Two 'medicals'—both 'decent' lads enough—
Hearkened the story out like gentlemen,
And said the right thing—almost looked it too!
Though all the while within them laughed a sea
Of student mirth, which for full half an hour
They stifled well, but then could hold no more,
As soon their mad piano testified:
While in the kitchen dinner was toward
With hiss and bubble from the cooking stove,
And now a laugh from John ran up the stairs,
And a voice called aloud—of boiling pans.

'So soon,' reflected I, 'the waters of life
Close o'er the sunken head!' Reflected I,
Not that in truth I was more pitiful
To the poor dead than those about me were,
Nay, but a trick of thinking much on Life
And Death i' the piece giveth each little strand
More deep significance—love for the whole
Must make us tender for the parts, methinks,
As in some souls the equal law holds true,
Sorrow for one makes sorrow for the world.
A fallen leaf or a dead flower indeed
Has made me just as sad, or some poor bee
Dead in the early summer—what's the odds?
Death was at '48,' and yet what sign?
Who seemed to know? who could have known that
called?
For not a blind was lower than its wont—
'The lodgers would not like them down,' you know—
And in all rooms, save one, the boisterous life
Blazed like the fires within the several grates—
Save one where lay the poor dead silent thing,
A closet chill as who hath sat at night
With love beside the ingle knows the ashes
In the morning.

Death was at '48,'
Yet Life and Love and Sunlight were there too.
I ate and slept, and morning came at length,
And brought my Lady's letter to my bed:
Thrice read and thirty kisses, came a thought,
As the sweet morning laughed about the room,
Of the poor face downstairs, the sunshine there
Playing about it like a wakeful child
Whose weary mother sleepeth in the dawn,
Pressing soft fingers round about the eyes
To make them open, then with laughing shout
Making a gambol all her body's length.
Ah me! poor eyes that never open more!
And mine as blithe to meet the morning's glance
As thirsty lips to close on thirsty lips!
Poor limbs no sun could ever warm again!
And mine so eager for the coming day!
TIME FLIES

On drives the road—another mile! and still
Time's horses gallop down the lessening hill
O why such haste, with nothing at the end!
Fain are we all, grim driver, to descend
And stretch with lingering feet the little way
That yet is ours—O stop thy horses, pray!

Yet, sister dear, if we indeed had grace
To win from Time one lasting halting-place,
Which out of all life's valleys would we choose,
And, choosing—which with willingness would lose?
Would we as children be content to stay,
Because the children are as birds all day;

Or would we still as youngling lovers kiss,
Fearing the ardours of the greater bliss?
The maid be still a maid and never know
Why mothers love their little blossoms so,
Or can the mother be content her bud
Shall never open out of babyhood?

Ah yes, Time flies because we fain would fly,
It is such ardent souls as you and I,
Greedy of living, give his wings to him—
And now we grumble that he uses them!
SO SOON TIRED!

Am I so soon grown tired?—yet this old sky
Can open still each morn so blue an eye,
This great old river still through nights and days
Run like a happy boy to holidays,
This sun be still a bridegroom, though long wed,
And still those stars go singing up the night,
Glad as yon lark there splashing in the light:
Are these old things indeed unwearied,
Yet I, so soon grown tired, would creep away to bed!
A e T O U M N

The year grows still again, the surging wake
Of full-sailed summer folds its furrows up,
As after passing of an argosy
Old Silence settles back upon the sea,
And ocean grows as placid as a cup.

Spring, the young morn, and Summer, the
strong noon,
Have dreamed and done and died for Autumn’s
sake.

Autumn that finds not for a loss so dear
Solace in stack and garner hers too soon—
Autumn, the faithful widow of the year.

Autumn, a poet once so full of song,
Wise in all rhymes of blossom and of bud,
Hath lost the early magic of his tongue,
And hath no passion in his failing blood.

