, Lord  
Tell me if I can serve Thee better there  
Than here, and I will go forthwith for Thee."  
Then in her heart a still small voice spake thus :  
" Daughter, to whom no ties of home were given  
Thou meekly tookest here the second place.  
But thine shall be the bliss of following now,  
Unhindered by such ties, the conquering Lamb  
Whitherso'er He goeth, and to thee  
God will restore the years the locusts ate  
Of vain ambition and of vain regret.  
Thus working for His world, that needs the aid  
Of all His true ones, life's best happiness  
Unselfish labour to a glorious end  
Is thine, and thine the everlasting name  
Of builder of the human House of God."

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## Part VII

*REST*

EVENING is sweet when all the western sky  
Flushes in farewell to the sun, and winds  
Sweep lightly o'er the treetops ; all is still  
Save drowsy cattle lowing homeward bound,  
And twittering birds choosing out twigs whereon  
To ruffle up their bosoms for repose.  
And eventide is sweetest when the day  
Knew cloud and fog, rough rain and cutting blast.  
So sweet was Thora's eventide, which ends  
This tale of one of many unwed lives  
Lived in our midst, lighted by no romance,  
No glow of passion, blazing suddenly  
To ecstasy, then flickering to despair.

When the world knew how she had journeyed  
forth

They doubted, then they wagered she'd return  
In six months, armed with matter for a book  
To take the town by storm : but on she stayed.  
And then two ancient gossips shook their heads,  
"Know you not how her mother's mother died ?  
'Tis maddest freak of a mad family."

What the world said had never weighed with her,  
And now 'twas less than nothing. On her way  
She went ; the world went likewise on its way,  
Forgetting soon that she had ever been,  
For hers was service bringing no renown.  
'Twas she whose healing skill brought back from  
death

Two pioneers who spent themselves too soon  
In their young faith and all-adventurous zeal ;  
And they were makers of a Christian state  
Hereafter, which amazed the curious world.  
Twas she who eased the cares of motherhood

For the brave helpmeets of those pioneers.

Twas she whose pen, none of its cunning lost  
Now it was wholly God's, wrote home the tale  
That stirred the hearts of Christian men to give  
Themselves and theirs to battle in the van ;  
That stopped the mouths of godless cavillers,  
Whose ill reports of Christ's great work abroad  
Battened on ignorance and apathy.

Now, her hair whitened, and her strength dried  
up

By tropic suns, she only mourns that youth  
Knew not the joy of offering to this cause,  
And winning store of love unknown before  
As friend and counsellor of all that band.  
Nor went she songless. Love must ever sing.  
Full chorus in the new-clad woods of June  
Yields when they don their deepest green, a while  
Before they blaze upon their funeral pyre,  
To the bright warble of the robin, heard  
When lordlier songs are hushed in harvest time.



Such was the song of Thora's life, for such  
The love of childless woman for a child.  
Two precious children shared her heart of hearts,  
Both at the font were held by her to seek  
Admission to Christ's flock ; her daily prayer,  
As fervent as a mother's, rose for them.  
One was a lovely blue-eyed English girl,  
With hair like fairest silk from new cocoons,  
Lapped up in luxury since first she breathed,  
For she was Gerald's firstborn. Twenty years  
And more he waited for his heart's first love ;  
But then his kinsfolk said, " You, brotherless,  
Go heirless. Shall your ancient name die out ? "  
So Gerald asked for Una, newly come  
From college. Yes, her world has learned to say,  
" Let women study what they will, unblamed."  
Unlike the world upon whose closed doors  
Of culture Thora once had knocked in vain.  
Then pretty Una's heart and head made Home  
A gracious word for Gerald day by day.

