

## TALES OF A WAYSIDE INN

### PART FIRST

#### PRELUDE

#### THE WAYSIDE INN

One Autumn night, in Sudbury town,  
Across the meadows bare and brown,  
The windows of the wayside inn  
Gleamed red with fire-light through the leaves  
Of woodbine, hanging from the eaves  
Their crimson curtains rent and thin.

As ancient is this hostelry  
As any in the land may be,  
Built in the old Colonial day,  
When men lived in a grander way,  
With ampler hospitality;  
A kind of old Hobgoblin Hall,  
Now somewhat fallen to decay,  
With weather-stains upon the wall,  
And stairways worn, and crazy doors,  
And creaking and uneven floors,  
And chimneys huge, and tiled and tall.

A region of repose it seems,  
A place of slumber and of dreams,  
Remote among the wooded hills!  
For there no noisy railway speeds,  
Its torch-race scattering smoke and gleeds;  
But noon and night, the panting teams  
Stop under the great oaks, that throw  
Tangles of light and shade below,  
On roofs and doors and window-sills.  
Across the road the barns display  
Their lines of stalls, their mows of hay,  
Through the wide doors the breezes blow,  
The wattled cocks strut to and fro,  
And, half effaced by rain and shine,  
The Red Horse prances on the sign.  
Round this old-fashioned, quaint abode  
Deep silence reigned, save when a gust  
Went rushing down the county road,  
And skeletons of leaves, and dust,  
A moment quickened by its breath,  
Shuddered and danced their dance of death,  
And through the ancient oaks o'erhead

Mysterious voices moaned and fled.

But from the parlor of the inn  
A pleasant murmur smote the ear,  
Like water rushing through a weir:  
Oft interrupted by the din  
Of laughter and of loud applause,  
And, in each intervening pause,  
The music of a violin.  
The fire-light, shedding over all  
The splendor of its ruddy glow,  
Filled the whole parlor large and low;  
It gleamed on wainscot and on wall,  
It touched with more than wonted grace  
Fair Princess Mary's pictured face;  
It bronzed the rafters overhead,  
On the old spinet's ivory keys  
It played inaudible melodies,  
It crowned the sombre clock with flame,  
The hands, the hours, the maker's name,  
And painted with a livelier red  
The Landlord's coat-of-arms again;  
And, flashing on the window-pane,  
Emblazoned with its light and shade  
The jovial rhymes, that still remain,  
Writ near a century ago,  
By the great Major Molineaux,  
Whom Hawthorne has immortal made.

Before the blazing fire of wood  
Erect the rapt musician stood;  
And ever and anon he bent  
His head upon his instrument,  
And seemed to listen, till he caught  
Confessions of its secret thought,--  
The joy, the triumph, the lament,  
The exultation and the pain;  
Then, by the magic of his art,  
He soothed the throbbings of its heart,  
And lulled it into peace again.

Around the fireside at their ease  
There sat a group of friends, entranced  
With the delicious melodies  
Who from the far-off noisy town  
Had to the wayside inn come down,  
To rest beneath its old oak-trees.  
The fire-light on their faces glanced,  
Their shadows on the wainscot danced,  
And, though of different lands and speech,  
Each had his tale to tell, and each  
Was anxious to be pleased and please.  
And while the sweet musician plays,  
Let me in outline sketch them all,  
Perchance uncouthly as the blaze  
With its uncertain touch portrays  
Their shadowy semblance on the wall.

But first the Landlord will I trace;  
Grave in his aspect and attire;  
A man of ancient pedigree,  
A Justice of the Peace was he,  
Known in all Sudbury as "The Squire."  
Proud was he of his name and race,  
Of old Sir William and Sir Hugh,  
And in the parlor, full in view,  
His coat-of-arms, well framed and glazed,  
Upon the wall in colors blazed;  
He beareth gules upon his shield,  
A chevron argent in the field,  
With three wolf's heads, and for the crest  
A Wyvern part-per-pale addressed  
Upon a helmet barred; below  
The scroll reads, "By the name of Howe."  
And over this, no longer bright,  
Though glimmering with a latent light,  
Was hung the sword his grandsire bore  
In the rebellious days of yore,  
Down there at Concord in the fight.

A youth was there, of quiet ways,  
A Student of old books and days,  
To whom all tongues and lands were known  
And yet a lover of his own;  
With many a social virtue graced,  
And yet a friend of solitude;  
A man of such a genial mood  
The heart of all things he embraced,  
And yet of such fastidious taste,  
He never found the best too good.

Books were his passion and delight,  
And in his upper room at home  
Stood many a rare and sumptuous tome,  
In vellum bound, with gold bedight,  
Great volumes garmented in white,  
Recalling Florence, Pisa, Rome.  
He loved the twilight that surrounds  
The border-land of old romance;  
Where glitter hauberk, helm, and lance,  
And banner waves, and trumpet sounds,  
And ladies ride with hawk on wrist,  
And mighty warriors sweep along,  
Magnified by the purple mist,  
The dusk of centuries and of song.  
The chronicles of Charlemagne,  
Of Merlin and the Mort d'Arthure,  
Mingled together in his brain  
With tales of Flores and Blanchefleur,  
Sir Ferumbras, Sir Eglamour,  
Sir Launcelot, Sir Morgadour,  
Sir Guy, Sir Bevis, Sir Gawain.

A young Sicilian, too, was there;  
In sight of Etna born and bred,  
Some breath of its volcanic air  
Was glowing in his heart and brain,  
And, being rebellious to his liege,  
After Palermo's fatal siege,  
Across the western seas he fled,  
In good King Bomba's happy reign.  
His face was like a summer night,  
All flooded with a dusky light;  
His hands were small; his teeth shone white  
As sea-shells, when he smiled or spoke;  
His sinews supple and strong as oak;  
Clean shaven was he as a priest,  
Who at the mass on Sunday sings,  
Save that upon his upper lip  
His beard, a good palm's length least,  
Level and pointed at the tip,  
Shot sideways, like a swallow's wings.  
The poets read he o'er and o'er,  
And most of all the Immortal Four  
Of Italy; and next to those,  
The story-telling bard of prose,  
Who wrote the joyous Tuscan tales  
Of the Decameron, that make  
Fiesole's green hills and vales  
Remembered for Boccaccio's sake.

Much too of music was his thought;  
The melodies and measures fraught  
With sunshine and the open air,  
Of vineyards and the singing sea  
Of his beloved Sicily;  
And much it pleased him to peruse  
The songs of the Sicilian muse,--  
Bucolic songs by Meli sung  
In the familiar peasant tongue,  
That made men say, "Behold! once more  
The pitying gods to earth restore  
Theocritus of Syracuse!"

A Spanish Jew from Alicant  
With aspect grand and grave was there;  
Vender of silks and fabrics rare,  
And attar of rose from the Levant.  
Like an old Patriarch he appeared,  
Abraham or Isaac, or at least  
Some later Prophet or High-Priest;  
With lustrous eyes, and olive skin,  
And, wildly tossed from cheeks and chin,  
The tumbling cataract of his beard.  
His garments breathed a spicy scent  
Of cinnamon and sandal blent,  
Like the soft aromatic gales  
That meet the mariner, who sails  
Through the Moluccas, and the seas  
That wash the shores of Celebes.  
All stories that recorded are  
By Pierre Alphonse he knew by heart,  
And it was rumored he could say  
The Parables of Sandabar,  
And all the Fables of Pilpay,  
Or if not all, the greater part!  
Well versed was he in Hebrew books,  
Talmud and Targum, and the lore  
Of Kabala; and evermore  
There was a mystery in his looks;  
His eyes seemed gazing far away,  
As if in vision or in trance  
He heard the solemn sackbut play,  
And saw the Jewish maidens dance.

A Theologian, from the school  
Of Cambridge on the Charles, was there;  
Skilful alike with tongue and pen,  
He preached to all men everywhere  
The Gospel of the Golden Rule,

The New Commandment given to men,  
Thinking the deed, and not the creed,  
Would help us in our utmost need.  
With reverent feet the earth he trod,  
Nor banished nature from his plan,  
But studied still with deep research  
To build the Universal Church,  
Lofty as in the love of God,  
And ample as the wants of man.

A Poet, too, was there, whose verse  
Was tender, musical, and terse;  
The inspiration, the delight,  
The gleam, the glory, the swift flight,  
Of thoughts so sudden, that they seem  
The revelations of a dream,  
All these were his; but with them came  
No envy of another's fame;  
He did not find his sleep less sweet  
For music in some neighboring street,  
Nor rustling hear in every breeze  
The laurels of Miltiades.  
Honor and blessings on his head  
While living, good report when dead,  
Who, not too eager for renown,  
Accepts, but does not clutch, the crown!

Last the Musician, as he stood  
Illumined by that fire of wood;  
Fair-haired, blue-eyed, his aspect blithe.  
His figure tall and straight and lithe,  
And every feature of his face  
Revealing his Norwegian race;  
A radiance, streaming from within,  
Around his eyes and forehead beamed,  
The Angel with the violin,  
Painted by Raphael, he seemed.  
He lived in that ideal world  
Whose language is not speech, but song;  
Around him evermore the throng  
Of elves and sprites their dances whirled;  
The Stromkarl sang, the cataract hurled  
Its headlong waters from the height;  
And mingled in the wild delight  
The scream of sea-birds in their flight,  
The rumor of the forest trees,  
The plunge of the implacable seas,  
The tumult of the wind at night,  
Voices of eld, like trumpets blowing,

Old ballads, and wild melodies  
Through mist and darkness pouring forth,  
Like Elivagar's river flowing  
Out of the glaciers of the North.

The instrument on which he played  
Was in Cremona's workshops made,  
By a great master of the past,  
Ere yet was lost the art divine;  
Fashioned of maple and of pine,  
That in Tyrolian forests vast  
Had rocked and wrestled with the blast;  
Exquisite was it in design,  
Perfect in each minutest part.  
A marvel of the lutist's art;  
And in its hollow chamber, thus,  
The maker from whose hands it came  
Had written his unrivalled name,--  
"Antonius Stradivarius."

And when he played, the atmosphere  
Was filled with magic, and the ear  
Caught echoes of that Harp of Gold,  
Whose music had so weird a sound,  
The hunted stag forgot to bound,  
The leaping rivulet backward rolled,  
The birds came down from bush and tree,  
The dead came from beneath the sea,  
The maiden to the harper's knee!

The music ceased; the applause was loud,  
The pleased musician smiled and bowed;  
The wood-fire clapped its hands of flame,  
The shadows on the wainscot stirred,  
And from the harpsichord there came  
A ghostly murmur of acclaim,  
A sound like that sent down at night  
By birds of passage in their flight,  
From the remotest distance heard.

Then silence followed; then began  
A clamor for the Landlord's tale,--  
The story promised them of old,  
They said, but always left untold;  
And he, although a bashful man,  
And all his courage seemed to fail,  
Finding excuse of no avail,  
Yielded; and thus the story ran.



## THE LANDLORD'S TALE.

### PAUL REVERE'S RIDE.

Listen, my children, and you shall hear  
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,  
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five;  
Hardly a man is now alive  
Who remembers that famous day and year.

He said to his friend, "If the British march  
By land or sea from the town to-night,  
Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry arch  
Of the North Church tower as a signal light,--  
One, if by land, and two, if by sea;  
And I on the opposite shore will be,  
Ready to ride and spread the alarm  
Through every Middlesex village and farm  
For the country folk to be up and to arm,"

Then he said, "Good night!" and with muffled oar  
Silently rowed to the Charlestown shore,  
Just as the moon rose over the bay,  
Where swinging wide at her moorings lay  
The Somerset, British man-of-war;  
A phantom ship, with each mast and spar  
Across the moon like a prison bar,  
And a huge black hulk, that was magnified  
By its own reflection in the tide.

Meanwhile, his friend, through alley and street,  
Wanders and watches with eager ears,  
Till in the silence around him he hears  
The muster of men at the barrack door,  
The sound of arms, and the tramp of feet,  
And the measured tread of the grenadiers,  
Marching down to their boats on the shore.

Then he climbed the tower of the Old North Church,  
By the wooden stairs, with stealthy tread,  
To the belfry-chamber overhead,  
And startled the pigeons from their perch  
On the sombre rafters, that round him made  
Masses and moving shapes of shade,--  
By the trembling ladder, steep and tall  
To the highest window in the wall,  
Where he paused to listen and look down  
A moment on the roofs of the town,  
And the moonlight flowing over all.

Beneath, in the churchyard, lay the dead,  
In their night-encampment on the hill,  
Wrapped in silence so deep and still  
That he could hear, like a sentinel's tread,  
The watchful night-wind, as it went  
Creeping along from tent to tent  
And seeming to whisper, "All is well!"  
A moment only he feels the spell  
Of the place and the hour, and the secret dread  
Of the lonely belfry and the dead;  
For suddenly all his thoughts are bent  
On a shadowy something far away,  
Where the river widens to meet the bay,--  
A line of black that bends and floats  
On the rising tide, like a bridge of boats.

Meanwhile, impatient to mount and ride,  
Booted and spurred, with a heavy stride  
On the opposite shore walked Paul Revere.  
Now he patted his horse's side,  
Now gazed at the landscape far and near,  
Then, impetuous, stamped the earth,  
And turned and tightened his saddle-girth;  
But mostly he watched with eager search  
The belfry-tower of the Old North Church,  
As it rose above the graves on the hill,  
Lonely and spectral and sombre and still.  
And lo! as he looks, on the belfry's height  
A glimmer, and then a gleam of light!  
He springs to the saddle, the bridle he turns,  
But lingers and gazes, till full on his sight  
A second lamp in the belfry burns!

A hurry of hoofs in a village street,  
A shape in the moonlight, a bulk in the dark,  
And beneath, from the pebbles, in passing, a spark  
Struck out by a steed flying fearless and fleet:  
That was all! And yet, through the gloom and the light,  
The fate of a nation was riding that night;  
And the spark struck out by that steed, in his flight,  
Kindled the land into flame with its heat.  
He has left the village and mounted the steep,  
And beneath him, tranquil and broad and deep,  
Is the Mystic, meeting the ocean tides;  
And under the alders, that skirt its edge,  
Now soft on the sand, now loud on the ledge,  
Is heard the tramp of his steed as he rides.

It was twelve by the village clock  
When he crossed the bridge into Medford town.  
He heard the crowing of the cock,  
And the barking of the farmer's dog,  
And felt the damp of the river fog,  
That rises after the sun goes down.

It was one by the village clock,  
When he galloped into Lexington.  
He saw the gilded weathercock  
Swim in the moonlight as he passed,  
And the meeting-house windows, blank and bare,  
Gaze at him with a spectral glare,  
As if they already stood aghast  
At the bloody work they would look upon.

It was two by the village clock,  
When he came to the bridge in Concord town.  
He heard the bleating of the flock,  
And the twitter of birds among the trees,  
And felt the breath of the morning breeze  
Blowing over the meadows brown.  
And one was safe and asleep in his bed  
Who at the bridge would be first to fall,  
Who that day would be lying dead,  
Pierced by a British musket-ball.

You know the rest. In the books you have read,  
How the British Regulars fired and fled,--  
How the farmers gave them ball for ball,  
From behind each fence and farm-yard wall,  
Chasing the red-coats down the lane,  
Then crossing the fields to emerge again  
Under the trees at the turn of the road,  
And only pausing to fire and load.

So through the night rode Paul Revere;  
And so through the night went his cry of alarm  
To every Middlesex village and farm,--  
A cry of defiance and not of fear,  
A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,  
And a word that shall echo forevermore!  
For, borne on the night-wind of the Past,  
Through all our history, to the last,  
In the hour of darkness and peril and need,  
The people will waken and listen to hear  
The hurrying hoof-beats of that steed,  
And the midnight message of Paul Revere.

## INTERLUDE.

The Landlord ended thus his tale,  
Then rising took down from its nail  
The sword that hung there, dim with dust  
And cleaving to its sheath with rust,  
And said, "This sword was in the fight."  
The Poet seized it, and exclaimed,  
"It is the sword of a good knight,  
Though homespun was his coat-of-mail;  
What matter if it be not named  
Joyeuse, Colada, Durindale,  
Excalibar, or Aroundight,  
Or other name the books record?  
Your ancestor, who bore this sword  
As Colonel of the Volunteers,  
Mounted upon his old gray mare,  
Seen here and there and everywhere,  
To me a grander shape appears  
Than old Sir William, or what not,  
Clinking about in foreign lands  
With iron gauntlets on his hands,  
And on his head an iron pot!"

All laughed; the Landlord's face grew red  
As his escutcheon on the wall;  
He could not comprehend at all  
The drift of what the Poet said;  
For those who had been longest dead  
Were always greatest in his eyes;  
And he was speechless with surprise  
To see Sir William's plumed head  
Brought to a level with the rest,  
And made the subject of a jest.  
And this perceiving, to appease  
The Landlord's wrath, the others' fears,  
The Student said, with careless ease,  
"The ladies and the cavaliers,  
The arms, the loves, the courtesies,  
The deeds of high emprise, I sing!  
Thus Ariosto says, in words  
That have the stately stride and ring  
Of armed knights and clashing swords.  
Now listen to the tale I bring  
Listen! though not to me belong  
The flowing draperies of his song,  
The words that rouse, the voice that charms.

The Landlord's tale was one of arms,  
Only a tale of love is mine,  
Blending the human and divine,  
A tale of the Decameron, told  
In Palmieri's garden old,  
By Fiametta, laurel-crowned,  
While her companions lay around,  
And heard the intermingled sound  
Of airs that on their errands sped,  
And wild birds gossiping overhead,  
And lisp of leaves, and fountain's fall,  
And her own voice more sweet than all,  
Telling the tale, which, wanting these,  
Perchance may lose its power to please."

## THE STUDENT'S TALE

### THE FALCON OF SER FEDERIGO

One summer morning, when the sun was hot,  
Weary with labor in his garden-plot,  
On a rude bench beneath his cottage eaves,  
Ser Federigo sat among the leaves  
Of a huge vine, that, with its arms outspread,  
Hung its delicious clusters overhead.  
Below him, through the lovely valley flowed  
The river Arno, like a winding road,  
And from its banks were lifted high in air  
The spires and roofs of Florence called the Fair;  
To him a marble tomb, that rose above  
His wasted fortunes and his buried love.  
For there, in banquet and in tournament,  
His wealth had lavished been, his substance spent,  
To woo and lose, since ill his wooing sped,  
Monna Giovanna, who his rival wed,  
Yet ever in his fancy reigned supreme,  
The ideal woman of a young man's dream.

Then he withdrew, in poverty and pain,  
To this small farm, the last of his domain,  
His only comfort and his only care  
To prune his vines, and plant the fig and pear;  
His only forester and only guest  
His falcon, faithful to him, when the rest,  
Whose willing hands had found so light of yore  
The brazen knocker of his palace door,  
Had now no strength to lift the wooden latch,  
That entrance gave beneath a roof of thatch.  
Companion of his solitary ways,  
Purveyor of his feasts on holidays,  
On him this melancholy man bestowed  
The love with which his nature overflowed.

And so the empty-handed years went round,  
Vacant, though voiceful with prophetic sound,  
And so, that summer morn, he sat and mused  
With folded, patient hands, as he was used,  
And dreamily before his half-closed sight  
Floated the vision of his lost delight.  
Beside him, motionless, the drowsy bird  
Dreamed of the chase, and in his slumber heard  
The sudden, scythe-like sweep of wings, that dare  
The headlong plunge thro' eddying gulfs of air,  
Then, starting broad awake upon his perch,

Tinkled his bells, like mass-bells in a church,  
And, looking at his master, seemed to say,  
"Ser Federigo, shall we hunt to-day?"

Ser Federigo thought not of the chase;  
The tender vision of her lovely face,  
I will not say he seems to see, he sees  
In the leaf-shadows of the trellises,  
Herself, yet not herself; a lovely child  
With flowing tresses, and eyes wide and wild,  
Coming undaunted up the garden walk,  
And looking not at him, but at the hawk.  
"Beautiful falcon!" said he, "would that I  
Might hold thee on my wrist, or see thee fly!"  
The voice was hers, and made strange echoes start  
Through all the haunted chambers of his heart,  
As an aeolian harp through gusty doors  
Of some old ruin its wild music pours.

"Who is thy mother, my fair boy?" he said,  
His hand laid softly on that shining head.  
"Monna Giovanna. Will you let me stay  
A little while, and with your falcon play?  
We live there, just beyond your garden wall,  
In the great house behind the poplars tall."