Hear ye no sound of sobbing in the air?
'Tis his. Low bending in a secret lane,
Late blooms of second childhood in his hair,
He tries old magic, like a dotard mage;
Tries spell and spell, to weep and try again:
Yet not a daisy hears, and everywhere
The hedgerow rattles like an empty cage.
He hath no pleasure in his silken skies,
    Nor delicate ardours of the yellow land;
Yea, dead, for all its gold, the woodland lies,
    And all the throats of music filled with sand.
Neither to him across the stubble field
    May stack nor garner any comfort bring,
Who loveth more this jasmine he hath made,
    The little tender rhyme he yet can sing,
Than yesterday, with all its pompous yield,
    Or all its shaken laurels on his head.
A FROST FANCY

Summer gone,
Winter here,
Ways are white,
Skies are clear
And the sun
A ruddy boy
All day sliding,
While at night
The stars appear
Like skaters gliding
On a mere.
THE WORLD IS WIDE

The world is wide—around yon court,
   Where dirty little children play,
Another world of street on street
   Grows wide and wider every day.

And round the town for endless miles
   A great strange land of green is spread—
O wide the world, O weary-wide,
   But it is wider overhead.

For could you mount yon glittering stairs
   And on their topmost turret stand,—
Still endless shining courts and squares,
   And lanes of lamps on every hand.

And, might you tread those starry streets
   To where those long perspectives bend,
O you would cast you down and die—
   Street upon street, world without end.
SAINT CHARLES!

"Saint Charles," said Thackeray to me, thirty years ago, putting one of Charles Lamb's letters to his forehead.—LETTERS OF EDWARD FITZGERALD.

SAINT CHARLES! ah yes, let other men
Love Elia for his antic pen,
And watch with dilettante eyes
His page for every quaint surprise,
Curious of cavare phrase.

Yea; those who will not also praise?
We surely must, but which is more
The motley that his sorrow wore,
Or the great heart whose valorous beat
Upheld his brave unaltering feet
Along the narrow path he chose,
And followed faithful to the close?*

Yea, Elia, thank thee for thy wit,
How poor our laughter, lacking it!
For all thy gillyflowers of speech
Gramercy, Elia; but most rich
Are we, most holpen, when we meet
Thee and thy Bridget in the street,
Upon that tearful errand set—
So often trod, so patient yet!
GOOD-NIGHT

(AFTER THE NORWEGIAN OF ROSENCRANTZ JOHNSEN)

Midnight, and through the blind the moonlight stealing,
On silver feet across the sleeping room,
Ah, moonlight, what is this thou art revealing—
Her breast, a great sweet lily in the gloom.

It is their bed, white little isle of bliss
In the dark wilderness of midnight sea,—
Hush! 'tis their hearts still beating from the kiss,
The warm dark kiss that only night may see.

Their cheeks still burn, they close and nestle yet,
Ere, with faint breath, they falter out good-night,
Her hand in his upon the coverlet
Lies in the silver pathway of the light.

(LILLEHAMMER, August 22, 1892.)
NEÆRA'S HAIR

Let me take thy hair down, sweetheart,
     loosen little pin by pin,
Let me feel it tumbling o'er me
     drinking all its fragrance in,
Let me wrap thee all within it,
     kiss thee through its golden thread—
O I shall go mad with kissing,
     kissing, kissing thy dear head.

Let me walk within this garden,
     I can smell the roses there,
They are even sweeter, darling,
     than the violets of thy hair,
Just one butterfly sweet minute,
     one deep kiss, and then away—
Unless, sweetheart, you would rather,
     rather, dear, that I should stay.

O thy body, sweet sweet body,
     let me drink and drink and drink!
Caust thou let me, like the minstrel,
     die upon the fountain's brink?
Love, O Love, what art Thou? tell me:
     is this heaven, hell, or where?
All I know is that I kiss thee,
     lying in thy yellow hair.
BEATRICE

(NINE MYSTIC REVOLUTIONS OF THE SPHERES)

Since Dante's birth, and lo! a star new-born
Shining in heaven: and like a lark at morn
Springing to meet it, straight in all men's ears,
A strange newsong, which through the listening years
Grew deep as lonely sobbing from the thorn
Rising at eve, shot through with bitter scorn,
Full-throated with the ecstasy of tears.

Long since that star arose, that song rang,
That shine and sing in heaven above us yet;
Since thy white childhood, glorious Beatrice,
Dawned like a blessed angel upon his:
Thy star it was that did his song beget,
Star shining for us still because he sang.
A CHILD'S EVENSONG

The sun is weary, for he ran
So far and fast to-day;
The birds are weary, for who sang
So many songs as they?
The bees and butterflies at last
Are tired out, for just think too
How many gardens through the day
Their little wings have fluttered through.

