THE VICTORIES OF LOVE

"Da quod amo: amo enim, et hoc tu dedisti."

ST. AUGUSTINE.
BOOK I.

I

FROM FREDERICK GRAHAM.

MOTHER, I smile at your alarms!
I own, indeed, my Cousin's charms,
But, like all nursery maladies,
Love is not badly taken twice.
Have you forgotten Charlotte Hayes,
My playmate in the pleasant days
At Knatchley, and her sister, Anne,
The twins, so made on the same plan,
That one wore blue, the other white,
To mark them to their father's sight;
And how, at Knatchley harvesting,
You bade me kiss her in the ring,
Like Anne and all the others? You,
That never of my sickness knew,
Will laugh, yet had I the disease,
And gravely, if the signs are these:
As, ere the Spring has any power,
The almond branch all turns to flower,
Though not a leaf is out, so she
The bloom of life provoked in me;
And, hard till then and selfish, I
Was thenceforth nought but sanctity
And service: life was mere delight
In being wholly good and right,
As she was; just, without a slur;
Honouring myself no less than her;
Obeying, in the loneliest place,
Ev'n to the slightest gesture, grace,
Assured that one so fair, so true,
He only served that was so too.
For me, hence weak towards the weak,
No more the unnested blackbird's shriek
Startled the light-leaved wood; on high
Wander'd the gadding butterfly,
Unscared by my flung cap; the bee,
Rifling the hollyhock in glee,
Was no more trapp'd with his own flower,
And for his honey slain. Her power,
From great things even to the grass
Through which the unfenced footways pass,
Was law, and that which keeps the law,
Cherubic gaiety and awe;
Day was her doing, and the lark
Had reason for his song; the dark
In anagram innumerable spelt
Her name with stars that throbb'd and felt;
'Twas the sad summit of delight
To wake and weep for her at night;
She turn'd to triumph or to shame
The strife of every childish game;
The heart would come into my throat
At rosebuds; howsoe'er remote,
In opposition or consent,
Each thing, or person, or event,
Or seeming neutral howsoe'er,
All, in the live, electric air,
Awoke, took aspect, and confess'd
In her a centre of unrest,
Yea, stocks and stones within me bred
Anxieties of joy and dread.
   O, bright apocalyptic sky
O'erarching childhood! Far and nigh
Mystery and obscurcation none,
Yet nowhere any moon or sun!
What reason for these sighs? What hope,
Daunting with its audacious scope
The disconcerted heart, affects
These ceremonies and respects?
Why stratagems in everything?
Why, why not kiss her in the ring?
'Tis nothing strange that warriors bold,
Whose fierce, forecasting eyes behold
The city they desire to sack,
Humbly begin their proud attack
By delving ditches two miles off,
Aware how the fair place would scoff
At hasty wooing; but, O child,
Why thus approach thy playmate mild?
   One morning, when it flush'd my thought
That, what in me such wonder wrought
Was call'd, in men and women, love,
And, sick with vanity thereof,
I, saying loud, 'I love her,' told
My secret to myself, behold
A crisis in my mystery!
For, suddenly, I seem'd to be
Whirl'd round, and bound with showers of threads,
As when the furious spider sheds
Captivity upon the fly
To still his buzzing till he die;
Only, with me, the bonds that flew,
Enfolding, thrill'd me through and through
With bliss beyond aught heaven can have,
And pride to dream myself her slave.
A long, green slip of wilder’d land,
With Knatchley Wood on either hand,
Sunder’d our home from hers. This day
Glad was I as I went her way.
I stretch’d my arms to the sky, and sprang
O’er the elastic sod, and sang
‘I love her, love her! ’ to an air
Which with the words came then and there;
And even now, when I would know
All was not always dull and low,
I mind me awhile of the sweet strain
Love taught me in that lonely lane.
Such glories fade, with no more mark
Than when the sunset dies to dark.
They pass, the rapture and the grace
Ineffable, their only trace
A heart which, having felt no less
Than pure and perfect happiness,
Is duly dainty of delight;
A patient, poignant appetite
For pleasures that exceed so much
The poor things which the world calls such,
That, when these lure it, then you may
The lion with a wisp of hay.
That Charlotte, whom we scarcely knew
From Anne but by her ribbons blue,
Was loved, Anne less than look’d at, shows
That liking still by favour goes!
This Love is a Divinity,
And holds his high election free
Of human merit; or let’s say,
A child by ladies call’d to play,
But careless of their becks and wiles,
Till, seeing one who sits and smiles
Like any else; yet only charms,
He cries to come into her arms.
Then, for my Cousins, fear me not!
None ever loved because he ought.
Fatal were else this graceful house,
So full of light from ladies' brows.
There's Mary; Heaven in her appears
Like sunshine through the shower's bright tears;
Mildred's of Earth, yet happier far
Than most men's thoughts of Heaven are;
But, for Honoria, Heaven and Earth
Seal'd amity in her sweet birth.
The noble Girl! With whom she talks
She knights first with her smile; she walks,
Stands, dances, to such sweet effect,
Alone she seems to move erect.
The brightest and the chastest brow
Rules o'er a cheek which seems to show
That love, as a mere vague suspense
Of apprehensive innocence,
Perturbs her heart; love without aim
Or object, like the sunlit flame
That in the Vestals' Temple glow'd,
Without the image of a god.
And this simplicity most pure
She sets off with no less allure
Of culture, subtly skill'd to raise
The power, the pride, and mutual praise
Of human personality
Above the common sort so high,
It makes such homely souls as mine
Marvel how brightly life may shine.
How you would love her! Even in dress
She makes the common mode express
New knowledge of what's fit so well
'Tis virtue gaily visible!
Nay, but her silken sash to me
Were more than all morality,

VOL. L
Had not the old, sweet, feverous ill
Left me the master of my will!
'So, Mother, feel at rest, and please
To send my books on board. With these,
When I go hence, all idle hours
Shall help my pleasures and my powers.
I've time, you know, to fill my post,
And yet make up for schooling lost
Through young sea-service. They all speak
German with ease; and this, with Greek,
(Which Dr. Churchill thought I knew,)
And history, which I fail'd in too,
Will stop a gap I somewhat dread,
After the happy life I've led
With these my friends; and sweet 'twill be
To abridge the space from them to me.
II

FROM MRS. GRAHAM.

My Child, Honoria Churchill sways.
A double power through Charlotte Hayes.
In minds to first-love's memory pledged
The second Cupid's born full-fledged.
I saw, and trembled for the day
When you should see her beauty, gay
And pure as apple-blooms, that show
Outside a blush and inside snow,
Her high and touching elegance
Of order'd life as free as chance.
Ah, haste from her bewitching side,
No friend for you, far less a bride!
But, warning from a hope so wild,
I wrong you. Yet this know, my Child:
He that but once too nearly hears
The music of forefended spheres,
Is thenceforth lonely, and for all
His days like one who treads the Wall
Of China, and, on this hand, sees
Cities and their civilities,
And, on the other, lions. Well,
(Your rash reply I thus foretell,)
Good is the knowledge of what's fair,
Though bought with temporal despair!
Yes, good for one, but not for two.
Will it content a wife that you
Should pine for love, in love's embrace,
Through having known a happier grace;
And break with inward sighs your rest,
Because, though good, she's not the best?
You would, you think, be just and kind,
And keep your counsel! You will find
You cannot such a secret keep;
'Twill out, like murder, in your sleep;
A touch will tell it, though, for pride,
She may her bitter knowledge hide;
And, while she accepts love's make-believe,
You'll twice despise what you'd deceive.

I send the books. Dear Child, adieu!
Tell me of all you are and do.
I know, thank God, whate'er it be,
'Twill need no veil 'twixt you and me.
III

FROM FREDERICK.

The multitude of voices blythe
Of early day, the hissing scythe
Across the dew drawn and withdrawn,
The noisy peacock on the lawn,
These, and the sun's eye-gladding gleam,
This morning, chased the sweetest dream
That e'er shed penitential grace
On life's forgetful commonplace;
Yet 'twas no sweeter than the spell
To which I woke to say farewell.

Noon finds me many a mile removed
From her who must not be beloved;
And us the waste sea soon shall part,
Heaving for aye, without a heart!
Mother, what need to warn me so?
I love Miss Churchill? Ah, no, no.
I view, enchanted, from afar,
And love her as I love a star.
For, not to speak of colder fear,
Which keeps my fancy calm, I hear,
Under her life's gay progress hurl'd,
The wheels of the preponderant world,
Set sharp with swords that fool to slay
Who blunders from a poor byway,
To covet beauty with a crown
Of earthly blessing added on;
FROM FREDERICK.

