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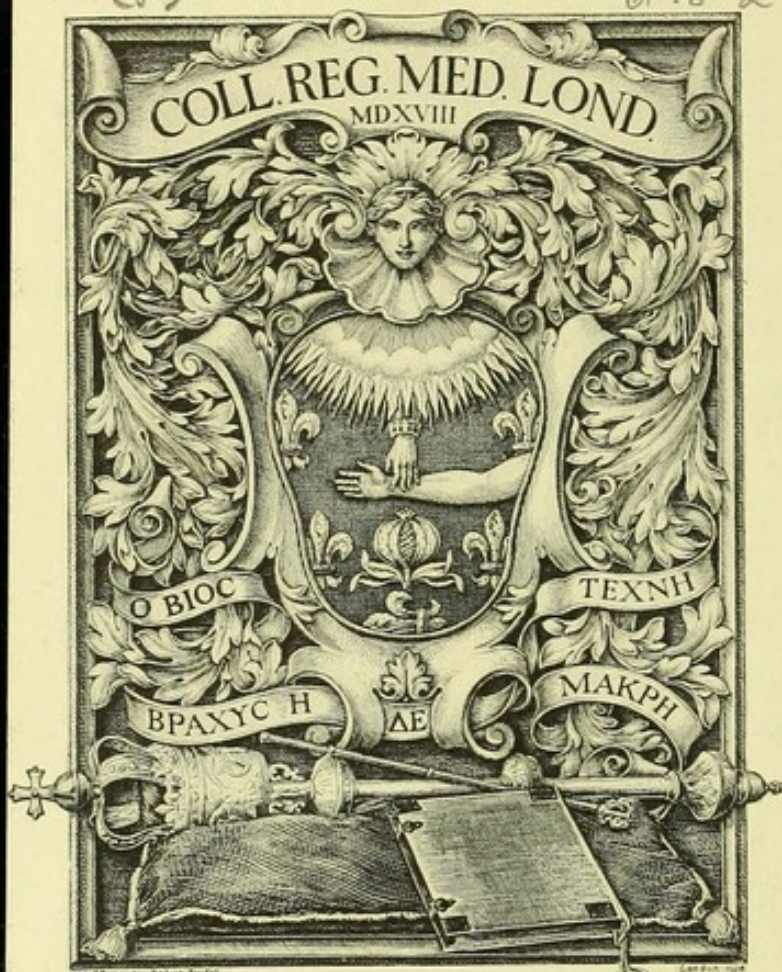


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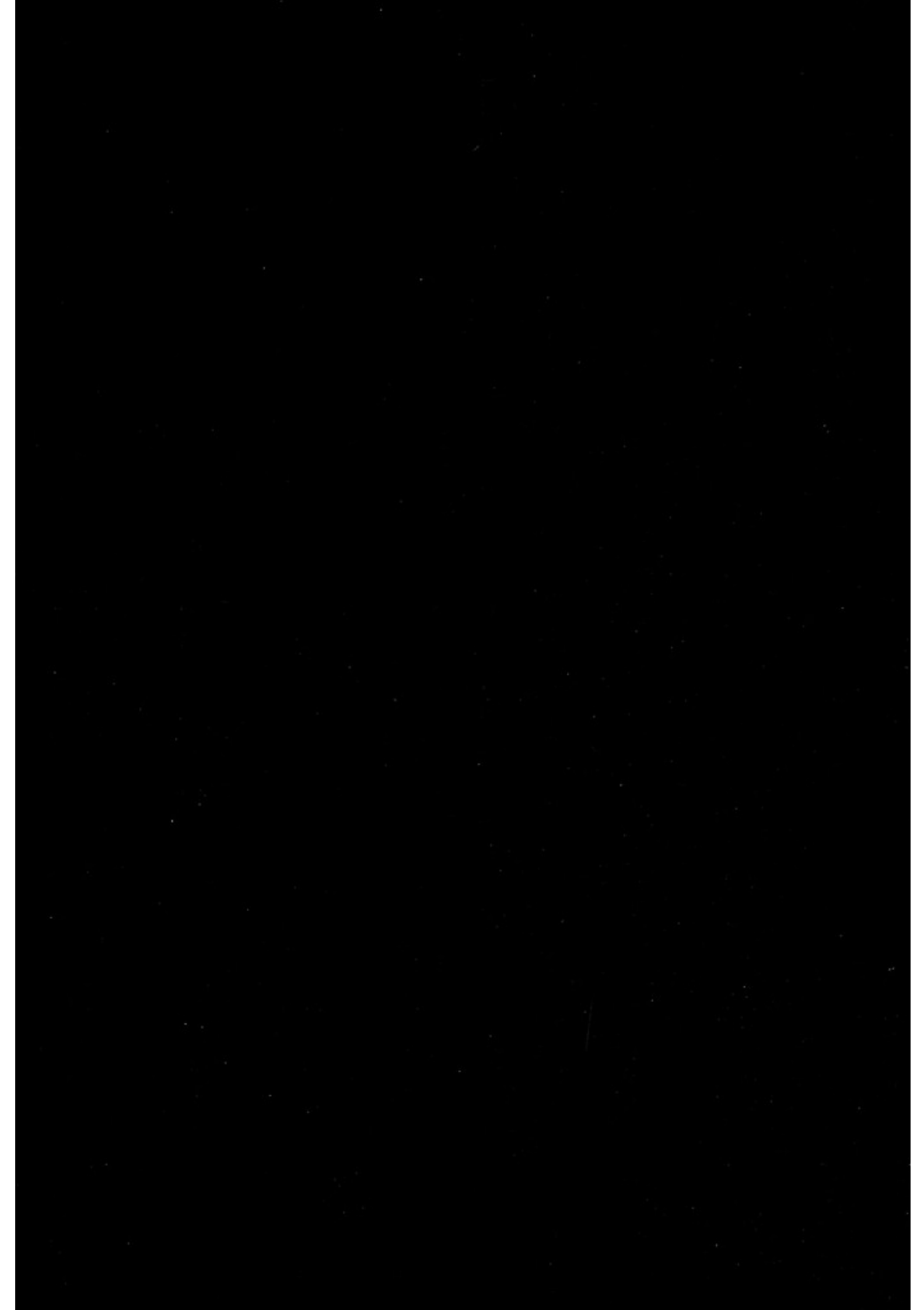


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SELBY.

A PATHOLOGICAL MORALITY

BY

EPPIE FRAZER.

London:

JOHN BALE SONS AND DANIELSSON, LIMITED,

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—
1899.

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To
JOHN CHIENE,
A MASTER IN MORALS AND IN SURGERY,
His DISCIPLE,
UNKNOWN AND UNPERMITTED,
DEDICATES
THIS
BOOK.

A thought of God arose in me ;
I gave it shape delightedly ;
Yet e'en the shape was nowise mine ;
That, too, was wrought by force divine
Coercing my passivity.

The thought was fresh, uncouth and free ;
The form was fashioned to agree,
For who can cripple or confine
A thought of God ?

Fare forth, O thought, for men to see !
Neglect, derision, thou maun dree :
Shall God, thy author, therefore whine ?
Or I, thy vehicle, repine ?
'Tis rapture but to bring to be
A thought of God.



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CHARACTERS.

SELBY FRAYTER	<i>A Country Doctor.</i>
KEAN GUINNESS	<i>A Pathologist.</i>
IRENE NOBLE	<i>A Hospital Matron.</i>
MRS. BUBB.....	<i>An Old-type Nurse.</i>

I.

Far in the North, a wide well-watered vale
Wraps rugs of ridgy wood around the pale
Decrepit limbs of Dalgin, famous town,
Old Dalgin, doting o'er her past renown !
Her castle crumbles lone upon the hill ;
Her abbey moulders by the waters chill ;
Throned on a mound, begirt by tree-tops tall,
Her later-born delight, her Hospital,
In stately pity hearkens every call.
Without, the Hospital is huge and grim ;
Within, the wards are warm and bright and trim ;
But stronger contrast to the outer gloom
Is offered by the cosy matron's room.
There, ever glows a ruddy, cheerful blaze ;
There, couch and chair in comfortable ways
Subdue to restfulness the worried man.
His brain is calmed by the soft colour-plan
That dominates the place, his eye is caught
By some sad picture mystically wrought
On which he gazes till all life seems high
And solemn-sweet, and great it is to die.

But solace subtler than of tint or chair
 Lays hold on him who meets the matron there :
 For who can view Irene yet not feel
 A brave serenity across him steal ?
 'Tis true that she is smaller than beseems,
 And light and fleshless as a thing of dreams ;
 Yet fair is she : her parted tresses wave
 In curves that frame a forehead pure and grave ;
 Her eyes are grey, and clear as pebbled wells,
 And steady in their gaze, yet liking dwells
 In little, ready wrinkles underneath ;
 Her cheek is smooth, faint-tinted like the heath ;
 Large is her nose and firm : full are her lips,
 And gently curved, and ruddier than hips.
 A strong calm face ; oft lit by such a smile
 As doth a sick child of its fears beguile.
 That face fond Selby Frayter knows full well ;
 Four years have passed since first he felt the spell.
 At first he pleased calmly in its grace,
 As men approve a picture or a place ;
 Ere long it haunted him at work, at play,
 A guiding-star upon his upward way ;
 And, last, the shadow face waxed kind and warm,
 Fount of Irene's sympathy and charm,
 As he grew wont to demonstrate to her
 The problems of a social visioner.
 For Selby's heartstrings ring to every wind

Of aspiration in the dim, dull mind
 Of groping men at large. He long has cast
 Away the splints and crutches of the past,
 Forth-stepping free and fearless, resolute
 To perfect every power within him put
 Regardless of conventions : life for him
 Is but his chance to gratify a whim
 For working such experiments in living
 As may, who knows ? eventuate in giving
 New potency of progress to mankind.
 His dress proclaims his openness of mind.
 Physician though he is, and though his bread
 Depends on folk's belief in him, instead
 Of customèd cylinders in black and white
 He wears warm woollens, soft and loose and light,
 And knickerbockers lax, and jacket rough,
 And cap concocted of the self same stuff ;
 Enduring e'en misfits and bulgings quaint,
 So that his clothes be pure of sweaters' taint.
 Such garb be-dwarfs a stature nowise great,
 Yet leaves in high relief a head sedate,
 High-domed, high-browed, with thin high-archèd nose,
 An eye austere as moonlit mountain snows,
 A mouth severe and sad. And yet, the eyes
 Can glow and soften ; and, curled smiling-wise,
 The lips can pucker when he jokes, or when
 He listens to the talk of women or old men.

No smile on Selby's face this afternoon ;
 Big-eyed, and ill at ease, he sits, too soon
 For his appointment. Glance on glance is cast
 About the well-known room ; no comfort flows
 Nor wonted peace. A step—he starts—at last
 Irene enters, radiant in repose.

I. Welcome, O punctual man !
 Painfully punctual thou !
 Prithee, what plausible plan
 Plagueth the puzzlepate now ?

S. Very well—I mean, How—
 Ah ! The weather—Confound—
 Oh forgive me ! I fear
 My request was unwonted ;
 For never before,
 All the years you have known me,
 In sorrow or hope,
 Have I specially pressed you to grant me the meed of a
 meeting alone.

I. Such preparations
 Solemn and serious,
 Such protestations
 Mildly mysterious,
 When they don't weary us,
 Touch the absurd.