So he spake on; and Federigo heard  
As from afar each softly uttered word,  
And drifted onward through the golden gleams  
And shadows of the misty sea of dreams,  
As mariners becalmed through vapors drift,  
And feel the sea beneath them sink and lift,  
And hear far off the mournful breakers roar,  
And voices calling faintly from the shore!  
Then, waking from his pleasant reveries  
He took the little boy upon his knees,  
And told him stories of his gallant bird,  
Till in their friendship he became a third.

Monna Giovanna, widowed in her prime,  
Had come with friends to pass the summer time  
In her grand villa, half-way up the hill,  
O'erlooking Florence, but retired and still;  
With iron gates, that opened through long lines  
Of sacred ilex and centennial pines,  
And terraced gardens, and broad steps of stone,  
And sylvan deities, with moss o'ergrown,  
And fountains palpitating in the heat,  
And all Val d'Arno stretched beneath its feet.

Here in seclusion, as a widow may,  
The lovely lady whiled the hours away,  
Pacing in sable robes the statued hall,  
Herself the stateliest statue among all,  
And seeing more and more, with secret joy,  
Her husband risen and living in her boy,  
Till the lost sense of life returned again,  
Not as delight, but as relief from pain.  
Meanwhile the boy, rejoicing in his strength,  
Stormed down the terraces from length to length;  
The screaming peacock chased in hot pursuit,  
And climbed the garden trellises for fruit.  
But his chief pastime was to watch the flight  
Of a gerfalcon, soaring into sight,  
Beyond the trees that fringed the garden wall,  
Then downward stooping at some distant call;  
And as he gazed full often wondered he  
Who might the master of the falcon be,  
Until that happy morning, when he found  
Master and falcon in the cottage ground.

And now a shadow and a terror fell  
On the great house, as if a passing-bell  
Tolled from the tower, and filled each spacious room  
With secret awe, and preternatural gloom;  
The petted boy grew ill, and day by day  
Pined with mysterious malady away.  
The mother's heart would not be comforted;  
Her darling seemed to her already dead,  
And often, sitting by the sufferer's side,  
"What can I do to comfort thee?" she cried.  
At first the silent lips made no reply,  
But moved at length by her importunate cry,  
"Give me," he answered, with imploring tone,  
"Ser Federigo's falcon for my own!"  
No answer could the astonished mother make;  
How could she ask, e'en for her darling's sake,  
Such favor at a luckless lover's hand,  
Well knowing that to ask was to command?  
Well knowing, what all falconers confessed,  
In all the land that falcon was the best,  
The master's pride and passion and delight,  
And the sole pursuivant of this poor knight.  
But yet, for her child's sake, she could no less  
Than give assent to soothe his restlessness,  
So promised, and then promising to keep  
Her promise sacred, saw him fall asleep.

The morrow was a bright September morn;

The earth was beautiful as if new-born;  
There was that nameless splendor everywhere,  
That wild exhilaration in the air,  
Which makes the passers in the city street  
Congratulate each other as they meet.  
Two lovely ladies, clothed in cloak and hood,  
Passed through the garden gate into the wood,  
Under the lustrous leaves, and through the sheen  
Of dewy sunshine showering down between.

The one, close-hooded, had the attractive grace  
Which sorrow sometimes lends a woman's face;  
Her dark eyes moistened with the mists that roll  
From the gulf-stream of passion in the soul;  
The other with her hood thrown back, her hair  
Making a golden glory in the air,  
Her cheeks suffused with an auroral blush,  
Her young heart singing louder than the thrush.  
So walked, that morn, through mingled light and shade,  
Each by the other's presence lovelier made,  
Monna Giovanna and her bosom friend,  
Intent upon their errand and its end.

They found Ser Federigo at his toil,  
Like banished Adam, delving in the soil;  
And when he looked and these fair women spied,  
The garden suddenly was glorified;  
His long-lost Eden was restored again,  
And the strange river winding through the plain  
No longer was the Arno to his eyes,  
But the Euphrates watering Paradise!

Monna Giovanna raised her stately head,  
And with fair words of salutation said:  
"Ser Federigo, we come here as friends,  
Hoping in this to make some poor amends  
For past unkindness. I who ne'er before  
Would even cross the threshold of your door,  
I who in happier days such pride maintained,  
Refused your banquets, and your gifts disdained,  
This morning come, a self-invited guest,  
To put your generous nature to the test,  
And breakfast with you under your own vine."  
To which he answered: "Poor desert of mine,  
Not your unkindness call it, for if aught  
Is good in me of feeling or of thought,  
From you it comes, and this last grace outweighs  
All sorrows, all regrets of other days."

And after further compliment and talk,  
Among the asters in the garden walk  
He left his guests; and to his cottage turned,  
And as he entered for a moment yearned  
For the lost splendors of the days of old,  
The ruby glass, the silver and the gold,  
And felt how piercing is the sting of pride,  
By want embittered and intensified.  
He looked about him for some means or way  
To keep this unexpected holiday;  
Searched every cupboard, and then searched again,  
Summoned the maid, who came, but came in vain;  
"The Signor did not hunt to-day," she said,  
"There's nothing in the house but wine and bread."

Then suddenly the drowsy falcon shook  
His little bells, with that sagacious look,  
Which said, as plain as language to the ear,  
"If anything is wanting, I am here!"  
Yes, everything is wanting, gallant bird!  
The master seized thee without further word.  
Like thine own lure, he whirled thee round; ah me!  
The pomp and flutter of brave falconry,  
The bells, the jesses, the bright scarlet hood,  
The flight and the pursuit o'er field and wood,  
All these forevermore are ended now;  
No longer victor, but the victim thou!

Then on the board a snow-white cloth he spread,  
Laid on its wooden dish the loaf of bread,  
Brought purple grapes with autumn sunshine hot,  
The fragrant peach, the juicy bergamot;  
Then in the midst a flask of wine he placed,  
And with autumnal flowers the banquet graced.  
Ser Federigo, would not these suffice  
Without thy falcon stuffed with cloves and spice?

When all was ready, and the courtly dame  
With her companion to the cottage came,  
Upon Ser Federigo's brain there fell  
The wild enchantment of a magic spell!  
The room they entered, mean and low and small,  
Was changed into a sumptuous banquet-hall,  
With fanfares by aerial trumpets blown;  
The rustic chair she sat on was a throne;  
He ate celestial food, and a divine  
Flavor was given to his country wine,  
And the poor falcon, fragrant with his spice,  
A peacock was, or bird of paradise!

When the repast was ended, they arose  
And passed again into the garden-close.  
Then said the lady, "Far too well I know  
Remembering still the days of long ago,  
Though you betray it not with what surprise  
You see me here in this familiar wise.  
You have no children, and you cannot guess  
What anguish, what unspeakable distress  
A mother feels, whose child is lying ill,  
Nor how her heart anticipates his will.  
And yet for this, you see me lay aside  
All womanly reserve and check of pride,  
And ask the thing most precious in your sight,  
Your falcon, your sole comfort and delight,  
Which if you find it in your heart to give,  
My poor, unhappy boy perchance may live."

Ser Federigo listens, and replies,  
With tears of love and pity in his eyes:  
"Alas, dear lady! there can be no task  
So sweet to me, as giving when you ask.  
One little hour ago, if I had known  
This wish of yours, it would have been my own.  
But thinking in what manner I could best  
Do honor to the presence of my guest,  
I deemed that nothing worthier could be  
Than what most dear and precious was to me,  
And so my gallant falcon breathed his last  
To furnish forth this morning our repast."

In mute contrition, mingled with dismay,  
The gentle lady tuned her eyes away,  
Grieving that he such sacrifice should make,  
And kill his falcon for a woman's sake,  
Yet feeling in her heart a woman's pride,  
That nothing she could ask for was denied;  
Then took her leave, and passed out at the gate  
With footstep slow and soul disconsolate.

Three days went by, and lo! a passing-bell  
Tolled from the little chapel in the dell;  
Ten strokes Ser Federigo heard, and said,  
Breathing a prayer, "Alas! her child is dead!"  
Three months went by; and lo! a merrier chime  
Rang from the chapel bells at Christmas time;  
The cottage was deserted, and no more  
Ser Federigo sat beside its door,  
But now, with servitors to do his will,

In the grand villa, half-way up the hill,  
Sat at the Christmas feast, and at his side  
Monna Giovanna, his beloved bride,  
Never so beautiful, so kind, so fair,  
Enthroned once more in the old rustic chair,  
High-perched upon the back of which there stood  
The image of a falcon carved in wood,  
And underneath the inscription, with date,  
"All things come round to him who will but wait."

## INTERLUDE

Soon as the story reached its end,  
One, over eager to commend,  
Crowned it with injudicious praise;  
And then the voice of blame found vent,  
And fanned the embers of dissent  
Into a somewhat lively blaze.

The Theologian shook his head;  
"These old Italian tales," he said,  
"From the much-praised Decameron down  
Through all the rabble of the rest,  
Are either trifling, dull, or lewd;  
The gossip of a neighborhood  
In some remote provincial town,  
A scandalous chronicle at best!  
They seem to me a stagnant fen,  
Grown rank with rushes and with reeds,  
Where a white lily, now and then,  
Blooms in the midst of noxious weeds  
And deadly nightshade on its banks."

To this the Student straight replied,  
"For the white lily, many thanks!  
One should not say, with too much pride,  
Fountain, I will not drink of thee!  
Nor were it grateful to forget,  
That from these reservoirs and tanks  
Even imperial Shakespeare drew  
His Moor of Venice, and the Jew,  
And Romeo and Juliet,  
And many a famous comedy."

Then a long pause; till some one said,  
"An Angel is flying overhead!"  
At these words spake the Spanish Jew,  
And murmured with an inward breath:  
"God grant, if what you say be true,  
It may not be the Angel of Death!"  
And then another pause; and then,  
Stroking his beard, he said again:  
"This brings back to my memory  
A story in the Talmud told,  
That book of gems, that book of gold,  
Of wonders many and manifold,  
A tale that often comes to me,  
And fills my heart, and haunts my brain,  
And never wearies nor grows old."

## THE SPANISH JEW'S TALE

### THE LEGEND OF RABBI BEN LEVI

Rabbi Ben Levi, on the Sabbath, read  
A volume of the Law, in which it said,  
"No man shall look upon my face and live."  
And as he read, he prayed that God would give  
His faithful servant grace with mortal eye  
To look upon His face and yet not die.

Then fell a sudden shadow on the page,  
And, lifting up his eyes, grown dim with age  
He saw the Angel of Death before him stand,  
Holding a naked sword in his right hand.  
Rabbi Ben Levi was a righteous man,  
Yet through his veins a chill of terror ran.  
With trembling voice he said, "What wilt thou here?"  
The angel answered, "Lo! the time draws near  
When thou must die; yet first, by God's decree,  
Whate'er thou askest shall be granted thee."  
Replied the Rabbi, "Let these living eyes  
First look upon my place in Paradise."

Then said the Angel, "Come with me and look."  
Rabbi Ben Levi closed the sacred book,  
And rising, and uplifting his gray head,  
"Give me thy sword," he to the Angel said,  
"Lest thou shouldst fall upon me by the way."  
The angel smiled and hastened to obey,  
Then led him forth to the Celestial Town,  
And set him on the wall, whence, gazing down,  
Rabbi Ben Levi, with his living eyes,  
Might look upon his place in Paradise.

Then straight into the city of the Lord  
The Rabbi leaped with the Death-Angel's sword,  
And through the streets there swept a sudden breath  
Of something there unknown, which men call death.  
Meanwhile the Angel stayed without and cried,  
"Come back!" To which the Rabbi's voice replied,  
"No! in the name of God, whom I adore,  
I swear that hence I will depart no more!"

Then all the Angels cried, "O Holy One,  
See what the son of Levi here hath done!"

The kingdom of Heaven he takes by violence,  
And in Thy name refuses to go hence!"  
The Lord replied, "My Angels, be not wroth;  
Did e'er the son of Levi break his oath?  
Let him remain; for he with mortal eye  
Shall look upon my face and yet not die."

Beyond the outer wall the Angel of Death  
Heard the great voice, and said, with panting breath,  
"Give back the sword, and let me go my way."  
Whereat the Rabbi paused, and answered, "Nay!  
Anguish enough already hath it caused  
Among the sons of men." And while he paused  
He heard the awful mandate of the Lord  
Resounding through the air, "Give back the sword!"

The Rabbi bowed his head in silent prayer;  
Then said he to the dreadful Angel, "Swear,  
No human eye shall look on it again;  
But when thou takest away the souls of men,  
Thyself unseen, and with an unseen sword,  
Thou wilt perform the bidding of the Lord."  
The Angel took the sword again, and swore,  
And walks on earth unseen forevermore.

## INTERLUDE

He ended: and a kind of spell  
Upon the silent listeners fell.  
His solemn manner and his words  
Had touched the deep, mysterious chords,  
That vibrate in each human breast  
Alike, but not alike confessed.  
The spiritual world seemed near;  
And close above them, full of fear,  
Its awful adumbration passed,  
A luminous shadow, vague and vast.  
They almost feared to look, lest there,  
Embodied from the impalpable air,  
They might behold the Angel stand,  
Holding the sword in his right hand.

At last, but in a voice subdued,  
Not to disturb their dreamy mood,  
Said the Sicilian: "While you spoke,  
Telling your legend marvellous,  
Suddenly in my memory woke

The thought of one, now gone from us,--  
An old Abate, meek and mild,  
My friend and teacher, when a child,  
Who sometimes in those days of old  
The legend of an Angel told,  
Which ran, as I remember, thus?'

## THE SICILIAN'S TALE

### KING ROBERT OF SICILY

Robert of Sicily, brother of Pope Urbane  
And Valmond, Emperor of Allemaine,  
Apparelled in magnificent attire,  
With retinue of many a knight and squire,  
On St. John's eve, at vespers, proudly sat  
And heard the priests chant the Magnificat,  
And as he listened, o'er and o'er again  
Repeated, like a burden or refrain,  
He caught the words, "Deposuit potentes  
De sede, et exaltavit humiles";  
And slowly lifting up his kingly head  
He to a learned clerk beside him said,  
"What mean these words?" The clerk made answer meet,  
"He has put down the mighty from their seat,  
And has exalted them of low degree."  
Thereat King Robert muttered scornfully,  
"T is well that such seditious words are sung  
Only by priests and in the Latin tongue;  
For unto priests and people be it known,  
There is no power can push me from my throne!"  
And leaning back, he yawned and fell asleep,  
Lulled by the chant monotonous and deep.

When he awoke, it was already night;  
The church was empty, and there was no light,  
Save where the lamps, that glimmered few and faint,  
Lighted a little space before some saint.  
He started from his seat and gazed around,  
But saw no living thing and heard no sound.  
He groped towards the door, but it was locked;  
He cried aloud, and listened, and then knocked,  
And uttered awful threatenings and complaints,  
And imprecations upon men and saints.  
The sounds re-echoed from the roof and walls  
As if dead priests were laughing in their stalls.

At length the sexton, hearing from without  
The tumult of the knocking and the shout,  
And thinking thieves were in the house of prayer,  
Came with his lantern, asking, "Who is there?"  
Half choked with rage, King Robert fiercely said,  
"Open: 'tis I, the King! Art thou afraid?"  
The frightened sexton, muttering, with a curse,  
"This is some drunken vagabond, or worse!"  
Turned the great key and flung the portal wide;

A man rushed by him at a single stride,  
Haggard, half naked, without hat or cloak,  
Who neither turned, nor looked at him, nor spoke,  
But leaped into the blackness of the night,  
And vanished like a spectre from his sight.

Robert of Sicily, brother of Pope Urbane  
And Valmond, Emperor of Allemaine,  
Despoiled of his magnificent attire,  
Bareheaded, breathless, and besprent with mire,  
With sense of wrong and outrage desperate,  
Strode on and thundered at the palace gate;  
Rushed through the courtyard, thrusting in his rage  
To right and left each seneschal and page,  
And hurried up the broad and sounding stair,  
His white face ghastly in the torches' glare.  
From hall to hall he passed with breathless speed;  
Voices and cries he heard, but did not heed,  
Until at last he reached the banquet-room,  
Blazing with light and breathing with perfume.

There on the dais sat another king,  
Wearing his robes, his crown, his signet-ring,  
King Robert's self in features, form, and height,  
But all transfigured with angelic light!  
It was an Angel; and his presence there  
With a divine effulgence filled the air,  
An exaltation, piercing the disguise,  
Though none the hidden Angel recognize.

A moment speechless, motionless, amazed,  
The throneless monarch on the Angel gazed,  
Who met his look of anger and surprise  
With the divine compassion of his eyes;  
Then said, "Who art thou? and why com'st thou here?"  
To which King Robert answered, with a sneer,  
"I am the King, and come to claim my own  
From an impostor, who usurps my throne!"  
And suddenly, at these audacious words,  
Up sprang the angry guests, and drew their swords;  
The Angel answered, with unruffled brow,  
"Nay, not the King, but the King's Jester, thou  
Henceforth shall wear the bells and scalloped cape,  
And for thy counsellor shalt lead an ape;  
Thou shalt obey my servants when they call,  
And wait upon my henchmen in the hall!"

Deaf to King Robert's threats and cries and prayers,  
They thrust him from the hall and down the stairs;

A group of tittering pages ran before,  
And as they opened wide the folding door,  
His heart failed, for he heard, with strange alarms,  
The boisterous laughter of the men-at-arms,  
And all the vaulted chamber roar and ring  
With the mock plaudits of "Long live the King!"

Next morning, waking with the day's first beam,  
He said within himself, "It was a dream!"  
But the straw rustled as he turned his head,  
There were the cap and bells beside his bed,  
Around him rose the bare, discolored walls,  
Close by, the steeds were champing in their stalls,  
And in the corner, a revolting shape,  
Shivering and chattering sat the wretched ape.  
It was no dream; the world he loved so much  
Had turned to dust and ashes at his touch!

Days came and went; and now returned again  
To Sicily the old Saturnian reign;  
Under the Angel's governance benign  
The happy island danced with corn and wine,  
And deep within the mountain's burning breast  
Enceladus, the giant, was at rest.

Meanwhile King Robert yielded to his fate,  
Sullen and silent and disconsolate.  
Dressed in the motley garb that Jesters wear,  
With look bewildered and a vacant stare,  
Close shaven above the ears, as monks are shorn,  
By courtiers mocked, by pages laughed to scorn,  
His only friend the ape, his only food  
What others left,--he still was unsubdued.  
And when the Angel met him on his way,  
And half in earnest, half in jest, would say  
Sternly, though tenderly, that he might feel  
The velvet scabbard held a sword of steel,  
"Art thou the King?" the passion of his woe  
Burst from him in resistless overflow,  
And, lifting high his forehead, he would fling  
The haughty answer back, "I am, I am the King!"

Almost three years were ended; when there came  
Ambassadors of great repute and name  
From Valmond, Emperor of Allemaine,  
Unto King Robert, saying that Pope Urbane  
By letter summoned them forthwith to come  
On Holy Thursday to his city of Rome.  
The Angel with great joy received his guests,

And gave them presents of embroidered vests,  
And velvet mantles with rich ermine lined,  
And rings and jewels of the rarest kind.  
Then he departed with them o'er the sea  
Into the lovely land of Italy,  
Whose loveliness was more resplendent made  
By the mere passing of that cavalcade,  
With plumes, and cloaks, and housings, and the stir  
Of jewelled bridle and of golden spur.  
And lo! among the menials, in mock state,  
Upon a piebald steed, with shambling gait,  
His cloak of fox-tails flapping in the wind,  
The solemn ape demurely perched behind,  
King Robert rode, making huge merriment  
In all the country towns through which they went.

The Pope received them with great pomp and blare  
Of bannered trumpets, on Saint Peter's square,  
Giving his benediction and embrace,  
Fervent, and full of apostolic grace.  
While with congratulations and with prayers  
He entertained the Angel unawares,  
Robert, the Jester, bursting through the crowd,  
Into their presence rushed, and cried aloud,  
"I am the King! Look, and behold in me  
Robert, your brother, King of Sicily!  
This man, who wears my semblance to your eyes,  
Is an impostor in a king's disguise.  
Do you not know me? does no voice within  
Answer my cry, and say we are akin?"  
The Pope in silence, but with troubled mien,  
Gazed at the Angel's countenance serene;  
The Emperor, laughing, said, "It is strange sport  
To keep a mad man for thy Fool at court!"  
And the poor, baffled Jester in disgrace  
Was hustled back among the populace.