And she's so much, it seems to me,
Beyond all women womanly,
I dread to think how he should fare
Who came so near as to despair.
Yonder the sombre vessel rides
Where my obscure condition hides.
Waves scud to shore against the wind
That flings the sprinkling surf behind;
In port the bickering pennons show
Which way the ships would gladly go;
Through Edgecumbe Park the rooted trees
Are tossing, reckless, in the breeze;
On top of Edgecumbe's firm-set tower,
As foils, not foibles, of its power,
The light vanes do themselves adjust
To every veering of the gust:
By me alone may nought be given
To guidance of the airs of heaven?
In battle or peace, in calm or storm,
Should I my daily task perform,
Better a thousand times for love,
Who should my secret soul reprove?

Beholding one like her, a man
Longs to lay down his life! How can
Aught to itself seem thus enough,
When I have so much need thereof?
Blest in her place, blissful is she;
And I, departing, seem to be
Like the strange waif that comes to run
A few days flaming near the sun,
And carries back, through boundless night,
Its lessening memory of light.
Oh, my dear Mother, I confess
To a deep grief of Homelessness,
Unfelt, save once, before. 'Tis years
Since such a shower of girlish tears
Disgraced me! But this wretched Inn,
At Plymouth, is so full of din,
Talkings and trampings to and fro.
And then my ship, to which I go
To-night, is no more home. I dread,
As strange, the life I long have led;
And as, when first I went to school,
And found the horror of a rule
Which only ask'd to be obey'd,
I lay and wept, of dawn afraid,
And thought, with bursting heart, of one
Who, from her little, wayward son,
Required obedience, but above
Obedience still regarded love,
So change I that enchanting place,
The abode of innocence and grace
And gaiety without reproof,
For the black gun-deck's louring roof,
Blind and inevitable law
Which makes light duties burdens, awe
Which is not reverence, laughers gain'd
At cost of purities profaned,
And whatsoever most may stir
Remorseful passion towards her,
Whom to behold is to depart
From all defect of life and heart.

But, Mother, I shall go on shore,
And see my Cousin yet once more!
'Twere wild to hope for her, you say.
I've torn and cast those words away.
Surely there's hope! For life 'tis well
Love without hope's impossible;
So, if I love, it is that hope
Is not outside the outer scope
Of fancy. You speak truth: this hour
I must resist, or lose the power.
What! and, when some short months are o'er,
Be not much other than before?
Drop from the bright and virtuous sphere
In which I'm held but while she's dear?
For daily life's dull, senseless mood,
Slay the fine nerves of gratitude
And sweet allegiance, which I owe
Whether the debt be weal or woe?
Nay, Mother, I, forewarn'd, prefer
To want for all in wanting her.

For all? Love's best is not bereft
Ever from him to whom is left
The trust that God will not deceive
His creature, fashion'd to believe
The prophecies of pure desire.
Not loss, not death, my love shall tire,
A mystery does my heart foretell;
Nor do I press the oracle
For explanations. Leave me alone,
And let in me love's will be done.
From Frederick.

Fashion'd by Heaven and by art
So is she, that she makes the heart
Ache and o'erflow with tears, that grace
So lovely fair should have for place,
(Deeming itself at home the while,)
The unworthy earth! To see her smile
Amid this waste of pain and sin,
As only knowing the heaven within,
Is sweet, and does for pity stir
Passion to be her minister:
Wherefore last night I lay awake,
And said, 'Ah, Lord, for thy love's sake,
Give not this darling child of thine
To care less reverent than mine!'
And, as true faith was in my word,
I trust, I trust that I was heard.

The waves, this morning, sped to land,
And shouted hoarse to touch the strand,
Where Spring, that goes not out to sea,
Lay laughing in her lovely glee;
And, so, my life was sunlit spray
And tumult, as, once more to-day,
For long farewell did I draw near
My Cousin, desperately dear.
Faint, fierce, the truth that hope was none
Gleam'd like the lightning in the sun:
Yet hope I had, and joy thereof.
The father of love is hope, (though love
Lives orphan'd on, when hope is dead,)
And, out of my immediate dread
And crisis of the coming hour,
Did hope itself draw sudden power.
So the still brooding storm, in Spring,
Makes all the birds begin to sing.

Mother, your foresight did not err:
I've lost the world, and not won her.
And yet, ah, laugh not, when you think
What cup of life I sought to drink!
The bold, said I, have climb'd to bliss
Absurd, impossible, as this,
With nought to help them but so great
A heart it fascinates their fate.
If ever Heaven heard man's desire,
Mine, being made of altar-fire,
Must come to pass, and it will be
That she will wait, when she shall see,
This evening, how I go to get,
By means unknown, I know not yet
Quite what, but ground whereon to stand,
And plead more plainly for her hand!

And so I raved, and cast in hope
A superstitious horoscope!
And still, though something in her face
Portended 'No!' with such a grace
It burthen'd me with thankfulness,
Nothing was credible but 'Yes.'
Therefore, through time's close pressure bold,
I praised myself, and boastful told
My deeds at Acre; strain'd the chance
I had of honour and advance
In war to come; and would not see
Sad silence meant, 'What's this to me.'
When half my precious hour was gone,
She rose to greet a Mr. Vaughan;
And, as the image of the moon
Breaks up, within some still lagoon
That feels the soft wind suddenly,
Or tide fresh flowing from the sea,
And turns to giddy flames that go
Over the water to and fro,
Thus, when he took her hand to-night,
Her lovely gravity of light
Was scatter'd into many smiles
And flattering weakness. Hope beguiles
No more my heart, dear Mother. He,
By jealous looks, o'erhonour'd me.
With nought to do, and fondly fain
To hear her singing once again,
I stay'd, and turn'd her music o'er;
Then came she with me to the door.
' Dearest Honoria,' I said,
(By my despair familiar made,)
'Heaven bless you!' Oh, to have back then stepp'd
And fallen upon her neck, and wept,
And said, 'My friend, I owe you all
'I am, and have, and hope for. Call
'For some poor service; let me prove
'To you, or him here whom you love,
'My duty. Any solemn task,
'For life's whole course, is all I ask!'
Then she must surely have wept too,
And said, 'My friend, what can you do!'
And I should have replied, 'I'll pray
'For you and him three times a-day,
'And, all day, morning, noon, and night,
'My life shall be so high and right
'That never Saint yet scaled the stairs
'Of heaven with more availing prayers!'
FROM FREDERICK.

But this (and, as good God shall bless
Somehow my end, I'll do no less,)
I had no right to speak. Oh, shame,
So rich a love, so poor a claim!
  My Mother, now my only friend,
Farewell. The school-books which you send
I shall not want, and so return.
Give them away, or sell, or burn.
I'll write from Malta. Would I might
But be your little Child to-night,
And feel your arms about me fold,
Against this loneliness and cold!
VI

FROM MRS. GRAHAM.

The folly of young girls! They doff
Their pride to smooth success, and scoff
At far more noble fire and might
That woo them from the dust of fight!

But, Frederick, now the storm is past,
Your sky should not remain o'ercast.
A sea-life's dull, and, oh, beware
Of nourishing, for zest, despair.
My Child, remember, you have twice
Heartily loved; then why not thrice,
Or ten times? But a wise man shuns
To cry 'All's over,' more than once.
I'll not say that a young man's soul
Is scarcely measure of the whole
Earthly and heavenly universe,
To which he inveterately prefers
The one beloved woman. Best
Speak to the senses' interest,
Which brooks no mystery nor delay:
Frankly reflect, my Son, and say,
Was there no secret hour, of those
Pass'd at her side in Sarum Close,
When, to your spirit's sick alarm,
It seem'd that all her marvellous charm
Was marvellously fled? Her grace
Of voice, adornment, movement, face
Was what already heart and eye
Had ponder'd to satiety;
And so the good of life was o'er,
Until some laugh not heard before,
Some novel fashion in her hair,
Or style of putting back her chair,
Restored the heavens. Gather then cc
The loss-consoling inference.

Yet blame not beauty, which beguiles,
With lovely motions and sweet smiles,
Which while they please us pass away,
The spirit to lofty thoughts that stay
And lift the whole of after-life,
Unless you take the vision to wife,
Which then seems lost, or serves to slake
Desire, as when a lovely lake
Far off scarce fills the exulting eye
Of one athirst, who comes thereby,
And inappreciably sips
The deep, with disappointed lips.
To fail is sorrow, yet confess
That love pays dearly for success!
No blame to beauty! Let's complain
Of the heart, which can so ill sustain
Delight. Our griefs declare our fall,
But how much more our joys! They pall
With plucking, and celestial mirth
Can find no footing on the earth,
More than the bird of paradise,
Which only lives the while it flies.

Think, also, how 'twould suit your pride
To have this woman for a bride.
Whate'er her faults, she's one of those
To whom the world's last polish owes
A novel grace, which all who aspire
To courtliest custom must acquire.
The world's the sphere she's made to charm,
Which you have shunn'd as if 'twere harm.
Oh, law perverse, that loneliness
Breeds love, society success!
Though young, 'twere now o'er late in life
To train yourself for such a wife;
So she would suit herself to you,
As women, when they marry, do.
For, since 'tis for our dignity
Our lords should sit like lords on high,
We willingly deteriorate
To a step below our rulers' state;
And 'tis the commonest of things
To see an angel, gay with wings,
Lean weakly on a mortal's arm!
'Honoria would put off the charm
Of lofty grace that caught your love,
For fear you should not seem above
Herself in fashion and degree,
As in true merit. Thus, you see,
'Twere little kindness, wisdom none,
To light your cot with such a sun.
VII
FROM FREDERICK.