S. To the winds with pretence !
 You divine my intent.
 Never woman was wooed
 But knew at a glance
 All the moods of the man
 Ere a word she had heard.
 Let us trifle no more I implore you. I offer my life.
 Be my wife.

I. Marry you ?

S. I am poor, it is true, and apostate to boot.

I. Poverty need not be mentioned. I honour the dutiful,
 Brotherly thought for thy fellows that stinteth so sternly thine earning.
 Great is the soul that denies itself even the beautiful,
 Grieved at the want and the woe that on all sides oppress its discerning.
 But, not so brotherwise—
 Painfully otherwise—
 Rings thy religion.

S. You are right.
 In religion we differ entirely.
 Still you cling to your Christ,
 And in him you can find
 Firmest friend, wisest brother, and loveliest lover,
 Your luminous teacher, your flawless example, your evident God !
 While for me,

He has shrunk to a bundle of mystical myths,
 He is only an idol, depriving my God of adorers.
 Imperfect the record, imperfect the ——

I. Roughly rejecting Him,
 Coldly dissecting Him,
 Scoffing, and careless to stifle thy scorn,
 This in the wooing-time !
 What in the rueing-time ?
 Gibes and contentions ! how could they be borne ?

S. To the end that contention may cease, do I speak.
 Once for all
 Let us face our divergence of faith in its fulness.
 Let each realise in its clearness
 The creed that the other embraces,
 And then, for the future, respect it in silence.
 We are one in so much !
 In enough, I would urge, for the trueness of union.
 Oft of yore
 Have I found I could trust you as counsellor cool,
 With a sympathy swiftly upspringing
 To strengthen what in me is best.
 O my Friend !
 I have learned in our converse how selfishly dense
 I tend to become ;
 How, in living alone, I am shirking the discipline olden
 Of little annoyances, little absurdities, little encroachments ;

How I vaguely dilate on my love for the Race,
 Yet fail to divulge it in loving devotion to One.
 Thou hast shown me my cold, ineffectual self ;

O fuse it with thine !

A useless and isolate icicle, I !

Be my sun,

To thaw me and draw me insensibly higher,
 Set free and diffused to be secretly, humanly, used
 In the dews, or the wells, or the seas, or in viewless untirable steam !

She hearkened to his hesitant appeal ;
 Some fatal lack of something could she feel ;
 She marked his pose, erect and out of reach ;
 The want defined itself in inward speech.

I. Never a hint of a heart !
 Never a glimmer of love !
 Culture is conning a part,
 Dreaming of dramas above !

The pause was short. She, moving to one side,
 Made room for him upon the sofa wide,
 And with serene inconsequence replied.

I. Fie on that frown !
 Won't you sit down ?

He sat him down in that seductive nook,
 Retaining still his speculative look.

Upon the couch her hand lay yieldingly ;
 His hands were tightly clasped about his knee.
 Most tremulous her lips, and kissing-fain ;
 He bit at his, unconscious of the pain.
 Her shining eyes sought his with shy desire ;
 He gazed abstractedly into the fire.
 She shivered, clasped her hands and sat erect,
 Withdrawn, and resolute, and circumspect.

I. All this is Greek to me !
 Why did you speak to me ?

S. Again must I say it ?
 A craving for help
 To aid and sustain me in daily crusades,
 To enable me climb to the peaks of my gleaming ideal.

I. Still I'm unable to see
 Why you have spoken to me.

S. Ah ! You are the Woman ! the One !
 The woman alone, among those I have known,
 To whose guidance benign
 My life I would dare to confide !

I. Potent the flattery
 Masked in your battery,
 Yet, in its fashioning
 Lurketh no passioning—

He rose, and strode a stride : then turning, stood,
Stung to extenuate his stony mood.

S. And the absence of passion is surely a duty !
Obscure not the issues by fusionless yielding
To animal impulse in brutish upheaval !
Let intellect balance the arguments duly,
Then sue to the soul for an ultimate judgment.
We are friends ; and the numberless tendrils that bind us
Owe nought of their nurture to forcing emotion ;
They are wholly of mind ; let them knit us still closer,
Enringed, intertwined in intricate clasping,
Developing, blending, to oneness eternal.

I. Love is a clambering plant.
Just as the creeper is rooted in earth,
Love must be rooted in physical passion ;
Stems gather strength in the breeziest mirth.
Love must be toughened in similar fashion ;
Cleansing, supplying the sap, come the showers,
Love is refined and re-fed by emotion ;
Sunlight and heat are supremest of dowers,
Love is not love without godly devotion.

Love is a clambering plant.

Love is a clambering plant.
Just as the flower is triumph o'er death,
Love lavisheth life for eternal renewal ;

Rankness of overgrowth slays what it hath,
 Love is fordone by luxuriance cruel ;
 Creepers empurple the ugliest stone,
 Love will ennoble the meanest of mortals ;
 Climbers must grovel when growing alone,
 Love in alliance will wreathe to God's portals.

Love is a clambering plant.

S.

Yes,

Except when you advocate animal passion,
 I echo your every expression.

I.

Plants there are plenty that scorn the indelicate soil,
 Seeking ethereal nurture with minimum toil ;
 Air is their only demand ; yet, ere long, unaware,
 Cumulate natural cravings for juicier fare ;
 Lodged on some sturdier sister, her forces they tap,
 Battening idly on stores of elaborate sap ;
 Selfishly sunken in sloth, their ideals defiled,
 Totally noxious they wax : they are Parasites styled.

With folded arms he gazing stood ; the while
 There stole across his face a bitter smile.

S.

You are hitting out hard.

I.

Pardon my parable, please !

S.

Most readily. Really it misses the mark.

Desire is by no means the primal requirement in love :

Be there fitness of intellect, known correspondence of soul,
Then low, elemental attraction will soon supervene.

- I. Known correspondence of soul ! On that rock we must split.
Granted, desire may develop in dedicate life,
Granted, a mental affinity faultlessly fit,
Union is nathless a fiction when souls are at strife.
Wedlock is holy, and those who would rupture the veil
Ought above all to be one in the things of the soul,
Thus to admit in all else that is lower in scale
Gladness of mutual yielding in dual control.
Thou who art ruled by ideals, bow thee to this one of mine !
Never a man shall I marry who deemeth not Christ the Divine.

With elbow on the mantel-shelf, his hand
Tight gripped his temples : dumbly did he stand,
Scowling upon the fender, while his brain,
Aflood with fleeting thoughts, pulsed fluid pain.

- S. (*inly*) It was four years a-growing,
And nipped in an instant of impulse !
Rejected ! a gem of a jest !
But off with this horror of scoffing !
Her hand in my grasp, and my arm round her heart,
And soon will her scruples be doomed !
Down ! never the bestial help of the flesh—
Delay must be claimed,—

Her refusal is due to delusory views—

And yet ! Am I sure ?

Can I deem her ideal a feverish dream,

When the best in my breast gives it echo again ?

Doff thy pride ! She is right !

Accept thy rejection with selfless assent,

And spare her the pain of evasion.

Be worthy, nor utter a word to perturb her !

Meanwhile the silence checked her lofty mood.

She glanced at him, where, plunged in thought, he stood.

Spite of herself, she marked his rippled hair,

His black and bristled beard, the sinewy, spare,

Supporting leg that propped him, as he leant

Above the fire in posture negligent.

1.

(*inly*) Happy the woman of old

Wrenched from her patril meads

Thieved by a bachelor bold,

Curbed by the glamour of deeds,

Secretly tamed to the thrill,

Struggling in test of his strength,

Willingly wanting in will,

Lovingly yielding at length !

Spite of heroical words, ay me ! I could yield,

Were but a touch to bear witness to passion concealed.

At last he turned : alas ! his face was pale !

Tight jaws and straining eyelids told their tale.

His proffered hand was cold, he did not quail.

Good-bye

His hand was cold, but hers was warm and soft :

He bent, and touched it with his lips : aloft

Her longing flared : she raised to him her cheek ;

Impassively he quelled the sanguine freak ;

His kiss was not a kiss : she flushed, she shrank away ;

The door closed gently on him ; disparate were they.

II.

The sun has set. The jagged mountain crest,
 Cut black and hard against the solemn west,
 Is very near. To east and far below,
 Wide leagues of billowy hill reflect the glow.
 This lofty col, denuded to the bone,
 Is gaunt and grey and desolate ; yet here,
 A dot amid the scattered scurf of stone,
 Minute above those precipices sheer,
 A man sits bowed and makes his lonely moan.

S. Ye ponderous mountains, immovable, placid and mute,
 I have come to you humbly, encumbered with turbulent lusts,
 Afret with rebellious regrets,
 Distractedly parrying sallies of shattering passion.
 How changed since the day
 When I boasted emotion dethroned and ignored !
 Alack ! inexperienced fool !
 How soon did thy feelings their mastery prove !
 How frightful the nights,
 When, bereft of the labour that lulled thee by day,
 Thou plunged into reasonless sleep
 But to dream of Irene beguilingly smiling and kind ;
 No logic of conscience intruded ;
 The simple, instinctive conviction of mutual love,

Unrestrained, unproved, overflowed in delicious embracings.

And then, to awake

To a knowledge of obstacles, potent, eternal and vague !

Oh the jarring, the crashing, the torture, as conscience took grasp

Of the blissful oblivious vision, and tore off its mask,

And wrestled the rebel of hell !

And the struggle recurred and recurred,

Till I cried in my anguish,

“ The Hills ! let me hie to the Hills ! to the sanative Hills !

Let me gaze on the vastness of grassy and gable-sloped braes,

Let me drink of the stillness that lingers in nebulous glens,

Let me tingle in whitening winds

That sweep in their purity spaciouly up from the sea.

Oh there, surely there, in the peace I shall hear

The voice of my God,

And these demons unclean shall no longer beleaguer my soul.”

So hither I came.

All day have I wandered in search of a passionless calm.

I breasted the mightiest steeps with the fierceness of flame,

And the muscular tumult annulled for the moment my grief,

But, when breathless I paused,

Up bubbled the bitter remembrance.

Long passive I sat,

And yearned to the tinting commingled and rich on the moor,

And brooded on outlines of mountains aspiringly piled,

And strained to the cumulus inlets of infinite blue,

Yet ever in vain did I cry,

"I am trysted with God."

No message, no leading, no stimulus pierced to my soul ;

Deserted and lonely I throed.

Till a gathering horror of stillness and vastness and chill

And cruel magnific aloofness so grew on my brain,

That it blotted all thought, as that mist, in its swirling aloft,

Is blotting the hills from my sight.

And I leaped to my feet,

And I ran, and I climbed, agonising and maddened and blind,

Till I stumbled, and found myself here—

But where ?

The mist is beshrouding all landmarks ;

It masks e'en the cliffs that surround me ;

And thicker and blacker it glooms with the gathering night.

A cry ?

'Tis some high-nested bird

That easily wingeth its way, unimpeded by mist,

While I, if I dare but to crawl on these rocks,

Am confronted with Death.

Well, what better could hap ?

One stumble, a breath-stopping rush through the air, and a crash !

And my soul leaps to freedom undreamed of by soaringest bird—

Yea, so in good sooth

Were I trysted with God !

Yet Death, my deliveress ! woo thee I will not.

The wailing keens out like a maniac's howl !

I shiver : no shelter but lichenous rocks

To parry the knives of the wind.
 I hunger : since daybreak I've wandered
 Forgetting my oaten cake store.
 More precious than gold is it now ;
 It needs must be saved
 To combat exhaustion that creeps on its prey with the dawn.
 That wailing anew !
 Is it human ? a signal for aid ?

