

NANNIE NICOLSON.

Ou, Jenny, she is fair an' braw,
An' Daisy fu' o' lovin' wiles;
Then Mary has a broo o' snaw,
An' lips an' cheeks just made for smiles.
I lo'e the three wi' a' my will,
For roun' my heart their spells are thrown;
But there's anither dearer still,
My bonnie Nannie Nicolson!

I like to look on Effie's face,
Where spring an' simmer wed their beams;
An' Annie sweet in stately grace,
She moves through a' my wauken dreams.
I lo'e the five, though weel I ken
That I can only wed wi' one.
O, tell me where it a' will en',
My bonnie Nannie Nicolson!

The sheep may wan'er where they like,
Or at dyke-sides lie doon an' dee;
My faithfu' collie, honest tyke,
He won'ers what's gane wrang wi' me.
I've lost mysel' amang them a',
I wish this weary life were done;
O, come to me, an' set me free,
My bonnie Nannie Nicolson!

A BALLADE OF TOBACCO SMOKE.

WHAT fretting loads we mortals bear
Through life, whose fading rainbows mock
And Time, who drives a splendid pair
Of steeds he never will unyoke,

A BALLADE OF TOBACCO SMOKE

Sweeps his lean fingers through our hair,
He scarcely leaves a decent lock,
Yet chide him not, if still he spare
The dreams seen through tobacco smoke.

We each must have our little care
To add by contrast to our joke,
A laugh that spreads in vain its snare
To catch the lips of solemn folk.
Well, let us walk through all the fair,
And watch the crowds that sway and shock;
They follow what we see elsewhere—
The dreams seen through tobacco smoke.

Dreamers of dreams in ships of air,
Whose keels have never entered dock,
I wish you may have sounder ware
Than did Alnaschar when he woke!
Statesmen, when strife is high, forswear
For half an hour the wordy stroke,
I fain would hint of better fare—
The dreams seen through tobacco smoke!

ENVOI.

Prince, when you weary of the chair
From which you govern realms and folk,
Your faithful bard would have you share
The dreams seen through tobacco smoke.

WE ARE THE SLAVES.

We are the slaves of those that died
A thousand years ago;
We walk in all our little pride,
We walk and do not know.

WE ARE THE SLAVES

Dead hands are still within our hands,
They lead us on and on;
And never nearer do they stand,
Than when we are alone.

They give us thoughts, they give us creeds,
Born of a distant day,
And highest gifts for highest needs,
We cannot fling away.

They build an unseen wall around,
And though we do not know,
We walk within its narrow bound,
That hems us as we go.

Some stronger spirits that burst out,
And seek another shade;
They come at times with half a doubt,
To see the wreck they made.

How strange it is, that, far and wide,
And wander as we will,
Dead men still stand on either side,
To grasp and mould us still!

A CITY REVERIE.

HERE in the city as I sit,
The twilight filling all the room,
I dream, and as my fancies flit,
They weave this picture on their loom:—

A little hamlet, clean and fair,
On either side soft green-clad hills,
And on their foreheads, here and there,
A rocky pathway for the rills;

A CITY REVERIE

A hamlet of a single street,
From end to end the children play,
And workers sit, for rest is sweet
After the labour of the day.

A river in the Western beam
Turns silver as it murmurs on;
I hear its music, and I dream,
For boyhood mingles with its tone.

And more than boyhood—youth is there,
And years of toil upon the line;
But yet to me those years were fair
And sweet with what of song is mine.

For all behind the little town,
Four threadlike metals glance and gleam,
Where, hourly, thunder up and down
Swart genii of the land of steam.

They roar and rush in wild desire,
And, moaning in their deep despair,
Belch forth from hearts of molten fire
Smoke-pythons to the shaking air.

What marvel, then, that I was stirred
Within that narrow clanging clime;
That through my songs there should be heard
The ring of wheels within their rhyme.