In solemn state the Holy Week went by,  
And Easter Sunday gleamed upon the sky;  
The presence of the Angel, with its light,  
Before the sun rose, made the city bright,  
And with new fervor filled the hearts of men,  
Who felt that Christ indeed had risen again.  
Even the Jester, on his bed of straw,  
With haggard eyes the unwonted splendor saw,  
He felt within a power unfelt before,  
And, kneeling humbly on his chamber floor,  
He heard the rushing garments of the Lord  
Sweep through the silent air, ascending heavenward.

And now the visit ending, and once more  
Valmond returning to the Danube's shore,  
Homeward the Angel journeyed, and again  
The land was made resplendent with his train,  
Flashing along the towns of Italy  
Unto Salerno, and from thence by sea.  
And when once more within Palermo's wall,  
And, seated on the throne in his great hall,  
He heard the Angelus from convent towers,  
As if the better world conversed with ours,  
He beckoned to King Robert to draw nigher,  
And with a gesture bade the rest retire;  
And when they were alone, the Angel said,  
"Art thou the King?" Then, bowing down his head,  
King Robert crossed both hands upon his breast,  
And meekly answered him: "Thou knowest best!  
My sins as scarlet are; let me go hence,  
And in some cloister's school of penitence,  
Across those stones, that pave the way to heaven,  
Walk barefoot, till my guilty soul be shriven!"

The Angel smiled, and from his radiant face  
A holy light illumined all the place,  
And through the open window, loud and clear,  
They heard the monks chant in the chapel near,  
Above the stir and tumult of the street:  
"He has put down the mighty from their seat,  
And has exalted them of low degree!"  
And through the chant a second melody  
Rose like the throbbing of a single string:  
"I am an Angel, and thou art the King!"

King Robert, who was standing near the throne,  
Lifted his eyes, and lo! he was alone!  
But all apparelled as in days of old,  
With ermined mantle and with cloth of gold;  
And when his courtiers came, they found him there  
Kneeling upon the floor, absorbed in, silent prayer.

## INTERLUDE

And then the blue-eyed Norseman told  
A Saga of the days of old.

"There is," said he, "a wondrous book  
Of Legends in the old Norse tongue,  
Of the dead kings of Norroway, --  
Legends that once were told or sung  
In many a smoky fireside nook  
Of Iceland, in the ancient day,  
By wandering Saga-man or Scald;  
Heimskringla is the volume called;  
And he who looks may find therein  
The story that I now begin."

And in each pause the story made  
Upon his violin he played,  
As an appropriate interlude,  
Fragments of old Norwegian tunes  
That bound in one the separate runes,  
And held the mind in perfect mood,  
Entwining and encircling all  
The strange and antiquated rhymes  
with melodies of olden times;  
As over some half-ruined wall,  
Disjointed and about to fall,  
Fresh woodbines climb and interlace,  
And keep the loosened stones in place.

## THE MUSICIAN'S TALE

## THE SAGA OF KING OLAF

### I

## THE CHALLENGE OF THOR

I am the God Thor,  
I am the War God,  
I am the Thunderer!  
Here in my Northland,  
My fastness and fortress,  
Reign I forever!

Here amid icebergs  
Rule I the nations;  
This is my hammer,  
Mjolner the mighty;  
Giants and sorcerers  
Cannot withstand it!

These are the gauntlets  
Wherewith I wield it,  
And hurl it afar off;  
This is my girdle;  
Whenever I brace it,  
Strength is redoubled!

The light thou beholdest  
Stream through the heavens,  
In flashes of crimson,  
Is but my red beard  
Blown by the night-wind,  
Affrighting the nations!

Jove is my brother;  
Mine eyes are the lightning;  
The wheels of my chariot  
Roll in the thunder,  
The blows of my hammer  
Ring in the earthquake!

Force rules the world still,  
Has ruled it, shall rule it;  
Meekness is weakness,  
Strength is triumphant,  
Over the whole earth  
Still is it Thor's-Day!

Thou art a God too,  
O Galilean!  
And thus single-handed  
Unto the combat,  
Gauntlet or Gospel,  
Here I defy thee!

## II

### KING OLAF'S RETURN

And King Olaf heard the cry,  
Saw the red light in the sky,  
Laid his hand upon his sword,  
As he leaned upon the railing,  
And his ships went sailing, sailing  
Northward into Drontheim fiord.

There he stood as one who dreamed;  
And the red light glanced and gleamed  
On the armor that he wore;  
And he shouted, as the rifled  
Streamers o'er him shook and shifted,  
"I accept thy challenge, Thor!"

To avenge his father slain,  
And reconquer realm and reign,  
Came the youthful Olaf home,  
Through the midnight sailing, sailing,  
Listening to the wild wind's wailing,  
And the dashing of the foam.

To his thoughts the sacred name  
Of his mother Astrid came,  
And the tale she oft had told  
Of her flight by secret passes  
Through the mountains and morasses,  
To the home of Hakon old.

Then strange memories crowded back  
Of Queen Gunhild's wrath and wrack,  
And a hurried flight by sea;  
Of grim Vikings, and the rapture  
Of the sea-fight, and the capture,  
And the life of slavery.

How a stranger watched his face

In the Esthonian market-place,  
Scanned his features one by one,  
Saying, "We should know each other;  
I am Sigurd, Astrid's brother,  
Thou art Olaf, Astrid's son!"

Then as Queen Allogia's page,  
Old in honors, young in age,  
Chief of all her men-at-arms;  
Till vague whispers, and mysterious,  
Reached King Valdemar, the imperious,  
Filling him with strange alarms.

Then his cruisings o'er the seas,  
Westward to the Hebrides,  
And to Scilly's rocky shore;  
And the hermit's cavern dismal,  
Christ's great name and rites baptismal  
in the ocean's rush and roar.

All these thoughts of love and strife  
Glimmered through his lurid life,  
As the stars' intenser light  
Through the red flames o'er him trailing,  
As his ships went sailing, sailing,  
Northward in the summer night.

Trained for either camp or court,  
Skilful in each manly sport,  
Young and beautiful and tall;  
Art of warfare, craft of chases,  
Swimming, skating, snow-shoe races  
Excellent alike in all.

When at sea, with all his rowers,  
He along the bending oars  
Outside of his ship could run.  
He the Smalsor Horn ascended,  
And his shining shield suspended,  
On its summit, like a sun.

On the ship-rails he could stand,  
Wield his sword with either hand,  
And at once two javelins throw;  
At all feasts where ale was strongest  
Sat the merry monarch longest,  
First to come and last to go.

Norway never yet had seen

One so beautiful of mien,  
One so royal in attire,  
When in arms completely furnished,  
Harness gold-inlaid and burnished,  
Mantle like a flame of fire.

Thus came Olaf to his own,  
When upon the night-wind blown  
Passed that cry along the shore;  
And he answered, while the rifted  
Streamers o'er him shook and shifted,  
"I accept thy challenge, Thor!"

### III

#### THORA OF RIMOL

"Thora of Rimol! hide me! hide me!  
Danger and shame and death betide me!  
For Olaf the King is hunting me down  
Through field and forest, through thorp and town!"  
Thus cried Jarl Hakon  
To Thora, the fairest of women.

Hakon Jarl! for the love I bear thee  
Neither shall shame nor death come near thee!  
But the hiding-place wherein thou must lie  
Is the cave underneath the swine in the sty."  
Thus to Jarl Hakon  
Said Thora, the fairest of women.

So Hakon Jarl and his base thrall Karker  
Crouched in the cave, than a dungeon darker,  
As Olaf came riding, with men in mail,  
Through the forest roads into Orkadale,  
Demanding Jarl Hakon  
Of Thorn, the fairest of women.

"Rich and honored shall be whoever  
The head of Hakon Jarl shall dissever!"  
Hakon heard him, and Karker the slave,  
Through the breathing-holes of the darksome cave.  
Alone in her chamber  
Wept Thora, the fairest of women.

Said Karker, the crafty, "I will not slay thee!  
For all the king's gold I will never betray thee!"

"Then why dost thou turn so pale, O churl,  
And then again black as the earth?" said the Earl.  
More pale and more faithful  
Was Thora, the fairest of women.

From a dream in the night the thrall started, saying,  
"Round my neck a gold ring King Olaf was laying!"  
And Hakon answered, "Beware of the king!  
He will lay round thy neck a blood-red ring."  
At the ring on her finger  
Gazed Thorn, the fairest of women.

At daybreak slept Hakon, with sorrows encumbered,  
But screamed and drew up his feet as he slumbered;  
The thrall in the darkness plunged with his knife,  
And the Earl awakened no more in this life.  
But wakeful and weeping  
Sat Thorn, the fairest of women.

At Nidarholm the priests are all singing,  
Two ghastly heads on the gibbet are swinging;  
One is Jarl Hakon's and one is his thrall's,  
And the people are shouting from windows and walls;  
While alone in her chamber  
Swoons Thorn, the fairest of women.

#### IV

#### QUEEN SIGRID THE HAUGHTY

Queen Sigrid the Haughty sat proud and aloft  
In her chamber, that looked over meadow and croft.  
Heart's dearest,  
Why dost thou sorrow so?

The floor with tassels of fir was besprent,  
Filling the room with their fragrant scent.

She heard the birds sing, she saw the sun shine,  
The air of summer was sweeter than wine.

Like a sword without scabbard the bright river lay  
Between her own kingdom and Norrøya.

But Olaf the King had sued for her hand,  
The sword would be sheathed, the river be spanned.

Her maidens were seated around her knee,  
Working bright figures in tapestry.

And one was singing the ancient rune  
Of Brynhilda's love and the wrath of Gudrun.

And through it, and round it, and over it all  
Sounded incessant the waterfall.

The Queen in her hand held a ring of gold,  
From the door of Lade's Temple old.

King Olaf had sent her this wedding gift,  
But her thoughts as arrows were keen and swift.

She had given the ring to her goldsmiths twain,  
Who smiled, as they handed it back again.

And Sigrid the Queen, in her haughty way,  
Said, "Why do you smile, my goldsmiths, say?"

And they answered: "O Queen! if the truth must be told,  
The ring is of copper, and not of gold!"

The lightning flashed o'er her forehead and cheek,  
She only murmured, she did not speak:

"If in his gifts he can faithless be,  
There will be no gold in his love to me."

A footstep was heard on the outer stair,  
And in strode King Olaf with royal air.

He kissed the Queen's hand, and he whispered of love,  
And swore to be true as the stars are above.

But she smiled with contempt as she answered: "O King,  
Will you swear it, as Odin once swore, on the ring?"

And the King: "O speak not of Odin to me,  
The wife of King Olaf a Christian must be."

Looking straight at the King, with her level brows,  
She said, "I keep true to my faith and my vows."

Then the face of King Olaf was darkened with gloom,  
He rose in his anger and strode through the room.

"Why, then, should I care to have thee?" he said,--

"A faded old woman, a heathenish jade!"

His zeal was stronger than fear or love,  
And he struck the Queen in the face with his glove.

Then forth from the chamber in anger he fled,  
And the wooden stairway shook with his tread.

Queen Sigrid the Haughty said under her breath,  
"This insult, King Olaf, shall be thy death!"  
Heart's dearest,  
Why dost thou sorrow so?

V

### THE SKERRY OF SHRIEKS

Now from all King Olaf's farms  
His men-at-arms  
Gathered on the Eve of Easter;  
To his house at Angvalds-ness  
Fast they press,  
Drinking with the royal feaster.

Loudly through the wide-flung door  
Came the roar  
Of the sea upon the Skerry;  
And its thunder loud and near  
Reached the ear,  
Mingling with their voices merry.

"Hark!" said Olaf to his Scald,  
Halfred the Bald,  
"Listen to that song, and learn it!  
Half my kingdom would I give,  
As I live,  
If by such songs you would earn it!

"For of all the runes and rhymes  
Of all times,  
Best I like the ocean's dirges,  
When the old harper heaves and rocks,  
His hoary locks  
Flowing and flashing in the surges!"

Halfred answered: "I am called  
The Unappalled!"

Nothing hinders me or daunts me.  
Hearken to me, then, O King,  
    While I sing  
The great Ocean Song that haunts me."

"I will hear your song sublime  
    Some other time,"  
Says the drowsy monarch, yawning,  
And retires; each laughing guest  
    Applauds the jest;  
Then they sleep till day is dawning.

Facing up and down the yard,  
    King Olaf's guard  
Saw the sea-mist slowly creeping  
O'er the sands, and up the hill,  
    Gathering still  
Round the house where they were sleeping.

It was not the fog he saw,  
    Nor misty flaw,  
That above the landscape brooded;  
It was Eyvind Kallda's crew  
    Of warlocks blue  
With their caps of darkness hooded!

Round and round the house they go,  
    Weaving slow  
Magic circles to encumber  
And imprison in their ring  
    Olaf the King,  
As he helpless lies in slumber.

Then athwart the vapors dun  
    The Easter sun  
Streamed with one broad track of splendor!  
in their real forms appeared  
    The warlocks weird,  
Awful as the Witch of Endor.

Blinded by the light that glared,  
    They groped and stared  
Round about with steps unsteady;  
From his window Olaf gazed,  
    And, amazed,  
"Who are these strange people?" said he.

"Eyvind Kallda and his men!"  
    Answered then

From the yard a sturdy farmer;  
While the men-at-arms apace  
    Filled the place,  
Busily buckling on their armor.

From the gates they sallied forth,  
    South and north,  
Scoured the island coast around them,  
Seizing all the warlock band,  
    Foot and hand  
On the Skerry's rocks they bound them.

And at eve the king again  
    Called his train,  
And, with all the candles burning,  
Silent sat and heard once more  
    The sullen roar  
Of the ocean tides returning.

Shrieks and cries of wild despair  
    Filled the air,  
Growing fainter as they listened;  
Then the bursting surge alone  
    Sounded on;--  
Thus the sorcerers were christened!

"Sing, O Scald, your song sublime,  
    Your ocean-rhyme,"  
Cried King Olaf: "it will cheer me!"  
Said the Scald, with pallid cheeks,  
    "The Skerry of Shrieks  
Sings too loud for you to hear me!"

## VI

### THE WRAITH OF ODIN

The guests were loud, the ale was strong,  
King Olaf feasted late and long;  
The hoary Scalds together sang;  
O'erhead the smoky rafters rang.

Dead rides Sir Morten of Fogelsang.

The door swung wide, with creak and din;  
A blast of cold night-air came in,  
And on the threshold shivering stood  
A one-eyed guest, with cloak and hood.

Dead rides Sir Morten of Fogelsang.

The King exclaimed, "O graybeard pale!  
Come warm thee with this cup of ale."  
The foaming draught the old man quaffed,  
The noisy guests looked on and laughed.

Dead rides Sir Morten of Fogelsang.

Then spake the King: "Be not afraid;  
Sit here by me." The guest obeyed,  
And, seated at the table, told  
Tales of the sea, and Sagas old.

Dead rides Sir Morten of Fogelsang.

And ever, when the tale was o'er,  
The King demanded yet one more;  
Till Sigurd the Bishop smiling said,  
"T is late, O King, and time for bed."

Dead rides Sir Morten of Fogelsang.

The King retired; the stranger guest  
Followed and entered with the rest;  
The lights were out, the pages gone,  
But still the garrulous guest spake on.

Dead rides Sir Morten of Fogelsang.

As one who from a volume reads,  
He spake of heroes and their deeds,  
Of lands and cities he had seen,  
And stormy gulfs that tossed between.

Dead rides Sir Morten of Fogelsang.

Then from his lips in music rolled  
The Havamal of Odin old,  
With sounds mysterious as the roar

Of billows on a distant shore.

Dead rides Sir Morten of Fogelsang.

"Do we not learn from runes and rhymes  
Made by the gods in elder times,  
And do not still the great Scalds teach  
That silence better is than speech?"

Dead rides Sir Morten of Fogelsang.

Smiling at this, the King replied,  
"Thy lore is by thy tongue belied;  
For never was I so enthralled  
Either by Saga-man or Scald,"

Dead rides Sir Morten of Fogelsang.

The Bishop said, "Late hours we keep!  
Night wanes, O King! 't is time for sleep!"  
Then slept the King, and when he woke  
The guest was gone, the morning broke.

Dead rides Sir Morten of Fogelsang.

They found the doors securely barred,  
They found the watch-dog in the yard,  
There was no footprint in the grass,  
And none had seen the stranger pass.

Dead rides Sir Morten of Fogelsang.

King Olaf crossed himself and said:  
"I know that Odin the Great is dead;  
Sure is the triumph of our Faith,  
The one-eyed stranger was his wraith."

Dead rides Sir Morten of Fogelsang.

## VII

### IRON-BEARD

Olaf the King, one summer morn,  
Blew a blast on his bugle-horn,  
Sending his signal through the land of Drontheim.

And to the Hus-Ting held at Mere  
Gathered the farmers far and near,  
With their war weapons ready to confront him.

Ploughing under the morning star,  
Old Iron-Beard in Yriar

Heard the summons, chuckling with a low laugh.

He wiped the sweat-drops from his brow,  
Unharnessed his horses from the plough,  
And clattering came on horseback to King Olaf.

He was the churliest of the churls;  
Little he cared for king or earls;  
Bitter as home-brewed ale were his foaming passions.

Hodden-gray was the garb he wore,  
And by the Hammer of Thor he swore;  
He hated the narrow town, and all its fashions.

But he loved the freedom of his farm,  
His ale at night, by the fireside warm,  
Gudrun his daughter, with her flaxen tresses.

He loved his horses and his herds,  
The smell of the earth, and the song of birds,  
His well-filled barns, his brook with its water-cresses.

Huge and cumbersome was his frame;  
His beard, from which he took his name,  
Frosty and fierce, like that of Hymer the Giant.

So at the Hus-Ting he appeared,  
The farmer of Yriar, Iron-Beard,  
On horseback, in an attitude defiant.

And to King Olaf he cried aloud,  
Out of the middle of the crowd,  
That tossed about him like a stormy ocean:

"Such sacrifices shalt thou bring;  
To Odin and to Thor, O King,  
As other kings have done in their devotion!"

King Olaf answered: "I command  
This land to be a Christian land;  
Here is my Bishop who the folk baptizes!

"But if you ask me to restore  
Your sacrifices, stained with gore,  
Then will I offer human sacrifices!

"Not slaves and peasants shall they be,  
But men of note and high degree,  
Such men as Orm of Lyra and Kar of Gryting!"

Then to their Temple strode he in,  
And loud behind him heard the din  
Of his men-at-arms and the peasants fiercely fighting.

There in the Temple, carved in wood,  
The image of great Odin stood,  
And other gods, with Thor supreme among them.

King Olaf smote them with the blade  
Of his huge war-axe, gold inlaid,  
And downward shattered to the pavement flung them.

At the same moment rose without,  
From the contending crowd, a shout,  
A mingled sound of triumph and of wailing.

And there upon the trampled plain  
The farmer iron-Beard lay slain,  
Midway between the assailed and the assailing.

King Olaf from the doorway spoke.  
"Choose ye between two things, my folk,  
To be baptized or given up to slaughter!"

And seeing their leader stark and dead,  
The people with a murmur said,  
"O King, baptize us with thy holy water";

So all the Drontheim land became  
A Christian land in name and fame,  
In the old gods no more believing and trusting.

And as a blood-atonement, soon  
King Olaf wed the fair Gudrun;  
And thus in peace ended the Drontheim Hus-Ting!

## VIII

### GUDRUN

On King Olaf's bridal night  
Shines the moon with tender light,  
And across the chamber streams  
Its tide of dreams.

At the fatal midnight hour,  
When all evil things have power,  
In the glimmer of the moon  
Stands Gudrun.

Close against her heaving breast  
Something in her hand is pressed  
Like an icicle, its sheen  
Is cold and keen.

On the cairn are fixed her eyes  
Where her murdered father lies,  
And a voice remote and drear  
She seems to hear.

What a bridal night is this!  
Cold will be the dagger's kiss;  
Laden with the chill of death  
Is its breath.

Like the drifting snow she sweeps  
To the couch where Olaf sleeps;  
Suddenly he wakes and stirs,  
His eyes meet hers.

"What is that," King Olaf said,  
"Gleams so bright above thy head?  
Wherefore standest thou so white  
In pale moonlight?"

"'T is the bodkin that I wear  
When at night I bind my hair;  
It woke me falling on the floor;  
'T is nothing more."

"Forests have ears, and fields have eyes;  
Often treachery lurking lies  
Underneath the fairest hair!  
Gudrun beware!"