Straightway he flung a shout into the night.
 At once a wail slipped back in quavers slight.
 He started up, and crept among the stones
 Towards the sound, and still, in heartsome tones,
 He rolled responses to the thin, sad cry.
 At length, while crawling onwards cautiously,
 His right arm stretched ahead for resting-place
 Met no resistance ; down it sank in space,
 And on a jagged edge his chest was dashed.
 Instinctively, with toe and hand and knee,
 He clutched the rock, while far below him, crashed
 And boomed, rebounding, plunging far and free,
 A boulder new detached ; he gasped, he froze ;
 From out the depths a feeble cry arose.

VOICE.

Look out ! Look out !

You heedless lout !

S. My comrade, I'm sorry !
 I sought to discover and come to you.

VOICE. Oh help me ! come to me for pity's sake !
 My leg is broken ; all alone I quake,
 Stuck halfway down the precipice !

S. Have courage ! I'll come !

(*inly*) O God, I am grateful !

Thou savest me thus from the vampire of self.
 Thou sendest a brother more lorn to be helped :
 Through succouring, solace for sorrow.

Directed by the voice below, he crept
 Along the verge by whistling wind-blasts swept,
 Until he reached an angled gap which showed
 Where into the abyss a rillet flowed.
 And down that rugged channel, foot by foot,
 He probed his way, for sight was useless there ;
 With fingers numbed and torn, and sodden boot,
 He felt for chink or ledge ; asprawl in air
 He hung full oft, while blindly he did test
 Where next he warily his weight might rest.
 And ever, through the gusty dark below,
 The voice came clamouring fitful notes of woe ;
 And nearer, clearer, sounded ; till, at last,
 The perils of that grim descent o'erpast,
 Torn, bleeding, bruised and breathless, Selby stood

In safety on a boulder, huge and rude,
 Lodged in a rift of that tall precipice.
 And lo ! a groping human hand met his.

VOICE. How good to grasp a hand again !
 What ? Blood on it ? You flinch in pain ?

S. But your leg ?

VOICE. So heedfully you hold the limb,
 So masterful your touch,
 I spot you as a surgeon grim.
 You are ? I guessed as much !

S It is simply a Pott.
 We must wait for the daylight,
 But then we'll attempt the descent.
 Of course you remember your way ?

VOICE. Ra-thér ! I know this range, its every hill.
 I chose as my vacation exercise
 To map each corrie, precipice and rill,
 Exploring, gauging, charting, student-wise.
 For sure am I, slow taught by toilsome test,
 No subtler, stabler joy can man attain
 Than that which buoys him, patiently a-quest
 Some latent lore, minute, exact, to gain.
 Right well I know the track I lately scaled !
 This crag, the grimmest crag in all the range,

I all but conquered ; nor, indeed, had failed,
Had not this break, combined with sudden change
To mist and night, such helplessness entailed.
But, faint with hunger, here I lie.
And well nigh chilled to death am I.

S. Here is food.

Let me throw this old coat round your shoulders.

VOICE. Why, so ! It buttons tight and warm.
 And now, the grub. Great Scott ! the charm
 Of dry oat-cake I ne'er before
 Had dreamed of. 'Zooks, it's good ! Hast more ?

S. Not a crumb.

VOICE. Ah well ! I feel decidedly more game,
More sweet on life, less like to tip the perch.
What may I call you ? Guinness is my name.
I live in London, sedulous for fame,
Immersed in pathological research.

S. My name? It is Frayter.

I carry on general practice in Hempie.

G. Not Frayter who with meteoric blaze
So dazzled Reekie in my student days ?
To whom, as by some weird magnetic spell,
Each prize, each post, inevitably fell ;

Yet who, his fame still hot on all men's lips,
Vamoosed, decamped, in silence and eclipse ?

S. I believe I'm the weakling you mean.

G. Why, in the name of all that's queer,
What made you chuck that great career ?

S. It were vain to explain it ;
Nor would you approve.
Yet my tale may amuse you and wile away night.

G. Great shade of Pott ! my leg does ache !
O, tell your tale for any sake.

S. Nowadays education is grounded on gain.
Our system engenders and stimulates selfish ambition ;
And selfish ambition possessed me when, fresh from my school,
A poor and uncouth-looking stranger, I entered at Reekie.
Ignored and disdained,
I swore I would force admiration.
One gadfly idea
Thenceforth was my lord—
The grabbing of every possible honour and prize.

G. Indeed you scored ! And where's the blame ?
That work should tell is right enough ;
Had I possessed a will as tough,
I would have done the very same.

S. It was horribly wrong.
 Though honours were piled upon honours,
 I shrivelled the while into selfishness, pettiness, narrowness,
 Chilling the infinite, potent ebullience of man
 To the trivial trickle of words of a parrot—

G. Oh yes—I know the sort of life—
 But tell me why you fled the strife
 Just when the rich rewards were rife.

S. The Capping was over ;
 The crop of my honours was garnered ;
 Yea, already re-sown, and in growth, and a-bearing,
 For Dedder, the lion of Reekie, had chosen me jackal.
 Alone, in the silence of night,
 I emerged from a banquet of triumph ;
 The graduates' cheering still rang in my ears ;
 The weariful past but enhanced the content of the present,
 I seemed to be whirling up infinite vistas of fame.
 Uplifted and vague,
 I came to my comfortless room.
 Confusion prevailed.
 The son of my landlady ran to me, struggling with tears,
 His mother was suddenly ill—
 Would I come ?
 She was writhing in silence of agony.
 Startled, distressed,

I essayed diagnosis and failed ;
 My stocked, theoretical knowledge was vain ;
 My brain was in fog ;
 Yet her sufferings urged, reputation demanded
 That something be done ;
 I treated her boldly, but blindly ;
 She speedily died.

G. Your thorough-going way !
 Who else can brag
 That on the very day
 Of licensing to slay
 He's made a bag ?

S. Oh ! brutally true !
 It was nothing but legalised murder :
 I fed her and dosed her to death.

G. Poof ! let the trivial matter rest.
 No need for grief. You did your best.

S. My best !
 When a medical man at his best
 Is baffled by perforate ulcer of stomach,
 His best is a sham and a snare.
 This fatal mistake
 Re-kindled my flickering conscience,
 And thrashed into action my moral perceptions.

Remorseful, I pondered
 The awful, innate obligations of study—
 How knowledge unusable speaks intellectual greed
 How pursuit of a personal fame is a theft.

Spirit-pained,
 I burst from the caverns and glooms of my books
 To strive up the sunny, wind-buffed hill-sides of action.

In less than a week
 I was toiling in Stepney, a busy practitioner's helper.

G. In Stepney ! Ah ! the very place
 Where one would go, in hope to find
 Great, lonely hills of solemn face,
 A-flush with sun, and scoured with wind !
 But, seriously, what gain could come
 From slaving in a London slum ?

S. The greatest of gains, even Wisdom.
 My wish was to mitigate bodily ills,
 Yet bitter, at first, was my failure ;
 Then, humbly despairing,
 I vowed that if mine were no healing to offer,
 At least I had sympathy, gentleness, care.
 And thus, unawares,
 I became so familiar with symptoms,
 So attuned to the drone in the music of life,
 That at length I attained to empirical deftness ;

I came to be sought after, locally famous,
Yea, posed up aloft as a popular oracle.

G. I see. The more you make them swallow,
The more they dub you their Apollo !
Such glory, though, seems rather hollow.

S. It was glory to know myself useful.
But reluctantly taught,
I saw that my drugging was futile—
A botching of rags that have rotted to tatters—
A cropping the tops and the leaves of a weed
Whose lustier root will but burgeon anew.
Ambitious to cure,
I attacked their pernicious disease-giving habits.

G. In fact, Apollo quits the big pill box
And blusters forth a hygienic Knox !
Did Stepney stand your faithful shocks ?

S. Ah ! Stepney was little the better ;
And I saw that the habits I warred on
Were largely reaction to faulty surroundings.

G. But in their pig-styes they rejoice ;
Against the filth they raise no voice ;
These vile surroundings are their choice.

S. Not theirs is the choice !
They are dazed with their toil ;

Apathetic, in impotent ignorance left, they accept
 What the dexterous upperlings please to permit,
 The means of the merest existence—
 Existence uncertain, unhealthy, unlovely, unthrilled.

G. Humph ! Granting what you diagnosed,
 Let's hear the cure that you proposed.

S. All power must come from above :
 That the weak may attain and be strong,
 The strong must refrain and be weak :
 That the poorest may cease to be poor,
 The rich must refuse to be rich :
 All power must come from above ;
 And the ultimate power is Love.

G. That sounds immense—cocksure—serene !
 But what the dickens does it mean ?

S. That sinners and slums
 Result from the struggle for comfort and show
 That dominates middle-class living.

G. Jerusalem ! D'you mean to say
 That you would really undertake
 To induce one man to cast away
 His comforts for the Race's sake ?

S. Most certainly—Yes.

G. Oh sanguine man ! Oh mighty blow !
For ages altruists have striven
To live your dream ; yet on we go
As selfish as we well can be,
Preferring 'Change to Galilee,
And snug suburban ease to Heaven.

S. The good must prevail !
Understood, it constrains one to aid it.
So, reckless of failure,
I ventured to vary the ancient endeavour,
Attempting by rightness of living
To show men how joyous and noble and helpful
Our poisonous life may be made.

G. If that's your game, it seems a pity
You didn't stick to London city,
Foul den of mercantile banditti.

S. What London most urgently needs
Is relief from her surging congestion.
A bleeding of but one corpuscle is better than nothing.
So, turning from Stepney, I fled to the country,
And drawn by the magnet of family haunts
I settled in Hempie.

G. But how can such a brain as yours
Endure the comradeship of boors?

It chanced that I was capped at last.
 And then—and then—one hour of lust
 Blasted the buds of life to dust.
 Thenceforward not for me the good
 Of love, or home, or fatherhood.
 Awhile I raged and gloomed and cursed,
 Then grimly grinned, and faced the worst,
 Seeking relief and men's respect
 In strictest toil of intellect.
 The tip's a good one : when the smart
 Of after-passion chars the heart,
 There's nought can quench the flames that lurk
 Like douchings of cool mental work.

S. And the work that you turned to ?

G. Don't snigger at my modest answer—
 The Etiology of Cancer.

S. A glorious quest !
 On no nobler adventure
 Did ever a helmeted knight——

G. Oh, rubbish ! I began the job
 To cure myself of curse and sob ;
 Continued it for lust of fame ;
 And now, the pleasure of the game,
 With pride in play of thought and skill,
 Suffice to keep me at it still.

But, look ! there glimmers forth a star !
 Nay, scores of them ! and now, afar,
 The whirling mist is swept away ;
 And look again ! that radiance gray
 That blanches half the sky must be
 The dawn in its first purity ;

Hullo ! I note
 You shiver in a dripping shirt.

Your only coat
 So comfortingly round me girt ?

Your face is drawn
 And pale, and smeared with blood and dirt ;

Your clothes are sawn
 To rags ; your feet and hands are hurt—

S.

Oh ! peace with appearance !
 Enough that I'm able to aid you.
 Now, Brother, your hand !

Up ! so !
 And your arm o'er my shoulders !

III.