The twilight deepens on apace,
The vision fades away from me;
But yet another takes its place,
I look, and this is what I see:—

A church and churchyard on the hill,
Where the white sentinels are seen
Guarding the dead that sleep their fill
Beneath their little tents of green.

A CITY REVERIE

A sacred spot to me, for there,
Beside a single thorn, the dust
Of those I held as good and fair
Sleep on in perfect love and trust.

They took their youth to higher lands
That mortal eye has never seen;
I cannot reach them with my hands,
Or whisper to them what has been.

I only know that, far apart,
They cannot share my hopes and fears;
That somewhere heart may answer heart,
That theirs is not an eye for tears.

So let them sleep; the grasses grow
Above them; they sleep not alone;
And sweet that sleep would be to know
A mother's dust is with their own.

For she, too, wearied, fell asleep,
And rests beside them as was meet,
For after eighty years the deep
Long silence of the grave is sweet.

I, too, can see, with fears that haunt
From out the years that are to be,
A dull, cold light that falls aslant
A grave that will be made for me.

So be it, for the shadow slips
That muffles all, and death above,
A smile of pity on his lips,
Shakes dust upon the dreams we love.

And then we pass to join the dead,
To share the silence which they crave,
While the great world with iron tread
Roars on and never heeds a grave.

A CITY REVERIE

Away with visions! let them sink;
Weak moments have their weaker thought,
And weakest of them all to shrink
In fear, nor front our common lot.

The city stirs: outside I hear
The passionate fervour of the street;
It comes like music to my ear,
O, life is strong, and life is sweet;

And there its thousand pulses, rife
With vigour, ring their perfect tone,
I, too, must mingle with that life
That I may strengthen all my own.

LANGSYNE, WHEN LIFE WAS BONNIE.

LANGSYNE, when life was bonnie,
An' a' the skies were blue,
When ilka thocht took blossom,
An' hung its head wi' dew,
When winter wasna winter,
Though snaws cam' happin' doon;
Langsyne, when life was bonnie,
Spring gaed a twalmonth roun'.

Langsyne, when life was bonnie,
An' a' the days were lang,
When through them ran the music
That comes to us in sang,
We never wearied liltin'
The auld love-laden tune;
Langsyne, when life was bonnie
Love gaed a twalmonth roun'.

LANGSYNE

Langsyne, when life was bonnie,
An' a' the warld was fair,
The leaves were green wi' simmer,
For autumn wasna there.
But listen hoo they rustle,
Wi' an eerie, weary soun',
For noo, alas, 'tis winter
That gangs a twalmonth roun'.

IN MEMORIAM.

The Rev. John Donaldson, M.A., Kirkconnel.
“*Ave Atque Vale.*”

A BROODING quiet rests to-day
On all the well-known hills around;
Spring lingers slowly by the way,
Like one who listens for a sound.

In front she sends a messenger,
A softer feeling through the air,
And in bright nooks beloved of her,
She plants a primrose here and there.

The earth is waiting for the life
That stirs to-day, and not in vain;
The promise of the spring is rife
With consecrations of the rain.

And here once more, as in a dream,
I stand and watch the sunshine glance
Upon the ripples of the stream
That glides and murmurs by the manse.

But deep upon the Pastor's Pool
A sense of loss and shadow lies;
To me this sweet spring day is full
Of death and all its mysteries.

IN MEMORIAM

The manse is silent; not for him
Spring with her wand of wondrous spell;
He sleeps amid the silence dim—
The good gray head we knew so well.

The dear, old pastor, kind and wise,
Large-hearted, full of quiet grace,
The kindness within his eyes,
The sympathy upon his face.

The old-world courtliness of speech,
The tender spirit quickly stirred;
The large experience that could teach,
And claim for all a kindly word.

Broad as the Master whom he served,
And tolerant as the summer air;
The pity that nor failed nor swerved
Was with him, and was always there.

High culture born of classic lore,
A richer culture of the heart,
A quiet scorn of aught that wore
The mean device of idle art.

Through all these gifts and learning ran,
Deep down and in a simple way,
The manliness that made the man,
As light completes and makes the day.