Write not, my Mother, her dear name
With the least word or hint of blame.
Who else shall discommend her choice,
I giving it my hearty voice?
Wed me? Ah, never near her come
The knowledge of the narrow home!
Far fly from her dear face, that shows
The sunshine lovelier than the rose,
The sordid gravity they wear
Who poverty's base burthen bear!
(And all are poor who come to miss
Their custom, though a crown be this.)
My hope was, that the wheels of fate,
For my exceeding need, might wait,
And she, unseen amidst all eyes,
Move sightless, till I sought the prize,
With honour, in an equal field.
But then came Vaughan, to whom I yield
With grace as much as any man,
In such cause, to another can.
Had she been mine, it seems to me
That I had that integrity
And only joy in her delight—
But each is his own favourite
In love! The thought to bring me rest
Is that of us she takes the best.
'Twas but to see him to be sure
That choice for her remain'd no more!
His brow, so gaily clear of craft;
His wit, the timely truth that laugh'd
To find itself so well express'd;
His words, abundant yet the best;
His spirit, of such handsome show
You mark'd not that his looks were so;
His bearing, prospects, birth, all these
Might well, with small suit, greatly please;
How greatly, when she saw arise
The reflex sweetness of her eyes
In his, and every breath defer
Humbly its bated life to her;
Whilst power and kindness of command,
Which women can no more withstand
Than we their grace, were still unquell'd,
And force and flattery both compell'd
Her softness! Say I'm worthy. I
Grew, in her presence, cold and shy.
It awed me, as an angel's might
In raiment of reproachful light.
Her gay looks told my sombre mood
That what's not happy is not good;
And, just because 'twas life to please,
Death to repel her, truth and ease
Deserted me; I strove to talk,
And stammer'd foolishness; my walk
Was like a drunkard's; if she took
My arm, it stiffen'd, ached, and shook:
A likely wooer! Blame her not;
Nor ever say, dear Mother, aught
Against that perfectness which is
My strength, as once it was my bliss.
And do not chafe at social rules.
Leave that to charlatans and fools.
FROM FREDERICK.

Clay graffs and clods conceive the rose,
So base still fathers best. Life owes
Itself to bread; enough thereof
And easy days condition love;
And, kindly train'd, love's roses thrive,
No more pale, scentless petals five,
Which moisten the considerate eye
To see what haste they make to die,
But heavens of colour and perfume,
Which, month by month, renew the bloom
Of art-born graces, when the year
In all the natural grove is sere.

Blame nought then! Bright let be the air
About my lonely cloud of care.
FROM FREDERICK.

Religion, duty, books, work, friends,—
'Tis good advice, but there it ends.
I'm sick for what these have not got.
Send no more books: they help me not;
I do my work: the void's there still
Which carefulest duty cannot fill.
What though the inaugural hour of right
Comes ever with a keen delight?
Little relieves the labour's heat;
Disgust oft crowns it when complete;
And life, in fact, is not less dull
For being very dutiful.
‘The stately homes of England,’ lo,
‘How beautiful they stand!’ They owe
How much to nameless things like me
Their beauty of security!
But who can long a low toil mend
By looking to a lofty end?
And let me, since 'tis truth, confess
The void's not fill'd by godliness.
God is a tower without a stair,
And His perfection, love's despair.
'Tis He shall judge me when I die;
He suckles with the hissing fly
The spider; gazes calmly down,
Whilst rapine grips the helpless town.
His vast love holds all this and more. 
In consternation I adore. 
Nor can I ease this aching gulf 
With friends, the pictures of myself. 
Then marvel not that I recur 
From each and all of these to her. 
For more of heaven than her have I 
No sensitive capacity. 
Had I but her, ah, what the gain 
Of owning aught but that domain! 
Nay, heaven's extent, however much, 
Cannot be more than many such; 
And, she being mine, should God to me 
Say 'Lo! my Child, I give to thee 
All heaven besides,' what could I then, 
But, as a child, to Him complain 
That whereas my dear Father gave 
A little space for me to have 
In His great garden, now, o'erblest, 
I've that, indeed, but all the rest, 
Which, somehow, makes it seem I've got 
All but my only cared-for plot. 
Enough was that for my weak hand 
To tend, my heart to understand. 
Oh, the sick fact, 'twixt her and me 
There's naught, and half a world of sea.
IX

FROM FREDERICK.

In two, in less than two hours more
I set my foot on English shore,
Two years untrod, and, strange to tell,
Nigh miss’d through last night’s storm! There fell
A man from the shrouds, that roar’d to quench
Even the billows’ blast and drench.
Besides me none was near to mark.
His loud cry in the louder dark,
Dark, save when lightning show’d the deeps
Standing about in stony heaps.
No time for choice! A rope; a flash
That flamed as he rose; a dizzy splash;
A strange, inopportune delight
Of mounting with the billowy might,
And falling, with a thrill again
Of pleasure shot from feet to brain;
And both paced deck, ere any knew
Our peril. Round us press’d the crew,
With wonder in the eyes of most.
As if the man who had loved and lost
Honoria dared no more than that!
My days have else been stale and flat.
This life’s at best, if justly scann’d,
A tedious walk by the other’s strand,
With, here and there cast up, a piece
Of coral or of ambergris,
Which, boasted of abroad, we ignore
The burden of the barren shore.
I seldom write, for 'twould be still
Of how the nerves refuse to thrill;
How, throughout doubly-darken'd days,
I cannot recollect her face;
How to my heart her name to tell
Is beating on a broken bell;
And, to fill up the abhorrent gulf,
Scarce loving her, I hate myself.
   Yet, latterly, with strange delight,
Rich tides have risen in the night,
And sweet dreams chased the fancies dense
Of waking life's dull somnolence.
I see her as I knew her, grace
Already glory in her face;
I move about, I cannot rest,
For the proud brain and joyful breast
I have of her. Or else I float,
The pilot of an idle boat,
Alone, alone with sky and sea,
And her, the third simplicity.
Or Mildred, to some question, cries,
(Her merry meaning in her eyes,)
'The Ball, oh, Frederick will go;
'Honoria will be there!' and, lo,
As moisture sweet my seeing blurs
To hear my name so link'd with hers,
A mirror joins, by guilty chance,
Either's averted, watchful glance!
Or with me, in the Ball-Room's blaze,
Her brilliant mildness thrids the maze;
Our thoughts are lovely, and each word
Is music in the music heard,
And all things seem but parts to be
Of one persistent harmony,
By which I'm made divinely bold;
The secret, which she knows, is told;
And, laughing with a lofty bliss
Of innocent accord, we kiss;
About her neck my pleasure weeps;
Against my lip the silk vein leaps;
Then says an Angel, 'Day or night,
'If yours you seek, not her delight,"
'Although by some strange witchery
'It seems you kiss her, 'tis not she;
'But,' whilst you languish at the side
'Of a fair foul phantasmal bride,
'Surely a dragon and strong tower
'Guard the true lady in her bower.'
And I say, 'Dear my Lord, Amen !'
And the true lady kiss again.
Or else some wasteful malady
Devours her shape and dims her eye;
No charms are left, where all were rife,
Except her voice, which is her life,
Wherewith she, for her foolish fear,
Says trembling, 'Do you love me, Dear ?'
And I reply, 'Sweetest, I vow
' I never loved but half till now.'
She turns her face to the wall at this,
And says, 'Go, Love, 'tis too much bliss.'
And then a sudden pulse is sent
About the sounding firmament
In smittings as of silver bars;
The bright disorder of the stars
Is solved by music; far and near,
Through infinite distinctions clear,
Their twofold voices' deeper tone
Utters the Name which all things own,
And each ecstatic treble dwells
On one whereof none other tells;
And we, sublimed to song and fire,
Take order in the wheeling quire,
Till from the throbbing sphere I start,
Waked by the heaving of my heart.

Such dreams as these come night by night,
Disturbing day with their delight.
Portend they nothing? Who can tell!
God yet may do some miracle.
'Tis nigh two years, and she's not wed,
Or you would know! He may be dead,
Or mad, and loving some one else,
And she, much moved that nothing quells
My constancy, or, simply wroth
With such a wretch, accept my troth
To spite him; or her beauty's gone,
(And that's my dream!) and this man Vaughan
Takes her release: or tongues malign,
Confusing every ear but mine,
Have smirch'd her; ah, 'twould move her, sure,
To find I loved her all the more!
Nay, now I think, haply amiss
I read her words and looks, and his,
That night! Did not his jealousy
Show—Good my God, and can it be
That I, a modest fool, all blest,
Nothing of such a heaven guess'd?
Oh, chance too frail, yet frantic sweet,
To-morrow sees me at her feet!