And so, as all tired people do,
They've gone to lay their sleepy heads
Deep deep in warm and happy beds.
The sun has shut his golden eye
And gone to sleep beneath the sky,
The birds and butterflies and bees
Have all crept into flowers and trees,
And all lie quiet, still as mice,
Till morning comes—like father's voice.

So Geoffrey, Owen, Phyllis, you
Must sleep away till morning too.
Close little eyes, down little heads,
And sleep—sleep—sleep in happy beds.
AN EPITAPH ON A GOLDFISH

(WITH APOLOGIES TO ARIEL)

Five inches deep Sir Goldfish lies,
Here last September was he laid,
Poppies these that were his eyes,
Of fish-bones were these bluebells made.
His fins of gold that to and fro
Waved and waved so long ago,
Still as petals wave and wave
To and fro above his grave.
Hearken too! for so his knell
Tolls all day each tiny bell.
BEAUTY ACCURST

I am so fair that wheresoe'er I wend
Men yearn with strange desire to kiss my face,
Stretch out their hands to touch me as I pass,
And women follow me from place to place.

A poet writing honey of his dear
Leaves the wet page,—ah! leaves it long to dry.
The bride forgets it is her marriage-morn,
The bridegroom too forgets as I go by.

Within the street where my strange feet shall stray
All markets hush and traffickers forget,
In my gold head forget their meaner gold,
The poor man grows unmindful of his debt.

Two lovers kissing in a secret place,
Should I draw nigh,—will never kiss again;
I come between the king and his desire,
And where I am all loving else is vain.

Lo! when I walk along the woodland way
Strange creatures leer at me with uncouth love,
And from the grass reach upward to my breast,
And to my mouth lean from the boughs above.
The sleepy kine move round me in desire
   And press their oozy lips upon my hair,
Toads kiss my feet and creatures of the mire,
   The snailg will leave their shells to watch me there.

But all this worship, what is it to me?
   I smite the ox and crush the toad in death:
I only know I am so very fair,
   And that the world was made to give me breath.

I only wait the hour when God shall rise
   Up from the star where he so long hath sat,
And bow before the wonder of my eyes
   And set me there—I am so fair as that.
A MAID IN THE MEADOW

Dew in the meadow and flowers fair,
And happy songs on the morning air,
Like silver flutes the blackbirds call,
But a maid in the meadow is best of all.

'O maid, O maid, it was you they meant
With their dewy song, and shine and scent,
It was you I know that I went to meet,
But, ah! the dream was not half so sweet.'

_O blackbird bold!
_O blackbird old!

Shrill was your whistle of warning,
So many a maid
Have you seen betrayed
By men in the meadows at morning.

But your voice was too sweet to warn, brave bird,
It was only the music the maiden heard,
It was only your song that filled her head,
Your song and the words that the gallant said.

He had a dainty body fair
That maiden's eyes must follow after,
And O he had such bonny hair
And such a merry laughter.
She had a body like a rose,
   Her eyes were like the dew there,
   Her breast a garden under snows—
   Ah! how the violets grew there!

O life is sweet, but nought so sweet
   As this in morning weather,
   A man and maid with mouths that meet
   And hearts that beat together.

O life is sad, but nought so sad
   As when the sun is setting
   That one forgets the joy they had,
   And one has no forgetting.

Frost on the meadow, no flowers fair,
No song, no light, no maiden there,
But look for her down in the village street—
'Tis she, I know, that they go to meet,
'Tis she, I know, that they walk before,
For she walks in the meadows nevermore.

O nightingale!
O nightingale!

What is the use of weeping!

So many a maid

Have you seen laid

Down there where she is sleeping.
TO A DEAD FRIEND

And is it true indeed, and must you go,
Set out alone across that moorland track,
No love avail, though we have loved you so,
No voice have any power to call you back?
And losing hands stretch after you in vain,
And all our eyes grow empty for your lack.
Nor hands, nor eyes, know aught of you again.

Dear friend, I shed no tear while yet you stayed,
Nor vexed your soul with unavailing word,
But you are gone, and now can all be said,
And tear and sigh too surely fall unheard.
So long I kept for you an undimmed eye,
Surely for grief this hour may well be spared,
Though could you know I still must keep it dry.