Such was our friend we shall not see,
Yet sweet the friendship that has been;
I speak to him—he speaks to me
Across the grave that lies between.

To-night the manse receives its dead,
To-night his slumbers will be fair;
To-night around that good gray head
The darkness will be sacred there.

To-morrow with his kindred dust
His own shall lie; the grass will grow
Above him; earnest of that trust
And faith he held that sleeps below.

Around him, and beneath the stone
Whereon their simple name appears,
In rain and sunshine slumber on
The dead of those long fifty years.

He stood beside them when their brow
Grew white beneath the shadowy hand
Of that last terror—death, and now
He comes to join their silent band.

And he will sleep with them through all
The seasons as they come and go;
Spring, blushing as her footsteps fall,
And winter with his drifts of snow.

The years will wax and wane, and bring
Their breathing space of Sabbaths still;
But other voices then will sing
Within the church upon the hill.

And stranger forms will press the grass,
Where headstones mark the dead below,
Or read, half careless, as they pass,
The dim remembered names they show.

Change, change in this mysterious din
Of human life that smiles or grieves;
Time sitting at his loom takes in
New colours in the web he weaves.

So be it; but the years in store
May bring whatever is most meet;
But we behind shall see no more
His gracious presence in the street.

IN MEMORIAM

And I, his friend, no more shall hear
The rich deep music of his speech,
Except when Fancy cheats the ear
By placing it within my reach.

Shall never see his kindly eyes
Light up with welcome; for the last
Farewell is taken; darkness lies
On him and them, and all is past.

Henceforth the churchyard on the hill,
Dear to us all, and pure and fair,
Shall in our hearts be dearer still
Because the Pastor slumbers there.

THE HOUSE OF THE SINGING BIRDS.

I SAT in the house of the master,
With the Pentland Hills in view,
And in at the open window
The light of summer shone through.

Our talk was of singers and sages,
But ever through all our words
There ran, like the sweetest of music,
The twitter and song of the birds.

The room was alive with their singing—
Then what was our speech to theirs?
For they sang without our sorrows,
They sang without our cares.

And one on the master's finger,
He piped the sweetest of all,
In his heart was the joy of summer,
In his voice its madrigal.

THE HOUSE OF THE SINGING BIRDS

And I said to myself, "O, poet,
The songs that I hear from thee,
Are those that I yearn and strive for,
But their music is hidden from me.

"I stand on ways that are trodden
With the weary tramp of feet;
And the hollow sound of their marching
Have made my own less sweet.

"For I hear, not the swell of triumph,
Nor the eager shouts of my kind;
I only hear the murmur
Of those who have fallen behind.

"For I, too, linger and listen
And dream, while far ahead
The heavy columns are marching,
But behind are the sick and the dead.

"My songs have therefore the echo
Of the weary ones who lie
By the wayside, watching the columns
That are daily marching by."

But that bird on the master's finger,
That tiny feathered thing,
Was the best of all the poets,
For he sang as they cannot sing.

In his voice was the throb and rapture
Which they struggle in vain to reach,
For their's but bear the burden
That is under human speech.

They sing, but what is their singing?
And what are their paltry words
To the music that had no sadness
In the house of the singing birds?

Oh, what would I give for the music
That would chase all sorrow away,
As that bird's on the master's finger,
And to sing as he sang that day!

MAY SONG.

COME let us lift our voice, and sing
A song to greet the May,
When all the woodland echoes ring,
And light and shadow play.
The grass is springing at our feet,
The fleecy cloud is seen,
Then let us sing a song for May
When all the fields are green.

A thrill of life is in the air,
Whose breathing is the wind,
It comes and goes, and everywhere
A music stays behind.
A thousand leaves burst into leaf
Where late no bud was seen;
Then let us sing a song for May
When all the fields are green.

The spirit of the May is here—
It walks from place to place,
And where it rests its unseen feet
A flower upturns its face.
The joy of life and love is rife
To crown her summer's queen;
Then let us sing a song for May
When all the fields are green.