“Let Cousin Thora name our child,” she said,  
“And call her home for the babe’s baptism.”  
So Thora took the hand she had not clasped  
For five-and-twenty years, and knew herself  
As white-haired woman happier than the girl  
Who dreamed of love that far-off summer morn.  
“Know Africa is heir to all my gold,  
But little Thora’s be the rest of mine,  
And God’s best blessing dwell on her and hers.”  
She pled for Africa in words that reached  
Hearts never reached before, and turned to go.  
And when she gained her equatorial home,  
They claimed her mercy for another babe,  
Telling this tale to her compassionate heart :—  
A fettered gang pursued their painful way,  
Most wretched journey to more wretched goal.  
A week before, hunters of human prey  
Had burst upon their village and had slain  
Stalwart and sick and aged, leading off  
The helpless crowd of women, lads, and babes,

In one long line of sad captivity,  
Towards the coast, where all were sold as slaves  
That had not died by reason of the way.  
One woman, newly widowed, bore her babe,  
And to her clung another child bereft,  
Whose mother bled on his dead father's breast  
In yonder smoking homestead. As her steps  
Faltered, the Arab driver of the gang  
Muttered, "Her strength suffices not for two.  
The child sells better than the babe." So snatched  
Her nursling from her, hurling it afar  
Like refuse to the tangled jungle's heart.  
Frantic, the fettered mother sprang on him,  
And vexed at her polluting heathen touch,  
He smote her to the death—one more sad soul  
Dying in utter darkness in God's world,  
Because His servants let the devil reign.\*

\* The Rev. Herbert Clarke (Universities Mission) tells this story. The Arab, however, slew the child with a stone instead of throwing it into the jungle.

Our heavenly Father heard the outcast's wail,  
And guided succouring Christians to the spot.  
So in the same kind arms that lately held  
The dainty Lady Thora, that black babe  
Took refuge. Him she called Nathanael—  
That is, in Hebrew tongue, "the gift of God."  
When he laid palm to palm in childish prayer  
Beside her knee, giving her more and more  
The strong impulsive love of his hot race,  
She wept, but not the bitter tears once shed  
O'er golden-headed Eric. Tears of joy,  
Praying he might prove guileless and be blest  
To all his tribe ; and thus it came to pass.  
Her mind, enriched with many-coloured spoil,  
Trained his mind, not less able than her own,  
Until he proved to a gainsaying world  
That God respects not persons when He gives  
Powers that sway the hearts of other men.  
He learned and taught and laboured in the Lord,  
Till as "a godly and well-learned man,"

He in the stately Minster bowed his head  
And rose chief shepherd of his distant flock ;  
To build on soil where the white man had laid  
Foundations, as the white man cannot build ;  
That savage Africa be won to Christ  
And sweet civility by words which won  
Britain, as dark ten centuries ago.

But Thora only saw that day by faith ;  
For when her work was done God called her home.  
The night wind moans amid the kingly palms,  
Stirring their shadowy crowns, and earth revives  
Faint from the blazing day and stifling blast  
Across the desert sands. The damp mists rise  
From steaming, sodden undergrowth that chokes  
The boundless, pathless forest ; all its trees  
Strangled in the embrace of wandering vines  
And thorny creepers, binding bough to bough,  
And flinging meshes of tough greenery  
Athwart the single wriggling track that led  
To the lone mission-house where Thora lay.

Her comrades slept the broken sleep that comes  
To arduous toilers even in this hot land ;  
The howl of the hyena questing prey,  
The fitful gnawing of the audacious rat,  
The whirr and thud of distant gongs that made  
Night hideous, keeping hideous things at bay,  
Tortured her ears as she tossed to and fro,  
Too spent with thirst and weakness even to pray,  
Nearing the last hour of her earthly life,  
All her soul going out in one desire :—  
“ Oh, for a glimpse of dewy turf alert  
With laughing daisies, for a single waft  
From hawthorn hedge or thymy slope, before  
I close my eyes and ears for aye, where all  
Is strange, save the white moonbeam and the sob  
Of the dear sea, whose distant soothing plash  
I hear as its long roll comes slowly in !  
The one vast sea, that washes with bright waves,  
Brimful of life, the shores of all the world ;  
Great highway of the nations, that at last



Brings face to face all those whom God hath made  
Brothers, to serve each other ; deep and wide  
As is the Love of Him at whose behest  
Its tides move ceaseless, singing happy songs  
To peaceful night beneath the moon's calm sway."  
Her thought flies back to radiant dreams of youth  
By moonlit seas, when life's untrodden path  
Seemed endless, which had proved so strait and  
brief.