'Mid upland, open fields a village stands,
One row of houses backed by garden lands ;
And, half way up the line, just where the road
Makes curved ascent, behold the low abode
Of Selby Frayter. Rough-cast is the wall,
And shagged with roses and with creepers tall.
Three little windows, bright with flowers in bloom,
Denote the But and Ben and eke The Room
That constitute the house. The stone-floored But
Is bare and simple as a peasant's hut,
Yet clean and airy, windowed front and back.
Of ornament there is a studied lack ;
The cooking stove is prominent ; a chair
Or two of plain, dark, polished wood are there ;
A table by the larger window stands ;
A tall, old clock, with quaintly twisted hands,
Ticks drowsily against the fireside wall.

The clock strikes One with rumble guttural ;
And straight a woman snorts aggrieved response.
As one annoyed, and that not for the nonce,
She stands and taps a quick impatient heel

Beside the table spread for frugal meal ;
 A stout built dame, of comely middle-age,
 Shapely and tall, yet lissom as a page,
 Black-haired, black eyed, snub-nosed and brown of skin,
 'Tis Selby's housekeeper who waits his coming in.

Mrs. B.

Little good in preparation,
 He's so gone on moderation.
 Little good that I am able
 Equal-like to sit at table,
 When the feeding is so meagre—
 Near as meagre as his talking.
 Tetts ! I can go on no longer
 Fighting appetites so eager,
 Curbing them but makes them stronger,
 They're for use and not for balking.
 Now or never I shall risk it,
 Hook him or for ever lose him,
 Thaw his ice and marble brisket
 On this beating, burning bosom,
 Or be snubbed and get the sack.
 Hark ! I hear him coming back.

S.

I'm afraid I am late, Mrs. Bubb.
 Has the Postman been here ?

Mrs. B.

That he has. The man could hardly creep,
 Cumbered with your papers. See the heap.

Even as she spoke, he drew anigh the pile
 And fingered this and that in loving style.
 He grew absorbed ; he ripped off just one cover,
 And glanced at just one page ; he seemed to hover
 For one caught breath ; then down he swooped
 Into the argument ; with forehead drooped,
 And shoulders bowed, he read, and reading stood,
 Till his companion, in impatient mood,
 When fidgetings and clattered plates had failed,
 With shrill remonstrant words his ears assailed.

Mrs. B.

Dinner's ready.

More than ready !

What's the good of roasting, boiling,
 When you let the food lie spoiling ?
 You may live on dreams and reading ;
 Other folk require some feeding.

S.

Ah, thanks ! It's too bad of me ! Come !

You are hungry and fagged.

They sat to eat ; but his attention strayed,
 And silence brooded. Bitter break she made.

Mrs. B.

Still your eyes are on your papers,
 Glowering like two snuffy tapers.
 Still you eat as you were dreaming.
 Scarcely can I keep from screaming,
 Silence irks me so to break it !
 Don't you see how dull you make it ?

S. It gains me no fame, for no name is paraded.
A money return would be doubly repugnant.

Mrs. B. Well, that's funny !
Here you're slaving day and night,
Stinting sleep and appetite ;
What's it for, if not for money ?

He rose, and, wandering to the rearward pane
Which overlooked his little flower domain,
Stood there, forgetful, silent once again.

S. *(inly)* Aye, what ?
She can't understand.
The prescription of Guinness was simple,
Just douchings of cool mental work !
An absolute cure !
This journalist interest, urgent, objective,
Has ousted the ghouls.
The beastlier instincts are crushed,
The nobler alone are persistent.
His eye was dwelling on a red, rough pot
From which a lonely, lusty poppy shot
Aloft a scarry capsule scabbed with tears,
When, once again, her question smote his ears,
And dreamily he parabled his thought.

S. What is man but some earth in a pot ?
His body a shell of some solider earth

Enclosing that finer potentiate mould which is mind.

First potted and set i' the air,

The earth-patch is vacantly black ;

But casual seeds,

Entangled in soil, or implanted by breezes,

Rejoicingly sprouting, uncoiling, upcrowding,

Soft crown it with gradual green.

Yet some of the seedlings are weakly and die,

While the lustier thrive ;

Till at length, by the sifting of Death, there are left

But a cognate, victorious few.

And according as these are of use or of hurt

We honour or flee from the pot.

Mrs. B. *(inly)* Sounds like stale teetotal rot !

S. Our pot becomes conscious,
Is shocked to discover a noxious crop ;
It resolves,
“ Oh ! Death to these pestilent weeds !
So be it I breed no imperial blooms,
At least I will foster an offspring for healing or food.”
There drops in its bosom the seed of a poppy ;
The penitent welcomes it gratefully,
Tends it incessantly, on it converging
The sunlight, the rainfall, the nurture, the catering germs ;
And ever the weedlings enfeeble, and dwindle, and starve,
And ever the poppy increases in stature and leafage,

Yea, buds and unfurls in a triumph of flags.
Yet, unspoiled by the joy of a bloom so unlooked for,
The pot in its patience persists,
Though petals be scattered and foliage withered,
Till, dapper and oval, the capsule englobes
With its precious perfection of sap.

Mrs. B. Why, you talk like a romancer !
But you've given me no answer.

S. I myself am the potful of earth ;
The weedlings are lusts ;
My journal the rescuing poppy !
It conquers ! Oh, thanks be to God !
The weeds disappear ! the poppy is clean and unhampered !

Mrs. B. (*inly*) Crikey ! Here's a fine confession !
Love for me was in possession,
And he cured himself by study !
Oh, the simple, solemn cuddy !
With this knowledge to assist me
I'll defy him to resist me.

He still was dreaming, gazing at his flower ;
She stole towards him, big with sense of power.

Mrs. B. Do come back and finish dinner.
Little wonder you get thinner !

She laid caressing hands upon his arm :
 Her touch conveyed some subtle hint of harm.
 He started, flushed, and looked around for aid,
 And for the first time missed the little maid
 Who, by her constant presence, gossip had allayed.

S. Why, what has become of your daughter ?

Mrs. B. Well, she's young ; she needs some fun and frolic ;
 Here the life is far too melancholic ;
 Schoolmates had invited her to stay
 In seaside rooms with them ; she went to-day.

Disquieted, he scarce knew why, he frowned,
 And answered slowly, eyes upon the ground

S. Hm ! Yes—she is young :
 A home so devoted to study is dull :
 And yet—
 For how long has she gone ?

Mrs. B. (*inly*) How distressed to let her go !
 Who'd have thought he liked her so !
 (*aloud*) For a fortnight, maybe longer.
 She'll come back a lot the stronger.

S. (*inly*) How absurd my perturbation !
 The life of the child should be brighter ;
 Her absence can hardly bring harm,
 And yet—

Alarmed, ashamed, he sought the postal pile,
And idly sorted papers for a while.

Mrs. B. (*inly*) Quite upset ! Why, this is lucky !
Such a blessing for my duckie !
Though he's but a backward wooer,
What a father he'll be to her !

S. Hullo ! here's a postcard from Guinness ;
 He'll be with me to-morrow.
 (inly) Thank God ! a protection !
 I would I could hasten his movements a day.
 (aloud) It is he who is working at Cancer ;
 And at last, it would seem, to some purpose.
 (reads) My toil,
 As you foretold,
 Has just struck oil—
 Nay, Gold !

Mrs. B. *(inly)* What a nuisance ! Interference
Just when safe to all appearance !
(aloud) Kind of him to offer you a visit ;
I'll be ready—when ? To-morrow is it ?
(inly) Good ! At least there's this night pat,
Maybe I can score in that.

S. (*gathering papers*) Now for some work !

Mrs. B. Why so keen to get away ?
Don't you recollect the day ?

S. The day ?

Mrs. B.

I at least will ne'er forget
Day and hour on which we met.
Just a year ago to-day,
Sickened, in the inn I lay.
You were called, pronounced it fever :
Inn-folk, village-folk had liever
House a fiend than one infected ;
Terror-hardened, all rejected.
No ! I won't have done ! It does me good,
Just for once, to tell in gratitude
How you pled and stormed at their behaviour ;
How, at last, yourself became my saviour—
Made a sick-room of the cot next door,
Nursed me there yourself, until, once more,
I was strong and free from all infection ;
How you learned the cause of my dejection,
Widowed, friendless, workless, with a daughter
To provide for ; how unasked, you sought her,
Found her, placed us here to keep your house.
Oh ! I can be quiet as a mouse,
But this once I must not leave unspoken
All the thanks I burst with ! Here's a token
To remind you that I'm not ungrateful,
Rescued from a death and life so hateful !
She caught his hand and kissed it whimpering,

He strove to free it : closer did she cling,
 And on his finger slipped a gaudy ring.
 Nor then let go ; but braved his hurt surprise
 With scared beseeching in her glistening eyes.

S. *(inly)* This is terrible ! Heaven defend me !

(aloud) Thanks—thanks !

 But you mustn't—Absurd—

 Nay, madness—Be calmer—

 There's work to be done !

With shaking hands and strangely tightened throat
 He turned to grasp his papers. Far remote
 She saw recede the goal of her desire ;
 She sighed, and stooped to stir the dying fire.

S. *(inly)* To the Purest be glory ! That's over !

 Poor thing ! she is sighing.

 Can she think that her token's despised ?

 I must speak on some common-place topic

 To set her at ease.

(aloud) The postman must owe me a grudge

 As he notes how the number of journals is growing ;

 Why, sometimes his load must be doubled.

Mrs. B. *(inly)* Fain ! I know it by his hawking :

 Anything to keep him talking.

(aloud) Postie had no breath to-day for grumbling,

Like a thunder-plump the words came tumbling.
Never have I seen him so excited.
Partly, that he'd news to tell, delighted ;
Partly, grieved for her whose life is blighted ;
(She, it seems, was used to nurse him
Through the lung attacks that curse him)
Mainly, though, he spluttered admirations
For the deed that killed her. I've no patience
With the fools that risk themselves as she did.
Such a sacrifice is never needed.

S. Hum ! What was the cause of it all ?

Mrs. B. Oh ! it's just the customary story :
Choking child a-dying of diphtheria—
Lonely nurse with morbid taste for glory—
(Seems to me it's rather like hysteria)—
Tube gets blocked—the child's at point of death—
She sucks out the filth—the child gets breath,
Rallies, lives :—the nurse (it's no surprise)
Gets diphtheria and goes and dies.

Even while she spoke, a dark foreboding gloomed
Athwart his brain : the slowing pulse-beats boomed
Upon his ear-drums : bowing low his head,
He braced to meet the blow, and huskily he said,

S. Ah ! Where did this happen ?

Mrs. B.

(*inly*) Down in Dalgin at the Hospital.
Takes no interest in the news at all !
Plainly he is hankering for me.
Probably the surest game would be
Helping with his fad nonsensical.

S. And the name of the nurse ?

Mrs. B. She was matron—ought to have known better—
Found the nurse was nervous—wouldn't let her
Carry on the case—herself would tend it !
“ Noble ” was her name, but that don't mend it.

He sought the window ; drawn with anguished eye,
Towards that well-known loadstar bit of sky
'Neath which his pole, the Hospital, did lie.

Mrs. B. Really, it's too bad of me to bore you,
Dumping third-hand gossipings before you,
When I know you're longing to be tasting
These new journals. Couldn't I be hasting
Things a bit, by cutting out and pasting ?

S. *(inly)* Huh ! The Journals !
Ugh ! “douchings of cool mental work” forsooth !

(aloud) Mrs. Bubbs, an ye love me,
Away with these papers, and all in the study ;
Pile up the inadequate frauds in the garden
And burn them at once.