TOSHIE NORRIE.

O BONNIE Toshie Norrie
To Inverard is gane,
An' wi' her a' the sunshine
That made us unco fain.
The win' is cauld an' gurlly,
An' winter's in the air,
But where dwells Toshie Norrie,
O, it's aye simmer there!

O, bonnie Toshie Norrie,
What made you leave us a' ?
Your hame is no' the Hielands,
Though there the hills are braw.
Come back wi' a' your daffin',
An' walth o' gowden hair,
For where dwells Toshie Norrie,
O, it's aye simmer there!

O, bonnie Toshie Norrie,
The winter nichts are lang,
An' aft we sit an' weary
To hear an auld Scots sang;
Come back, and let your music,
Like sunshine, fill the air,
For where dwells Toshie Norrie,
O, it's aye simmer there!

THE UNKNOWN SINGER.

FAR down within my heart she stands
With downcast eyes and folded hands,
And singing as she sang that day
Within a village far away.

THE UNKNOWN SINGER

Amid the winter wind and rain
A simple song with sad refrain,
Such as a poet sings with lips
Half closed by sorrow's finger tips.
And still the old-world melody
Comes with its burden unto me.
I hear it in the thronging street
And in the sound of human feet.
But who the singer, in whose heart
So much of sorrow had a part,
That all his song with tears was wet,
And dim with shadowy regret?
We know not. What to him was name,
And all the idle voice of fame?
Far better that his song was sung
To haunt the heart and ear and tongue,
As in that village far away
Beneath a sky of gloomy grey,
I heard it with its sad refrain
Amid the winter wind and rain.

IF I WERE SOMEWHAT YOUNGER.

If I were somewhat younger
In years—say twenty-five;
And you a little older,
Then love might surely thrive,
And bind about your brow in time,
The orange flower instead of rhyme.

IF I WERE YOUNGER

My years are in their autumn,
When all the trees are bare;
But yours are in their springtime,
When all is sweet and fair,
And Hope is holding out to you
Her blossoms that are ever new.

Your feet are on the roses,
And mine upon dead leaves;
Your winds have low sweet music,
And mine a sound that grieves;
The blossom of your life is sweet,
But mine — its leaves are at my feet.

A BALLADE OF PIPES.

I LIKE to see in graceful row
My modest pipes upon the wall,
For there they make a dainty show,
And ever ready at my call.
I praise them with a smoker's drawl
To friends, but when they go away
I put them back, and, free from thrall,
I take the ever-ready clay.

Your meerschaum makes the fancy glow
As up the bowl the colours crawl;
But still there is the inward throe
For fear of blotch or sudden fall.
Your briar can stand an overhaul,
Does yeoman service night or day;
I smoke them both, but after all
I take the ever-ready clay.

It matters not what visions grow
From hookahs, whether short or tall,
Chibouques in bearded lips, and slow,
Soul-soothing whiffs for great and small.
Somehow upon the taste they pall,
Whether from Stamboul or Cathay;
Smoke them who will in Turkish hall,
I take the ever-ready clay.

ENVOI.

Friends, when the evening fire is low,
When visions have their best display,
Put past your briar and meerschaum—so—
And take the ever-ready clay.

O MAVIS SINGIN' IN THE WOOD.

O MAVIS singin' in the wood,
When a' the hills are white wi' snaw;
O mavis singin' in the wood,
Though cauld win's wither as they blaw,
I dinna see on hedge or tree
A single bud to herald spring,
Nor fin' the Wast win' touch my cheek,
An' yet ye sing, an' yet ye sing.

O mavis liltin' in the wood,
Ye sing frae where I canna see,
Yet ilka note that swells thy throat
Brings simmer nearer unto me.
The sunshine sweetens roun' the cloud,
The gowans wauken at my feet,
The win' turns round frae East to Wast,
Ye sing sae sweet, ye sing sae sweet.