Ere the earliest peep of morn  
Blew King Olaf's bugle-horn;  
And forever sundered ride  
    Bridegroom and bride!

## IX

### THANGBRAND THE PRIEST

Short of stature, large of limb,  
    Burly face and russet beard,  
All the women stared at him,  
    When in Iceland he appeared.  
    "Look!" they said,  
    With nodding head,  
"There goes Thangbrand, Olaf's Priest."

All the prayers he knew by rote,  
    He could preach like Chrysostome,  
From the Fathers he could quote,  
    He had even been at Rome,  
    A learned clerk,  
    A man of mark,  
Was this Thangbrand, Olaf's Priest,

He was quarrelsome and loud,  
    And impatient of control,  
Boisterous in the market crowd,  
    Boisterous at the wassail-bowl,  
    Everywhere  
    Would drink and swear,  
Swaggering Thangbrand, Olaf's Priest

In his house this malcontent  
    Could the King no longer bear,  
So to Iceland he was sent  
    To convert the heathen there,  
    And away  
    One summer day  
Sailed this Thangbrand, Olaf's Priest.

There in Iceland, o'er their books  
    Pored the people day and night,  
But he did not like their looks,  
    Nor the songs they used to write.  
    "All this rhyme  
    Is waste of time!"

Grumbled Thangbrand, Olaf's Priest.

To the alehouse, where he sat  
Came the Scalds and Saga-men;  
Is it to be wondered at,  
That they quarrelled now and then,  
When o'er his beer  
Began to leer  
Drunken Thangbrand, Olaf's Priest?

All the folk in Altafiord  
Boasted of their island grand;  
Saying in a single word,  
"Iceland is the finest land  
That the sun  
Doth shine upon!"  
Loud laughed Thangbrand, Olaf's Priest.

And he answered: "What's the use  
Of this bragging up and down,  
When three women and one goose  
Make a market in your town!"  
Every Scald  
Satires scrawled  
On poor Thangbrand, Olaf's Priest.

Something worse they did than that;  
And what vexed him most of all  
Was a figure in shovel hat,  
Drawn in charcoal on the wall;  
With words that go  
Sprawling below,  
"This is Thangbrand, Olaf's Priest."

Hardly knowing what he did,  
Then he smote them might and main,  
Thorvald Veile and Veterlid  
Lay there in the alehouse slain.  
"To-day we are gold,  
To-morrow mould!"  
Muttered Thangbrand, Olaf's Priest.

Much in fear of axe and rope,  
Back to Norway sailed he then.  
"O, King Olaf! little hope  
Is there of these Iceland men!"  
Meekly said,  
With bending head,  
Pious Thangbrand, Olaf's Priest.

## X

### RAUD THE STRONG

"All the old gods are dead,  
All the wild warlocks fled;  
But the White Christ lives and reigns,  
And throughout my wide domains  
His Gospel shall be spread!"  
    On the Evangelists  
    Thus swore King Olaf.

But still in dreams of the night  
Beheld he the crimson light,  
And heard the voice that defied  
Him who was crucified,  
And challenged him to the fight.  
    To Sigurd the Bishop  
    King Olaf confessed it.

And Sigurd the Bishop said,  
"The old gods are not dead,  
For the great Thor still reigns,  
And among the Jarls and Thanes  
The old witchcraft still is spread."  
    Thus to King Olaf  
    Said Sigurd the Bishop.

"Far north in the Salten Fiord,  
By rapine, fire, and sword,  
Lives the Viking, Raud the Strong;  
All the Godoe Isles belong  
To him and his heathen horde."  
    Thus went on speaking  
    Sigurd the Bishop.

"A warlock, a wizard is he,  
And lord of the wind and the sea;  
And whichever way he sails,  
He has ever favoring gales,  
By his craft in sorcery."  
    Here the sign of the cross  
    Made devoutly King Olaf.

"With rites that we both abhor,  
He worships Odin and Thor;  
So it cannot yet be said,

That all the old gods are dead,  
And the warlocks are no more,"  
Flushing with anger  
Said Sigurd the Bishop.

Then King Olaf cried aloud:  
"I will talk with this mighty Raud,  
And along the Salten Fiord  
Preach the Gospel with my sword,  
Or be brought back in my shroud!"  
So northward from Drontheim  
Sailed King Olaf!

## **XI**

### **BISHOP SIGURD AT SALTEN FIORD**

Loud the angry wind was wailing  
As King Olaf's ships came sailing  
Northward out of Drontheim haven  
To the mouth of Salten Fiord.

Though the flying sea-spray drenches  
Fore and aft the rowers' benches,  
Not a single heart is craven  
Of the champions there on board.

All without the Fiord was quiet  
But within it storm and riot,  
Such as on his Viking cruises  
Raud the Strong was wont to ride.

And the sea through all its tide-ways  
Swept the reeling vessels sideways,  
As the leaves are swept through sluices,  
When the flood-gates open wide.

"'T is the warlock! 't is the demon  
Raud!" cried Sigurd to the seamen;  
"But the Lord is not affrighted  
By the witchcraft of his foes."

To the ship's bow he ascended,  
By his choristers attended,  
Round him were the tapers lighted,  
And the sacred incense rose.

On the bow stood Bishop Sigurd,  
In his robes, as one transfigured,  
And the Crucifix he planted  
High amid the rain and mist.

Then with holy water sprinkled  
All the ship; the mass-bells tinkled;  
Loud the monks around him chanted,  
Loud he read the Evangelist.

As into the Fiord they darted,  
On each side the water parted;  
Down a path like silver molten  
Steadily rowed King Olaf's ships;

Steadily burned all night the tapers,  
And the White Christ through the vapors  
Gleamed across the Fiord of Salten,  
As through John's Apocalypse,--

Till at last they reached Raud's dwelling  
On the little isle of Gelling;  
Not a guard was at the doorway,  
Not a glimmer of light was seen.

But at anchor, carved and gilded,  
Lay the dragon-ship he buildd;  
'T was the grandest ship in Norway,  
With its crest and scales of green.

Up the stairway, softly creeping,  
To the loft where Raud was sleeping,  
With their fists they burst asunder  
Bolt and bar that held the door.

Drunken with sleep and ale they found him,  
Dragged him from his bed and bound him,  
While he stared with stupid wonder,  
At the look and garb they wore.

Then King Olaf said: "O Sea-King!  
Little time have we for speaking,  
Choose between the good and evil;  
Be baptized, or thou shalt die!

But in scorn the heathen scoffer  
Answered: "I disdain thine offer;  
Neither fear I God nor Devil;  
Thee and thy Gospel I defy!"

Then between his jaws distended,  
When his frantic struggles ended,  
Through King Olaf's horn an adder,  
Touched by fire, they forced to glide.

Sharp his tooth was as an arrow,  
As he gnawed through bone and marrow;  
But without a groan or shudder,  
Raud the Strong blaspheming died.

Then baptized they all that region,  
Swarthy Lap and fair Norwegian,  
Far as swims the salmon, leaping,  
Up the streams of Salten Fiord.

In their temples Thor and Odin  
Lay in dust and ashes trodden,  
As King Olaf, onward sweeping,  
Preached the Gospel with his sword.

Then he took the carved and gilded  
Dragon-ship that Raud had builded,  
And the tiller single-handed,  
Grasping, steered into the main.

Southward sailed the sea-gulls o'er him,  
Southward sailed the ship that bore him,  
Till at Drontheim haven landed  
Olaf and his crew again.

## **XII**

### **KING OLAF'S CHRISTMAS**

At Drontheim, Olaf the King  
Heard the bells of Yule-tide ring,  
As he sat in his banquet-hall,  
Drinking the nut-brown ale,  
With his bearded Berserks hale  
And tall.

Three days his Yule-tide feasts  
He held with Bishops and Priests,  
And his horn filled up to the brim;  
But the ale was never too strong,

Nor the Saga-man's tale too long,  
For him.

O'er his drinking-horn, the sign  
He made of the cross divine,  
As he drank, and muttered his prayers;  
But the Berserks evermore  
Made the sign of the Hammer of Thor  
Over theirs.

The gleams of the fire-light dance  
Upon helmet and hauberk and lance,  
And laugh in the eyes of the King;  
And he cries to Halfred the Scald,  
Gray-bearded, wrinkled, and bald,  
"Sing!"

"Sing me a song divine,  
With a sword in every line,  
And this shall be thy reward."  
And he loosened the belt at his waist,  
And in front of the singer placed  
His sword.

"Quern-biter of Hakon the Good,  
Wherewith at a stroke he hewed  
The millstone through and through,  
And Foot-breadth of Thoralf the Strong,  
Were neither so broad nor so long,  
Nor so true."

Then the Scald took his harp and sang,  
And loud though the music rang  
The sound of that shining word;  
And the harp-strings a clangor made,  
As if they were struck with the blade  
Of a sword.

And the Berserks round about  
Broke forth into a shout  
That made the rafters ring:  
They smote with their fists on the board,  
And shouted, "Long live the Sword,  
And the King!"

But the King said, "O my son,  
I miss the bright word in one  
Of thy measures and thy rhymes."  
And Halfred the Scald replied,

"In another 't was multiplied  
Three times."

Then King Olaf raised the hilt  
Of iron, cross-shaped and gilt,  
And said, "Do not refuse;  
Count well the gain and the loss,  
Thor's hammer or Christ's cross:  
Choose!"

And Halfred the Scald said, "This  
In the name of the Lord I kiss,  
Who on it was crucified!"  
And a shout went round the board,  
"In the name of Christ the Lord,  
Who died!"

Then over the waste of snows  
The noonday sun uprose,  
Through the driving mists revealed,  
Like the lifting of the Host,  
By incense-clouds almost  
Concealed.

On the shining wall a vast  
And shadowy cross was cast  
From the hilt of the lifted sword,  
And in foaming cups of ale  
The Berserks drank "Was-hael!  
To the Lord!"

### XIII

#### THE BUILDING OF THE LONG SERPENT

Thorberg Skafting, master-builder,  
In his ship-yard by the sea,  
Whistling, said, "It would bewilder  
Any man but Thorberg Skafting,  
Any man but me!"

Near him lay the Dragon stranded,  
Built of old by Raud the Strong,  
And King Olaf had commanded  
He should build another Dragon,  
Twice as large and long.

Therefore whistled Thorberg Skafting,  
As he sat with half-closed eyes,  
And his head turned sideways, drafting  
That new vessel for King Olaf  
Twice the Dragon's size.

Round him busily hewed and hammered  
Mallet huge and heavy axe;  
Workmen laughed and sang and clamored;  
Whirred the wheels, that into rigging  
Spun the shining flax!

All this tumult heard the master,--  
It was music to his ear;  
Fancy whispered all the faster,  
"Men shall hear of Thorberg Skafting  
For a hundred year!"

Workmen sweating at the forges  
Fashioned iron bolt and bar,  
Like a warlock's midnight orgies  
Smoked and bubbled the black caldron  
With the boiling tar.

Did the warlocks mingle in it,  
Thorberg Skafting, any curse?  
Could you not be gone a minute  
But some mischief must be doing,  
Turning bad to worse?

'T was an ill wind that came wafting,  
From his homestead words of woe  
To his farm went Thorberg Skafting,

Oft repeating to his workmen,  
Build ye thus and so.

After long delays returning  
Came the master back by night  
To his ship-yard longing, yearning,  
Hurried he, and did not leave it  
Till the morning's light.

"Come and see my ship, my darling"  
On the morrow said the King;  
"Finished now from keel to carling;  
Never yet was seen in Norway  
Such a wondrous thing!"

In the ship-yard, idly talking,  
At the ship the workmen stared:  
Some one, all their labor balking,  
Down her sides had cut deep gashes,  
Not a plank was spared!

"Death be to the evil-doer!"  
With an oath King Olaf spoke;  
"But rewards to his pursuer  
And with wrath his face grew redder  
Than his scarlet cloak.

Straight the master-builder, smiling,  
Answered thus the angry King:  
"Cease blaspheming and reviling,  
Olaf, it was Thorberg Skafting  
Who has done this thing!"

Then he chipped and smoothed the planking,  
Till the King, delighted, swore,  
With much lauding and much thanking,  
"Handsomest is now my Dragon  
Than she was before!"

Seventy ells and four extended  
On the grass the vessel's keel;  
High above it, gilt and splendid,  
Rose the figure-head ferocious  
With its crest of steel.

Then they launched her from the tressels,  
In the ship-yard by the sea;  
She was the grandest of all vessels,  
Never ship was built in Norway

Half so fine as she!

The Long Serpent was she christened,  
    'Mid the roar of cheer on cheer!  
They who to the Saga listened  
Heard the name of Thorberg Skafting  
    For a hundred year!

#### XIV

#### THE CREW OF THE LONG SERPENT

Safe at anchor in Drontheim bay  
King Olaf's fleet assembled lay,  
    And, striped with white and blue,  
Downward fluttered sail and banner,  
As alights the screaming lanner;  
Lustily cheered, in their wild manner,  
    The Long Serpent's crew

Her forecastle man was Ulf the Red,  
Like a wolf's was his shaggy head,  
    His teeth as large and white;  
His beard, of gray and russet blended,  
Round as a swallow's nest descended;  
As standard-bearer he defended  
    Olaf's flag in the fight.

Near him Kolbiorn had his place,  
Like the King in garb and face,  
    So gallant and so hale;  
Every cabin-boy and varlet  
Wondered at his cloak of scarlet;  
Like a river, frozen and star-lit,  
    Gleamed his coat of mail.

By the bulkhead, tall and dark,  
Stood Thrand Rame of Thelemark,  
A figure gaunt and grand;  
On his hairy arm imprinted  
Was an anchor, azure-tinted;  
Like Thor's hammer, huge and dinted  
Was his brawny hand.

Einar Tamberskelver, bare  
To the winds his golden hair,  
    By the mainmast stood;

Graceful was his form, and slender,  
And his eyes were deep and tender  
As a woman's, in the splendor  
Of her maidenhood.

In the fore-hold Biorn and Bork  
Watched the sailors at their work:  
Heavens! how they swore!  
Thirty men they each commanded,  
Iron-sinewed, horny-handed,  
Shoulders broad, and chests expanded.  
Tugging at the oar.

These, and many more like these,  
With King Olaf sailed the seas,  
Till the waters vast  
Filled them with a vague devotion,  
With the freedom and the motion,  
With the roll and roar of ocean  
And the sounding blast.

When they landed from the fleet,  
How they roared through Drontheim's street,  
Boisterous as the gale!  
How they laughed and stamped and pounded,  
Till the tavern roof resounded,  
And the host looked on astounded  
As they drank the ale!

Never saw the wild North Sea  
Such a gallant company  
Sail its billows blue!  
Never, while they cruised and quarrelled,  
Old King Gorm, or Blue-Tooth Harald,  
Owned a ship so well apparelled,  
Boasted such a crew!

## XV

### A LITTLE BIRD IN THE AIR

A little bird in the air  
Is singing of Thyri the fair,  
The sister of Svend the Dane;  
And the song of the garrulous bird  
In the streets of the town is heard,  
And repeated again and again.  
Hoist up your sails of silk,  
And flee away from each other.

To King Burislaf, it is said,  
Was the beautiful Thyri wed,  
And a sorrowful bride went she;  
And after a week and a day,  
She has fled away and away,  
From his town by the stormy sea.  
Hoist up your sails of silk,  
And flee away from each other.

They say, that through heat and through cold,  
Through weald, they say, and through wold,  
By day and by night, they say,  
She has fled; and the gossips report  
She has come to King Olaf's court,  
And the town is all in dismay.  
Hoist up your sails of silk,  
And flee away from each other.

It is whispered King Olaf has seen,  
Has talked with the beautiful Queen;  
And they wonder how it will end;  
For surely, if here she remain,  
It is war with King Svend the Dane,  
And King Burislaf the Vend!  
Hoist up your sails of silk,  
And flee away from each other.

O, greatest wonder of all!  
It is published in hamlet and hall,  
It roars like a flame that is fanned!  
The King--yes, Olaf the King--  
Has wedded her with his ring,  
And Thyri is Queen in the land!  
Hoist up your sails of silk,  
And flee away from each other.

## XVI

### QUEEN THYRI AND THE ANGELICA STALKS

Northward over Drontheim,  
Flew the clamorous sea-gulls,  
Sang the lark and linnet  
From the meadows green;

Weeping in her chamber,  
Lonely and unhappy,  
Sat the Drottning Thyri,  
Sat King Olaf's Queen.

In at all the windows  
Streamed the pleasant sunshine,  
On the roof above her  
Softly cooed the dove;

But the sound she heard not,  
Nor the sunshine heeded,  
For the thoughts of Thyri  
Were not thoughts of love,

Then King Olaf entered,  
Beautiful as morning,  
Like the sun at Easter  
Shone his happy face;

In his hand he carried  
Angelicas uprooted,  
With delicious fragrance  
Filling all the place.

Like a rainy midnight  
Sat the Drottning Thyri,  
Even the smile of Olaf  
Could not cheer her gloom;

Nor the stalks he gave her  
With a gracious gesture,  
And with words as pleasant  
As their own perfume.

In her hands he placed them,  
And her jewelled fingers  
Through the green leaves glistened

Like the dews of morn;

But she cast them from her,  
Haughty and indignant,  
On the floor she threw them  
With a look of scorn.

"Richer presents," said she,  
"Gave King Harald Gormson  
To the Queen, my mother,  
Than such worthless weeds;

"When he ravaged Norway,  
Laying waste the kingdom,  
Seizing scatt and treasure  
For her royal needs.

"But thou darest not venture  
Through the Sound to Vendland,  
My domains to rescue  
From King Burislaf;

"Lest King Svend of Denmark,  
Forked Beard, my brother,  
Scatter all thy vessels  
As the wind the chaff."

Then up sprang King Olaf,  
Like a reindeer bounding,  
With an oath he answered  
Thus the luckless Queen:

"Never yet did Olaf  
Fear King Svend of Denmark;  
This right hand shall hale him  
By his forked chin!"

Then he left the chamber,  
Thundering through the doorway,  
Loud his steps resounded  
Down the outer stair.

Smarting with the insult,  
Through the streets of Drontheim  
Strode he red and wrathful,  
With his stately air.

All his ships he gathered,  
Summoned all his forces,

Making his war levy  
In the region round;

Down the coast of Norway,  
Like a flock of sea-gulls,  
Sailed the fleet of Olaf  
Through the Danish Sound.

With his own hand fearless,  
Steered he the Long Serpent,  
Strained the creaking cordage,  
Bent each boom and gaff;

Till in Venland landing,  
The domains of Thyri  
He redeemed and rescued  
From King Burislaf.

Then said Olaf, laughing,  
"Not ten yoke of oxen  
Have the power to draw us  
Like a woman's hair!

"Now will I confess it,  
Better things are jewels  
Than angelica stalks are  
For a Queen to wear."

## XVII

### **KING SVEND OF THE FORKED BEAR**

Loudly the sailors cheered  
Svend of the Forked Beard,  
As with his fleet he steered  
Southward to Vendland;  
Where with their courses hauled  
All were together called,  
Under the Isle of Svald  
Near to the mainland.

After Queen Gunhild's death,  
So the old Saga saith,  
Plighted King Svend his faith  
To Sigrid the Haughty;  
And to avenge his bride,  
Soothing her wounded pride,

Over the waters wide  
King Olaf sought he.

Still on her scornful face,  
Blushing with deep disgrace,  
Bore she the crimson trace  
Of Olaf's gauntlet;  
Like a malignant star,  
Blazing in heaven afar,  
Red shone the angry scar  
Under her frontlet.

Oft to King Svend she spake,  
"For thine own honor's sake  
Shalt thou swift vengeance take  
On the vile coward!"  
Until the King at last,  
Gusty and overcast,  
Like a tempestuous blast  
Threatened and lowered.

Soon as the Spring appeared,  
Svend of the Forked Beard  
High his red standard reared,  
Eager for battle;  
While every warlike Dane,  
Seizing his arms again,  
Left all unsown the grain,  
Unhoused the cattle.

Likewise the Swedish King  
Summoned in haste a Thing,  
Weapons and men to bring  
In aid of Denmark;  
Erie the Norseman, too,  
As the war-tidings flew,  
Sailed with a chosen crew  
From Lapland and Finmark.

So upon Easter day  
Sailed the three kings away,  
Out of the sheltered bay,  
In the bright season;  
With them Earl Sigvald came,  
Eager for spoil and fame;  
Pity that such a name  
Stooped to such treason!