For what can tears avail you? the spring rain
That softly pelts the lattice, as with flowers,
Will of its tears a daisied counterpane
Weave for your rest, and all its sound of showers
Make of its sobbing low a cradle song:
All tears avail but these salt tears of ours,
These tears alone 'tis idle to prolong.
Yet must we shed them, barren though they be,
Though bloom nor burden answer as they flow,
Though no sun shines that our sad eyes can see
To throw across their fall hope's radiant bow.
Poor selfish tears! we weep them not for him,
'Tis our own sorrow that we pity so,
'Tis our own loss that leaves our eyes so dim.
SUNSET IN THE CITY

Above the town a monstrous wheel is turning,
   With glowing spokes of red,
Low in the west its fiery axle burning;
   And, lost amid the spaces overhead,
A vague white moth, the moon, is fluttering.

Above the town an azure sea is flowing,
   'Mid long peninsulas of shining sand,
From opal unto pearl the moon is growing,
   Dropped like a shell upon the changing strand.

Within the town the streets grow strange and haunted,
   And, dark against the western lakes of green,
The buildings change to temples, and unwonted
   Shadows and sounds creep in where day has been.

Within the town, the lamps of sin are flaring,
   Poor foolish men that know not what ye are!
Tired traffic still upon his feet is faring—
   Two lovers meet and kiss and watch a star.
THE CITY IN MOONLIGHT

Dear city in the moonlight dreaming,
    How changed and lovely is your face;
Where is the sordid busy scheming
    That filled all day the market-place?

Was it but fancy that a rabble
    Of money-changers bought and sold,
Filling with sacrilegious babble
    This temple-court of solemn gold?

Ah no, poor captive-slave of Crœsus,
    His bondmaid all the toiling day,
You, like some hunted child of Jesus,
    Steal out beneath the moon to pray.
OF POETS AND POETRY
To James Ashcroft Noble,

Poet and Critic, a small acknowledgment of much
unforgotten kindness
INSCRIPTIONS

Poet, a truce to your song!
Have you heard the heart sing?
   Like a brook among trees,
   Like the humming of bees,
   Like the ripple of wine:
Had you heard, would you stay
Blowing bubbles so long?
You have ears for the spheres—
Have you heard the heart sing?

Have you loved the good books of the world,—
   And written none?
Have you loved the great poet,—
   And burnt your little rhyme?
'O be my friend, and teach me to be thine.'

By many hands the work of God is done,
Swart toil, pale thought, flushed dream, he
   spurneth none:
Yea! and the weaver of a little rhyme
Is seen his worker in his own full time.
THE DÉCADENT TO HIS SOUL

The Décadent was speaking to his soul—
Poor useless thing, he said,
Why did God burden me with such as thou?
The body were enough,
The body gives me all.

The soul's a sort of sentimental wife
That prays and whimpers of the higher life,
Objects to latch-keys, and bewails the old,
The dear old days, of passion and of dream,
When life was a blank canvas, yet untouched
Of the great painter Sin.

Yet, little soul, thou hast fine eyes,
And knowest fine airy motions,
Hast a voice—
Why wilt thou so devote them to the church?

His face grew strangely sweet—
As when a toad smiles.
He dreamed of a new sin:
An incest 'twixt the body and the soul.
He drugged his soul, and in a house of sin
She played all she remembered out of heaven
For him to kiss and clip by.
He took a little harlot in his hands,
• And she made all his veins like boiling oil,
Then that grave organ made them cool again.

Then from that day, he used his soul
As bitters to the over dulcet sins,
As olives to the fatness of the feast—
She made those dear heart-breaking ecstasies
Of minor chords amid the Phrygian lutes,
She sauced his sins with splendid memories,
Starry regrets and infinite hopes and fears;
His holy youth and his first love
Made pearly background to strange-coloured vice.

Sin is no sin when virtue is forgot.
It is so good in sin to keep in sight
The white hills whence we fell, to measure by—
To say I was so high, so white, so pure,
And am so low, so blood-stained and so base;
I revel here amid the sweet sweet mire
And yonder are the hills of morning flowers:
So high, so low; so lost and with me yet;
To stretch the octave 'twixt the dream and deed,
Ah, that's the thrill!
To dream so well, to do so ill,—
There comes the bitter-sweet that makes the sin.