Yonder, at last, the glad sea roars
Along the sacred English shores!
There lies the lovely land I know,
Where men and women lordliest grow;
There peep the roofs where more than kings
Postpone state cares to country things,
And many a gay queen simply tends
The babes on whom the world depends;
There curls the wanton cottage smoke
Of him that drives but bears no yoke;
There laughs the realm where low and high
Are lieges to society,
And life has all too wide a scope,
Too free a prospect for its hope,
For any private good or ill,
Except dishonour, quite to fill! ¹

—Mother, since this was penn’d, I’ve read
That ‘Mr. Vaughan, on Tuesday, wed
‘The beautiful Miss Churchill.’ So
That’s over; and to-morrow I go
To take up my new post on board
The Wolf, my peace at last restored;
My lonely faith, like heart-of-oak,
Shock-season’d. Grief is now the cloak
I clasp about me to prevent
The deadly chill of a content
With any near or distant good,
Except the exact beatitude
Which love has shown to my desire.
Talk not of ‘other joys and higher,’
I hate and disavow all bliss
As none for me which is not this.
Think not I blasphemously cope
With God’s decrees, and cast off hope.
How, when, and where can mine succeed?
I’ll trust He knows who made my need.

Baseness of men! Pursuit being o’er,
Doubtless her Husband feels no more
The heaven of heavens of such a Bride,
But, lounging, lets her please his pride
With fondness, guerdons her caress
With little names, and turns a tress

¹ Written in 1856.
Round idle fingers. If 'tis so,
Why then I'm happier of the two!
Better, for lofty loss, high pain,
Than low content with lofty gain.
Poor, foolish Dove, to trust from me
Her happiness and dignity!
I thought the worst had brought me balm:
’Twas but the tempest’s central calm.
Vague sinkings of the heart aver
That dreadful wrong is come to her,
And o’er this dream I brood and dote,
And learn its agonies by rote.
As if I loved it, early and late
I make familiar with my fate,
And feed, with fascinated will,
On very dregs of finish’d ill.
I think, she’s near him now, alone,
With wardship and protection none;
Alone, perhaps, in the hindering stress
Of airs that clasp him with her dress,
They wander whispering by the wave;
And haply now, in some sea-cave,
Where the ribb’d sand is rarely trod,
They laugh, they kiss. Oh, God! oh, God!
There comes a smile acutely sweet
Out of the picturing dark; I meet
The ancient frankness of her gaze,
That soft and heart-surprising blaze
Of great goodwill and innocence,
And perfect joy proceeding thence!
Ah! made, for earth’s delight, yet such
The mid-sea air’s too gross to touch.
FROM FREDERICK.

At thought of which, the soul in me
Is as the bird that bites a bee,
And darts abroad on frantic wing,
Tasting the honey and the sting;
And, moaning where all round me sleep
Amidst the moaning of the deep,
I start at midnight from my bed—
And have no right to strike him dead.

What world is this that I am in,
Where chance turns sanctity to sin!
'Tis crime henceforward to desire
The only good; the sacred fire
That sunn'd the universe is hell!
I hear a Voice which argues well:
'The Heaven hard has scorn'd your cry;
Fall down and worship me, and I
Will give you peace; go and profane
This pangful love, so pure, so vain,
And thereby win forgetfulness
And pardon of the spirit's excess,
Which soar'd too nigh that jealous Heaven
Ever, save thus, to be forgiven.
No Gospel has come down that cures
With better gain a loss like yours.
Be pious! Give the beggar pelf,
And love your neighbour as yourself!
You, who yet love, though all is o'er,
And she'll ne'er be your neighbour more,
With soul which can in pity smile
That aught with such a measure vile
As self should be at all named "love!"
Your sanctity the priests reprove;
Your case of grief they wholly miss;
The Man of Sorrows names not this.
The years, they say, graff love divine
On the lopp'd stock of love like thine;
'The wild tree dies not, but converts.'
'So be it; but the lopping hurts,
'The graff takes tardily! Men stanch
'Meantime with earth the bleeding branch.
'There's nothing heals one woman's loss,
'And lightens life's eternal cross
'With intermission of sound rest,
'Like lying in another's breast.
'The cure is, to your thinking, low!
'Is not life all, henceforward, so?'

Ill Voice, at least thou calm'st my mood
I'll sleep! But, as I thus conclude,
The intrusions of her grace dispel
The comfortable glooms of hell.

A wonder! Ere these lines were dried,
Vaughan and my Love, his three-days' Bride,
Became my guests. I look'd, and, lo,
In beauty soft as is the snow
And powerful as the avalanche,
She lit the deck. The Heav'n-sent chance!
She smiled, surprised. They came to see
The ship, not thinking to meet me.

At infinite distance she's my day:
What then to him? Howbeit they say
'Tis not so sunny in the sun
But men might live cool lives thereon!

All's well; for I have seen arise
That reflex sweetness of her eyes
In his, and watch'd his breath defer
Humbly its bated life to her,
His wife. My Love, she's safe in his
Devotion! What ask'd I but this?

They bade adieu; I saw them go
Across the sea; and now I know
The ultimate hope I rested on,
The hope beyond the grave, is gone,
FROM FREDERICK.

The hope that, in the heavens high,
At last it should appear that I
Loved most, and so, by claim divine,
Should have her, in the heavens, for mine.
According to such nuptial sort
As may subsist in the holy court,
Where, if there are all kinds of joys
To exhaust the multitude of choice
In many mansions, then there are
Loves personal and particular,
Conspicuous in the glorious sky
Of universal charity,
As Phosphor in the sunrise. Now
I've seen them, I believe their vow
Immortal; and the dreadful thought,
That he less honour'd than he ought
Her sanctity, is laid to rest,
And, blessing them, I too am blest.
My goodwill, as a springing air,
Unclouds a beauty in despair;
I stand beneath the sky's pure cope
Unburthen'd even by a hope;
And peace unspeakable, a joy
Which hope would deaden and destroy,
Like sunshine fills the airy gulf
Left by the vanishing of self.
That I have known her; that she moves
Somewhere all-graceful; that she loves,
And is belov'd, and that she's so
Most happy, and to heaven will go,
Where I may meet with her, (yet this
I count but accidental bliss,)
And that the full, celestial weal
Of all shall sensitively fee
The partnership and work of each,
And thus my love and labour reach
FROM FREDERICK.

Her region, there the more to bless
Her last, consummate happiness,
Is guerdon up to the degree
Of that alone true loyalty
Which, sacrificing, is not nice
About the terms of sacrifice,
But offers all, with smiles that say,
'Tis little, but it is for aye!
XI

FROM MRS. GRAHAM.

You wanted her, my Son, for wife, With the fierce need of life in life. That nobler passion of an hour Was rather prophecy than power; And nature, from such stress unbent, Recurs to deep discouragement. Trust not such peace yet; easy breath, In hot diseases, argues death; And tastelessness within the mouth Worse fever shows than heat or drouth. Wherefore take, Frederick, timely fear Against a different danger near: Wed not one woman, oh, my Child, Because another has not smiled! Oft, with a disappointed man, The first who cares to win him can; For, after love's heroic strain, Which tired the heart and brought no gain, He feels consoled, relieved, and eased To meet with her who can be pleased To proffer kindness, and compute His acquiescence for pursuit; Who troubles not his lonely mood; And asks for love mere gratitude. Ah, desperate folly! Yet, we know, Who wed through love wed mostly so.
At least, my Son, when wed you do,
See that the woman equals you,
Nor rush, from having loved too high,
Into a worse humility.
A poor estate's a foolish plea
For marrying to a base degree.
A woman grown cannot be train'd,
Or, if she could, no love were gain'd;
For, never was a man's heart caught
By graces he himself had taught.
And fancy not 'tis in the might
Of man to do without delight,
For, should you in her nothing find
To exhilarate the higher mind,
Your soul would deaden useless wings
With wickedness of lawful things,
And vampire pleasure swift destroy
Even the memory of joy.
So let no man, in desperate mood,
Wed a dull girl because she's good.
All virtues in his wife soon dim,
Except the power of pleasing him,
Which may small virtue be, or none!