Safe under Svald at last,

Now were their anchors cast,  
Safe from the sea and blast,  
    Plotted the three kings;  
While, with a base intent,  
Southward Earl Sigvald went,  
On a foul errand bent,  
    Unto the Sea-kings.

Thence to hold on his course,  
Unto King Olaf's force,  
Lying within the hoarse  
    Mouths of Stet-haven;  
Him to ensnare and bring,  
Unto the Danish king,  
Who his dead corse would fling  
    Forth to the raven!

## **XVIII**

### **KING OLAF AND EARL SIGVALD**

On the gray sea-sands  
King Olaf stands,  
Northward and seaward  
He points with his hands.

With eddy and whirl  
The sea-tides curl,  
Washing the sandals  
Of Sigvald the Earl.

The mariners shout,  
The ships swing about,  
The yards are all hoisted,  
The sails flutter out.

The war-horns are played,  
The anchors are weighed,  
Like moths in the distance  
The sails flit and fade.

The sea is like lead  
The harbor lies dead,  
As a corse on the sea-shore,  
Whose spirit has fled!

On that fatal day,

The histories say,  
Seventy vessels  
Sailed out of the bay.

But soon scattered wide  
O'er the billows they ride,  
While Sigvald and Olaf  
Sail side by side.

Cried the Earl: "Follow me!  
I your pilot will be,  
For I know all the channels  
Where flows the deep sea!"

So into the strait  
Where his foes lie in wait,  
Gallant King Olaf  
Sails to his fate!

Then the sea-fog veils  
The ships and their sails;  
Queen Sigrid the Haughty,  
Thy vengeance prevails!

## **XIX**

### **KING OLAF'S WAR-HORNS**

"Strike the sails!" King Olaf said;  
"Never shall men of mine take flight;  
Never away from battle I fled,  
Never away from my foes!  
Let God dispose  
Of my life in the fight!"

"Sound the horns!" said Olaf the King;  
And suddenly through the drifting brume  
The blare of the horns began to ring,  
Like the terrible trumpet shock  
Of Regnarock,  
On the Day of Doom!

Louder and louder the war-horns sang  
Over the level floor of the flood;  
All the sails came down with a clang,  
And there in the mist overhead  
The sun hung red

As a drop of blood.

Drifting down on the Danish fleet  
Three together the ships were lashed,  
So that neither should turn and retreat;  
In the midst, but in front of the rest  
    The burnished crest  
Of the Serpent flashed.

King Olaf stood on the quarter-deck,  
With bow of ash and arrows of oak,  
His gilded shield was without a fleck,  
His helmet inlaid with gold,  
    And in many a fold  
Hung his crimson cloak.

On the forecastle Ulf the Red  
Watched the lashing of the ships;  
"If the Serpent lie so far ahead,  
We shall have hard work of it here,  
    Said he with a sneer  
On his bearded lips.

King Olaf laid an arrow on string,  
"Have I a coward on board?" said he.  
"Shoot it another way, O King!"  
Sullenly answered Ulf,  
    The old sea-wolf;  
"You have need of me!"

In front came Svend, the King of the Danes,  
Sweeping down with his fifty rowers;  
To the right, the Swedish king with his thanes;  
And on board of the Iron Beard  
    Earl Eric steered  
To the left with his oars.

"These soft Danes and Swedes," said the King,  
"At home with their wives had better stay,  
Than come within reach of my Serpent's sting:  
But where Eric the Norseman leads  
    Heroic deeds  
Will be done to-day!"

Then as together the vessels crashed,  
Eric severed the cables of hide,  
With which King Olaf's ships were lashed,  
And left them to drive and drift  
    With the currents swift

Of the outward tide.

Louder the war-horns growl and snarl,  
Sharper the dragons bite and sting!  
Eric the son of Hakon Jarl  
A death-drink salt as the sea  
    Pledges to thee,  
Olaf the King!

## XX

### EINAR TAMBERSKELVER

It was Einar Tamberskelver  
    Stood beside the mast;  
From his yew-bow, tipped with silver,  
    Flew the arrows fast;  
Aimed at Eric unavailing,  
    As he sat concealed,  
Half behind the quarter-railing,  
    Half behind his shield.

First an arrow struck the tiller,  
    Just above his head;  
"Sing, O Eyvind Skaldaspiller,"  
    Then Earl Eric said.  
"Sing the song of Hakon dying,  
    Sing his funeral wail!"  
And another arrow flying  
    Grazed his coat of mail.

Turning to a Lapland yeoman,  
    As the arrow passed,  
Said Earl Eric, "Shoot that bowman  
    Standing by the mast."  
Sooner than the word was spoken  
    Flew the yeoman's shaft;  
Einar's bow in twain was broken,  
    Einar only laughed.

"What was that?" said Olaf, standing  
    On the quarter-deck.  
"Something heard I like the stranding  
    Of a shattered wreck."  
Einar then, the arrow taking  
    From the loosened string,  
Answered, "That was Norway breaking

From thy hand, O King!"

"Thou art but a poor diviner,"  
Straightway Olaf said;  
"Take my bow, and swifter, Einar,  
Let thy shafts be sped."  
Of his bows the fairest choosing,  
Reached he from above;  
Einar saw the blood-drops oozing  
Through his iron glove.

But the bow was thin and narrow;  
At the first assay,  
O'er its head he drew the arrow,  
Flung the bow away;  
Said, with hot and angry temper  
Flushing in his cheek,  
"Olaf! for so great a Kamper  
Are thy bows too weak!"

Then, with smile of joy defiant  
On his beardless lip,  
Scaled he, light and self-reliant,  
Eric's dragon-ship.  
Loose his golden locks were flowing,  
Bright his armor gleamed;  
Like Saint Michael overthrowing  
Lucifer he seemed.

## XXI

### KING OLAF'S DEATH-DRINK

All day has the battle raged,  
All day have the ships engaged,  
But not yet is assuaged  
The vengeance of Eric the Earl.

The decks with blood are red,  
The arrows of death are sped,  
The ships are filled with the dead,  
And the spears the champions hurl.

They drift as wrecks on the tide,  
The grappling-irons are plied,  
The boarders climb up the side,  
The shouts are feeble and few.

Ah! never shall Norway again  
See her sailors come back o'er the main;  
They all lie wounded or slain,  
Or asleep in the billows blue!

On the deck stands Olaf the King,  
Around him whistle and sing  
The spears that the foemen fling,  
And the stones they hurl with their hands.

In the midst of the stones and the spears,  
Kolbiorn, the marshal, appears,  
His shield in the air he uprears,  
By the side of King Olaf he stands.

Over the slippery wreck  
Of the Long Serpent's deck  
Sweeps Eric with hardly a check,  
His lips with anger are pale;

He hews with his axe at the mast,  
Till it falls, with the sails overcast,  
Like a snow-covered pine in the vast  
Dim forests of Orkadale.

Seeking King Olaf then,  
He rushes aft with his men,  
As a hunter into the den  
Of the bear, when he stands at bay.

"Remember Jarl Hakon!" he cries;  
When lo! on his wondering eyes,  
Two kingly figures arise,  
Two Olaf's in warlike array!

Then Kolbiorn speaks in the ear  
Of King Olaf a word of cheer,  
In a whisper that none may hear,  
With a smile on his tremulous lip;

Two shields raised high in the air,  
Two flashes of golden hair,  
Two scarlet meteors' glare,  
And both have leaped from the ship.

Earl Eric's men in the boats  
Seize Kolbiorn's shield as it floats,  
And cry, from their hairy throats,  
"See! it is Olaf the King!"

While far on the opposite side  
Floats another shield on the tide,  
Like a jewel set in the wide  
Sea-current's eddying ring.

There is told a wonderful tale,  
How the King stripped off his mail,  
Like leaves of the brown sea-kale,  
As he swam beneath the main;

But the young grew old and gray,  
And never, by night or by day,  
In his kingdom of Norroway  
Was King Olaf seen again!

## XXII

### THE NUN OF NIDAROS

In the convent of Drontheim,  
Alone in her chamber  
Knelt Astrid the Abbess,  
At midnight, adoring,  
Beseeching, entreating  
The Virgin and Mother.

She heard in the silence  
The voice of one speaking,  
Without in the darkness,  
In gusts of the night-wind  
Now louder, now nearer,  
Now lost in the distance.

The voice of a stranger  
It seemed as she listened,  
Of some one who answered,  
Beseeching, imploring,  
A cry from afar off  
She could not distinguish.

The voice of Saint John,  
The beloved disciple,  
Who wandered and waited  
The Master's appearance.  
Alone in the darkness,  
Unsheltered and friendless.

"It is accepted  
The angry defiance  
The challenge of battle!  
It is accepted,  
But not with the weapons  
Of war that thou wieldest!

"Cross against corselet,  
Love against hatred,  
Peace-cry for war-cry!  
Patience is powerful;  
He that o'ercometh  
Hath power o'er the nations!

"As torrents in summer,  
Half dried in their channels,  
Suddenly rise, though the

Sky is still cloudless,  
For rain has been falling  
Far off at their fountains;

So hearts that are fainting  
Grow full to o'erflowing,  
And they that behold it  
Marvel, and know not  
That God at their fountains  
Far off has been raining!

"Stronger than steel  
Is the sword of the Spirit;  
Swifter than arrows  
The light of the truth is,  
Greater than anger  
Is love, and subdueth!

"Thou art a phantom,  
A shape of the sea-mist,  
A shape of the brumal  
Rain, and the darkness  
Fearful and formless;  
Day dawns and thou art not!

"The dawn is not distant,  
Nor is the night starless;  
Love is eternal!  
God is still God, and  
His faith shall not fail us  
Christ is eternal!"

## **INTERLUDE**

A strain of music closed the tale,  
A low, monotonous, funeral wail,  
That with its cadence, wild and sweet,  
Made the long Saga more complete.

"Thank God," the Theologian said,  
"The reign of violence is dead,  
Or dying surely from the world;  
While Love triumphant reigns instead,  
And in a brighter sky o'erhead  
His blessed banners are unfurled.  
And most of all thank God for this:  
The war and waste of clashing creeds  
Now end in words, and not in deeds,

And no one suffers loss, or bleeds,  
For thoughts that men call heresies.

"I stand without here in the porch,  
I hear the bell's melodious din,  
I hear the organ peal within,  
I hear the prayer, with words that scorch  
Like sparks from an inverted torch,  
I hear the sermon upon sin,  
With threatenings of the last account.  
And all, translated in the air,  
Reach me but as our dear Lord's Prayer,  
And as the Sermon on the Mount.

"Must it be Calvin, and not Christ?  
Must it be Athanasian creeds,  
Or holy water, books, and beads?  
Must struggling souls remain content  
With councils and decrees of Trend?  
And can it be enough for these  
The Christian Church the year embalms  
With evergreens and boughs of palms,  
And fills the air with litanies?

"I know that yonder Pharisee  
Thanks God that he is not like me;  
In my humiliation dressed,  
I only stand and beat my breast,  
And pray for human charity.

"Not to one church alone, but seven,  
The voice prophetic spake from heaven;  
And unto each the promise came,  
Diversified, but still the same;  
For him that overcometh are  
The new name written on the stone,  
The raiment white, the crown, the throne,  
And I will give him the Morning Star!

"Ah! to how many Faith has been  
No evidence of things unseen,  
But a dim shadow, that recasts  
The creed of the Phantasiasts,  
For whom no Man of Sorrows died,  
For whom the Tragedy Divine  
Was but a symbol and a sign,  
And Christ a phantom crucified!

"For others a diviner creed

Is living in the life they lead.  
The passing of their beautiful feet  
Blesses the pavement of the street  
And all their looks and words repeat  
Old Fuller's saying, wise and sweet,  
Not as a vulture, but a dove,  
The Holy Ghost came from above.

"And this brings back to me a tale  
So sad the hearer well may quail,  
And question if such things can be;  
Yet in the chronicles of Spain  
Down the dark pages runs this stain,  
And naught can wash them white again,  
So fearful is the tragedy."

## THE THEOLOGIAN'S TALE

### TORQUEMADA

In the heroic days when Ferdinand  
And Isabella ruled the Spanish land,  
And Torquemada, with his subtle brain,  
Ruled them, as Grand Inquisitor of Spain,  
In a great castle near Valladolid,  
Moated and high and by fair woodlands hid,  
There dwelt as from the chronicles we learn,  
An old Hidalgo proud and taciturn,  
Whose name has perished, with his towers of stone,  
And all his actions save this one alone;  
This one, so terrible, perhaps 't were best  
If it, too, were forgotten with the rest;  
Unless, perchance, our eyes can see therein  
The martyrdom triumphant o'er the sin;  
A double picture, with its gloom and glow,  
The splendor overhead, the death below.

This sombre man counted each day as lost  
On which his feet no sacred threshold crossed;  
And when he chanced the passing Host to meet,  
He knelt and prayed devoutly in the street;  
Oft he confessed; and with each mutinous thought,  
As with wild beasts at Ephesus, he fought.  
In deep contrition scourged himself in Lent,  
Walked in processions, with his head down bent,  
At plays of Corpus Christi oft was seen,  
And on Palm Sunday bore his bough of green.  
His sole diversion was to hunt the boar  
Through tangled thickets of the forest hoar,  
Or with his jingling mules to hurry down  
To some grand bull-fight in the neighboring town,  
Or in the crowd with lighted taper stand,  
When Jews were burned, or banished from the land.  
Then stirred within him a tumultuous joy;  
The demon whose delight is to destroy  
Shook him, and shouted with a trumpet tone,  
Kill! kill! and let the Lord find out his own!"

And now, in that old castle in the wood,  
His daughters, in the dawn of womanhood,  
Returning from their convent school, had made  
Resplendent with their bloom the forest shade,  
Reminding him of their dead mother's face,  
When first she came into that gloomy place,--  
A memory in his heart as dim and sweet

As moonlight in a solitary street,  
Where the same rays, that lift the sea, are thrown  
Lovely but powerless upon walls of stone.  
These two fair daughters of a mother dead  
Were all the dream had left him as it fled.  
A joy at first, and then a growing care,  
As if a voice within him cried, "Beware  
A vague presentiment of impending doom,  
Like ghostly footsteps in a vacant room,  
Haunted him day and night; a formless fear  
That death to some one of his house was near,  
With dark surmises of a hidden crime,  
Made life itself a death before its time.  
Jealous, suspicious, with no sense of shame,  
A spy upon his daughters he became;  
With velvet slippers, noiseless on the floors,  
He glided softly through half-open doors;  
Now in the room, and now upon the stair,  
He stood beside them ere they were aware;  
He listened in the passage when they talked,  
He watched them from the casement when they walked,  
He saw the gypsy haunt the river's side,  
He saw the monk among the cork-trees glide;  
And, tortured by the mystery and the doubt  
Of some dark secret, past his finding out,  
Baffled he paused; then reassured again  
Pursued the flying phantom of his brain.  
He watched them even when they knelt in church;  
And then, descending lower in his search,  
Questioned the servants, and with eager eyes  
Listened incredulous to their replies;  
The gypsy? none had seen her in the wood!  
The monk? a mendicant in search of food!

At length the awful revelation came,  
Crushing at once his pride of birth and name;  
The hopes his yearning bosom forward cast,  
And the ancestral glories of the vast,  
All fell together, crumbling in disgrace,  
A turret rent from battlement to base.  
His daughters talking in the dead of night  
In their own chamber, and without a light,  
Listening, as he was wont, he overheard,  
And learned the dreadful secret, word by word;  
And hurrying from his castle, with a cry  
He raised his hands to the unpitying sky,  
Repeating one dread word, till bush and tree  
Caught it, and shuddering answered, "Heresy!"

Wrapped in his cloak, his hat drawn o'er his face,  
Now hurrying forward, now with lingering pace,  
He walked all night the alleys of his park,  
With one unseen companion in the dark,  
The Demon who within him lay in wait,  
And by his presence turned his love to hate,  
Forever muttering in an undertone,  
"Kill! kill! and let the Lord find out his own!"

Upon the morrow, after early Mass,  
While yet the dew was glistening on the grass,  
And all the woods were musical with birds,  
The old Hidalgo, uttering fearful words,  
Walked homeward with the Priest, and in his room  
Summoned his trembling daughters to their doom.  
When questioned, with brief answers they replied,  
Nor when accused evaded or denied;  
Expostulations, passionate appeals,  
All that the human heart most fears or feels,  
In vain the Priest with earnest voice essayed;  
In vain the father threatened, wept, and prayed;  
Until at last he said, with haughty mien,  
"The Holy Office, then, must intervene!"

And now the Grand Inquisitor of Spain,  
With all the fifty horsemen of his train,  
His awful name resounding, like the blast  
Of funeral trumpets, as he onward passed,  
Came to Valladolid, and there began  
To harry the rich Jews with fire and ban.  
To him the Hidalgo went, and at the gate  
Demanded audience on affairs of state,  
And in a secret chamber stood before  
A venerable graybeard of fourscore,  
Dressed in the hood and habit of a friar;  
Out of his eyes flashed a consuming fire,  
And in his hand the mystic horn he held,  
Which poison and all noxious charms dispelled.  
He heard in silence the Hidalgo's tale,  
Then answered in a voice that made him quail:  
"Son of the Church! when Abraham of old  
To sacrifice his only son was told,  
He did not pause to parley nor protest  
But hastened to obey the Lord's behest.  
In him it was accounted righteousness;  
The Holy Church expects of thee no less!"

A sacred frenzy seized the father's brain,  
And Mercy from that hour implored in vain.

Ah! who will e'er believe the words I say?  
His daughters he accused, and the same day  
They both were cast into the dungeon's gloom,  
That dismal antechamber of the tomb,  
Arraigned, condemned, and sentenced to the flame,  
The secret torture and the public shame.

Then to the Grand Inquisitor once more  
The Hidalgo went, more eager than before,  
And said: "When Abraham offered up his son,  
He clave the wood wherewith it might be done.  
By his example taught, let me too bring  
Wood from the forest for my offering!"  
And the deep voice, without a pause, replied:  
"Son of the Church! by faith now justified,  
Complete thy sacrifice, even as thou wilt;  
The Church absolves thy conscience from all guilt!"

Then this most wretched father went his way  
Into the woods, that round his castle lay,  
Where once his daughters in their childhood played  
With their young mother in the sun and shade.  
Now all the leaves had fallen; the branches bare  
Made a perpetual moaning in the air,  
And screaming from their eyries overhead  
The ravens sailed athwart the sky of lead.  
With his own hands he lopped the boughs and bound  
Fagots, that crackled with foreboding sound,  
And on his mules, caparisoned and gay  
With bells and tassels, sent them on their way.

Then with his mind on one dark purpose bent,  
Again to the Inquisitor he went,  
And said: "Behold, the fagots I have brought,  
And now, lest my atonement be as naught,  
Grant me one more request, one last desire,--  
With my own hand to light the funeral fire!"  
And Torquemada answered from his seat,  
"Son of the Church! Thine offering is complete;  
Her servants through all ages shall not cease  
To magnify thy deed. Depart in peace!"

Upon the market-place, builded of stone  
The scaffold rose, whereon Death claimed his own.  
At the four corners, in stern attitude,  
Four statues of the Hebrew Prophets stood,  
Gazing with calm indifference in their eyes  
Upon this place of human sacrifice,  
Round which was gathering fast the eager crowd,

With clamor of voices dissonant and loud,  
And every roof and window was alive  
With restless gazers, swarming like a hive.

The church-bells tolled, the chant of monks drew near,  
Loud trumpets stammered forth their notes of fear,  
A line of torches smoked along the street,  
There was a stir, a rush, a tramp of feet,  
And, with its banners floating in the air,  
Slowly the long procession crossed the square,  
And, to the statues of the Prophets bound,  
The victims stood, with fagots piled around.  
Then all the air a blast of trumpets shook,  
And louder sang the monks with bell and book,  
And the Hidalgo, lofty, stern, and proud,  
Lifted his torch, and, bursting through the crowd,  
Lighted in haste the fagots, and then fled,  
Lest those imploring eyes should strike him dead!

O pitiless skies! why did your clouds retain  
For peasants' fields their floods of hoarded rain?  
O pitiless earth! why open no abyss  
To bury in its chasm a crime like this?

That night a mingled column of fire and smoke  
From the dark thickets of the forest broke,  
And, glaring o'er the landscape leagues away,  
Made all the fields and hamlets bright as day.  
Wrapped in a sheet of flame the castle blazed,  
And as the villagers in terror gazed,  
They saw the figure of that cruel knight  
Lean from a window in the turret's height,  
His ghastly face illumined with the glare,  
His hands upraised above his head in prayer,  
Till the floor sank beneath him, and he fell  
Down the black hollow of that burning well.