First drink the stars, then grunt amid the mire,
So shall the mire have something of the stars,
And the high stars be fragrant of the mire.

The Décadent was speaking to his soul—
Dear witch, I said the body was enough.
How young, how simple as a suckling child!
And then I dreamed—'an incest 'twixt the body
  'and the soul:'
Let's wed, I thought, the seraph with the dog,
And wait the purple thing that shall be born.

And now look round—seest thou this bloom?
Seven petals and each petal seven dyes,
The stem is gilded and the root in blood:
That came of thee.
Yea, all my flowers were single save for thee.
I pluck seven fruits from off a single tree,
I pluck seven flowers from off a single stem,
I light my palace with the seven stars,
And eat strange dishes to Gregorian chants:
All thanks to thee.

But the soul wept with hollow hectic face,
Captive in that lupanar of a man.
And I who passed by heard and wept for both,—
The man was once an apple-cheek dear lad,
The soul was once an angel up in heaven.

O let the body be a healthy beast,
And keep the soul a singing soaring bird;
But lure thou not the soul from out the sky
To pipe unto the body in the sty.
TO A POET

As one, the secret lover of a queen,
Watches her move within the people's eye,
Hears their poor chatter as she passes by,
And smiles to think of what his eyes have seen;
The 'little room where love did ' shut them in,'
The fragrant couch whereon they twain did lie,
And rests his hand where on his heart doth die
A bruised daffodil of last night's sin:

So, Poet, as I read your rhyme once more
Here where a thousand eyes may read it too,
I smile your own sweet secret smile at those
Who deem the outer petals of the rose
The rose's heart—I, who through grace of you,
Have known it for my own so long before.
THE PASSIONATE READER TO HIS POET

Dost it not thrill thee, Poet,
Dead and dust though thou art,
To feel how I press thy singing
Close to my heart?

Take it at night to my pillow,
Kiss it before I sleep,
And again when the delicate morning
Beginneth to peep?

See how I bathe thy pages
Here in the light of the sun,
Through thy leaves, as a wind among roses,
The breezes shall run.

Feel how I take thy poem
And bury within it my face,
As I pressed it last night in the heart of
a flower,
Or deep in a dearer place.

Thnuk, as I love thee, Poet,
A thousand love beside,
Dear women love to press thee too
Against a sweeter side.
Art thou not happy, Poet?
I sometimes dream that I
For such a fragrant fame as thine
Would gladly sing and die.

Say, wilt thou change thy glory
For this same youth of mine?
And I will give my days i' the sun
For that great song of thine.
MATTHEW ARNOLD

(DILD, APRIL 15, 1888)

Within that wood where thine own scholar strays,
O! Poet, thou art passed, and at its bound
Hollow and sere we cry, yet win no sound
But the dark muttering of the forest maze
We may not tread, nor pierce with any gaze;
And hardly love dare whisper thou hast found
That restful moonlit slope of pastoral ground
Set in dark dingles of the songful ways.

Gone! they have called our shepherd from the hill,
Passed is the sunny sadness of his song,
That song which sang of sight and yet was brave
To lay the ghosts of seeing, subtly strong
To wean from tears and from the troughs to save;
And who shall teach us now that he is still!
'TENNYSON' AT THE FARM

(to L. AND H. H.)

O you that dwell 'mid farm and fold,
Yet keep so quick undulled a heart,
I send you here that book of gold,
So loved so long;
The fairest art,
The sweetest English song.

And often in the far-off town,
When summer sits with open door,
I'll dream I see you set it down
Beside the churn,
Whose round shall slacken more and more.
Till you forget to turn.

And I shall smile that you forget,
And Dad will scold—but never mind!
Butter is good, but better yet,
Think such as we,
To leave the farm and fold behind,
And follow such as he.
'THE DESK'S DRY WOOD'

(TO JAMES A. WELCH)

Dear Desk, Farewell! I spoke you oft
In phrases neither sweet nor soft,
But at the end I came to see
That thou a friend hast been to me,

No flatterer but very friend,

I or who shall teach so well again
The blessed son-book of pain,

The truth that souls that would aspire
Must bravely face the scourge and fire,

If they would conquer in the end?

Two days!