I know my just and tender Son,
To whom the dangerous grace is given
That scorns a good which is not heaven;
My Child, who used to sit and sigh
Under the bright, ideal sky,
And pass, to spare the farmer's wheat,
The poppy and the meadow-sweet!
He would not let his wife's heart ache
For what was mainly his mistake;
But, having err'd so, all his force
Would fix upon the hard, right course.
She's graceless, say, yet good and true,
And therefore inly fair, and, through
The veils which inward beauty fold,
Faith can her loveliness behold.
Ah, that’s soon tired; faith falls away
Without the ceremonial stay
Of outward loveliness and awe.
The weightier matters of the law
She pays: mere mint and cumin not;
And, in the road that she was taught,
She treads, and takes for granted still
Nature’s immedicable ill;
So never wears within her eyes
A false report of paradise,
Nor ever modulates her mirth
With vain compassion of the earth,
Which made a certain happier face
Affecting, and a gayer grace
With pathos delicately edged!
Yet, though she be not privileged
To unlock for you your heart’s delight,
(Her keys being gold, but not the right,)
On lower levels she may do!
Her joy is more in loving you
Than being loved, and she commands
All tenderness she understands.
It is but when you proffer more
The yoke weighs heavy and chases sore.
It’s weary work enforcing love
On one who has enough thereof,
And honour on the lowlihead
Of ignorance! Besides, you dread,
In Leah’s arms, to meet the eyes
Of Rachel, somewhere in the skies,
And both return, alike relieved,
To life less loftily conceived.
Alas, alas!

Then wait the mood
In which a woman may be woo'd
Whose thoughts and habits are too high
For honour to be flattery,
And who would surely not allow
The suit that you could proffer now.
Her equal yoke would sit with ease;
It might, with wearing, even please,
(Not with a better word to move
The loyal wrath of present love);
She would not mope when you were gay,
For want of knowing aught to say;
Nor vex you with unhandsome waste
Of thoughts ill-timed and words ill-placed;
Nor reckon small things duties small,
And your fine sense fantastical;
Nor would she bring you up a brood
Of strangers bound to you by blood,
Boys of a meaner moral race,
Girls with their mother's evil grace,
But not her chance to sometimes find
Her critic past his judgment kind;
Nor, unaccustomed to respect,
Which men, where 'tis not claim'd, neglect,
Confirm you selfish and morose,
And slowly, by contagion, gross;
But, glad and able to receive
The honour you would long to give,
Would hasten on to justify
Expectancy, however high,
Whilst you would happily incur
Compulsion to keep up with her.
XII

FROM FREDERICK.

Your letter, Mother, bears the date
Of six months back, and comes too late.
My Love, past all conceiving lost,
A change seem'd good, at any cost,
From lonely, stupid, silent grief,
Vain, objectless, beyond relief,
And, like a sea-fog, settled dense
On fancy, feeling, thought, and sense.
I grew so idle, so despised
Myself, my powers, by Her unprized,
Honouring my post, but nothing more,
And lying, when I lived on shore,
So late of mornings: weak tears stream'd
For such slight cause,—if only gleam'd,
Remotely, beautifully bright,
On clouded eyes at sea, the light
Of English headlands in the sun,—
That soon I deem'd 'twere better done
To lay this poor, complaining wraith
Of unreciprocated faith:
And so, with heart still bleeding quick,
But strengthen'd by the comfort sick
Of knowing that She could not care.
I turn'd away from my despair,
And told our chaplain's daughter, Jane,—
A dear, good girl, who saw my pain,
And look'd as if she pitied me,—
How glad and thankful I should be
If some kind woman, not above
Myself in rank, would give her love
To one that knew not how to woo.
Whereat she, without more ado,
Blush'd, spoke of love return'd, and closed
With what I meant to have proposed.

And, trust me, Mother, I and Jane,
We suit each other well. My gain
Is very great in this good Wife,
To whom I'm bound, for natural life,
By hearty faith, yet crossing not
My faith towards—I know not what!
As to the ether is the air,
Is her good to Honoria's fair;
One place is full of both, yet each
Lies quite beyond the other's reach
And recognition.

If you say,
Am I contented? Yea and nay!
For what's base but content to grow
With less good than the best we know?
But think me not from life withdrawn,
By passion for a hope that's gone,
So far as to forget how much
A woman is, as merely such,
To man's affection. What is best,
In each, belongs to all the rest;
And though, in marriage, quite to kiss
And half to love the custom is,
'Tis such dishonour, ruin bare,
The soul's interior despair,
And life between two troubles toss'd,
To me, who think not with the most;
Whatever 'twould have been, before
FROM FREDERICK.

My Cousin's time, 'tis now so sore
A treason to the abiding throne
Of that sweet love which I have known,
I cannot live so, and I bend
My mind perforce to comprehend
That He who givcs command to love
Does not require a thing above
The strength He gives. The highest degree
Of the hardest grace, humility;
The step 'ward heaven the latest trod,
And that which makes us most like God,
And us much more than God behoves,
Is, to be humble in our loves.
Henceforth for ever therefore I
Renounce all partiality
Of passion. Subject to control
Of that perspective of the soul
Which God Himself pronounces good,
Confirming claims of neighbourhood,
And giving man, for earthly life,
The closest neighbour in a wife,
I'll serve all. Jane be much more dear
Than all as she is much more near!
I'll love her! Yea, and love's joy comes
Ever from self-love's martyrdoms!
   Yet, not to lie for God, 'tis true
That 'twas another joy I knew
When frightened was my heart with fire
Of fond, irrational desire
For fascinating, female charms,
And hopeless heaven in Her mild arms.
Nor wrong I any, if I profess
That care for heaven with me were less
But that I'm utterly imbued
With faith of all Earth's hope renewed
In realms where no short-coming pains
FROM FREDERICK.

Expectance, and dear love disdains
Time's treason, and the gathering dross,
And lasts for ever in the gloss
Of newness.

All the bright past seems,
Now, but a splendour in my dreams,
Which shows, albeit the dreamer wakes,
The standard of right life. Life aches.
To be therewith conform'd; but, oh,
The world's so stolid, dark, and low!
That and the mortal element
Forbid the beautiful intent,
And, like the unborn butterfly,
It feels the wings, and wants the sky.

But perilous is the lofty mood
Which cannot yoke with lowly good.
Right life, for me, is life that wends
By lowly ways to lofty ends.
I well perceive, at length, that haste
T'ward heaven itself is only waste;
And thus I dread the impatient spur
Of aught that speaks too plain of Her.
There's little here that story tells;
But music talks of nothing else.
Therefore, when music breathes, I say,
(And urge my task,) Away, away!
Thou art the voice of one I knew,
But what thou say'st is not yet true;
Thou art the voice of her I loved,
And I would not be vainly moved.

So that which did from death set free
All things, now dons death's mockery,
And takes its place with things that are
But little noted. Do not mar
For me your peace! My health is high.
The proud possession of mine eye
FROM FREDERICK.

Departed, I am much like one
Who had by haughty custom grown
To think gilt rooms, and spacious grounds,
Horses, and carriages, and hounds,
Fine linen, and an eider bed
As much his need as daily bread,
And honour of men as much or more.
Till, strange misfortune smiting sore,
His pride all goes to pay his debts,
A lodging anywhere he gets,
And takes his family thereto
Weeping, and other relics few,
Allow'd, by them that seize his pelf,
As precious only to himself.
Yet the sun shines; the country green
Has many riches, poorly seen
From blazon'd coaches; grace at meat
Goes well with thrift in what they eat;
And there's amends for much bereft
In better thanks for much that's left!

Jane is not fair, yet pleases well
The eye in which no others dwell;
And features somewhat plainly set,
And homely manners leave her yet
The crowning boon and most express
Of Heaven's inventive tenderness,
A woman. But I do her wrong,
Letting the world's eyes guide my tongue!
She has a handsomeness that pays
No homage to the hourly gaze,
And dwells not on the arch'd brow's height
And lids which softly lodge the light,
Nor in the pure field of the cheek
Flow'rs, though the soul be still to seek;
But shows as fits that solemn place
Whereof the window is the face:
FROM FREDERICK.

Blankness and leaden outlines mark
What time the Church within is dark;
Yet view it on a Festal night,
Or some occasion else for light,
And each ungainly line is seen
A special character to mean
Of Saint or Prophet, and the whole
Blank window is a living scroll.

For hours, the clock upon the shelf,
Has all the talking to itself;
But to and fro her needle runs
Twice, while the clock is ticking once;
And, when a wife is well in reach,
Not silence separates, but speech;
And I, contented, read, or smoke,
And idly think, or idly stroke
The winking cat, or watch the fire,
In social peace that does not tire;
Until, at easeful end of day,
She moves, and puts her work away,
And, saying 'How cold 'tis,' or 'How warm,'
Or something else as little harm,
Comes, used to finding, kindly press'd,
A woman's welcome to my breast,
With all the great advantage clear
Of none else having been so near.

But sometimes, (how shall I deny !)
There falls, with her thus fondly by,
Dejection, and a chilling shade.
Remember'd pleasures, as they fade,
Salute me, and colossal grow,
Like foot-prints in the thawing snow.
I feel oppress'd beyond my force
With foolish envy and remorse.
I love this woman, but I might
Have loved some else with more delight;
FROM FREDERICK.