I'm now going out.

It may be that I shall be late.

Just then a knocking at the door was heard.
She ran to open, for a new hope stirred
That he might be detained at home thereby ;
But back she came, annoyance in her eye.

Mrs. B. Messenger from Mrs. Hudden.
She is ailing of a sudden—
Can't get breath—thinks you can free her—
Wants you out at once to see her.

S. How awkward !
This morning I rode by her door.

Mrs. B. What a shame ! Don't go ! And if she dies
Other folk may learn to use their eyes !

S. Ah no ! I must go there at once.
He took his cap and courteously withdrew.
She gazed and gaped while he remained in view.

Mrs. B. Well, I never ! He's a rum 'un !
All the wits that I can summon
Hardly seem to understand him.
No accounting for his capers.
Yet I fancy I can land him ;
Otherwise why burn his papers ?
" An ye love me " ! simply clenching !
After that there's no more blenching.

IV.

The cot is of this fashioning : the door
Gives on a passage with a white stone floor
Cutting the house in two unequally ;
To left there lies the kitchen snuggerly,
The homely But ; and out of that again,
A door admits to the secluded Ben
For Mrs. Bubb reserved, her bedroom den.
To right there lies, retired, apart, The Room,
To Selby sacred, where the busy loom
Of lonely fantasy he plies, and where
His patients' woes bespeak his kindly care ;
'Gainst this a little sleeping-room abuts,
Right back amid the garden leaves it juts.

And now 'tis late : the night is hot and dark ;
No sound is heard from cot, or road, or park ;
A vague oppression dominates the air,
All things lie cowering as they feared the blare
Of th' imminent Last Trump. A foot-fall clicks
Far-off—it loudens---crunchings intermix—
It grinds upon the doorstep—and it stops.
The door creaks open : groping finger-tops

Still quavered the praise of his wife,
 And I nodded assent, till his depth of affliction
 Belittled my nominal loss.
 My nominal loss ! My unchangeable gain !
 With a shock I beheld in its crudeness
 My folly intended—
 A rush to the Hospital death-bed,
 Indulgence in thoughtless, conventional sorrow,
 A madness of animal, meaningless grief.
 How crassly had this contradicted the creed of the spirit,
 Had I, the high soarer to supra-corporeal union,
 Thus writhed at the side of a shuffled-off husk !
 Her body ! It never was mine ;
 It fettered our converse.
 But, now that her soul is set free,
 It needs must be nearer my own.
 Oh ! e'en in the flesh
 She was ever an impulse to heavenly deeds ;
 Sure, now, in essential force,
 She mingles her power with the Holiest's Will
 As it thrills me, and urges in ardours of love
 The Cult of the Heart.
 Ah ! be it so ever !
 Irene, impel me !
 In-surg-ing in floods of ineffable love,
 To well out again in my deeds, a perennial fountain

Of weariless comfort and help,
 Till I, too, be freed from my bonds
 And, rejoicing, rejoin thee anew
 In the sureness, the pureness,
 Of union in God !

The room leapt lurid with a quick, wan flash ;
 The room rocked darkling with a thunder crash ;
 And flash to flash succeeding flickered quick,
 While rolling peals and shattering cracks boomed thick,
 Be-bassed and blended by the drumming rain
 That pounded on the roof and window pane.
 Up started Selby, well nigh mad with bliss,
 His eyes dilated, mouth upheld for kiss,
 Arms stretched on high with eager emphasis.

S.

Irene ! My God !

Out shrilled a shriek. Its discord scattered quite
 The noble chords of feeling, sound and light.
 He turned ; his door burst open ; in his arms
 Fell Mrs. Bubb, distraught by wild alarms,
 Bare-footed, night-dress clad, as she had leapt
 In terror from her bed ; she panted, wept,
 And clung to him, and on his shoulder hid
 Her fearful eyes. He struggled to forbid,
 But vainly : vivid lightning played the while,
 And glittered like a cynic demon's smile ;

The rain drum droned ; at every thunder blare
 She jerked, and jabbered broken bits of prayer.
 'Mid these, the sacred name detained his ear ;
 He took it as a text for words of cheer.

S.

Yes !

Well may we call upon God !
 The Highest is nigh to us ever, yea blent in us ever,
 Though oft undescried and forgotten ;
 And the storm in its terrible beauty is helpful
 In cowing the brute that be-clogs us,
 In bursting a door for the soul to leap forth
 Unimpededly mingling with Being Supreme.
 Be of heart !
 Would you fly from the eyes of your father ?
 The lightning is kindly, yea, kissingly kin,
 For in it, as in us, is the loving omnipotent God.

Mrs. B.

God ! He's angry ! Hear Him speaking !
 Vengeance ! Vengeance on me seeking !
 Oh, I'm bad ! Forgive the debtor !
 Spare me ! Teach me to be better !

Against his breast she pressed her pallid face,
 And clasped him tighter in her hot embrace.

S.

(inly)

The Cult of the Heart !

How sudden, how startling the summons !

Irene ! I needs must accede to thy leading,
 Must stoop to this poor, this improvable woman,
 Devote myself wholly to knowing and growing her soul,
 Refining and guiding it kindly to likeness of thine !

(*aloud*) Take courage !
 The flashes are paling, the thunder is fitful,
 The wires of the rain
 Are a safeguard for us.

Even as he spoke, her soft impassioned flesh
 Ensnared his being in its glowing mesh.
 And she, awaking to the storm by-blown,
 Recoiling from the terror she had shown,
 Was suddenly aware that she had won :
 She felt a tremor through his members run,
 His arms responded to her gentle force ;
 She slowly raised her face, flushed, stained and coarse,
 And fixed beseeching, yearning eyes on his ;
 He bent, and answered with a long, soft kiss.

Mrs. B. Oh, how kind ! how strong ! how good !
 Take me all ! my womanhood !
 What's the past ? It's on the shelf.
 Husband ! make me like yourself !

Again upon his shoulder sank her head
 In calm, achieved bliss, like that of saints new dead.

But now his reason, battling through the swirl
 Of giddy sense, emerged above the whirl,
 And, "This is Passion," was the instant thought.
 Straightway before his inner eye was brought
 An image of the well-known Matron's Room,
 Himself therein, fast rushing to his doom
 In proud, o'er-confident contempt of Sense,
 Yet cowed and baulked before the dogma-fence
 'Yond which Irene beamed with soulful charm :
 But here he felt the weight upon his arm ;
 He realised the difference immense ;
 Reaction from his ecstasy intense
 Set sudden in ; and vast and dark did loom
 His new-accepted task ; resistless gloom
 Welled up and up ; a great self-pity caught
 His will away ; convulsively he fought
 For three wild moments ; then a great hot tear
 Splashed on the flesh below her upturned ear.
 She started, stricken by unlooked-for fear.

Mrs. B.

Crikey ! what can be the matter ?

How my heart goes pitter-patter.

He sank into a chair ; his left hand gripped
 His tightened brows, but still the great drops dripped
 And hit the floor with audible impact
 'Mid ghastly silence. Scared, she stood, and racked
 With warring impulses of love and fear.

The mother-instinct gained ; she drew anear,
And touched him softly ; by his side she knelt ;
Her warm soft arms wound round him like a belt ;
She lavished kisses that he scarcely felt.

And now, behold the mystic errant knight,
The subtle seer, the spirit's eremite,
Lie spent and blank ; as appetent for rest
And vague flesh-comfort as a babe at breast ;
Caressed and soothed by her whose meagre soul,
Five minutes back, he ventured to condole,
And deigned to destine for his own high goal.

V.

The thunderstorm has cleared and cooled the air ;
The leaves look young again ; white cloudlets fare
But lazily athwart the clean, mild blue ;
The lucent sunlight seems so pure, so new,
It emanates from all things radiantly ;
A light east wind blows blythely from the sea.

All this does Selby notice, striding lone
About the Dalgin Station, loath to own
The heaving gloom that underlies his mind.
He eagerly observes the clouds, the wind,
The tossing leaves ; projecting all his might
To joy with them in their unfeigned delight ;
And not without reward : he fails to see
That whispering loungers eye him curiously.
A train roars in ; pale, stiff-legged men get out ;
And Guinness dawns, descending with a shout.

G.

Frayter ahoy ! By Jove, it's good of you
To come to meet me ! Thanks ! Well, how d'ye do ?
All right, I hope ? You don't look very fit.
You're white, and thin, and down in mouth a bit.

S. Oh ! worries and practice !
 In fact I've been up all the night.
 But this cool, sun-imbued afternoon
 Gives newness of psychical life.
 Shall we walk the four miles to my cottage
 Or idle and ride ?

G. Hooroop ! Let's walk !
 I want a talk.

The outskirt lanes were speedily swung past,
 For Guinness, muscle-avid, stepped it fast,
 But not so fast as wagged his nimble tongue ;
 He joked, he sang, with such untiring lung,
 That Selby felt no need one word to say.
 But now they trod a muddy, darkened way
 'Tween two tall dykes o'ertopped with tangled trees,
 And Guinness turned to topics of disease.

G. Aye, Frayter ! just as ever self controlled !
 No curious haste to have the secret told
 Of my great find. Why, man, one single hint
 To London pressmen, and what yards of print
 Would flaunt this Biggest Triumph of the Age !
 But well you know your value, silent sage !
 You know I'm here expressly to discuss
 My new-found lore with one who will not fuss,
 Or lightly be convinced, or shut his eyes

In jealousy, or sneak away my prize
 To foist it as his own, or weakly blab—
 Blab what? Why this, my boy, I've caught the Crab.

Here Selby stood stock-still. With eyes aglow
 He seized his friend and shook him to-and-fro.

S. Be serious, man, I entreat you !
 You mean that the Quest has succeeded ?
 You've spotted and cultured and verified germs ?

G. Precisely. Years of frustrate work,
 And then hard forrard with a jerk !
 Success came billowing like a spate !
 I managed to inoculate
 Some rabbits from a schirrous breast ;
 From these I bred a brood afresh,
 And put them likewise to the test ;
 The cancer ate the fitted flesh
 Like creeping fire ; and, breeding in,
 I got a morbid type of rabbit
 As tainted with the cancer habit
 As man with Daddy Adam's sin.
 All cancers that I grafted grew,
 Erupting fast, and breeding true—

S. But the germ ?

G. It's coming. With such plenteous store
 Of fecund cancer, o'er and o'er
 I sectioned, stained, and cultured it ;
 Without result ; till, one small bit
 I planted in some rich Thames mud
 Left in a meadow after flood.
 Well, by and by, that mud was crammed
 With strange amœboid germs ; I rammed
 A portion promptly 'neath the skin
 Of one of my adapted pets ;
 That rabbit paid off any debts
 Incurred to man by kith or kin ;
 It died of cancer in a week,
 And all its organs were a-reek
 With my new germ. Thenceforward, plain
 The path of proof. Again, again,
 I passed the growth from man to beast,
 From beast to mud, from mud to mud,
 From mud to beast ; nor ever ceased
 To spot in man, or beast, or soil,
 The jolly germs that cause the coil.
 One thing, yet lacking, mars my plan,
 I must inoculate a man.

S. You callous—you fiend !
 Would you tempt me to peril
 The life of a man ?

G. Why not ? To every man comes death.
 And, what is it the Scripture saith ?
 " 'Tis meet that one should die for all ? "
 I'm sure in Dalgin Hospital
 There must be some old, feeble man
 Who, good for nought, half dead indeed,
 Is just the human soil I need
 For my inoculation plan.
 And here the stupid country folk
 Would ne'er suspect our drift—

 He ceased ; for Selby stopped, and stamped his foot,
 And glared at him who dared this scheme to moot.