Shall I not hug thee very close?

Two days,

And then we part upon our ways.

Ah me!

Who shall possess thee after me?

O pray he be no enemy to poesy,

To gentle maid or gentle dream.

How have we dreamed together, I and thou,

Sweet dreams that like some incense wraapt us round—
The last new book, the last new love,
The last new trysting-ground.
How many queens have ruled and passed
Since first we met; how thick and fast
The letters used to come at first, how thin at last;
Then ceased, and winter for a space!
Until another hand
Brought spring into the land,
And went the seasons' pace.

And now, Dear Desk, thou knowest for how long time
I have no queen but song:
Yea, thou hast seen the last love fade, and now
Behold the last of many a secret rhyme!
A LIBRARY IN A GARDEN

'A Library in a garden! The phrase seems to contain the whole felicity of man.'—Mr. EDMUND GOSSE in Gossip in a Library.

A world of books amid a world of green,
Sweet song without, sweet song again within
Flowers in the garden, in the folios too:
O happy Bookman, let me live with you!

ON THE MORALS OF POETS

One says he is immoral, and points out
Warm sin in ruddy specks upon his soul:
Bigot, one folly of the man you flout
Is more to God than thy lean life is whole.
TO A GREAT CRITIC—ANDREW LANG, ESQ.

(WITH A VOLUME OF THE MINOR VERSE)

[Mr. Lang, writing, in 'Books and Bookmen,' of the presentation copies of 'Amateur Poets,' with which his life is made a burden, says: 'It is, no doubt, wise to turn these gifts with their sides against the inner walls of bookcases, to be bulwarks against the damp']

My little book, I envy thee,
For few doth Fortune favour so,
It might have been thy destiny
Some sleepy relative to know,
Or like proverbial lamb to go
For slaughter of some critic fang:
But thine, secure from fool and foe—
To line the shelves of Andrew Lang.

Small is my hope, small book, that he
For whom I write this ex dono
Shall feel the beating heart in thee,
And cheer us on, my book; ah no!
We are presumptuous dreaming so:
Rather he'll bid us both—go hang!
Or even hotly bid us go
To—line the shelves of Andrew Lang.
Yet, little book, I do not see
That such a fate need cause thee woe,
For very sweet 'twould seem to me
To line his sweet seraglio
Of *bouquins*, nestling row on row;
Indeed 'twould bring no pain or pang,
But rather set my heart aglow
To line the shelves of Andrew Lang.

O bards of unbought balladry,
Not all in vain it was you sang,
"Seems it not more than £ s. d.
To line the shelves of—Andrew Lang?"
FAERY GOLD

A poet hungered, as well he might—
Not a morsel since yesternight!
And sad he grew—good reason why—
For the poet had nought wherewith to buy.

'Are not two sparrows sold,' he cried,
'Sold for a farthing? and,' he sighed,
As he pushed his morning post away,
'Are not two sonnets more than they?'

Yet store of gold, great store had he,—
Of the gold that is known as 'faery.'
He had the gold of his burning dreams,
He had his golden rhymes—in reams,
He had the strings of his golden lyre,
And his own was that golden west on fire.

But the poet knew his world too well
To dream that such would buy or sell.
He had his poets, 'pure gold,' he said,
But the man at the bookstall shook his head,
And offered a grudging half-a-crown
For the five the poet had brought him down.
Ah, what a world we are in! we sigh,
Where a lunch costs more than a Keats can buy,
And even Shakespeare's hallowed line
Falls short of the requisite sum to dine.

Yet other gold had the poet got,
For see from that grey-blue Gouda pot
Three golden tulips spouting flame—
From his love, from his love, this morn, they came
His love he loved even more than fame.

Three golden tulips thrice more fair
Than other golden tulips were—
'And yet,' he smiled as he took one up,
And feasted on its yellow cup,—
'I wonder how many eggs you'd buy!
By Bacchus, I've half a mind to try!
'One golden bloom for one golden yolk—
Nay, on my word, sir, I mean no joke—
Gold for gold is fair dealing, sir,'
Think of the grocer gaping there!

Or the baker, if I went and said,
—'This tulip for a loaf of bread,
God's beauty for your kneaded grain,'

Or the vintner—'For this flower of mine
A flagon, pray, of yellow wine,
And you shall keep the change for gain.'
As he, on what a different earth
I and these fellows had our birth,
Strange that these golden things should be
For them so poor, so rich for me.