And strange it seems of God that he
Should make a vain capacity.
Such times of ignorant relapse,
'Tis well she does not talk, perhaps.
The dream, the discontent, the doubt,
To some injustice flaming out,
Were't else, might leave us both to moan
A kind tradition overthrown,
And dawning promise once more dead
In the pernicious lowlihead
Of not aspiring to be fair.
And what am I, that I should dare
Dispute with God, who moulds one clay
To honour and shame, and wills to pay
With equal wages them that delve
About his vines one hour or twelve!
I've dreadful news, my Sister dear!  
Frederick has married, as we hear,  
Oh, such a girl! This fact we get  
From Mr. Barton, whom we met  
At Abury once. He used to know,  
At Race and Hunt, Lord Clitheroe,  
And writes that he 'has seen Fred Graham,  
'Commander of the Wolf,—the same  
'The Mess call'd Joseph,—with his Wife  
'Under his arm.' He 'lays his life,  
'The fellow married her for love,  
'For there was nothing else to move.  
'H. is her Shibboleth. 'Tis said  
'Her Mother was a Kitchen-Maid.'  
Poor Fred! What will Honoria say?  
She thought so highly of him. Pray  
Tell it her gently. I've no right,  
I know you hold, to trust my sight;  
But Frederick's state could not be hid!  
And Felix, coming when he did,  
Was lucky; for Honoria, too,  
Was half in love. How warm she grew  
On 'worldliness,' when once I said  
I fancied that, in ladies, Fred
Had tastes much better than his means!
His hand was worthy of a Queen's,
Said she, and actually shed tears
The night he left us for two years,
And sobb'd, when ask'd the cause to tell,
That 'Frederick look'd so miserable.'
He did look very dull, no doubt,
But such things girls don't cry about.

What weathercocks men always prove!
You're quite right not to fall in love.
*I* never did, and, truth to tell,
I don't think it respectable.
The man can't understand it, too.
He likes to be in love with you,
But scarce knows how, if you love him,
Poor fellow. When 'tis woman's whim
To serve her husband night and day,
The kind soul let's her have her way!
So, if you wed, as soon you should,
Be selfish for your husband's good.
Happy the men who relegate
Their pleasures, vanities, and state
To *us*. Their nature seems to be
To enjoy themselves by deputy,
For, seeking their own benefit,
Dear, what a mess they make of it!
A man will work his bones away,
If but his wife will only play;
He does not mind how much he's teased,
So that his plague looks always pleased;
And never thanks her, while he lives,
For anything, but what he gives!
'Tis hard to manage men, we hear!
Believe me, nothing's easier, Dear.
The most important step by far
Is finding what their colours are.
The next is, not to let them know
The reason why they love us so.
The indolent droop of a blue shawl,
Or gray silk's fluctuating fall,
Covers the multitude of sins
In me.  *Your* husband, Love, might wince
At azure, and be wild at slate,
And yet do well with chocolate.
Of course you'd let him fancy he
Adored you for your piety.
XIV

FROM JANE TO HER MOTHER.

Dear Mother, as you write, I see
How glad and thankful I should be
For such a husband. Yet to tell
The truth, I am so miserable!
How could he—I remember, though,
He never said he loved me! No,
He is so right that all seems wrong
I've done and thought my whole life long!
I'm grown so dull and dead with fear
That Yes and No, when he is near,
Is all I have to say. He's quite
Unlike what most would call polite,
And yet, when first I saw him come
To tea in Aunt's fine drawing-room,
He made me feel so common! Oh,
How dreadful if he thinks me so!
It's no use trying to behave
To him. His eye, so kind and grave,
Sees through and through me! Could not you,
Without his knowing that I knew,
Ask him to scold me now and then?
Mother, it's such a weary strain
The way he has of treating me
As if 'twas something fine to be
A woman; and appearing not
To notice any faults I've got!
FROM JANE TO HER MOTHER.

I know he knows I'm plain, and small,
Stupid, and ignorant, and all
Awkward and mean; and, by degrees,
I see a beauty which he sees,
When often he looks strange awhile,
Then recollects me with a smile.

I wish he had that fancied Wife,
With me for Maid, now! all my life
To dress her out for him, and make
Her looks the lovelier for his sake;
To have her rate me till I cried;
Then see her seated by his side,
And driven off proudly to the Ball;
Then to stay up for her, whilst all
The servants were asleep; and hear
At dawn the carriage rolling near,
And let them in; and hear her laugh,
And boast, he said that none was half
So beautiful, and that the Queen,
Who danced with him the first, had seen
And noticed her, and ask'd who was
That lady in the golden gauze?
And then to go to bed, and lie
In a sort of heavenly jealousy,
Until 'twas broad day, and I guess'd
She slept, nor knew how she was bless'd.

Pray burn this letter. I would not
Complain, but for the fear I've got
Of going wild, as we hear tell
Of people shut up in a cell,
With no one there to talk to. He,
Must never know he is loved by me
The most; he'd think himself to blame;
And I should almost die for shame.

If being good would serve instead
Of being graceful, ah, then, Fred—
But I, myself, I never could
See what's in women's being good;
For all their goodness is to do
Just what their nature tells them to.
Now, when a man would do what's right,
He has to try with all his might.

Though true and kind in deed and word,
Fred's not a vessel of the Lord.
But I have hopes of him; for, oh,
How can we ever surely know
But that the very darkest place
May be the scene of saving grace!
XV

FROM FREDERICK.

‘How did I feel?’ The little wight
Fill’d me, unfatherly, with fright!
So grim it gazed, and, out of the sky,
There came, minute, remote, the cry,
Piercing, of original pain.
I put the wonder back to Jane,
And her delight seem’d dash’d, that I,
Of strangers still by nature shy,
Was not familiar quite so soon
With her small friend of many a moon.
But, when the new-made Mother smiled,
She seem’d herself a little child,
Dwelling at large beyond the law
By which, till then, I judged and saw;
And that fond glow which she felt stir
For it, suffused my heart for her;
To whom, from the weak babe, and thence
To me, an influent innocence,
Happy, reparative of life,
Came, and she was indeed my wife,
As there, lovely with love she lay,
Brightly contented all the day
To hug her sleepy little boy,
In the reciprocated joy
Of touch, the childish sense of love,
Ever inquisitive to prove
Its strange possession, and to know
If the eye’s report be really so.
FROM JANE TO MRS. GRAHAM.

Dear Mother,—such if you'll allow,
In love, not law, I'll call you now,—
I hope you're well. I write to say
Frederick has got, besides his pay,
A good appointment in the Docks;
Also to thank you for the frocks
And shoes for Baby. I, (D.V.),
Shall soon be strong. Fred goes to sea
No more. I am so glad; because,
Though kinder husband never was,
He seems still kinder to become
The more he stays with me at home.
When we are parted, I see plain
He's dull till he gets used again
To marriage. Do not tell him, though;
I would not have him know I know,
For all the world.

I try to mind
All your advice; but sometimes find
I do not well see how. I thought
To take it about dress; so bought
A gay new bonnet, gown, and shawl;
But Frederick was not pleased at all;
For, though he smiled, and said, 'How smart!'
I feel, you know, what's in his heart.
But I shall learn! I fancied long
That care in dress was very wrong,
Till Frederick, in his startling way,
When I began to blame, one day,
The Admiral’s Wife, because we hear
She spends two hours, or something near,
In dressing, took her part, and said
How all things deck themselves that wed;
How birds and plants grow fine to please
Each other in their marriages;
And how (which certainly is true—
It never struck me—did it you?)
Dress was, at first, Heaven’s ordinance,
And has much Scripture countenance.
For Eliezer, we are told,
Adorn’d with jewels and with gold
Rebecca. In the Psalms, again,
How the King’s Daughter dress’d! And, then,
The Good Wife in the Proverbs, she
Made herself clothes of tapestry,
Purple and silk: and there’s much more
I had not thought about before!
But Fred’s so clever! Do you know,
Since Baby came, he loves me so!
I’m really useful, now, to Fred;
And none could do so well instead.
It’s nice to fancy, if I died,
He’d miss me from the Darling’s side!
Also, there’s something now, you see,
On which we talk, and quite agree;
On which, without pride too, I can
Hope I’m as wise as any man.
I should be happy now, if quite
Sure that in one thing Fred was right.
But, though I trust his prayers are said,
Because he goes so late to bed,
I doubt his Calling. Glad to find
A text adapted to his mind,—
That where St. Paul, in Man and Wife,
Allows a little worldly life,—
He smiled, and said that he knew all
Such things as that without St. Paul!
And once he said, when I with pain
Had got him just to read Romaine,
'Men's creeds should not their hopes condemn.
'Who wait for heaven to come to them
'Are little like to go to heaven,
'If logic's not the devil's leaven!'
I cried at such a wicked joke,
And he, surprised, went out to smoke
But to judge him is not for me,
Who myself sin so dreadfully
As half to doubt if I should care
To go to heaven, and he not there.
He must be right; and I dare say
I shall soon understand his way.
To other things, once strange, I've grown
Accustom'd, nay, to like. I own
'Twas long before I got well used
To sit, while Frederick read or mused
For hours, and scarcely spoke. When he
For all that, held the door to me,
Pick'd up my handkerchief, and rose
To set my chair, with other shows
Of honour, such as men, 'tis true,
To sweethearts and fine ladies do,
It almost seem'd an unkind jest;
But now I like these ways the best.
They somehow make me gentle and good;
And I don't mind his quiet mood.
If Frederick does seem dull awhile,
There's Baby. You should see him smile!
FROM JANE TO MRS. GRAHAM.