"O Mavis, Singing in the Wood"

Ewan Geddes, R.S.W.

LINES ON AN OLD COMMUNION CUP.

I LIFT this old Communion Cup,
And, lo!—what visions gather up
Like white clouds on a summer day
When all the winds have fled away!

For I can deem its sacred rim
May have been touched by Balfour grim;
Or Peden, in whose fitful eye
Rose up the light of prophecy;
Or Cameron, ere the heather knew
On wild Aird's Moss a darker hue;
Or Renwick, in the dew of youth,
Before he gave his life for truth.

I hear, far out among the hills,
Whose voices are the lonely rills,
The bleat of sheep, the curlew's cry,
The wail of winds that wander by.
I see a band of earnest men
For whom Truth waves her torch again,
To draw them onward with its fire,
To dare to struggle and aspire.
The simple faith to worship God
In the old ways their fathers trod
Has brought them there; and now they stand,
As outlaws in their native land,
To claim that right, and nature there
Joins in the spirit of their prayer.

I mark their faces stern and keen,
And eyes that flash forth what they mean.
A sword is in each strong right hand,
Ready to leap forth at command.

A Bible in the left—the Crown
For which they fight—and eyebrows down
In that stern will that cannot bend,
But dares and suffers to the end.

I look again, and maidens there
Bloom forth like summer sweet and fair.
Beside their lovers sit, who know
That one swift onset of the foe
Might change the coming bridal wreath
To cypress and the leaves of death.
And sober matrons, in whose eyes
Fear, with its troubled shadow lies,
For husbands, sons, whose blood ere night
May dye the bracken with its blight.

Hush! upward on the moorland calm,
The wailing pathos of the psalm,
And far along the bleak, grey hill
It floats in echoes, then is still.
Hark to the preacher. Eyes are there,
And hearts that hang upon the prayer;
And treasure, as a miser seeks
To hoard his gold, the words he speaks.
O, sacred task, to speak to men
Who turn and search for truth again.
No higher task has yet been given,
Than bearing messages from heaven.

The vision sinks to rise again
On flashing swords and dying men;
Gray heads have fallen low, and eyes
Stare blindly to the passive skies;
The psalm has sunk amid the yell
Of curses from the mouth of hell.

AN OLD COMMUNION CUP

The very Bible on the green
Lies torn and open, and between
The leaves, where promises are fair,
It's owner's blood is resting there.
"How long," was once the cry of old,
When men who rose were stern and bold;
How long? 'Tis not for us to think,
God knows it; let the vision sink.

So ran my thoughts, that, thronging up,
At sight of this Communion Cup,
Made pictures till the inward eye
Saw underneath a lonely sky
Gray-bearded men and matrons trim,
Touch with hushed lips its holy rim,
Till in the spirit Fancy lent
To colour all her dream, I bent,
And, part of all the sacred scene,
Touched with my own where theirs had been.

THE HILLS IN THE HIELANDS.

THE hills in the Hielands are bonnie,
Wi' the licht an' the shadow at play;
An' the winds that mak' redder the heather
Far up on the cliff an' the brae.
The white clouds are floatin' abune them,
Like snawdrifts that never can fa',
The hills in the Hielands are bonnie,
The hills in the Hielands are braw!

The streets o' the city grow weary
For want o' the glint an' the sheen;
An' the wast wind has never a murmur
O' woods that are wavin' wi' green:

THE HILLS IN THE HIELANDS

But O, for the bound o' the red deer,
An' the curlew that bugles to a';
The hills in the Hielands are bonnie,
The hills in the Hielands are brow.

I sigh for the roar o' the river
Far down in the depths o' the glen,
The rush an' the whirr o' the blackcock
As he springs frae the side o' the ben;
For the sweep o' the sky-cleavin' eagle,
Whose wings are the bounds o' his law—
The hills in the Hielands are bonnie,
The hills in the Hielands are brow.