Ended his sigh, the poet searched his shelf—
Seeking another poet to feed himself;
Then sadly went, and, full of shame and grief,
Sold his last Swinburne for a plate of beef.

Thus poets too, to fill the hungry maw,
Must eat each other—'tis the eternal law.
THE MAKING OF SONG

A poet prayed, and the answer came—
‘Thou shalt sing, and thy song shall bring thee fame
But this must thou give for thy silver tongue
Thrice three sorrows for each new song.’

The poet was young and the world all bloom—
‘Give me the song, let the sorrows come.’

And so it befell that his boyhood’s pain
Was thrice more bitter and thrice again,
But his tears were pearls and his sobs were song
And the solace great if the sorrow long.

Then youth with its splendid moon i’ the sky
And its wonder-maiden and love, drew nigh,
And the heart of the poet grew so glad
He forgot his song in the joy he had.
But the maiden died—then he thought to die
But his song awoke him, and up in the sky,
For each little shining tear he shed,
He set a great shining star instead—
His singing ended, his tears were dry.
Then years went by, and he took a wife,
So dear she stood him in place of life,
And, as the blossoms come to the tree,
So came a little babe to be.
But the blossom withered in springtime frost,
And the poet sang of the thing they lost—
—'But ah, my wife, had they taken thee!'

Death heard the song, and he came one night,
And the wife lay dead in the morning light.
Now, O poet, what comfort now?
Dost thou not weep for thy boyish vow?
Yea, the poet bowed his stricken head—
—'Now let me die, for my life is dead.'

Yet, as days wore on, little leaf by leaf
Budded once more on the tree of grief,
And note by note the accustomed song
Rose, as of old, more deep, more strong;
Though something told to the listening ears
That it bubbled up from a fount of tears.

One more sorrow remained untried:
God took back his song—then the poet died.
ALL SUNG

What shall I sing when all is sung,
    And every tale is told,
And in the world is nothing young
    That was not long since old?

Why should I fret unwilling ears
  With old things sung anew,
While voices from the old dead years
    Still go on singing too?

A dead man singing of his maid
    Makes all my rhymes in vain,
Yet his poor lips must fade and fade,
    And mine shall kiss again.

Why should I strive through weary moons
    To make my music true?
Only the dead men knew the tunes
    The live world dances to.
CORYDON'S FAREWELL TO HIS PIPE

Yea, it is best, dear friends, who have so oft
Fed full my ears with praises sweet and soft,
Sweeter and softer than my song should win,
Too sweet and soft— I must not listen more,
Lest its dear perilous honey make me mad,
And once again an overweening lad
Presume against Apollo. Nay, no more!
'Tis not to pipes like mine sing stars at morn,
Nor stars at night dance in their solemn dance:
Nay, stars! why tell of stars? the very thrush
Putteth my daintiest cunning to the blush
And boasteth him the hedgerow laureate.
Yea, dimmest daisies lost amid the grass,
One might have deemed blessed us for looking at,
Would rather choose,— yea, so it is, alas!—
The meanest bird that from its tiny throat
Droppeth the pearl of one monotonous note,
Than any music I can bring to pass.

So, let me go: for, while I linger here,
Piping these dainty ditties for your ear,
To win that dearer honey for my own,
Daylong my Thestylix doth sit alone,
OF POETS AND POETRY

Weeping, mayhap, because the gods have given
Song but not sheep—the rarer gift of heaven;
And little Phyllis solitary grows,
And little Corydon unheeded goes.

Sheep are the shepherd's business,—let me go,—
Piping his pastime when the sun is low:
But I, alas! the other order keep,
Piping my business, and forgot my sheep.