I’m pretty and nice to him, sweet Pet,
And he will learn no better yet:
Indeed, now little Johnny makes
A busier time of it, and takes
Our thoughts off one another more,
I’m happy as need be, I’m sure!
XVII

FROM FELIX TO HONORIA.

Let me, Beloved, while gratitude
Is garrulous with coming good,
Or ere the tongue of happiness
Be silenced by your soft caress,
Relate how, musing here of you,
The clouds, the intermediate blue,
The air that rings with larks, the grave
And distant rumour of the wave,
The solitary sailing skiff,
The gusty corn-field on the cliff,
The corn-flower by the crumbling ledge,
Or, far-down at the shingle's edge,
The sighing sea's recurrent crest
Breaking, resign'd to its unrest,
All whisper, to my home-sick thought,
Of charms in you till now uncaught,
Or only caught as dreams, to die
Ere they were own'd by memory.

High and ingenious Decree
Of joy-devising Deity!
You whose ambition only is
The assurance that you make my bliss,
(Hence my first debt of love to show,
That you, past showing, indeed do so!)
Trust me the world, the firmament,
With diverse-natured worlds besprent,
Were rear'd in no mere undivine
Boast of omnipotent design,
The lion differing from the snake
But for the trick of difference sake,
And comets darting to and fro
Because in circles planets go;
But rather that sole love might be
Refresh'd throughout eternity
In one sweet faith, for ever strange,
Mirror'd by circumstantial change.
For, more and more, do I perceive
That everything is relative
To you, and that there's not a star,
Nor nothing in't, so strange or far,
But, if 'twere scanned, 'twould chiefly mean
Somewhat, till then, in you unseen,
Something to make the bondage strait
Of you and me more intimate,
Some unguess'd opportunity
Of nuptials in a new degree.

But, oh, with what a novel force
Your best-conn'd beauties, by remorse
Of absence, touch; and, in my heart,
How bleeds afresh the youthful smart
Of passion fond, despairing still
To utter infinite good-will
By worthy service! Yet I know
That love is all that love can owe,
And this to offer is no less
Of worth, in kind speech or caress,
Than if my life-blood I should give.
For good is God's prerogative,
And Love's deed is but to prepare
The flatter'd, dear Belov'd to dare
Acceptance of His gifts. When first
On me your happy beauty burst,
Honoria, verily it seem'd
That naught beyond you could be dream'd
Of beauty and of heaven's delight.
Zeal of an unknown infinite
Yet bade me ever wish you more
Beatified than e'er before.
Angelical were your replies
To my prophetic flatteries;
And sweet was the compulsion strong
That drew me in the course along
Of heaven's increasing bright allure,
With provocations fresh of your
Victorious capacity.
Whither may love, so fledged, not fly?

Did not mere Earth hold fast the string
Of this celestial soaring thing,
So measure and make sensitive,
And still, to the nerves, nice notice give
Of each minutest increment
Of such interminable ascent,
The heart would lose all count, and beat
Unconscious of a height so sweet,
And the spirit-pursuing senses strain
Their steps on the starry track in vain!
But, reading now the note just come,
With news of you, the babes, and home,
I think, and say, 'To-morrow eve
'With kisses me will she receive,'
And, thinking, for extreme delight
Of love's extremes, I laugh outright.
XVIII
FROM FREDERICK.

Eight wedding-days gone by, and none
Yet kept, to keep them all in one,
Jane and myself, with John and Grace
On donkeys, visited the place
I first drew breath in, Knatchley Wood.
Bearing the basket, stuff’d with food,
Milk, loaves, hard eggs, and marmalade,
I halted where the wandering glade
Divides the thicket. There I knew,
It seem’d, the very drops of dew
Below the unalter’d eglantine.
Nothing had changed since I was nine!
   In the green desert, down to eat
We sat, our rustic grace at meat
Good appetite, through that long climb
Hungry two hours before the time.
And there Jane took her stitching out,
And John for birds’-nests pry’d about,
And Grace and Baby, in between
The warm blades of the breathing green,
Dodged grasshoppers; and I no less,
In conscientious idleness,
Enjoy’d myself, under the noon
Stretch’d, and the sounds and sights of June
Receiving, with a drowsy charm,
Through muffled ear and folded arm.
And then, as if I sweetly-dream’d,
I half-remember’d how it seem’d
When I, too, was a little child
About the wild wood roving wild.
Pure breezes from the far-off height
Melted the blindness from my sight,
Until, with rapture, grief, and awe,
I saw again as then I saw.
As then I saw, I saw again
The harvest-waggon in the lane,
With high-hung tokens of its pride
Left in the elms on either side;
The daisies coming out at dawn
In constellations on the lawn;
The glory of the daffodil;
The three black windmills on the hill,
Whose magic arms, flung wildly by,
Sent magic shadows o’er the rye.
Within the leafy coppice, lo,
More wealth than miser’s dreams could show,
The blackbird’s warm and woolly brood,
Five golden beaks agape for food;
The Gipsies, all the summer seen
Native as poppies to the Green;
The winter, with its frosts and thaws
And opulence of hips and haws;
The lovely marvel of the snow;
The Tamar, with its altering show
Of gay ships sailing up and down,
Among the fields and by the Town;
And, dearer far than anything,
Came back the songs you used to sing.
(Ah, might you sing such songs again,
And I, your child, but hear as then,
With conscious profit of the gulf
Flown over from my present self!)
And, as to men's retreating eyes,
Beyond high mountains higher rise,
Still farther back there shone to me
The dazzling dusk of infancy.
Thither I look'd, as, sick of night,
The Alpine shepherd looks to the height,
And does not see the day, 'tis true,
But sees the rosy tops that do.

Meantime Jane stitch'd, and fann'd the flies
From my repose, with hush'd replies
To Grace, and smiles when Baby fell.
Her countenance love visible
Appear'd, love audible her voice.
Why in the past alone rejoice,
Whilst here was wealth before me cast
Which, I could feel, if 'twere but past
Were then most precious? Question vain,
When ask'd again and yet again,
Year after year; yet now, for no
Cause, but that heaven's bright winds will

Not at our pray'r but as they list,
It brought that distant, golden mist
To grace the hour, firing the deep
Of spirit and the drowsy keep
Of joy, till, spreading uncontain'd,
The holy power of seeing gain'd
The outward eye, this owning even
That where there's love and truth there's
heaven.

Debtor to few, forgotten hours
Am I, that truths for me are powers.
Ah, happy hours, 'tis something yet
Not to forget that I forget!

And now a cloud, bright, huge and calm,
Rose, doubtful if for bale or balm;
O'ertoppling towers and bulwarks bright
Appear'd, at beck of viewless might,
Along a rifted mountain range.
Untraceable and swift in change,
Those glittering peaks, disrupted, spread
To solemn bulks, seen overhead;
The sunshine quench'd, from one dark form
Fumed the appalling light of storm.
Straight to the zenith, black with bale,
The Gipsies' smoke rose deadly pale;
And one wide night of hopeless hue
Hid from the heart the recent blue.
And soon, with thunder crackling loud,
A flash reveal'd the formless cloud:
Lone sailing rack, far wavering rim,
And billowy tracts of stormland dim.

We stood, safe group'd beneath a shed.
Grace hid behind Jane's gown for dread,
Who told her, fondling with her hair,
'The naughty noise! but God took care
Of all good girls.' John seem'd to me
Too much for Jane's theology,
Who bade him watch the tempest. Now
A blast made all the woodland bow;
Against the whirl of leaves and dust
Kine dropp'd their heads; the tortured gust
Jagg'd and convuls'd the ascending smoke
To mockery of the lightning's stroke.
The blood prick'd, and a blinding flash
And close cointantaneous crash
Humbled the soul, and the rain all round
Resilient dimm'd the whistling ground,
Nor flagg'd in force from first to last,
Till, sudden as it came, 'twas past,
Leaving a trouble in the copse
Of brawling birds and tinkling drops.
FROM FREDERICK.

* Change beyond hope! Far thunder faint
Mutter'd its vast and vain complaint,
And gaps and fractures, fringed with light,
Show'd the sweet skies, with squadrons bright
Of cloudlets, glittering calm and fair
Through gulfs of calm and glittering air.