Then, O, to be up in the Hielands,
Where the winds draw not bridle nor stay;
Where the forests are tossing their banners,
An' the breckans are thick on the brae.
Where the loch lies in shadow or sunshine,
Or leaps to the winds as they blaw;
The hills in the Hielands are bonnie,
The hills in the Hielands are brow.

THE OLD FAMILIAR WAYS.

I WALK the old familiar ways
Beside my native stream,
I think of half-forgotten days,
And as I think I dream.

O, early years when Hope was fair,
As any bride could be,
When all the blossom in her hair
I thought would bloom for me.

THE OLD FAMILIAR WAYS

She stood beside me as I wrought
 Within the four-foot way;
She walked beside me as I thought,
 And toil was far away.

I heard her speak; no sweeter voice
 Could touch a human ear;
I heard, and could not but rejoice,
 It was so sweet to hear.

But weary years, long weary years,
 Have come and fled since then;
And I have had my hopes and fears,
 Within the streets of men.

The orange blossom, too, has shed
 Its bloom upon the air,
The wreath that clasped her glowing head,
 Is now no longer there.

Yet, walking in the old dear ways
 This sunless summer day,
A sadness crowns those early days
 I would not wish away.

THE THRUSH.

“WITHIN a mile o’ Edinburgh toon,”
Beneath the gray of an afternoon,
 When the wind was bleak in its blowing,
He sang from the top of a leafless tree
A song of hope and of spring to be,
 And of flowers by the pathways growing.

The gray of the sky that was overhead,
Lay like a veil of the colour of lead
 On the Pentland hills before me;

THE THRUSH

It touched the hills beyond the Forth,
It was east and west, and south and north,
And to pensive sadness bore me.

I thought if I could flutter a wing,
Like that glorious bird, and try to sing,
My note would be one of sorrow;
It would ring with the pain of things that die,
Of the dreams that pass and the hopes that fly,
Of the night and not of the morrow.

But he—he sang when no leaf was seen,
When the hedges had never a breath of green
To hint where the buds would be springing.
Thou fool! he was all to himself and strong,
And though there was summer far down in his song,
He sang for the sake of the singing.

DURISDEER HILLS.

JUST a peep from a carriage window,
As we stood for a moment still,
Just one look—and no more—till the engine
Gave a whistle sharp and shrill.

But I saw in that moment the heather,
That lay like a purple sheet
On the hills that watch over the hamlet
That sleeps like a child at their feet.

O, sweet are those hills when the winter
Flings round them his mantle of snow,
And sweet when the sunshine of summer
Sets their fair green bosoms aglow.

DURISDEER HILLS

But sweeter and grander in autumn,
When the winds are soft with desire,
When the buds of the heather take blossom,
And run to their summits like fire.
And still as we tore through the valley,
With shrieks now and then as of scorn,
Though the uplands were golden with harvest,
And lasses were lifting the corn;
Though the river lay gleaming like silver,
Or dark in the shadows that fell
From trees that were spreading their branches
Like sorcerers weaving a spell,
I saw each and all through the heather
That purple lay spread like a sheet
On the hills that watch over the hamlet,
That sleeps like a child at their feet.

BONNIE BESSIE LOGAN.

O, BONNIE Bessie Logan
Is dainty, young, and fair;
The very wind that's blawin',
It lingers in her hair.
Sae lightsome is her footstep
As she comes o'er the lea;
But bonnie Bessie Logan
Is owre young for me.

O, bonnie Bessie Logan,
The lads are at the stile,
Or half-way up the loanin'
To catch your winsome smile;

BONNIE BESSIE LOGAN

I fain wad be amang them,
If sic a thing could be,
But bonnie Bessie Logan
Is owre young for me.

O, bonnie Bessie Logan,
I saw you late yestreen;
A rose was on your bosom,
And love was in your een.
I doot the lad that pu'd it
Is sure to win his plea,
For bonnie Bessie Logan
Is owre young for me.

I STAND WITH MY SHOULDER TO
SHOULDERS.

(From the German of Schienenleger.)