Three centuries and more above his bones  
Have piled the oblivious years like funeral stones;  
His name has perished with him, and no trace  
Remains on earth of his afflicted race;  
But Torquemada's name, with clouds o'ercast,  
Looms in the distant landscape of the Past,  
Like a burnt tower upon a blackened heath,  
Lit by the fires of burning woods beneath!

## **INTERLUDE**

Thus closed the tale of guilt and gloom,  
That cast upon each listener's face  
Its shadow, and for some brief space  
Unbroken silence filled the room.  
The Jew was thoughtful and distressed;  
Upon his memory thronged and pressed  
The persecution of his race,  
Their wrongs and sufferings and disgrace;  
His head was sunk upon his breast,  
And from his eyes alternate came  
Flashes of wrath and tears of shame.

The student first the silence broke,  
As one who long has lain in wait  
With purpose to retaliate,  
And thus he dealt the avenging stroke.  
"In such a company as this,  
A tale so tragic seems amiss,  
That by its terrible control  
O'ermasters and drags down the soul  
Into a fathomless abyss.  
The Italian Tales that you disdain,  
Some merry Night of Straparole,  
Or Machiavelli's Belphagor,  
Would cheer us and delight us more,  
Give greater pleasure and less pain  
Than your grim tragedies of Spain!"

And here the Poet raised his hand,  
With such entreaty and command,  
It stopped discussion at its birth,  
And said: "The story I shall tell  
Has meaning in it, if not mirth;  
Listen, and hear what once befell  
The merry birds of Killingworth!"

## THE POET'S TALE

### THE BIRDS OF KILLINGWORTH

It was the season, when through all the land  
The merle and mavis build, and building sing  
Those lovely lyrics, written by His hand,  
Whom Saxon Caedmon calls the Blitheheart King;  
When on the boughs the purple buds expand,  
The banners of the vanguard of the Spring,  
And rivulets, rejoicing, rush and leap,  
And wave their fluttering signals from the steep.

The robin and the bluebird, piping loud,  
Filled all the blossoming orchards with their glee;  
The sparrows chirped as if they still were proud  
Their race in Holy Writ should mentioned be;  
And hungry crows assembled in a crowd,  
Clamored their piteous prayer incessantly,  
Knowing who hears the ravens cry, and said:  
"Give us, O Lord, this day our daily bread!"

Across the Sound the birds of passage sailed,  
Speaking some unknown language strange and sweet  
Of tropic isle remote, and passing hailed  
The village with the cheers of all their fleet;  
Or quarrelling together, laughed and railed  
Like foreign sailors, landed in the street  
Of seaport town, and with outlandish noise  
Of oaths and gibberish frightening girls and boys.

Thus came the jocund Spring in Killingworth,  
In fabulous day; some hundred years ago;  
And thrifty farmers, as they tilled the earth,  
Heard with alarm the cawing of the crow,  
That mingled with the universal mirth,  
Cassandra-like, prognosticating woe;  
They shook their heads, and doomed with dreadful words  
To swift destruction the whole race of birds.

And a town-meeting was convened straightway  
To set a price upon the guilty heads  
Of these marauders, who, in lieu of pay,  
Levied black-mail upon the garden beds  
And cornfields, and beheld without dismay  
The awful scarecrow, with his fluttering shreds;  
The skeleton that waited at their feast,  
Whereby their sinful pleasure was increased.

Then from his house, a temple painted white,  
With fluted columns, and a roof of red,  
The Squire came forth, august and splendid sight!  
Slowly descending, with majestic tread,  
Three flights of steps, nor looking left nor right,  
Down the long street he walked, as one who said,  
"A town that boasts inhabitants like me  
Can have no lack of good society!"

The Parson, too, appeared, a man austere,  
The instinct of whose nature was to kill;  
The wrath of God he preached from year to year,  
And read, with fervor, Edwards on the Will;  
His favorite pastime was to slay the deer  
In Summer on some Adirondac hill;  
E'en now, while walking down the rural lane,  
He lopped the wayside lilies with his cane.

From the Academy, whose belfry crowned  
The hill of Science with its vane of brass,  
Came the Preceptor, gazing idly round,  
Now at the clouds, and now at the green grass,  
And all absorbed in reveries profound  
Of fair Almira in the upper class,  
Who was, as in a sonnet he had said,  
As pure as water, and as good as bread.

And next the Deacon issued from his door,  
In his voluminous neck-cloth, white as snow;  
A suit of sable bombazine he wore;  
His form was ponderous, and his step was slow;  
There never was so wise a man before;  
He seemed the incarnate "Well, I told you so!"  
And to perpetuate his great renown  
There was a street named after him in town.

These came together in the new town-hall,  
With sundry farmers from the region round.  
The Squirt presided, dignified and tall,  
His air impressive and his reasoning sound;  
Ill fared it with the birds, both great and small;  
Hardly a friend in all that crowd they found,  
But enemies enough, who every one  
Charged them with all the crimes beneath the sun.

When they had ended, from his place apart,  
Rose the Preceptor, to redress the wrong,  
And, trembling like a steed before the start,  
Looked round bewildered on the expectant throng;

Then thought of fair Almira, and took heart  
To speak out what was in him, clear and strong,  
Alike regardless of their smile or frown,  
And quite determined not to be laughed down.

"Plato, anticipating the Reviewers,  
From his Republic banished without pity  
The Poets; in this little town of yours,  
You put to death, by means of a Committee,  
The ballad-singers and the Troubadours,  
The street-musicians of the heavenly city,  
The birds, who make sweet music for us all  
In our dark hours, as David did for Saul.

"The thrush that carols at the dawn of day  
From the green steeples of the piny wood;  
The oriole in the elm; the noisy jay,  
Jargoning like a foreigner at his food;  
The bluebird balanced on some topmost spray,  
Flooding with melody the neighborhood;  
Linnet and meadow-lark, and all the throng  
That dwell in nests, and have the gift of song.

"You slay them all! and wherefore! for the gain  
Of a scant handful more or less of wheat,  
Or rye, or barley, or some other grain,  
Scratched up at random by industrious feet,  
Searching for worm or weevil after rain!  
Or a few cherries, that are not so sweet  
As are the songs these uninvited guests,  
Sing at their feast with comfortable breasts.

"Do you ne'er think what wondrous beings these?  
Do you ne'er think who made them and who taught  
The dialect they speak, where melodies  
Alone are the interpreters of thought?  
Whose household words are songs in many keys,  
Sweeter than instrument of man e'er caught!  
Whose habitations in the tree-tops even  
Are half-way houses on the road to heaven!

"Think, every morning when the sun peeps through  
The dim, leaf-latticed windows of the grove,  
How jubilant the happy birds renew  
Their old, melodious madrigals of love!  
And when you think of this, remember too  
'T is always morning somewhere, and above  
The awakening continent; from shore to shore,  
Somewhere the birds are singing evermore.

"Think of your woods and orchards without birds!  
Of empty nests that cling to boughs and beams  
As in an idiot's brain remembered words  
Hang empty 'mid the cobwebs of his dreams!  
Will bleat of flocks or bellowing of herds  
Make up for the lost music, when your teams  
Drag home the stingy harvest, and no more  
The feathered gleaners follow to your door?"

"What! would you rather see the incessant stir  
Of insects in the windrows of the hay,  
And hear the locust and the grasshopper  
Their melancholy hurdy-gurdies play?  
Is this more pleasant to you than the whir  
Of meadow-lark, and her sweet roundelay,  
Or twitter of little field-fares, as you take  
Your nooning in the shade of bush and brake?"

"You call them thieves and pillagers; but know,  
They are the winged wardens of your farms,  
Who from the cornfields drive the insidious foe,  
And from your harvests keep a hundred harms;  
Even the blackest of them all, the crow,  
Renders good service as your man-at-arms,  
Crushing the beetle in his coat of mail,  
And crying havoc on the slug and snail.

"How can I teach your children gentleness,  
And mercy to the weak, and reverence  
For Life, which, in its weakness or excess,  
Is still a gleam of God's omnipotence,  
Or Death, which, seeming darkness, is no less  
The selfsame light, although averted hence,  
When by your laws, your actions, and your speech,  
You contradict the very things I teach?"

With this he closed; and through the audience went  
A murmur, like the rustle of dead leaves;  
The farmers laughed and nodded, and some bent  
Their yellow heads together like their sheaves;  
Men have no faith in fine-spun sentiment  
Who put their trust in bullocks and in beeves.  
The birds were doomed; and, as the record shows,  
A bounty offered for the heads of crows.

There was another audience out of reach,  
Who had no voice nor vote in making laws,  
But in the papers read his little speech,

And crowned his modest temples with applause;  
They made him conscious, each one more than each,  
He still was victor, vanquished in their cause.  
Sweetest of all the applause he won from thee,  
O fair Almira at the Academy!

And so the dreadful massacre began;  
O'er fields and orchards, and o'er woodland crests,  
The ceaseless fusillade of terror ran.  
Dead fell the birds, with blood-stains on their breasts,  
Or wounded crept away from sight of man,  
While the young died of famine in their nests;  
A slaughter to be told in groans, not words,  
The very St. Bartholomew of Birds!

The Summer came, and all the birds were dead;  
The days were like hot coals; the very ground  
Was burned to ashes; in the orchards fed  
Myriads of caterpillars, and around  
The cultivated fields and garden beds  
Hosts of devouring insects crawled, and found  
No foe to check their march, till they had made  
The land a desert without leaf or shade.

Devoured by worms, like Herod, was the town,  
Because, like Herod, it had ruthlessly  
Slaughtered the Innocents. From the trees spun down  
The canker-worms upon the passers-by,  
Upon each woman's bonnet, shawl, and gown,  
Who shook them off with just a little cry  
They were the terror of each favorite walk,  
The endless theme of all the village talk.

The farmers grew impatient but a few  
Confessed their error, and would not complain,  
For after all, the best thing one can do  
When it is raining, is to let it rain.  
Then they repealed the law, although they knew  
It would not call the dead to life again;  
As school-boys, finding their mistake too late,  
Draw a wet sponge across the accusing slate.

That year in Killingworth the Autumn came  
Without the light of his majestic look,  
The wonder of the falling tongues of flame,  
The illumined pages of his Doom's-Day book.  
A few lost leaves blushed crimson with their shame,  
And drowned themselves despairing in the brook,  
While the wild wind went moaning everywhere,

Lamenting the dead children of the air!

But the next Spring a stranger sight was seen,  
A sight that never yet by bard was sung,  
As great a wonder as it would have been  
If some dumb animal had found a tongue!  
A wagon, overarched with evergreen,  
Upon whose boughs were wicker cages hung,  
All full of singing birds, came down the street,  
Filling the air with music wild and sweet.

From all the country round these birds were brought,  
By order of the town, with anxious quest,  
And, loosened from their wicker prisons, sought  
In woods and fields the places they loved best,  
Singing loud canticles, which many thought  
Were satires to the authorities addressed,  
While others, listening in green lanes, averred  
Such lovely music never had been heard!

But blither still and louder carolled they  
Upon the morrow, for they seemed to know  
It was the fair Almira's wedding-day,  
And everywhere, around, above, below,  
When the Preceptor bore his bride away,  
Their songs burst forth in joyous overflow,  
And a new heaven bent over a new earth  
Amid the sunny farms of Killingworth.

## **FINALE**

The hour was late; the fire burned low,  
The Landlord's eyes were closed in sleep,  
And near the story's end a deep  
Sonorous sound at times was heard,  
As when the distant bagpipes blow.  
At this all laughed; the Landlord stirred,  
As one awaking from a swoon,  
And, gazing anxiously around,  
Protested that he had not slept,  
But only shut his eyes, and kept  
His ears attentive to each word.

Then all arose, and said "Good Night."  
Alone remained the drowsy Squire  
To rake the embers of the fire,  
And quench the waning parlor light.

While from the windows, here and there,  
The scattered lamps a moment gleamed,  
And the illumined hostel seemed  
The constellation of the Bear,  
Downward, athwart the misty air,  
Sinking and setting toward the sun,  
Far off the village clock struck one.

## PART SECOND

### PRELUDE

A cold, uninterrupted rain,  
That washed each southern window-pane,  
And made a river of the road;  
A sea of mist that overflowed  
The house, the barns, the gilded vane,  
And drowned the upland and the plain,  
Through which the oak-trees, broad and high,  
Like phantom ships went drifting by;  
And, hidden behind a watery screen,  
The sun unseen, or only seen  
As a faint pallor in the sky;--  
Thus cold and colorless and gray,  
The morn of that autumnal day,  
As if reluctant to begin,  
Dawned on the silent Sudbury Inn,  
And all the guests that in it lay.

Full late they slept. They did not hear  
The challenge of Sir Chanticleer,  
Who on the empty threshing-floor,  
Disdainful of the rain outside,  
Was strutting with a martial stride,  
As if upon his thigh he wore  
The famous broadsword of the Squire,  
And said, "Behold me, and admire!"

Only the Poet seemed to hear,  
In drowse or dream, more near and near  
Across the border-land of sleep  
The blowing of a blithesome horn,  
That laughed the dismal day to scorn;  
A splash of hoofs and rush of wheels  
Through sand and mire like stranding keels,  
As from the road with sudden sweep  
The Mail drove up the little steep,  
And stopped beside the tavern door;  
A moment stopped, and then again  
With crack of whip and bark of dog  
Plunged forward through the sea of fog,  
And all was silent as before,--  
All silent save the dripping rain.

Then one by one the guests came down,  
And greeted with a smile the Squire,  
Who sat before the parlor fire,

Reading the paper fresh from town.  
First the Sicilian, like a bird,  
Before his form appeared, was heard  
Whistling and singing down the stair;  
Then came the Student, with a look  
As placid as a meadow-brook;  
The Theologian, still perplexed  
With thoughts of this world and the next;  
The Poet then, as one who seems  
Walking in visions and in dreams;  
Then the Musician, like a fair  
Hyperion from whose golden hair  
The radiance of the morning streams;  
And last the aromatic Jew  
Of Alicant, who, as he threw  
The door wide open, on the air  
Breathed round about him a perfume  
Of damask roses in full bloom,  
Making a garden of the room.

The breakfast ended, each pursued  
The promptings of his various mood;  
Beside the fire in silence smoked  
The taciturn, impassive Jew,  
Lost in a pleasant reverie;  
While, by his gravity provoked,  
His portrait the Sicilian drew,  
And wrote beneath it "Edrehi,  
At the Red Horse in Sudbury."

By far the busiest of them all,  
The Theologian in the hall  
Was feeding robins in a cage,--  
Two corpulent and lazy birds,  
Vagrants and pilferers at best,  
If one might trust the hostler's words,  
Chief instrument of their arrest;  
Two poets of the Golden Age,  
Heirs of a boundless heritage  
Of fields and orchards, east and west,  
And sunshine of long summer days,  
Though outlawed now and dispossessed!--  
Such was the Theologian's phrase.

Meanwhile the Student held discourse  
With the Musician, on the source  
Of all the legendary lore  
Among the nations, scattered wide  
Like silt and seaweed by the force

And fluctuation of the tide;  
The tale repeated o'er and o'er,  
With change of place and change of name,  
Disguised, transformed, and yet the same  
We've heard a hundred times before.

The Poet at the window mused,  
And saw, as in a dream confused,  
The countenance of the Sun, discrowned,  
And haggard with a pale despair,  
And saw the cloud-rack trail and drift  
Before it, and the trees uplift  
Their leafless branches, and the air  
Filled with the arrows of the rain,  
And heard amid the mist below,  
Like voices of distress and pain,  
That haunt the thoughts of men insane,  
The fateful cawings of the crow.

Then down the road, with mud besprent,  
And drenched with rain from head to hoof,  
The rain-drops dripping from his mane  
And tail as from a pent-house roof,  
A jaded horse, his head down bent,  
Passed slowly, limping as he went.

The young Sicilian--who had grown  
Impatient longer to abide  
A prisoner, greatly mortified  
To see completely overthrown  
His plans for angling in the brook,  
And, leaning o'er the bridge of stone,  
To watch the speckled trout glide by,  
And float through the inverted sky,  
Still round and round the baited hook--  
Now paced the room with rapid stride,  
And, pausing at the Poet's side,  
Looked forth, and saw the wretched steed,  
And said: "Alas for human greed,  
That with cold hand and stony eye  
Thus turns an old friend out to die,  
Or beg his food from gate to gate!  
This brings a tale into my mind,  
Which, if you are not disinclined  
To listen, I will now relate."

All gave assent; all wished to hear,  
Not without many a jest and jeer,  
The story of a spavined steed;

And even the Student with the rest  
Put in his pleasant little jest  
Out of Malherbe, that Pegasus  
Is but a horse that with all speed  
Bears poets to the hospital;  
While the Sicilian, self-possessed,  
After a moment's interval  
Began his simple story thus.

## THE SICILIAN'S TALE

### THE BELL OF ATRI

At Atri in Abruzzo, a small town  
Of ancient Roman date, but scant renown,  
One of those little places that have run  
Half up the hill, beneath a blazing sun,  
And then sat down to rest, as if to say,  
"I climb no farther upward, come what may,"--  
The Re Giovanni, now unknown to fame,  
So many monarchs since have borne the name,  
Had a great bell hung in the market-place  
Beneath a roof, projecting some small space,  
By way of shelter from the sun and rain.  
Then rode he through the streets with all his train,  
And, with the blast of trumpets loud and long,  
Made proclamation, that whenever wrong  
Was done to any man, he should but ring  
The great bell in the square, and he, the King,  
Would cause the Syndic to decide thereon.  
Such was the proclamation of King John.

How swift the happy days in Atri sped,  
What wrongs were righted, need not here be said.  
Suffice it that, as all things must decay,  
The hempen rope at length was worn away,  
Unravelled at the end, and, strand by strand,  
Loosened and wasted in the ringer's hand,  
Till one, who noted this in passing by,  
Mended the rope with braids of briony,  
So that the leaves and tendrils of the vine  
Hung like a votive garland at a shrine.

By chance it happened that in Atri dwelt  
A knight, with spur on heel and sword in belt,  
Who loved to hunt the wild-boar in the woods,  
Who loved his falcons with their crimson hoods,  
Who loved his hounds and horses, and all sports  
And prodigalities of camps and courts;--  
Loved, or had loved them; for at last, grown old,  
His only passion was the love of gold.

He sold his horses, sold his hawks and hounds,  
Rented his vineyards and his garden-grounds,  
Kept but one steed, his favorite steed of all,  
To starve and shiver in a naked stall,  
And day by day sat brooding in his chair,  
Devising plans how best to hoard and spare.

At length he said: "What is the use or need  
To keep at my own cost this lazy steed,  
Eating his head off in my stables here,  
When rents are low and provender is dear?  
Let him go feed upon the public ways;  
I want him only for the holidays."  
So the old steed was turned into the heat  
Of the long, lonely, silent, shadeless street;  
And wandered in suburban lanes forlorn,  
Barked at by dogs, and torn by brier and thorn.

One afternoon, as in that sultry clime  
It is the custom in the summer time,  
With bolted doors and window-shutters closed,  
The inhabitants of Atri slept or dozed;  
When suddenly upon their senses fell  
The loud alarum of the accusing bell!  
The Syndic started from his deep repose,  
Turned on his couch, and listened, and then rose  
And donned his robes, and with reluctant pace  
Went panting forth into the market-place,  
Where the great bell upon its cross-beam swung  
Reiterating with persistent tongue,  
In half-articulate jargon, the old song:  
"Some one hath done a wrong, hath done a wrong!"

But ere he reached the belfry's light arcade  
He saw, or thought he saw, beneath its shade,  
No shape of human form of woman born,  
But a poor steed dejected and forlorn,  
Who with uplifted head and eager eye  
Was tugging at the vines of briony.  
"Domeneddio!" cried the Syndic straight,  
"This is the Knight of Atri's steed of state!  
He calls for justice, being sore distressed,  
And pleads his cause as loudly as the best."

Meanwhile from street and lane a noisy crowd  
Had rolled together like a summer cloud,  
And told the story of the wretched beast  
In five-and-twenty different ways at least,  
With much gesticulation and appeal  
To heathen gods, in their excessive zeal.  
The Knight was called and questioned; in reply  
Did not confess the fact, did not deny;  
Treated the matter as a pleasant jest,  
And set at naught the Syndic and the rest,  
Maintaining, in an angry undertone,

That he should do what pleased him with his own.