With this adventure, we return'd.
The roads the feet no longer burn'd.
A wholesome smell of rainy earth
Refresh'd our spirits, tired of mirth.
The donkey-boy drew friendly near
My Wife, and, touch'd by the kind cheer
Her countenance show'd, or sooth'd perchance
By the soft evening's sad advance,
As we were, stroked the flanks and head
Of the ass, and, somewhat thick-voiced, said,
'To 'ave to wop the donkeys so
"'Ardens the 'art, but they wont go
'Without!" My Wife, by this impress'd,
As men judge poets by their best,
When now we reach'd the welcome door,
Gave him his hire, and sixpence more.
XIX
FROM JANE.

Dear Mrs. Graham, the fever's past, And Fred is well. I, in my last,
Forgot to say that, while 'twas on,
A lady, call'd Honoria Vaughan,
One of his Salisbury Cousins, came.
Had I, she ask'd me, heard her name?
'Twas that Honoria, no doubt,
Whom he would sometimes talk about
And speak to, when his nights were bad,
And so I told her that I had.
She look'd so beautiful and kind!
And just the sort of wife my mind
Pictured for Fred, with many tears,
In those sad early married years.
Visiting, yesterday, she said,
The Admiral's Wife, she learn'd that Fred
Was very ill; she begg'd to be,
If possible, of use to me.
What could she do? Last year, his Aunt
Died, leaving her, who had no want,
Her fortune. Half was his, she thought;
But he, she knew, would not be brought
To take his rights at second hand.
Yet something might, she hoped, be plann'd.
What did I think of putting John
To school and college? Mr. Vaughan,
When John was old enough, could give
Preferment to her relative;
And she should be so pleased.—I said
I felt quite sure that dearest Fred
Would be most thankful. Would we come,
And make ourselves, she ask'd, at home,
Next month, at High-Hurst? Change of air
Both he and I should need, and there
At leisure we could talk, and then
Fix plans, as John was nearly ten,
   It seemed so rude to think and doubt,
So I said, Yes. In going out,
She said, 'How strange of Frederick, Dear,'
(I wish he had been there to hear,)
'To send no cards, or tell me what
'A nice new Cousin I had got!'
Was not that kind?

When Fred grew strong,
I had, I found, done very wrong.
Anger was in his voice and eye.
With people born and bred so high
As Fred and Mrs. Vaughan and you,
It's hard to guess what's right to do;
And he won't teach me!

Dear Fred wrote,

Directly, such a lovely note,
Which, though it undid all I had done,
Was, both to me and Mrs. Vaughan,
So kind! His words, I can't say why,
Like soldiers' music, made me cry.
BOOK II.

I

FROM JANE TO HER MOTHER.

THANK Heaven, the burthens on the heart
Are not half known till they depair!
Although I long’d, for many a year,
To love with love that casts out fear,
My Frederick’s kindness frighten’d me,
And heaven seem’d less far off than he,
And in my fancy I would trace
A lady with an angel’s face,
That made devotion simply debt,
Till sick with envy and regret,
And wicked grief that God should e’er
Make women, and not make them fair.
That he might love me more because
Another in his memory was,
And that my indigence might be
To him what Baby’s was to me,
The chief of charms, who could have thought?
But God’s wise way is to give nought
Till we with asking it are tired;
And when, indeed, the change desired
Comes, lest we give ourselves the praise,
It comes by Providence, not Grace;
And mostly our thanks for granted pray'rs
Are groans at unexpected cares.
First Baby went to heaven, you know,
And, five weeks after, Grace went, too.
Then he became more talkative,
And, stooping to my heart, would give
Signs of his love, which pleased me more
Than all the proofs he gave before;
And, in that time of our great grief,
We talk'd religion for relief;
For, though we very seldom name
Religion, we now think the same!
Oh, what a bar is thus removed
To loving and to being loved!
For no agreement really is
In anything when none's in this.
Why, Mother, once, if Frederick press'd
His wife against his hearty breast,
The interior difference seem'd to tear
My own, until I could not bear
The trouble. 'Twas a dreadful strife,
And show'd, indeed, that faith is life.
He never felt this. If he did,
I'm sure it could not have been hid;
For wives, I need not say to you,
Can feel just what their husbands do,
Without a word or look; but then
It is not so, you know, with men.

From that time many a Scripture text
Help'd me, which had, before, perplex'd.
Oh, what a wond'rous word seem'd this:
He is my head, as Christ is his!
None ever could have dared to see
In marriage such a dignity
For, man, 'and for his wife, still less,
Such happy, happy lowliness,
Had God himself not made it plain!
This revelation lays the rein—
If I may speak so—on the neck
Of a wife's love, takes thence the check
Of conscience, and forbids to doubt
Its measure is to be without
All measure, and a fond excess
Is here her rule of godliness.

I took him not for love but fright;
He did but ask a dreadful right.
In this was love, that he loved me
The first, who was mere poverty.
All that I know of love he taught;
And love is all I know of aught.
My merit is so small by his,
That my demerit is my bliss.
My life is hid with him in Christ,
Never thence from to be enticed;
And in his strength have I such rest
As when the baby on my breast
Finds what it knows not how to seek,
And, very happy, very weak,
Lies, only knowing all is well,
Pillow'd on kindness palpable.
II
FROM LADY CLITHEROE TO MARY CHURCHILL.

Dear Saint, I'm still at High-Hurst Park, 
The house is fill'd with folks of mark.  
Honoria suits a good estate 
Much better than I hoped.  How fate 
Loads her with happiness and pride! 
And such a loving lord, beside! 
But between us, Sweet, everything 
Has limits, and to build a wing 
To this old house, when Courtholm stands 
Empty upon his Berkshire lands, 
And all that Honor might be near 
Papa, was buying love too dear.

With twenty others, there are two 
Guests here, whose names will startle you: 
Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Graham! 
I thought he stay'd away for shame. 
He and his wife were ask'd, you know, 
And would not come, four years ago. 
You recollect Miss Smythe found out 
Who she had been, and all about 
Her people at the Powder-mill; 
And how the fine Aunt tried to instil 
Haste-tom and how, at last poor Jane 
Had got so shy and gauche that, when
FROM LADY CLITHEROE.

The Dockyard gentry came to sup,
She always had to be lock'd up;
And some one wrote to us and said
Her mother was a kitchen-maid.
Dear Mary, you'll be charmed to know
It must be all a fib. But, oh,
She is the oddest little Pet
On which my eyes were ever set!
She's so outré and natural
That, when she first arrived, we all
Wonder'd, as when a robin comes
In through the window to eat crumbs
At breakfast with us. She has sense,
Humility, and confidence;
And, save in dressing just a thought
Gayer in colours than she ought,
(To-day she looks a cross between
Gipsy and Fairy, red and green,)
She always happens to do well.
And yet one never quite can tell
What she might do or utter next.
Lord Clitheroe is much perplex'd.
Her husband, every now and then,
Looks nervous; all the other men
Are charmed. Yet she has neither grace,
Nor one good feature in her face.
Her eyes, indeed, flame in her head,
Like very altar-fires to Fred,
Whose steps she follows everywhere
Like a tame duck, to the despair
Of Colonel Holmes, who does his part
To break her funny little heart.
Honor's enchanted. 'Tis her view
That people, if they're good and true,
And treated well, and let alone,
Will kindly take to what's their own,
And always be original,
Like children. Honor's just like all
The rest of us! But, thinking so,
'Tis well she miss'd Lord Clitheroe,
Who hates originality,
Though he puts up with it in me.
    Poor Mrs. Graham has never been
To the Opera! You should have seen
The innocent way she told the Earl
She thought Plays sinful when a girl,
And now she never had a chance!
Frederick's complacent smile and glance
Towards her, show'd me, past a doubt,
Honoria had been quite cut out.
'Tis very strange; for Mrs. Graham,
Though Frederick's fancy none can blame,
Seems the last woman you'd have thought
Her lover would have ever sought
She never reads, I find, nor goes
Anywhere; so that I suppose
She got at all she ever knew
By growing up, as kittens do.
    Talking of kittens, by-the-bye,
You have more influence than I
With dear Honoria. Get her, Dear,
To be a little more severe
With those sweet Children. They've the run
Of all the place. When school was done,
Maud burst in, while the Earl was there,
With 'Oh, Mama, do be a bear!'
    Do you know, Dear, this odd wife of Fred
Adores his old Love in his stead!
She is so nice, yet, I should say,
Not quite the thing for every day.
Wonders are wearying! Felix goes
Next Sunday with her to the Close,
And you will judge.

    Honoria asks
All Wiltshire Belles here; Felix bask's
Like Puss in fire-shine, when the room
Is thus afame with female bloom.
But then she smiles when most would pout;
And so his lawless lovcs go out
With the last brocade. 'Tis not the same,
I fear, with Mrs. Frederick Graham.
Honoria should not have her here,—
And this you might just hint, my Deat,—
For Felix says he never saw
Such proof of what he holds for law,
That 'beauty is love which can be seen.'
Whatever he by this may mean,
Were it not dreadful if he fell
In love with her on principle!