I STAND with my shoulder to shoulders,
In the long, sad battle of life;
I keep in the ranks of my fellows,
I add my voice to the strife.

The fight is a stumbling onward,
Where each must stand to his part;
Though he feels the warm blood trickling
From an unseen wound in his heart.

At times when the marching is over,
And the tents are pitched for the night,
I can hear the poets singing
Somewhere from an unseen height.

They sing of love and gladness,
Of the golden primal plan,
Of the forging of bosom to bosom,
And the brotherhood of man.

SHOULDER TO SHOULDERS

But I who am weary and footsore,
And faint from the wounds that bleed,
I turn away from their singing,
I am out of touch with their creed.

But still I can hear their music,
Like the rise and fall of the wind,
And it wakens the dim, far voices
Of the years that are left behind.

Then I whisper—"O, ye poets
That stand on the hills of life,
Your eyes are upon the battle,
But ye stand apart from the strife.

"Ye know not the deep, fierce anger
Of the columns that rally and wheel;
Ye are out of the reach of the bullet,
And beyond the sweep of the steel.

"But I who lay claim to no laurel,
I bow to the will of the Fates,
Take my place in the ranks of my fellows
And accept their loves and their hates."

A BALLADE OF "CHURCHWARDENS."

WHY, hang it all, let life go by,
It is but bubbles we pursue;
They burst at last, and then we sigh
And pay what folly claims as due.
We have our time to smile and sigh,
Who knows the false from all the true?
Let us enjoy before we die,
Churchwardens and a friend or two.

A BALLADE OF "CHURCHWARDENS"

For these are things that will not fly
Nor fade, as other pleasures do;
Nay, trust me, for I would not lie—
At least I would not lie to you.
There is a time when earth and sky
Unite—when lovers bill and coo—
A happy time; but let us try
Churchwardens and a friend or two.

Alas! what grief when you descry
White strangers—just a very few—
Among your hair. A friendly eye
Detects them, though you never knew.
Well, let them come, nor look awry,
But trust the gods to pull you through;
They'll do it if they but supply
Churchwardens and a friend or two.

ENVOI.

Prince should your royal eyes espy
A white hair—this is *entre nous*—
Remember you are very nigh
Churchwardens and a friend or two.

THE SECRET OF NATURE.

THE great Earth said to the poet,
"What are your paltry wrongs,
That still you must worship your sorrows,
And fashion them into songs?
"You see your fellows go downward,
You watch the decay of the leaf;
But yours is not the secret,
Or yours would not be the grief.

“ I, too, have many sorrows,
But I let their voices be heard
In the roar of the winds and oceans
When my great strong bosom is stirred.

“ But still in the rush of the whirlwind,
In the sway and surge of the sea,
There is not in all their music
One touch of pity for me.

“ The stern, swift years stride onward,
As a battle column will range,
And ever in front their outposts,
With their miracles of change.

“ The rivers widen their channels,
The seas have their grasp on the land;
I watch the beginnings of planets,
I know and I understand.

“ Men pass as the shadows on mountains,
They come to me for their rest;
I lay them into my bosom,
As an infant is laid to the breast.

“ I lull them into a silence
Till nothing can be so sweet;
They slumber, and are forgotten
In the echoes of other feet.

“ For race follows race, and they vanish,
And I have no sound that grieves;
What tree would blossom and flourish
If it thought of its last year's leaves?

“ I am struck with the lightnings of cannon,
And rent with the earthquake of wars,
I yearn and look upward for pity,
Which can only be had of the stars.

“ I hear the poets wailing,
But my ear is deaf to their moan,
They dimly guess at my meaning,
But their sorrow is all their own.

“ I have a purpose within me,
As a body has the soul,
But I care not to utter its message
When I understand the whole.

“ You watch your fellows go downwards,
You see the decay of the leaf,
But yours is not the secret,
Or yours would not be the grief.”

WE DANCED AT NIGHT IN THE FARM HOUSE.

WE danced at night in the farm-house,
While, fifty yards away,
We could hear the rush of the engines
When the fiddle had ceased to play.