S. Now Guinness, look here !
 If this is your reason for visiting me,
 Return to your horrible London at once.
 I'll have nothing to do with your tricks.

G. *(inly)* The sentimental ass ! Who would have thought
 Him capable of rage so overwrought ?

(aloud) Poof, man ! you take amiss what's half a joke.
 But, seriously, your aid I must invoke ;
 I want your skilled opinion on my slides,
 My drawings, notes and culture-tubes : besides
 I think of publishing a foreword, lest
 Some German claim priority ; and best
 Of journals for my purpose is your famous " Quest."

At this poor Selby walked right fast again.
Keen, keen awoke his half-lulled mental pain
As memory relumed each dark event
That cowered around the Journal's suttee-blaze.
But now they reached a parting of the ways,
And turned to climb a steep and straight ascent.
He set his teeth, and up the hill he sped
In grim abandon ; Guinness, sore bested,
Lagged far arrear, and shook a sobered head.

G. He's waxy ; but there's more behind :
There's clearly something on his mind.

Now Selby, having reached the upland brow,
 Stood still through habit ; scarce remembering how
 In boyhood he was custom'd there to pause
 And feast his eyes upon the blue, coned Laws,
 The gleaming Firth, the rolling river-plain,
 The broken, grassy hills beyond. In vain
 The landscape smiled on him that afternoon ;
 He stared as stricken blind : but Guinness, soon
 Arriving, found once more the comrade boon.

S. Ah, Guinness, forgive me !
This rudeness was wholly unconscious ;
My thoughts were absorbed in emotion.
Of two things I ought to inform you at once
The first, that the Journal's defunct.

G. You've stopped "The Quest" ?
At whose behest ?

S. I ought to have said
I have severed myself from its conduct.

G. All right. Let that be as you like.
 "The Quest" will run though you may strike.
 Our one-horse-shay intact remains.
 Some stauncher man will grasp the reins.

S. There's more to confess :
 We burned yesterday
All the Quests, all the papers and journals collected.

G. The deuce you did ! And who were " We "
 To perpetrate this thievish spree ?

S. My second confession affords you the answer.
This morning I married.

G. Good Lord ! of all men, you !
 It's somewhat sudden. Who,
 If I may ask without offence, has caused this big to-do ?
 What woman lives a life
 With perfectness so rife
 As half to realise your dream, the visionary wife ?

S. She who now is my wife
Was last night but my housekeeper.
She once was a nurse.

Here Guinness groaned ; and side by side they paced
In awkward silence o'er the level waste.
But slower grew his steps ; he stopped again,
And faced his comrade, wrinkling as in pain.

G. No, Frayter, no ! I really can't go on.
I can't intrude. You two should be alone.
I'll get me back to London right away ;
We'll have our talk some less eventful day.

S. By no means !
Your coming will nowise disturb us,
'Tis genuine pleasure to both.
Moreover, I'm anxious to study your germs.
Nay, come !
And, by coming, evince you forgive me
The wrong I committed in burning the journals.

G. *(inly)* The rummest chap I ever met !
I hardly like to go, and yet
I'm curious to see his life ;
More so than ever, now a wife
So oddly leaps into the scene.
Poor chap ! I'm sure his record's clean,
And yet his tale suggests my own,
The stumble nought can e'er atone.

(*aloud*) Well, Frayter, since you wish it so,
 So be it. Many thanks ! I'll go.

S. It's good of you, Guinness.
 You prove your forgiveness

Again they footed slow the long straight road
 In silence, poising each a mental load
 That, though the air was tense with golden light,
 Resistlessly submerged their souls in night.
 Down hill they went ; then through a shadowed wood,
 And up the curving brae where Hemptie stood.
 The cot was reached ; they found the homely But
 Untenanted, though neat as any nut.

S. Why, wife !
 Our guest is awaiting his welcome.

She entered from the Ben ; with hasty care
 One hand was tidying her ruffled hair.
 Her bright, glad eyes sought Selby's as he stepped
 To meet her, and as round her waist there crept
 His strengthening arm. He turned, and both at once
 Caught sight of Guinness gaping like a dunce ;
 Then saw the horror that convulsed his face ;
 Then rapid effort to expunge each trace
 Of discomposure. Instantly, erect
 And stiff he stood, and spoke with chill effect.

G. If you'll excuse me, Frayter—I'm not well—
I'll go right back and find out some hotel.

S. Not well ?
Then all the more reason to stay with us here.
Our cottage has almost a Hospital status
With doctor and nurse on the spot.
Of course you'll remain.
Now, Guinness, your bow !

But Guinness stood impassive as a rock,
And Selby archly turned to her ; a shock
Shot to his heart ; the happy face was gone,
Her brows were knit, wet-white the bared teeth shone,
She glared defiant hatred at her guest.
But, feeling Selby's gaze upon her rest,
The tense, contorted lines relaxed ; there came
A mighty sob, she wept for very shame.

S. What's the meaning of this ?

G. Five minutes' talk with you alone
Will tell you all that's to be known.

Mrs. F. Not alone ! not—not without me !
I must hear what's said about me.

S. My friend, be outspoken.
My wife has a right to be present.

Mrs. F. Husband, hear me first ! oh hear me !
 Nothing I can say can clear me.
 Oo ! I meant to have confessed it
 Long ago. You might have guessed it.

S. Be definite. What should I guess ?

Mrs. F. That I never married till this morning.
 Never was a widow. Oh ! your scorning
 Is what I deserve. My little daughter—
 Must I speak it ?—just what you have thought her.

S. Oh Highest ! be nigh me this trial !

Mrs. F. Cast me not away in loathing !
 You who look through flesh and clothing
 To the naked soul within,
 See how I detest my sin ;
 See how, since you stooped to love me,
 Heaven has opened kind above me ;
 How your great, full, free self-giving
 Lifts me up to noble living.
 I am lost—lost—lost for ever
 If your love from me you sever.

S. You have sinned, you confess, you repent ;

 You are fully forgiven.

O child of my spirit, you still are my wife !

He took her in his arms ; her eyes she pressed
 Against his shoulder, comforted, at rest.
 But Guinness yet stood statue-like and cold,
 And now began his thinking to unfold.

G. Your pardon, if incredulous and rude
 I may appear. Have you, Sir, understood
 That she has told the whole truth, all she could ?

Mrs. F. All the truth is told ! I swear it !
 Husband, help ! I cannot bear it !
 Let him see I've got your backing !
 He's a scoundrel ! Send him packing !

G. The truth has not been fully told : as she
 Hangs back therefrom the duty falls on me.
 But first, one awkward question I must ask ;
 Its answer bids, or else forbids, my task.
 This morning you were married ; does this stealth
 Betoken that—?

S. You scoundrel ! How dare you—

G. Enough. I see it's just as I had thought,
 Your record's clean, you're pure without a spot ;
 And so, to save you, I must face my task.
 But how to do it ? How shall I unmask
 This false infecting witch ? Can you recall
 What once I told you of my wreck, my fall ?

This was my temptress. She was then a nurse
 In Hunt Infirmary. There, for a friend,
 I served as Resident, a month on end,
 Just after I was capped. I well may curse
 The day I saw her. She, with harlot fire,
 My young hot blood set boiling with desire :
 Occasion served : I wallowed in the mire.
 At once she pressed for marriage : I delayed,
 And thanked my stars I had ; it was her trade ;
 She had a child already. Worse remained ;
 My single sin a life-long scourge had gained ;
 I found myself a tainted, toxic man.
 Be warned ; evade the virus while you can ;
 Don't dally, lost in moralisings vague ;
 Flee from this wanton as you would the plague.

S.

O Horror ! those coppery spots !

And—

The proofs are abundant !

It's true !

His arm relaxed ; she sank upon the floor,
 And lay with hidden features, sobbing sore.
 He turned ; long silent at the window stood,
 Beseeching guidance from the Wise, the Good.
 At length the awful hesitance he broke,
 Addressing Guinness ; low and slow he spoke.

S. My friend ! you have spoken with effort,
 In fearless pursuance of odious duty.
 Recognition of this
 Forbids me resent your attack on my wife.
 But now it is clear you must leave.
 In an hour I will guide you to Saughton.
 The down-going coach
 Will carry you back to the train.

G. Oh, thanks ! All right !
 At Dalgin I will stay the night.

S. Very good.
 In the meantime make use of my room
 And leave us together alone.

So saying, Selby led his guest with care
 Along the passage to the Room, and there
 Ensconced him in such comfort as he could,
 Supplying books and hasty foraged food.
 Then to The But he heavily returned,
 And shut both doors behind him. Brightly burned
 The cooking fire, the kettle spluttered thick,
 No other sound beyond the clock's tock-tick
 Possessed the trim, clean kitchen-spence ; but low
 Along the hearth lay stretched in abject woe
 The newly-wedded wife ; her angled arm
 Concealed her brow, her frantic sobs had ceased.

Mrs. F. Oh you're good ; too, too forgiving !
 Heaven is just where you are living !

She sprang upright, and, swiftly, round his neck
 Threw ardent arms : he shrank : the instant check
 Half quelled her impulse ; unresistingly
 She let her arms be loosened and put by.

S. Keep away !
 You mistake the position,
 Ignoring the limits imposed by your lingering sin.
 For us, in the future, no contact.
 Continue to live in your end of our dwelling,
 In mine I'll abide.
 This room will be common for food and for converse.

He spoke. Repulsed, she bent above the fire,
 Striving to keep in check her rising ire.

Mrs. F. This is what you call forgiving !
 This is happy married living !

S. It is all that is possible.

Mrs. F. It's a fraud—a fraud ! to torture carried !
 What the better am I that I'm married ?

S. You have me.

Mrs. F. But I haven't—that there's no denying !
 All I get is pious speechifying.
 Breath and flesh, for you—for you they're crying.

All I want—how small it is—
 Just a passing hug, a kiss.
 Give me these, and I'm contented ;
 Cut them off, I'll go demented.
 Oh I'll die if this must be !
 Pity me ! oh pity me !

With folded arms he stood erect, unmoved,
 But glowing eyes his loving pity proved.

S. Be calmer. Control yourself. Wait.
 This passion will smoulder away.
 To-morrow, these ravings will seem but a dream ;
 A year hence, forgotten.
 Be patient and wait.
 Together we'll settle to resolute life,
 And grapple with facts,
 Contented in usefulness, brightening, blessing,
 In friendship so helpful, so pure.

Mrs. F. Oh, how little do you know me !
 All I want, you think below me.
 See me ! I am just a woman
 Hungering for love that's human.
 Stoop to me ! by all means raise me !
 In your arms, though ! sermons daze me.
 If my soul is worth the winning,
 Make more human a beginning.

Give a love more real than this is,
Real in touches, pressures, kisses !

S. A line must be drawn.
There is only one stable arrangement,
Rejection of all the delights of the flesh ;
And this from the very beginning.

The clock struck six. He paused, and made an end,
Reminded of his duty to his friend.
She saw his purpose, and alarmed, confused,
Sprang forwards, heedless of the words she used.

Mrs. F. Stop ! you're mine !—not his—my very own !
Stay ! I'm mad—not safe to be alone !

She flung herself in tears about his neck,
As some caved billow overwhelms a deck.