And thereupon the Syndic gravely read  
The proclamation of the King; then said:  
"Pride goeth forth on horseback grand and gay,  
But cometh back on foot, and begs its way;  
Fame is the fragrance of heroic deeds,  
Of flowers of chivalry and not of weeds!  
These are familiar proverbs; but I fear  
They never yet have reached your knightly ear.  
What fair renown, what honor, what repute  
Can come to you from starving this poor brute?  
He who serves well and speaks not, merits more  
Than they who clamor loudest at the door.  
Therefore the law decrees that as this steed  
Served you in youth, henceforth you shall take heed  
To comfort his old age, and to provide  
Shelter in stall an food and field beside."

The Knight withdrew abashed; the people all  
Led home the steed in triumph to his stall.  
The King heard and approved, and laughed in glee  
And cried aloud: "Right well it pleaseth me!  
Church-bells at best but ring us to the door;  
But go not in to mass; my bell doth more:  
It cometh into court and pleads the cause  
Of creatures dumb and unknown to the laws;  
And this shall make, in every Christian clime,  
The Bell of Atri famous for all time."

## **INTERLUDE**

"Yes, well your story pleads the cause  
Of those dumb mouths that have no speech,  
Only a cry from each to each  
In its own kind, with its own laws;  
Something that is beyond the reach  
Of human power to learn or teach,--  
An inarticulate moan of pain,  
Like the immeasurable main  
Breaking upon an unknown beach."

Thus spake the Poet with a sigh;  
Then added, with impassioned cry,  
As one who feels the words he speaks,  
The color flushing in his cheeks,  
The fervor burning in his eye:

"Among the noblest in the land,  
Though he may count himself the least,  
That man I honor and revere  
Who without favor, without fear,  
In the great city dares to stand  
The friend of every friendless beast,  
And tames with his unflinching hand  
The brutes that wear our form and face,  
The were-wolves of the human race!"  
Then paused, and waited with a frown,  
Like some old champion of romance,  
Who, having thrown his gauntlet down,  
Expectant leans upon his lance;  
But neither Knight nor Squire is found  
To raise the gauntlet from the ground,  
And try with him the battle's chance.

"Wake from your dreams, O Edrehi!  
Or dreaming speak to us, and make  
A feint of being half awake,  
And tell us what your dreams may be.  
Out of the hazy atmosphere  
Of cloud-land deign to reappear  
Among us in this Wayside Inn;  
Tell us what visions and what scenes  
Illuminate the dark ravines  
In which you grope your way. Begin!"

Thus the Sicilian spake. The Jew  
Made no reply, but only smiled,  
As men unto a wayward child,  
Not knowing what to answer, do.  
As from a cavern's mouth, o'ergrown  
With moss and intertangled vines,  
A streamlet leaps into the light  
And murmurs over root and stone  
In a melodious undertone;  
Or as amid the noonday night  
Of sombre and wind-haunted pines,  
There runs a sound as of the sea;  
So from his bearded lips there came  
A melody without a name,  
A song, a tale, a history,  
Or whatsoever it may be,  
Writ and recorded in these lines.

## **THE SPANISH JEW'S TALE**

## KAMBALU

Into the city of Kambalu,  
By the road that leadeth to Ispahan,  
At the head of his dusty caravan,  
Laden with treasure from realms afar,  
Baldacca and Kelat and Kandahar,  
Rode the great captain Alau.

The Khan from his palace-window gazed,  
And saw in the thronging street beneath,  
In the light of the setting sun, that blazed  
Through the clouds of dust by the caravan raised,  
The flash of harness and jewelled sheath,  
And the shining scymitars of the guard,  
And the weary camels that bared their teeth,  
As they passed and passed through the gates unbarred  
Into the shade of the palace-yard.

Thus into the city of Kambalu  
Rode the great captain Alau;  
And he stood before the Khan, and said:  
"The enemies of my lord are dead;  
All the Kalifs of all the West  
Bow and obey thy least behest;  
The plains are dark with the mulberry-trees,  
The weavers are busy in Samarcand,  
The miners are sifting the golden sand,  
The divers plunging for pearls in the seas,  
And peace and plenty are in the land.

"Baldacca's Kalif, and he alone,  
Rose in revolt against thy throne:  
His treasures are at thy palace-door,  
With the swords and the shawls and the jewels he wore;  
His body is dust o'er the desert blown.

"A mile outside of Baldacca's gate  
I left my forces to lie in wait,  
Concealed by forests and hillocks of sand,  
And forward dashed with a handful of men,  
To lure the old tiger from his den  
Into the ambush I had planned.  
Ere we reached the town the alarm was spread,  
For we heard the sound of gongs from within;  
And with clash of cymbals and warlike din  
The gates swung wide; and we turned and fled;  
And the garrison sallied forth and pursued,

With the gray old Kalif at their head,  
And above them the banner of Mohammed:  
So we snared them all, and the town was subdued.

"As in at the gate we rode, behold,  
A tower that is called the Tower of Gold!  
For there the Kalif had hidden his wealth,  
Heaped and hoarded and piled on high,  
Like sacks of wheat in a granary;  
And thither the miser crept by stealth  
To feel of the gold that gave him health,  
And to gaze and gloat with his hungry eye  
On jewels that gleamed like a glow-worm's spark,  
Or the eyes of a panther in the dark.

"I said to the Kalif: 'Thou art old,  
Thou hast no need of so much gold.  
Thou shouldst not have heaped and hidden it here,  
Till the breath of battle was hot and near,  
But have sown through the land these useless hoards  
To spring into shining blades of swords,  
And keep thine honor sweet and clear.  
These grains of gold are not grains of wheat;  
These bars of silver thou canst not eat;  
These jewels and pearls and precious stones  
Cannot cure the aches in thy bones,  
Nor keep the feet of Death one hour  
From climbing the stairways of thy tower!'

"Then into his dungeon I locked the drone,  
And left him to feed there all alone  
In the honey-cells of his golden hive:  
Never a prayer, nor a cry, nor a groan  
Was heard from those massive walls of stone,  
Nor again was the Kalif seen alive!

"When at last we unlocked the door,  
We found him dead upon the floor;  
The rings had dropped from his withered hands,  
His teeth were like bones in the desert sands:  
Still clutching his treasure he had died;  
And as he lay there, he appeared  
A statue of gold with a silver beard,  
His arms outstretched as if crucified."

This is the story, strange and true,  
That the great captain Alau  
Told to his brother the Tartar Khan,  
When he rode that day into Kambalu

By the road that leadeth to Ispahan.

### **INTERLUDE**

"I thought before your tale began,"  
The Student murmured, "we should have  
Some legend written by Judah Rav  
In his Gemara of Babylon;  
Or something from the Gulistan,--  
The tale of the Cazy of Hamadan,  
Or of that King of Khorasan  
Who saw in dreams the eyes of one  
That had a hundred years been dead  
Still moving restless in his head,  
Undimmed, and gleaming with the lust  
Of power, though all the rest was dust.

"But lo! your glittering caravan  
On the road that leadeth to Ispahan  
Hath led us farther to the East  
Into the regions of Cathay.  
Spite of your Kalif and his gold,  
Pleasant has been the tale you told,  
And full of color; that at least  
No one will question or gainsay.  
And yet on such a dismal day  
We need a merrier tale to clear  
The dark and heavy atmosphere.  
So listen, Lordlings, while I tell,  
Without a preface, what befell  
A simple cobbler, in the year --  
No matter; it was long ago;  
And that is all we need to know."

## THE STUDENT'S TALE

### THE COBBLER OF HAGENAU

I trust that somewhere and somehow  
You all have heard of Hagenau,  
A quiet, quaint, and ancient town  
Among the green Alsatian hills,  
A place of valleys, streams, and mills,  
Where Barbarossa's castle, brown  
With rust of centuries, still looks down  
On the broad, drowsy land below,--  
On shadowy forests filled with game,  
And the blue river winding slow  
Through meadows, where the hedges grow  
That give this little town its name.

It happened in the good old times,  
While yet the Master-singers filled  
The noisy workshop and the guild  
With various melodies and rhymes,  
That here in Hagenau there dwelt  
A cobbler,--one who loved debate,  
And, arguing from a postulate,  
Would say what others only felt;  
A man of forecast and of thrift,  
And of a shrewd and careful mind  
In this world's business, but inclined  
Somewhat to let the next world drift.

Hans Sachs with vast delight he read,  
And Regenbogen's rhymes of love,  
For their poetic fame had spread  
Even to the town of Hagenau;  
And some Quick Melody of the Plough,  
Or Double Harmony of the Dove,  
Was always running in his head.  
He kept, moreover, at his side,  
Among his leathers and his tools,  
Reynard the Fox, the Ship of Fools,  
Or Eulenspiegel, open wide;  
With these he was much edified:  
He thought them wiser than the Schools.

His good wife, full of godly fear,  
Liked not these worldly themes to hear;  
The Psalter was her book of songs;  
The only music to her ear  
Was that which to the Church belongs,

When the loud choir on Sunday chanted,  
And the two angels carved in wood,  
That by the windy organ stood,  
Blew on their trumpets loud and clear,  
And all the echoes, far and near,  
Gibbered as if the church were haunted.  
Outside his door, one afternoon,  
This humble votary of the muse  
Sat in the narrow strip of shade  
By a projecting cornice made,  
Mending the Burgomaster's shoes,  
And singing a familiar tune:--

"Our ingress into the world  
Was naked and bare;  
Our progress through the world  
Is trouble and care;  
Our egress from the world  
Will be nobody knows where;  
But if we do well here  
We shall do well there;  
And I could tell you no more,  
Should I preach a whole year!"

Thus sang the cobbler at his work;  
And with his gestures marked the time  
Closing together with a jerk  
Of his waxed thread the stitch and rhyme.  
Meanwhile his quiet little dame  
Was leaning o'er the window-sill,  
Eager, excited, but mouse-still,  
Gazing impatiently to see  
What the great throng of folk might be  
That onward in procession came,  
Along the unfrequented street,  
With horns that blew, and drums that beat,  
And banners flying, and the flame  
Of tapers, and, at times, the sweet  
Voices of nuns; and as they sang  
Suddenly all the church-bells rang.

In a gay coach, above the crowd,  
There sat a monk in ample hood,  
Who with his right hand held aloft  
A red and ponderous cross of wood,  
To which at times he meekly bowed.  
In front three horsemen rode, and oft,  
With voice and air importunate,  
A boisterous herald cried aloud:

"The grace of God is at your gate!"  
So onward to the church they passed.

The cobbler slowly tuned his last,  
And, wagging his sagacious head,  
Unto his kneeling housewife said:  
"'Tis the monk Tetzal. I have heard  
The cawings of that reverend bird.  
Don't let him cheat you of your gold;  
Indulgence is not bought and sold."

The church of Hagenau, that night,  
Was full of people, full of light;  
An odor of incense filled the air,  
The priest intoned, the organ groaned  
Its inarticulate despair;  
The candles on the altar blazed,  
And full in front of it upraised  
The red cross stood against the glare.  
Below, upon the altar-rail  
Indulgences were set to sale,  
Like ballads at a country fair.  
A heavy strong-box, iron-bound  
And carved with many a quaint device,  
Received, with a melodious sound,  
The coin that purchased Paradise.

Then from the pulpit overhead,  
Tetzal the monk, with fiery glow,  
Thundered upon the crowd below.  
"Good people all, draw near!" he said;  
"Purchase these letters, signed and sealed,  
By which all sins, though unrevealed  
And unrepented, are forgiven!  
Count but the gain, count not the loss  
Your gold and silver are but dross,  
And yet they pave the way to heaven.  
I hear your mothers and your sires  
Cry from their purgatorial fires,  
And will ye not their ransom pay?  
O senseless people! when the gate  
Of heaven is open, will ye wait?  
Will ye not enter in to-day?  
To-morrow it will be too late;  
I shall be gone upon my way.  
Make haste! bring money while ye may!"

The women shuddered, and turned pale;  
Allured by hope or driven by fear,

With many a sob and many a tear,  
All crowded to the altar-rail.  
Pieces of silver and of gold  
Into the tinkling strong-box fell  
Like pebbles dropped into a well;  
And soon the ballads were all sold.  
The cobbler's wife among the rest  
Slipped into the capacious chest  
A golden florin; then withdrew,  
Hiding the paper in her breast;  
And homeward through the darkness went  
Comforted, quieted, content;  
She did not walk, she rather flew,  
A dove that settles to her nest,  
When some appalling bird of prey  
That scared her has been driven away.

The days went by, the monk was gone,  
The summer passed, the winter came;  
Though seasons changed, yet still the same  
The daily round of life went on;  
The daily round of household care,  
The narrow life of toil and prayer.  
But in her heart the cobbler's dame  
Had now a treasure beyond price,  
A secret joy without a name,  
The certainty of Paradise.  
Alas, alas! Dust unto dust!  
Before the winter wore away,  
Her body in the churchyard lay,  
Her patient soul was with the Just!  
After her death, among the things  
That even the poor preserve with care,--  
Some little trinkets and cheap rings,  
A locket with her mother's hair,  
Her wedding gown, the faded flowers  
She wore upon her wedding day,--  
Among these memories of past hours,  
That so much of the heart reveal,  
Carefully kept and put away,  
The Letter of Indulgence lay  
Folded, with signature and seal.

Meanwhile the Priest, aggrieved and pained,  
Waited and wondered that no word  
Of mass or requiem he heard,  
As by the Holy Church ordained;  
Then to the Magistrate complained,  
That as this woman had been dead

A week or more, and no mass said,  
It was rank heresy, or at least  
Contempt of Church; thus said the Priest;  
And straight the cobbler was arraigned.

He came, confiding in his cause,  
But rather doubtful of the laws.  
The Justice from his elbow-chair  
Gave him a look that seemed to say:  
"Thou standest before a Magistrate,  
Therefore do not prevaricate!"  
Then asked him in a business way,  
Kindly but cold: "Is thy wife dead?"  
The cobbler meekly bowed his head;  
"She is," came struggling from his throat  
Scarce audibly. The Justice wrote  
The words down in a book, and then  
Continued, as he raised his pen:  
"She is; and hath a mass been said  
For the salvation of her soul?  
Come, speak the truth! confess the whole!"  
The cobbler without pause replied:  
"Of mass or prayer there was no need;  
For at the moment when she died  
Her soul was with the glorified!"  
And from his pocket with all speed  
He drew the priestly title-deed,  
And prayed the Justice he would read.

The Justice read, amused, amazed;  
And as he read his mirth increased;  
At times his shaggy brows he raised,  
Now wondering at the cobbler gazed,  
Now archly at the angry Priest.  
"From all excesses, sins, and crimes  
Thou hast committed in past times  
Thee I absolve! And furthermore,  
Purified from all earthly taints,  
To the communion of the Saints  
And to the sacraments restore!  
All stains of weakness, and all trace  
Of shame and censure I efface;  
Remit the pains thou shouldst endure,  
And make thee innocent and pure,  
So that in dying, unto thee  
The gates of heaven shall open be!  
Though long thou livest, yet this grace  
Until the moment of thy death  
Unchangeable continueth!"

Then said he to the Priest: "I find  
This document is duly signed  
Brother John Tetzal, his own hand.  
At all tribunals in the land  
In evidence it may be used;  
Therefore acquitted is the accused."  
Then to the cobbler turned: "My friend,  
Pray tell me, didst thou ever read  
Reynard the Fox?"--"O yes, indeed!"--  
"I thought so. Don't forget the end."

## **INTERLUDE**

"What was the end? I am ashamed  
Not to remember Reynard's fate;  
I have not read the book of late;  
Was he not hanged?" the Poet said.  
The Student gravely shook his head,  
And answered: "You exaggerate.  
There was a tournament proclaimed,  
And Reynard fought with Isegrim  
The Wolf, and having vanquished him,  
Rose to high honor in the State,  
And Keeper of the Seals was named!"

At this the gay Sicilian laughed:  
"Fight fire with fire, and craft with craft;  
Successful cunning seems to be  
The moral of your tale," said he.  
"Mine had a better, and the Jew's  
Had none at all, that I could see;  
His aim was only to amuse."

Meanwhile from out its ebon case  
His violin the Minstrel drew,  
And having tuned its strings anew,  
Now held it close in his embrace,  
And poising in his outstretched hand  
The bow, like a magician's wand,  
He paused, and said, with beaming face:  
"Last night my story was too long;  
To-day I give you but a song,  
An old tradition of the North;  
But first, to put you in the mood,  
I will a little while prelude,  
And from this instrument draw forth

Something by way of overture."

He played; at first the tones were pure  
And tender as a summer night,  
The full moon climbing to her height,  
The sob and ripple of the seas,  
The flapping of an idle sail;  
And then by sudden and sharp degrees  
The multiplied, wild harmonies  
Freshened and burst into a gale;  
A tempest howling through the dark,  
A crash as of some shipwrecked bark.  
A loud and melancholy wail.

Such was the prelude to the tale  
Told by the Minstrel; and at times  
He paused amid its varying rhymes,  
And at each pause again broke in  
The music of his violin,  
With tones of sweetness or of fear,  
Movements of trouble or of calm,  
Creating their own atmosphere;  
As sitting in a church we hear  
Between the verses of the psalm  
The organ playing soft and clear,  
Or thundering on the startled ear.

## THE MUSICIAN'S TALE

### THE BALLAD OF CARMILHAN

#### I

At Stralsund, by the Baltic Sea,  
    Within the sandy bar,  
At sunset of a summer's day,  
Ready for sea, at anchor lay  
    The good ship Valdemar.

The sunbeams danced upon the waves,  
    And played along her side;  
And through the cabin windows streamed  
In ripples of golden light, that seemed  
    The ripple of the tide.

There sat the captain with his friends,  
    Old skippers brown and hale,  
Who smoked and grumbled o'er their grog,  
And talked of iceberg and of fog,  
    Of calm and storm and gale.

And one was spinning a sailor's yarn  
    About Klaboterman,  
The Kobold of the sea; a spright  
Invisible to mortal sight,  
    Who o'er the rigging ran.

Sometimes he hammered in the hold,  
    Sometimes upon the mast,  
Sometimes abeam, sometimes abaft,  
Or at the bows he sang and laughed,  
    And made all tight and fast.

He helped the sailors at their work,  
    And toiled with jovial din;  
He helped them hoist and reef the sails,  
He helped them stow the casks and bales,  
    And heave the anchor in.

But woe unto the lazy louts,  
    The idlers of the crew;  
Them to torment was his delight,  
And worry them by day and night,  
    And pinch them black and blue.

And woe to him whose mortal eyes

Klaboterman behold.  
It is a certain sign of death!--  
The cabin-boy here held his breath,  
He felt his blood run cold.

## II

The jolly skipper paused awhile,  
And then again began;  
"There is a Spectre Ship," quoth he,  
"A ship of the Dead that sails the sea,  
And is called the Carmilhan.

"A ghostly ship, with a ghostly crew,  
In tempests she appears;  
And before the gale, or against the gale,  
She sails without a rag of sail,  
Without a helmsman steers.

"She haunts the Atlantic north and south,  
But mostly the mid-sea,  
Where three great rocks rise bleak and bare  
Like furnace-chimneys in the air,  
And are called the Chimneys Three.

"And ill betide the luckless ship  
That meets the Carmilhan;  
Over her decks the seas will leap,  
She must go down into the deep,  
And perish mouse and man."

The captain of the Valdemar  
Laughed loud with merry heart.  
"I should like to see this ship," said he;  
"I should like to find these Chimneys Three,  
That are marked down in the chart.

"I have sailed right over the spot," he said  
"With a good stiff breeze behind,  
When the sea was blue, and the sky was clear,--  
You can follow my course by these pinholes here,--  
And never a rock could find."

And then he swore a dreadful oath,  
He swore by the Kingdoms Three,  
That, should he meet the Carmilhan,  
He would run her down, although he ran

Right into Eternity!

All this, while passing to and fro,  
The cabin-boy had heard;  
He lingered at the door to hear,  
And drank in all with greedy ear,  
And pondered every word.

He was a simple country lad,  
But of a roving mind.  
"O, it must be like heaven," thought he,  
"Those far-off foreign lands to see,  
And fortune seek and find!"

But in the fo'castle, when he heard  
The mariners blaspheme,  
He thought of home, he thought of God,  
And his mother under the churchyard sod,  
And wished it were a dream.

One friend on board that ship had he;  
'T was the Klaboterman,  
Who saw the Bible in his chest,  
And made a sign upon his breast,  
All evil things to ban.