But up got the lads and lasses
With many a merry glance;
And down went they all through the mazes
Of the dear old country dance.

There were gentle whispers and touches
Love only can hear and feel;
And pressure of dainty fingers
In the changes of the reel.

But the old man sat in the arm-chair,
By the fire that was sinking fast;
In his eyes was the look of the dreamer
Who is thinking of the past.

WE DANCED AT NIGHT

And I sat and watched the shadows
Of the firelight sink and flee,
But my thoughts were of him and his dreamings,
And what those dreams could be.

Were they thick with the well-reaped harvest
Of those long, dim eighty years?
The shadows of vanished sunbeams,
The mists of long-shed tears?

The changes all around him,
The homely customs fled;
Of his long past youth and manhood,
Of his friends with the lonely dead?

Were his thoughts of her who was with him
In the flower of her noble life,
Of her who had stood beside him
A true and a tender wife?

Did he feel once more the children
Lay their hands upon his knee?
Did he see in their eyes the promise
Of what each one would be?

Ah, vain is each idle question
That may spring from our hopes and fears;
We cannot know the thinking
Of him who is eighty years.

The old man sat in his arm-chair,
And still on his kindly face
The sinking firelight flickered,
And the thoughts I could not trace.

And still danced the lads and the lasses,
While, fifty yards away,
We could hear the roar of the engines
When the fiddle had ceased to play.

CHARITY.

IN quiet, holy light she stands,
But not for her the folded hands.
She scorns the life that moves apart
In selfish solitude of heart,
But knits herself to tasks that bend
Their footsteps to some noble end.
Here is a life of deeds from which
She keeps the hollow fame of speech!
She cares not for the praise or blame
That whirls, like wind, around a name.
She holds no creed; within her breast
The spirit of Christ hath perfect rest;
And thus she sees with fearless sight
The shadow lying by the light,
Nor turns away, for in her eyes
Dwells the blue calm of summer skies,
Whose soft and tender glories fall,
Not over one, but over all.

AN APRIL AFTERNOON.

A GLADNESS pulses through the earth,
And with a gentle sound
The rain comes down to give green birth
To all the buds around.
It is a tender afternoon,
As sweet as sweet can be,
And all the winds are in one tune—
They sing their songs to me.

AN APRIL AFTERNOON

I see the river full of light
That, gliding slowly by,
Takes onward with it to the sight
A little breadth of sky.

The birds are up and on the wing,
They pipe by glen and wood,
They have but one sweet wish to sing,
Nor wonder why they should.

A tender spirit over all,
Like one vast blessing lies,
And where his unseen fingers fall,
A thousand wonders rise.

For field and tree and waving grass
Flush into green and blow—
The earth is younger than it was
A thousand years ago.

THE SHADOW OF THE PAST.

As of old the river is singing,
The woods are thick and green,
The wind is swaying the branches,
That the light may fall between.

From the grass at my feet are peeping
The sweet forget-me-nots,
Their azure heads are hanging
With the dews of their own pure thoughts.

There is no change in the river,
No change in the green of the tree,
Yet a something that cannot be spoken
Is resting on all that I see.

THE SHADOW OF THE PAST

As of old the river is flowing,
And summer is heard in its tide;
I pace along the footpath,
But a dead man walks by my side.

There is no whisper spoken,
I hear no footsteps fall;
But I know in my heart he is with me
By the silence that settles on all.

In that silence a strange sad longing
For what we can never attain
Wells up, as a streamlet rises
In a sudden fall of the rain.

There is no whisper spoken,
No sound of human speech,
But spirit is touching spirit,
And each is looking at each.

His with the full, clear vision
Of those who have done with the years;
Mine, with the shadow of sorrow,
And the mists of human tears.

Up and down by the river
That flows and will always flow;
Up and down in the sunlight,
With footsteps sad and slow;

Up and down in the sunlight,
That falls on all that I see;
My heart alive with its longings,
And a dead man walking with me.