S. Behind me, thou Satan !

He seized her arms and sharply jerked them down ;
Then cast her from him ; terrible his frown.
In wild despair she shrieked, and on the floor
She threw herself, as he regained the door.
Her shriek brought Guinness running from The Room,
Prepared his lonely travel to resume.

G. What's wrong ? She's trumpeting her woes ?
I hope you have'nt come to blows ?

S. No, No !
 Discomposed and upset ;
 But she's best left alone.

They took the road, each plunged in painful thought,
 But Selby soon for information sought.

S. I had told her your name.
 How failed she to know who you were ?

G. A relative bequeathed me wealth and name
 Soon after I had left her. In my shame
 The change I welcomed ; not at all averse
 To hide, however feebly, from my curse.

Again long silence fell. On their approach
 To Saughtonfoot, up jogged the Dalgin coach,
 With Guinness' baggage evident aloft.
 Then Selby spoke. His tone was sad and soft.

S. You are close to the spot where the coach has to turn.
 You require me no further.
 Good-bye.

G. Old chap ! I feel for you both heart and soul.
 I'm loath to leave you stuck in such a hole.
 And yet I'm nowise sorry that I came ;
 I hope I've saved you from my own sick shame.
 What happens now, of course, is your affair.
 All I can do, I've done. Once more, Beware !

My comrade ! you've tried to be just.

Good-bye.

With one straight look and sympathetic grip
 They parted. Homewards, down the sudden dip
 That grooved the bottom of that upland vale.
 Full swiftly Selby swung ; nor did he fail
 To note the thick, rich turf of mellowed green ;
 The two rough, reddened pine-trunks, tall and clean
 As tropic palms ; the mighty dusky domes
 Of beeches silvery-boled ; the grey, tiled homes
 About the bridge, that yearning, sent on high
 Thin, blue smoke-feelers, seeking for the sky ;
 The sky, so far, so calm, so purely cold,
 Yet warming earthward in a haze of gold.
 The solemn beauty and the evening peace
 Brought Selby's dungeoned thoughts a sweet release,
 And, while he climbed the steep, wood-darkened brae,
 Some glimpse of tranquil hope illumed his way,
 As glints of glowing sky shone through the trees.
 First, then, he thought of food and restful ease,
 Well earned by such a bout of toil and strife ;
 And then of her, who, but in name his wife,
 Was more a moral babe, to rear, to save.
 The worst was past ; no longer would she rave,
 She would be quiet, biddable and mild ;
 A common caring for her ailing child
 Would link them heart to heart ; all three would rise

Through mutual, selfless service to the prize
 Supreme of pure, ungrudging, universal love.
 And here, emerged from woods, he saw above,
 The glowing, gorgeous West ; entranced, he gazed
 Far into lucent depths around which blazed
 The painted pantings of the earth he trod.
 Tears filled his eyes, he muttered " God ! ah God !"
 But there was Hempie, dusky 'neath the glow.
 With warm, glad heart he sought his cottage low.
 How strangely still and dark ! he oped the door ;
 The But was dim, in spite of dying fire.
 " What ! Wife !" he cheerly cried. Upon the floor
 Lay, indistinct, a form ; cold horror dire
 Shook heart and limb ; in trembling haste he knelt ;
 A splash ! his hands some jellied liquid felt !
 He looked, ah ! blood ! he touched her head ; 'twas cold,
 And helplessly beneath his touch it rolled ;
 Her hand ? it gripped his amputating knife.
 " Help ! Help ! She's dead !
 Oh God ! My wife ! My wife !"

VI.

Ugh ! this is London ! Murkily the pall
Sags down upon wet roofs and chimneys tall ;
The air is thick, exhausted, ill to breathe,
And sweats a sickly slime ; dun smoke-banks wreathe
Through squalid streets a-squelch with filthy mire.
But see this room. The mighty mirthful fire ;
The dainty table, white-clothed breakfast-laid ;
The broad-ranked, rich-bound books ; the etchings staid ;
The piles of littered Magazines and prints ;
The pipes—the easy-chairs—all these are hints
Of life in wealthy, lettered leisure led.
'Tis Guinness' room. He enters fresh from bed.

G. Ah ! good to settle snug at home again !
My long calm sleep has cleansed the clogged-up brain
Of its coarse filtrate from that hateful trial.
Hard lines to be so captured, no denial !
To be so pilloried before the world,
To have complicity in murder hurled
Full in my teeth ; and, worse than that in truth,
To have the scandal of my reckless youth
Grubbed up and spattered broadcast o'er the land

As sauce to this rank dish, this " Murder planned
 By two mad medicoes." No doubt well-meant
 Was Frayter's effort to divert their scent
 From facts that linked her bygone life to mine,
 But this just pricked the garbage-grubbing swine
 To snout more ardently and grunt more loud.
 Aye ! just the way ! the man superior-browed,
 Who always takes the high unheard-of line,
 Will always make a muddle, and consign
 To greater trouble folk he means to save.
 Perhaps the fault was mine. I'd heard him rave,
 Dilating on his fads : I knew his sort ;
 Yet, like a fool, enlisted his support,
 For my pet Quest, and what a mull he's made !
 The verdict surely won't be long delayed.
 Is't possible he really cut her throat ?
 Unlikely, one would say ; and yet, there float
 Such crazy notions in a dreamer's mind,
 Deeds come to differ in degree, not kind ;
 He sees no wrong, no right ; he loses touch
 With everyday morality ; the smutch
 Of what plain men call crime befouls his life
 While, lapped in lulling lies, his thoughts are rife
 With virtues that would put to shame a saint.
 " The Times " ! how goes the case ? Those counsel quaint
 Still cackling on ? Hullo ! It's polished off !
 The summing-up—the verdict—why, what goff !

"Not proven"! What the—There's the front door bell!
A visitor so early? Can't they tell——

The door was opened; Selby glided in.
His face was candle-white, and spectre-thin,
But large and luminous the black eyes glowed.
His hair and dress some trace of travel showed.

S. Good morning!
I'm sorry to trespass so early.

G. It's early, it is true;
Nor did I look for you.

S. The trial is over.
I see you are reading the final report.
The verdict dejects me.

G. Things do look rather queer.
You've somehow failed to clear
Your character, I fear.

S. But surely to you I am guiltless.

G. The facts are hard to blink.
I don't know what to think.

S. (*inly*) O Highest! the climax!
No clinging to life made me fight for acquittal,

For willingly would I have died.

Thy glory alone was my motive ;

Yea, jealous for Thee.

It was torture that he who aspired to be known

As Thy tool well-approved,

As Thy prophet professed,

As Thy manifestation—

That he, of all men, should appear so deserted,

So fogged, so insensate, so lost,

As to murder and lie.

Then, when nets of the evidence tightened about me,

Resigned to the flouts of the crowd,

One comfort I hugged,

My assurance that Guinness in fulness of knowledge

Believed me unspotted and true to my God.

But he, even he, misconceives me.

O Highest ! so be it !

For self I was jealous ;

'Twas my faulty presentment of Thee that I fought for.

No honour from me dost Thou need.

May others and worthier show forth Thy glory !

Enough, that Thou lettest me lean upon Thee,

That by Thee I am plumbed, understood,

Approved, aye, and loved !

G.

It may not be polite,

And yet I must enquire

If you have travelled all the night
To gaze into my fire ?

S. Ah ! pardon !
I came to explain —

G. I know of nought that needs to be explained.
My work—my quest—awaits me : has remained
Untouched too long. I cannot be detained.

S. Precisely to further the quest have I come.

G. No, Frayter. Let me say at once
Your help is useless, too unsteady.
You know full well (you're not a dunce)
The frightful mess you've made already.

S. I know how I vexed you by burning the journals.
I guess how you writhed through that pestilent trial.
No wonder you're cold with disgust.
But I hope to atone.

G. Excuse the rudeness : I must tell you straight
I'll have no more to do with you. Don't wait.

S. You are balking your dearest desire.
Your quest is arrested,
And simply for lack of a man to inject.
I have brought you the requisite victim.

- G. Good life ! Why, this is luck !
Where is the human muck ?
- S. Before you ! Behold it !
- G. What ! you of all unlikely folk ?
You're pleased to joke.
- S. I'm pleased to be serious.
- G. But, Frayter, you are risking life. I know
The germs are deadly : they are bound to grow.
- S. I am sure of it too.
- G. Then what's your meaning, man ?
Out with it ! state your plan !
- S. Inject me at once :
By this morning's express I'll return to the North,
To face my detractors, and take up my practice.
As soon as a tumour appears
I will come to you—let you excise it—
- G. I see. Great Scott ! the thought is sweet !
The circle rounds to proof complete.
But Frayter, you ?---for you it may be death :
You know the risk : and then, if but a breath
Of how it happed should reach the public ear,
Things would go rather hard with me, I fear.

S. O nonsense ! I promise to keep it a secret.
Or, better, go, get me the tools :
I'll do the injection myself.

G. Perhaps that would be better : though your word
Is quite enough, of course. But what's occurred
To prompt you to this martyrdom absurd ?

S. My longing for punishment fit.
I am morally guilty of murder.

G. Ah ! so ! and yet throughout your trial
You gave the charge a flat denial.
In spite of proofs against you pitted
You fought like mad to get acquitted.

S. I was guiltless in act and in law :
I am guilty in fact before God.

G. I'm flummoxed clean !
What do you mean ?

S. Deficient in insight and pity,
I throttled her soul at its birth :
She murdered her body alone.

G. What rot ! You tried to do the right :
She did the wrong. Why let her blight
Your life with this *post-mortem* spell ?

(*inly*) The hag ! I hope she's deep in hell !

S. I knew that you wouldn't approve.

G. Your old, your self-destructive fad !
Your conscientiousness run mad !
But how, supposing you are right,
Can voluntary death requite ?

S. "A life for a life !"
The judgment is just,
But it tends to insensate revenge.
Man's life is too subtle, too precious-unique
To be squandered for nought.
Let the life-spiller pour out his own in atonement,
But thriftily, winning a knowledge
That's potent with life for the Race.

G. I think I see it ! Mr. Cain
Strolls in. "I happen to have slain
My brother Abel. Now's your chance
To test that theory from France
About the cause of diabetes :
My poor medulla at your feet is."

S. The murderer ought to be dungeoned, and taught
Till he loathes, in its vileness, his crime ;
Till he claims as his right, as his proof of repentance,
A wisely-devised vivisectional death,
Giving life for the gaining of life.
But back to the facts !

The injection at once !

At ten I must catch the express.

G. All right ! However wild your views,
The chance is much too good to lose.
But, first, to make it safe for me,
Put down in writing your intent—
That you've devised with judgment free
This perilous experiment—
And give to all to understand
You do the deed with your own hand.

S. With pleasure !

G. You're sane enough. You're open-eyed.
Dissuasion all in vain I've tried.
If things go wrong, you'll take the blame :
If things go right, I'll take the fame.
But have some breakfast with me. No ?
Well then, my den is down below.
The stuff is ready—this way—so !
Five minutes' work : a little pain :
Then off with you to catch your train !

VII.