A headstrong girl, she lifted heart to God,  
As eaglets to the great sun lift their eyes,  
Yet in the nest, and knowing they must go  
Sunward, but never having spread their wings ;  
And cried, " Give knowledge, and I ask not love ;  
Let its red roses bloom on other brows.  
Give me to know Thy wisdom and Thy works."  
The proud petition of a hungry mind.  
In womanhood, her heart had gauged its need,  
Knowledge could never fill it ; yet in strength  
God-given, she renounced what she had prized

Beyond all else. Lifted above herself  
By sense of sacrifice, she lived to raise  
Her sisters, shaping forth ideals new  
For the unwed whose lives were nobly lived.  
Then came the bitter, unexpected hour  
Of impotent regret and vain desire ;  
And now she cast herself on God indeed,  
As eagle casts himself on yielding air,  
Such trust the only path to his bright goal,  
And knelt beneath the Cross to seek His love  
Who died to win us grace and benison ;  
So His gifts satisfied her heart a while.  
Again it hungered on its self-sought way,  
Until she learned to ask no other gift  
Than grace to give to Him who giveth all,  
And went forth for the gospel's sake, and His,  
To taste pure joy in seeking His lost sheep.

And now in His good time she dies. Strength  
fails

And thought drifts feebly on. "Methinks I stand

At last beside a misty sea alone.

The low-hung clouds hide from my stedfast gaze

All save the waves that break upon the shore,

Murmuring : not a sound save seabird's scream.

I go alone whither my fathers went.

Behind me lie the sunny meads and cots

Where once we nested, and the rugged hills

My daring youth strove up, the shadowy  
streams

Where I lay weary ; all the sights and sounds

That made my life for ever far away.

And as I face the unknown sea, a voice

Whispers, 'Tis shoreless.' As that lonely sail

Slips from my gaze in rolling fog, I pass

Out into nothingness : the fair, fond dream

Of life beyond this life will melt away

With tinkling church bells gathering living men

To dream it still. O last perplexing doubt !

I fought thee once in mail of evidence,

Creed tested, book inspired, and witness given,

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Armour too heavy for my weary frame  
To carry now. I know not what is true.  
But I know Him, the Truth, who led me on,  
Through all the tangled, devious path of life.  
And in His holy keeping my faint soul  
Is safe, till darkness break in perfect Light."

THE END.



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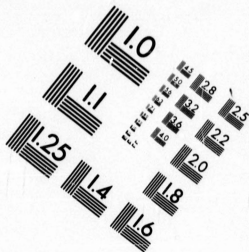
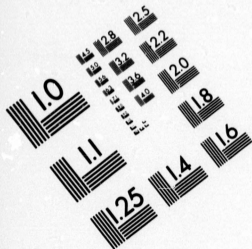
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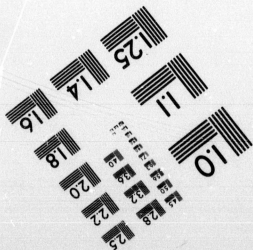
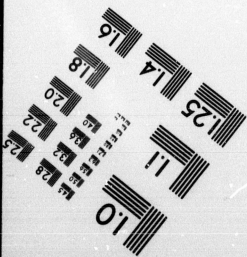
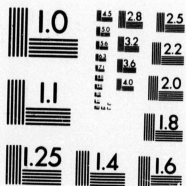
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