My song that once was as a little sweet
Savouring the daily bread we all must eat,
Lo! it has come to be my only food:
And, as a lover of the Indian weed
Steals to a self-indulgent solitude,
To draw the dreamy sweetness from its root,
So from the strong blithe world of valorous deed
I steal away to suck this singing weed;
And while the morning gathers up its strength,
And while the noonday runneth on in might,
Until the shadows and the evening light
Come and awake me with a fear at length,
Prone in some hankering covert hid away,
Fain am I still my piping to prolong,
And for the largess of a bounteous day
Dare pay my maker with a paltry song.
Welcome the song that like a trumpet high
Lifts the tired head of battle with its cry,
Welcome the song that from its morning heights
Cheers jaded markets with the health of fields,
Brings down the stars to mock the city lights,
Or up to heaven a shining ladder builds.
But not to me belongeth such a grace,
And, were it mine, 'tis not in amorous shade
To river music that such song is made:
The song that moves the battle on awoke
To the stern rhythm of the swordsman's stroke,
The song that fans the city's weary face
Sprang not afar from out some leafy place,
But bubbled spring-like in its dingiest lane
From out a heart that shared the city's pain;
And he who brings the stars into the street
And builds that shining ladder for our feet,
Dwells in no mystic Abora aloof,
But shares the shelter of the common roof;
He learns great metres from the thunderous hum,
And all his songs pulse to the human beat.

But I am Corydon, I am not he,
Though I no more that Corydon shall be
To make a sugared comfit of my song.
So now I go, go back to Thestyli—
How, her poor eyes will laugh again for this!—
Go back to Thestylis, and no more roam.
In melancholy meadows mad to sing,
But teach our little home itself to sing.
Yea, Corydon, now cast thy pipe away—
See, how it floats upon the stream, and see
There it has gone, and now—away! away!
But O! my pipe, how sweet thou wert to me!
The writer begs to acknowledge the kind permission of the Editors of 'Macmillan's Magazine,' 'Black and White,' 'The Library,' 'The Speaker,' 'The Academy,' 'The Art Review,' for several reprints. He has also to thank Messrs. Cope for a similar permission in regard to the lines on Lamb, originally written as a proem for their Lamb 'Booklet.'
Edinburgh  T and A Constable

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[Out of print and very rare.]

London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane, Vigo Street, W.
George Meredith: Some Characteristics.

By Richard Le Galliflennf With a Bibliography (much enlarged) by John Lane, Portrait, and Illustration of the novelist's Chalet

All Meredithians must possess George Meredith Some Characteristics, by Richard Le Gallienne. This book is a complete and excellent guide to the novelist and the novels—a sort of Meredithian briskshaw with pictures of the traffic superintendent and of the head office at Boxhall. Even Philistines may be won over by the blandishments of Mr Le Gallienne from whom I learn, by the way, that George Meredith is the Harvey of the Ego, and that he is not Adrian Harley I hear, also that drily, from one quarter or another come critical cuffs and knocks to impress upon a numb public the latest example of its immanent purblindness. And the Baron adds this cuff to the rest. Mr John Lane has compiled a Bibliography which is a model of minute industry. So here is the book of Richard and John.

The Book of Our Time in Punch

A very interesting and helpful book likely to be agreeable to Mr Meredith's instructed admirers and suggestive to many by whom his works are misunderstood as appreciations merely the essays are of a high order of literary merit. The author's style has indeed been compared with Mr Meredith's own. But that is a truism in which in effect is unjust, as it suggests the difficulties of Mr. Meredith's style rather than its merits. Occasionally Mr. Le Gallienne lays himself open to the charge of being fantastic but his style is not obscure. It is an eager, sensitive, and highly figured style, somewhat of the aphoristic type. Much of what Mr Le Gallienne says is admirable, for its own sake, and so far as his subject is concerned he is no unworthy guide. The remarks on Meredith's idea of comedy will be particularly useful to many. This critic lays no less stress on his poetry, especially on Modern Love. With the exception of the latter, he surely overrates this part of Mr. Meredith's work. The chapter, however, in which he discusses this is an interesting piece of criticism, written with the fervour of an enthusiast, yet not undiscriminating. And the concluding sentences are a striking example of his figurative style. The Bibliography compiled by Mr. Lane should be very useful.

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GLASGOW HERALD

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SATURDAY REVIEW, Article: 'Narcissus Poeticus,' Oct. 10, 1891.

LONDON: ELKIN MATHEWS AND JOHN LANE, VIGO STREET, W.
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‘The Baron’s Assistant, Reader,’ Punch, Sept. 19, 1891.

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Review of Reviews (with Portrait), Oct. 15, 1891

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*Daily Chronicle*, June 17, 1892

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