'Tis New Year's Eve. Six days the frost has gripped
The breathless land. Rime-cruled, furry-tipped,
Each leaf, each twiglet smoulders silver fire ;
The grass is ghostly white ; the frozen mire
Is blazoned with a million winking gems ;
For, high to south, a gibbous, glorious moon
Beams sole aloft ; no fleecy cloudlet stems
The flood of whitening light. The lonely moon !
She leans from out the heavens' dark abyss
As some pure, mild-faced mother stoops to kiss
Her wakeful, bedded babe ; her yearning gaze,
So loving, calm and penetrating, rays
In special concentration on the slates
And panes that gleam above the gloomy gates
Of Dalgin County Poorhouse ; she selects
Two blank, uncurtained windows, and projects
Her tenderest radiance into one still ward.

Ah ! chill the chamber, bare of wall and board,
Lit, warmed by naught but moonbeams, occupied
By eight white beds a-row and naught beside.

But stay ! the glory round that corner-bed
 Is more than moonlight ! whose that dusky head
 And shaggy beard ? those great, glad, starry eyes ?
 That wasted form, on which the sheeting lies
 Like snow that laps a narrow churchyard mound ?
 Selby the Blest this resting-place has found.

S.

Ah ! beauteous moon !

Ah ! Lady most radiant, gracious and pure !
 With mute understanding and gladsome approval
 Thou smilest, and markest the rapturous thanks

That I pour to The Source

For bliss that invincibly brightens as life flickers dim.

Ah ! queenly, encouraging moon !

Even thus was Irene accustomed to cheer me.

Irene ! my leader, my love !

We have never been utterly sundered—

Yea, now that thou'rt free,

More subtly thy sympathy thrills me,

More constantly nerves me thy strengthening presence.

I know thou hast soared above dogma ;

Now, dying, oh ! thanks to the Highest !

My barrier flesh will be rent

And spirit will leap unto spirit and mingle for ever.

Ah, Sweet ! 'tis the eve of our marriage !

How poignant the joy !

As I watch for the dawn of my true wedding morning,

And yearn for the voice of my groomsman, my boon-fellow Death.

A light rat-tat was knuckled on the door,
A careless voice rang through the moonbeams frore.

This passage is as dark as sin !
Is Frayter here ? May I come in ?

The door jarred open ; blindly, from the gloom,
In stumbled Guinness : monstrous did he loom,
And black, in that still light ; a huge fur coat,
Close-buttoned, bulked his form from foot to throat.

G. The Deuce ! Where have I blundered to ?
An empty ward ? The lazy crew
To let me grope unguided through
These pit-like passages——

S. Why, Guinness ?

G. Who's there ? Hullo ! I see !
(*inly*) Gods ! What an eye !
Some beastly pauper left alone to die :
 Attendants on the sly
Have bolted to enjoy the New Year Spree.
Frayter must hear of this. (*aloud*) I say,
You there ! I find I've missed my way.
(*inly*) What eyes ! Black fire ! They're orbing greater !
(*aloud*) How can I get to Dr. Frayter ?

S. Don't you know me ?

G. Eh? Good life! it's you!

In bed! Why, what's ado?

S. I'll explain in a moment ;
But first, give me news of your quest.
Not a word have you deigned
Since the day when you cut out my tumour.

G. Hum ! thoughtless of me, I confess.
I hate to talk of work half-done ;
But now I can report success—
Success, my boy ! It takes the bun !
Your tumour was a perfect cancer.
The germs were there all right ; they answer
To every test that I've devised.
My highest hopes are realised.

S. Oh ! glory and thanks to the Absolute Knower !
The one thing I hungered to hear of !
Now, tranquil and happy,
How easy, O Highest, the dying !

G. What ? Dying ? Frayter, has the risk you ran
 Turned deadly fact ? Not that, not that, old man !

S. It's just the result we expected—
 Internal recurrence.

G. Expected ! yes, if I had thought !
But, mad on microbes, I forgot.

I am a callous, selfish brute !
 Why are you here, though ? When I went
 To Hemptie, and was hither sent,
 I thought, of course, you had been put
 In charge of this sick-pauper stye.
 What freak has brought you here to die ?

S. Necessity.

Thanks to the trial,
 My practice had vanished entirely.
 I battled along till my tumour,
 Grown ripe, was removed ;
 Thereafter it rapidly generalised.
 Then, shunned as a murderer,
 No one would nurse me for love ;
 I ever had held it unjust
 To have money put by ;
 So, helpless and penniless, this was my refuge.

G. Perverse, old blunderer ! I've heaps of tin :
 You know how gladly I would take you in.

S. Of course—oh, of course !

But stay—
 One favour I'll beg, if you're willing to serve me ;
 Befriend in my stead,
 The innocent daughter forlorn.

G. The Deuce ! It is a bitter pill—
 But, if you wish it—Well !—I will.

S. My heartiest thanks !
 For myself, I am more than content.
 You remember my adage of old ?
 “ A social reformer, if honest and thorough,
 Must turn for his ultimate home to the workhouse.”

G. A cheerful home ! I find you all alone,
 No fire, no lamp—no food if truth were known.

S. The Staff are enjoying their annual ploy.
 I begged my attendants to go.
 They know that my death is at hand,
 That there's nothing for nursing to do,
 That I'm happiest left to communion with God.
 Oh, Guinness, you cannot imagine how happy I am !

G. Humph ! I can see you're shivering with cold.
 These bedclothes are absurd, so thin, so old.
 I say ! Do you remember how, that night
 Among the rocks, in pity for my plight,
 You stripped your coat and wrapped it round me tight ?
 Even while he spake he doffed his costly fur,
 And gently tucked it round the sufferer,
 Blushing the while ; then, standing by the bed,
 Slowly, with savage awkwardness, he said,

G. You saved my life that night, and I
 Have basely egged you on to die !
 Dolt that I am ! to shield your life
 From mere disease, I shamed your wife
 And drove her to her death and wrecked
 Your whole career ; and yet, intent
 On my own selfish ends, I lent
 The tools, and helped you to inject
 The germs of death. I sent you back
 To bear calumnious attack,
 And grief, and want, and wasting pain,
 Yet never gave a thought again
 To what might be your fate. Out-flame
 Foul fires of hell, no longer screened !
 I've let my lust for facts and fame
 Be-devil me till I'm a fiend.

 He dropped upon the nearest bed, and hid
 His face. From out the mounded fur there slid
 A wan, thin hand ; it rested on his knee ;
 And star-like Selby answered soothingly.

S. Come, Guinness !
 I'm sure you're unduly severe on yourself.
 This visit is proof of your goodness.

G. This visit ! Ugh ! I see you haven't guessed
 What brought me North. This too must be confessed.

It may be quite incredible to you
That I came here to torture you anew,
But so it is. The germs your tumour gave
So throve in mud and rabbit, that a crave
Awoke in me to pass them back through men.
I came to tempt you to inject again.

S. With pleasure ! At once !

G. Good Heavens! No! You've done enough.
On my own flesh I'll test the stuff.

S. Not so. You must live ! you must finish your quest
 And enthrone your results.
 Your heaviest work is to come.
With me it is different—all I am fit for—
My body is rubbish and otherwise useless—
It may be that even for this it is useless,
 So near is the blessing of death.

G. Cursèd be Death ! Accurst his onward stride
While I, so helpless, grovel at your side !
O criminally helpless ! till this hour
No thought had I of limiting Death's power.
I sought, through facts, a fame that would endure,
Nor ever yearned one sufferer to cure
Of any ache or ill. Heavens ! Now I see

My recent work leads up to victory
 O'er cancer at its worst : but all too late
 To be of use to you—to you ! your fate
 Is sealed ! Too late ! Ah, bitter, bootless thought !
 I might e'en now have saved you had I wrought
 In mere conventional humanity.
 Too late ! But now, I swear, my aim shall be
 The Cure of cancer. Solemnly I vow
 That I'll not rest while science can allow
 One fellow-man to die as you are dying now.

S.

You are right.

Your quest has no value apart from the service of man.

Though love without knowledge is helpless,
 Yet knowledge is devilish sundered from softening love.

G.

But yours shall be the glory and the fame !
 I'll tell the truth : I'll take my meed of shame.
 Mankind shall know the price their prize has cost,
 The fearless, peerless hero that they've lost !

S.

My comrade, be sane.

As well might you canonise rabbits or mud.

Emboldened by sudden emotional urging,

How easy to lay down a life !

There is something theatric and coarse

In the challenge of crosses, arenas and flames,

In suction of sea-gulfs, or blatter of bullets,
 In choke-damp, or cholera, clutching and blasting unseen.
 Upborne by the gaze and the praise and the blaze,

How easy the braving of dangers like these !

But give me the toiler, unwitting, unknown,

Who joyfully fritters away

In the daily, prosaic, fulfilment of duty

His ultimate treasure, his Self.

Not once and for all does he plunge to destruction :

His very existence is giving, and giving, and giving !

A life unheroic, it may be, but wholly divine !

G.

All very fine ! but men don't see it so.

They glorify the fortitude they know.

I must speak out, though you may like it not.

To die detested, mocked-at, soon forgot,

An abject failure ! This your guerdon ? No !

While words are mine this shall not be your lot.

S.

Your pains will be vain.

To the eye of the worldling the higher is ever a failure ;

His prizes are pleasures and money and fame ;

He knows not the holier rapture of giving.

In spite of my follies, in spite of misfortune,

That rapture was mine.

I have lived in the eye of my God,

And the single reward I desire

Is to feel myself drawn ever nearer and nearer to Him.

G. But think ! to leave the light ! to lose the known !
 To face the darkness, helplessly, alone !

S. I have thought of it, longed for it, often.
 I pass from this glimmering rushlight, your Sun,
 To the infinite brilliance we blindly denominate Darkness.
 I pass from the senses' deception, your Known,
 To truthful, intuitive, real and immediate Being.
 I pass from the selfish delusion, Alone,
 To conscious, eternal communion with Essence Supreme.

 As when upon a candle-flame the cone
 Extinguishing descends, and light is thrown
 Down through the pallid wax, so, in that place,
 Irradiated, shone the dying Selby's face.
 With shuddering wonder Guinness marked the change :
 Swiftly he knelt beside that death-bed strange.

G. O Selby ! I have always been intent
 On my own pleasure, humouring my bent,
 Yet never have I happiness attained.
 And here are you, an outcast, blighted, pained,
 But happier far than thought can comprehend !
 Teach me to face like this my dreaded end !

S. The Highest has constantly, quietly, taught you.
 He draws you in spite of yourself.
 From the mire of the senses he drew you,
 He planted you firm on the rock of the intellect.

He is giving you wings.

The hour has arrived, you are fitted for flying,

Henceforth you must soar through the clear empyrean of love.

G. My brother ! O my brother ! I'm not fit
 To live without you. Save me from the pit !
 Hard, hard to part just when I recognise
 How glorious your life, how loving-wise !

S. Be of cheer !
 For my death is but death in appearance.
 I never will leave you.
 I am merging within you to newness of birth ;
 And through you I'll live, and I'll work, and I'll love,
 As Irene in me,
 And the All in us all !

G. O Selby ! Brother ! Wait—I beg but this—
 I know I am a fool, a baby. Nay,
 I cannot help it ! Ere you pass away—
 One kiss !

The cold lips touched his throbbing, burning brow,
 And then the head fell back. The strong man now,
 With forehead buried in the pillow, knelt
 In awful silence : once he thought he felt
 A quiver ; then came long, unbroken peace.

A bell tolled twelve. At once in loud release

Out shrilled the clamour of the festive throng ;
 " New Year, New Year," came tossed on waves of song.
 He raised his head. The moonbeams cold and pure
 Gave light enough. One glance, and he was sure.

G.

Dead !

O God !

My God—My God—

Be merciful to me—

A sinner.