### III

The cabin windows have grown blank  
As eyeballs of the dead;  
No more the glancing sunbeams burn  
On the gilt letters of the stern,  
But on the figure-head;

On Valdemar Victorious,  
Who looketh with disdain  
To see his image in the tide  
Dismembered float from side to side,  
And reunite again.

"It is the wind," those skippers said,  
"That swings the vessel so;  
It is the wind; it freshens fast,  
'T is time to say farewell at last  
'T is time for us to go."

They shook the captain by the hand,

"Goodluck! goodluck!" they cried;  
Each face was like the setting sun,  
As, broad and red, they one by one  
Went o'er the vessel's side.

The sun went down, the full moon rose,  
Serene o'er field and flood;  
And all the winding creeks and bays  
And broad sea-meadows seemed ablaze,  
The sky was red as blood.

The southwest wind blew fresh and fair,  
As fair as wind could be;  
Bound for Odessa, o'er the bar,  
With all sail set, the Valdemar  
Went proudly out to sea.

The lovely moon climbs up the sky  
As one who walks in dreams;  
A tower of marble in her light,  
A wall of black, a wall of white,  
The stately vessel seems.

Low down upon the sandy coast  
The lights begin to burn;  
And now, uplifted high in air,  
They kindle with a fiercer glare,  
And now drop far astern.

The dawn appears, the land is gone,  
The sea is all around;  
Then on each hand low hills of sand  
Emerge and form another land;  
She steereth through the Sound.

Through Kattegat and Skager-rack  
She flitteth like a ghost;  
By day and night, by night and day,  
She bounds, she flies upon her way  
Along the English coast.

Cape Finisterre is drawing near,  
Cape Finisterre is past;  
Into the open ocean stream  
She floats, the vision of a dream  
Too beautiful to last.

Suns rise and set, and rise, and yet  
There is no land in sight;

The liquid planets overhead  
Burn brighter now the moon is dead,  
And longer stays the night.

#### IV

And now along the horizon's edge  
Mountains of cloud uprose,  
Black as with forests underneath,  
Above their sharp and jagged teeth  
Were white as drifted snows.

Unseen behind them sank the sun,  
But flushed each snowy peak  
A little while with rosy light  
That faded slowly from the sight  
As blushes from the cheek.

Black grew the sky,--all black, all black;  
The clouds were everywhere;  
There was a feeling of suspense  
In nature, a mysterious sense  
Of terror in the air.

And all on board the Valdemar  
Was still as still could be;  
Save when the dismal ship-bell tolled,  
As ever and anon she rolled,  
And lurched into the sea.

The captain up and down the deck  
Went striding to and fro;  
Now watched the compass at the wheel,  
Now lifted up his hand to feel  
Which way the wind might blow.

And now he looked up at the sails,  
And now upon the deep;  
In every fibre of his frame  
He felt the storm before it came,  
He had no thought of sleep.

Eight bells! and suddenly abaft,  
With a great rush of rain,  
Making the ocean white with spume,  
In darkness like the day of doom,  
On came the hurricane.

The lightning flashed from cloud to cloud,  
And rent the sky in two;  
A jagged flame, a single jet  
Of white fire, like a bayonet  
That pierced the eyeballs through.

Then all around was dark again,  
And blacker than before;  
But in that single flash of light  
He had beheld a fearful sight,  
And thought of the oath he swore.

For right ahead lay the Ship of the Dead,  
The ghostly Carmilhan!  
Her masts were stripped, her yards were bare,  
And on her bowsprit, poised in air,  
Sat the Klaboterman.

Her crew of ghosts was all on deck  
Or clambering up the shrouds;  
The boatswain's whistle, the captain's hail,  
Were like the piping of the gale,  
And thunder in the clouds.

And close behind the Carmilhan  
There rose up from the sea,  
As from a foundered ship of stone,  
Three bare and splintered masts alone:  
They were the Chimneys Three.

And onward dashed the Valdemar  
And leaped into the dark;  
A denser mist, a colder blast,  
A little shudder, and she had passed  
Right through the Phantom Bark.

She cleft in twain the shadowy hulk,  
But cleft it unaware;  
As when, careering to her nest,  
The sea-gull severs with her breast  
The unresisting air.

Again the lightning flashed; again  
They saw the Carmilhan,  
Whole as before in hull and spar;  
But now on board of the Valdemar  
Stood the Klaboterman.

And they all knew their doom was sealed;  
They knew that death was near;  
Some prayed who never prayed before,  
And some they wept, and some they swore,  
And some were mute with fear.

Then suddenly there came a shock,  
And louder than wind or sea  
A cry burst from the crew on deck,  
As she dashed and crashed, a hopeless wreck,  
Upon the Chimneys Three.

The storm and night were passed, the light  
To streak the east began;  
The cabin-boy, picked up at sea,  
Survived the wreck, and only he,  
To tell of the Carmilhan.

## **INTERLUDE**

When the long murmur of applause  
That greeted the Musician's lay  
Had slowly buzzed itself away,  
And the long talk of Spectre Ships  
That followed died upon their lips  
And came unto a natural pause,  
"These tales you tell are one and all  
Of the Old World," the Poet said,  
"Flowers gathered from a crumbling wall,  
Dead leaves that rustle as they fall;  
Let me present you in their stead  
Something of our New England earth,  
A tale which, though of no great worth,  
Has still this merit, that it yields  
A certain freshness of the fields,  
A sweetness as of home-made bread."

The Student answered: "Be discreet;  
For if the flour be fresh and sound,  
And if the bread be light and sweet,  
Who careth in what mill 't was ground,  
Or of what oven felt the heat,  
Unless, as old Cervantes said,  
You are looking after better bread  
Than any that is made of wheat?  
You know that people nowadays  
To what is old give little praise;

All must be new in prose and verse:  
They want hot bread, or something worse,  
Fresh every morning, and half baked;  
The wholesome bread of yesterday,  
Too stale for them, is thrown away,  
Nor is their thirst with water slaked.

As oft we see the sky in May  
Threaten to rain, and yet not rain,  
The Poet's face, before so gay,  
Was clouded with a look of pain,  
But suddenly brightened up again;  
And without further let or stay  
He told his tale of yesterday.

## **THE POET'S TALE**

### **LADY WENTWORTH.**

One hundred years ago, and something more,  
In Queen Street, Portsmouth, at her tavern door,  
Neat as a pin, and blooming as a rose,  
Stood Mistress Stavers in her furbelows,  
Just as her cuckoo-clock was striking nine.  
Above her head, resplendent on the sign,  
The portrait of the Earl of Halifax,  
In scarlet coat and periwig of flax,  
Surveyed at leisure all her varied charms,  
Her cap, her bodice, her white folded arms,  
And half resolved, though he was past his prime,  
And rather damaged by the lapse of time,  
To fall down at her feet and to declare  
The passion that had driven him to despair.  
For from his lofty station he had seen  
Stavers, her husband, dressed in bottle-green,  
Drive his new Flying Stage-coach, four in hand,  
Down the long lane, and out into the land,  
And knew that he was far upon the way  
To Ipswich and to Boston on the Bay!

Just then the meditations of the Earl  
Were interrupted by a little girl,  
Barefooted, ragged, with neglected hair,  
Eyes full of laughter, neck and shoulders bare,  
A thin slip of a girl, like a new moon,  
Sure to be rounded into beauty soon,  
A creature men would worship and adore,

Though now in mean habiliments she bore  
A pail of water, dripping, through the street  
And bathing, as she went her naked feet.

It was a pretty picture, full of grace, --  
The slender form, the delicate, thin face;  
The swaying motion, as she hurried by;  
The shining feet, the laughter in her eye,  
That o'er her face in ripples gleamed and glanced,  
As in her pail the shifting sunbeam danced:  
And with uncommon feelings of delight  
The Earl of Halifax beheld the sight.  
Not so Dame Stavers, for he heard her say  
These words, or thought he did, as plain as day:  
"O Martha Hilton! Fie! how dare you go  
About the town half dressed, and looking so!"  
At which the gypsy laughed, and straight replied:  
"No matter how I look; I yet shall ride  
In my own chariot, ma'am." And on the child  
The Earl of Halifax benignly smiled,  
As with her heavy burden she passed on,  
Looked back, then turned the corner, and was gone.

What next, upon that memorable day,  
Arrested his attention was a gay  
And brilliant equipage, that flashed and spun,  
The silver harness glittering in the sun,  
Outriders with red jackets, lithe and lank,  
Pounding the saddles as they rose and sank,  
While all alone within the chariot sat  
A portly person with three-cornered hat,  
A crimson velvet coat, head high in air,  
Gold-headed cane, and nicely powdered hair,  
And diamond buckles sparkling at his knees,  
Dignified, stately, florid, much at ease.  
Onward the pageant swept, and as it passed,  
Fair Mistress Stavers courtesied low and fast;  
For this was Governor Wentworth, driving down  
To Little Harbor, just beyond the town,  
Where his Great House stood looking out to sea,  
A goodly place, where it was good to be.

It was a pleasant mansion, an abode  
Near and yet hidden from the great high-road,  
Sequestered among trees, a noble pile,  
Baronial and colonial in its style;  
Gables and dormer-windows everywhere,  
And stacks of chimneys rising high in air, --  
Pandaean pipes, on which all winds that blew

Made mournful music the whole winter through.  
Within, unwonted splendors met the eye,  
Panels, and floors of oak, and tapestry;  
Carved chimney-pieces, where on brazen dogs  
Revelled and roared the Christmas fires of logs;  
Doors opening into darkness unawares,  
Mysterious passages, and flights of stairs;  
And on the walls, in heavy gilded frames,  
The ancestral Wentworths with Old-Scripture names.

Such was the mansion where the great man dwelt.  
A widower and childless; and he felt  
The loneliness, the uncongenial gloom,  
That like a presence haunted ever room;  
For though not given to weakness, he could feel  
The pain of wounds, that ache because they heal.

The years came and the years went,--seven in all,  
And passed in cloud and sunshine o'er the Hall;  
The dawns their splendor through its chambers shed,  
The sunsets flushed its western windows red;  
The snow was on its roofs, the wind, the rain;  
Its woodlands were in leaf and bare again;  
Moons waxed and waned, the lilacs bloomed and died,  
In the broad river ebbed and flowed the tide,  
Ships went to sea, and ships came home from sea,  
And the slow years sailed by and ceased to be.

And all these years had Martha Hilton served  
In the Great House, not wholly unobserved:  
By day, by night, the silver crescent grew,  
Though hidden by clouds, her light still shining through;  
A maid of all work, whether coarse or fine,  
A servant who made service seem divine!  
Through her each room was fair to look upon;  
The mirrors glistened, and the brasses shone,  
The very knocker on the outer door,  
If she but passed, was brighter than before.

And now the ceaseless turning of the mill  
Of Time, that never for an hour stands still,  
Ground out the Governor's sixtieth birthday,  
And powdered his brown hair with silver-gray.  
The robin, the forerunner of the spring,  
The bluebird with his jocund carolling,  
The restless swallows building in the eaves,  
The golden buttercups, the grass, the leaves,  
The lilacs tossing in the winds of May,  
All welcomed this majestic holiday!

He gave a splendid banquet served on plate,  
Such as became the Governor of the State,  
Who represented England and the King,  
And was magnificent in everything.  
He had invited all his friends and peers, --  
The Pepperels, the Langdons, and the Lears,  
The Sparhawks, the Penhallows, and the rest;  
For why repeat the name of every guest?  
But I must mention one, in bands and gown,  
The rector there, the Reverend Arthur Brown  
Of the Established Church; with smiling face  
He sat beside the Governor and said grace;  
And then the feast went on, as others do,  
But ended as none other I e'er knew.

When they had drunk the King, with many a cheer,  
The Governor whispered in a servant's ear,  
Who disappeared and presently there stood  
Within the room, in perfect womanhood,  
A maiden, modest and yet self-possessed,  
Youthful and beautiful, and simply dressed.  
Can this be Martha Hilton? It must be!  
Yes, Martha Hilton, and no other she!  
Dowered with the beauty of her twenty years,  
How ladylike, how queenlike she appears;  
The pale, thin crescent of the days gone by  
Is Dian now in all her majesty!  
Yet scarce a guest perceived that she was there,  
Until the Governor, rising from his chair,  
Played slightly with his ruffles, then looked down,  
And said unto the Reverend Arthur Brown:  
"This is my birthday: it shall likewise be  
My wedding-day; and you shall marry me!"

The listening guests were greatly mystified,  
None more so than the rector, who replied:  
"Marry you? Yes, that were a pleasant task,  
Your Excellency; but to whom? I ask."  
The Governor answered: "To this lady here"  
And beckoned Martha Hilton to draw near.  
She came and stood, all blushes, at his side.  
The rector paused. The impatient Governor cried:  
"This is the lady; do you hesitate?  
Then I command you as Chief Magistrate."  
The rector read the service loud and clear:  
"Dearly beloved, we are gathered here,"  
And so on to the end. At his command  
On the fourth finger of her fair left hand  
The Governor placed the ring; and that was all:

Martha was Lady Wentworth of the Hall!

### **INTERLUDE.**

Well pleased the audience heard the tale.  
The Theologian said: "Indeed,  
To praise you there is little need;  
One almost hears the farmers flail  
Thresh out your wheat, nor does there fail  
A certain freshness, as you said,  
And sweetness as of home-made bread.  
But not less sweet and not less fresh  
Are many legends that I know,  
Writ by the monks of long-ago,  
Who loved to mortify the flesh,  
So that the soul might purer grow,  
And rise to a diviner state;  
And one of these--perhaps of all  
Most beautiful--I now recall,  
And with permission will narrate;  
Hoping thereby to make amends  
For that grim tragedy of mine,  
As strong and black as Spanish wine,  
I told last night, and wish almost  
It had remained untold, my friends;  
For Torquemada's awful ghost  
Came to me in the dreams I dreamed,  
And in the darkness glared and gleamed  
Like a great lighthouse on the coast."

The Student laughing said: "Far more  
Like to some dismal fire of bale  
Flaring portentous on a hill;  
Or torches lighted on a shore  
By wreckers in a midnight gale.  
No matter; be it as you will,  
Only go forward with your tale."

### **THE THEOLOGIAN'S TALE**

### **THE LEGEND BEAUTIFUL**

"Hads't thou stayed, I must have fled!"  
That is what the Vision said.

In his chamber all alone,  
Kneeling on the floor of stone,

Prayed the Monk in deep contrition  
For his sins of indecision,  
Prayed for greater self-denial  
In temptation and in trial;  
It was noonday by the dial,  
And the Monk was all alone.

Suddenly, as if it lightened,  
An unwonted splendor brightened  
All within him and without him  
In that narrow cell of stone;  
And he saw the Blessed Vision  
Of our Lord, with light Elysian  
Like a vesture wrapped about him,  
Like a garment round him thrown.

Not as crucified and slain,  
Not in agonies of pain,  
Not with bleeding hands and feet,  
Did the Monk his Master see;  
But as in the village street,  
In the house or harvest-field,  
Halt and lame and blind he healed,  
When he walked in Galilee.

In an attitude imploring,  
Hands upon his bosom crossed,  
Wondering, worshipping, adoring,  
Knelt the Monk in rapture lost.  
Lord, he thought, in heaven that reignest,  
Who am I, that thus thou deignest  
To reveal thyself to me?  
Who am I, that from the centre  
Of thy glory thou shouldst enter  
This poor cell, my guest to be?

Then amid his exaltation,  
Loud the convent bell appalling,  
From its belfry calling, calling,  
Rang through court and corridor  
With persistent iteration  
He had never heard before.  
It was now the appointed hour  
When alike in shine or shower,  
Winter's cold or summer's heat,  
To the convent portals came  
All the blind and halt and lame,  
All the beggars of the street,  
For their daily dole of food

Dealt them by the brotherhood;  
And their almoner was he  
Who upon his bended knee,  
Rapt in silent ecstasy  
Of divinest self-surrender,  
Saw the Vision and the Splendor.

Deep distress and hesitation  
Mingled with his adoration;  
Should he go, or should he stay?  
Should he leave the poor to wait  
Hungry at the convent gate,  
Till the Vision passed away?  
Should he slight his radiant guest,  
Slight this visitant celestial,  
For a crowd of ragged, bestial  
Beggars at the convent gate?  
Would the Vision there remain?  
Would the Vision come again?  
Then a voice within his breast  
Whispered, audible and clear  
As if to the outward ear:  
"Do thy duty; that is best;  
Leave unto thy Lord the rest!"

Straightway to his feet he started,  
And with longing look intent  
On the Blessed Vision bent,  
Slowly from his cell departed,  
Slowly on his errand went.

At the gate the poor were waiting,  
Looking through the iron grating,  
With that terror in the eye  
That is only seen in those  
Who amid their wants and woes  
Hear the sound of doors that close,  
And of feet that pass them by;  
Grown familiar with disfavor,  
Grown familiar with the savor  
Of the bread by which men die!  
But to-day, they knew not why,  
Like the gate of Paradise  
Seemed the convent sate to rise,  
Like a sacrament divine  
Seemed to them the bread and wine.  
In his heart the Monk was praying,  
Thinking of the homeless poor,  
What they suffer and endure;

What we see not, what we see;  
And the inward voice was saying:  
"Whatsoever thing thou doest  
To the least of mine and lowest,  
That thou doest unto me!"

Unto me! but had the Vision  
Come to him in beggar's clothing,  
Come a mendicant imploring,  
Would he then have knelt adoring,  
Or have listened with derision,  
And have turned away with loathing.

Thus his conscience put the question,  
Full of troublesome suggestion,  
As at length, with hurried pace,  
Towards his cell he turned his face,  
And beheld the convent bright  
With a supernatural light,  
Like a luminous cloud expanding  
Over floor and wall and ceiling.

But he paused with awe-struck feeling  
At the threshold of his door,  
For the Vision still was standing  
As he left it there before,  
When the convent bell appalling,  
From its belfry calling, calling,  
Summoned him to feed the poor.  
Through the long hour intervening  
It had waited his return,  
And he felt his bosom burn,  
Comprehending all the meaning,  
When the Blessed Vision said,  
"Hadst thou stayed, I must have fled!"

#### **INTERLUDE.**

All praised the Legend more or less;  
Some liked the moral, some the verse;  
Some thought it better, and some worse  
Than other legends of the past;  
Until, with ill-concealed distress  
At all their cavilling, at last  
The Theologian gravely said:  
"The Spanish proverb, then, is right;  
Consult your friends on what you do,  
And one will say that it is white,  
And others say that it is red."

And "Amen!" quoth the Spanish Jew.

"Six stories told! We must have seven,  
A cluster like the Pleiades,  
And lo! it happens, as with these,  
That one is missing from our heaven.  
Where is the Landlord? Bring him here;  
Let the Lost Pleiad reappear."

Thus the Sicilian cried, and went  
Forthwith to seek his missing star,  
But did not find him in the bar,  
A place that landlords most frequent,  
Nor yet beside the kitchen fire,  
Nor up the stairs, nor in the hall;  
It was in vain to ask or call,  
There were no tidings of the Squire.

So he came back with downcast head,  
Exclaiming: "Well, our bashful host  
Hath surely given up the ghost.  
Another proverb says the dead  
Can tell no tales; and that is true.  
It follows, then, that one of you  
Must tell a story in his stead.  
You must," he to the Student said,  
"Who know so many of the best,  
And tell them better than the rest."  
Straight by these flattering words beguiled,  
The Student, happy as a child  
When he is called a little man,  
Assumed the double task imposed,  
And without more ado unclosed  
His smiling lips, and thus began.

## **THE STUDENT'S SECOND TALE**

### **THE BARON OF ST. CASTINE**

Baron Castine of St. Castine  
Has left his chateau in the Pyrenees,  
And sailed across the western seas.  
When he went away from his fair demesne  
The birds were building, the woods were green;  
And now the winds of winter blow  
Round the turrets of the old chateau,  
The birds are silent and unseen,

The leaves lie dead in the ravine,  
And the Pyrenees are white with snow.

His father, lonely, old, and gray,  
Sits by the fireside day by day,  
Thinking ever one thought of care;  
Through the southern windows, narrow and tall,  
The sun shines into the ancient hall,  
And makes a glory round his hair.  
The house-dog, stretched beneath his chair,  
Groans in his sleep as if in pain  
Then wakes, and yawns, and sleeps again,  
So silent is it everywhere,--  
So silent you can hear the mouse  
Run and rummage along the beams  
Behind the wainscot of the wall;  
And the old man rouses from his dreams,  
And wanders restless through the house,  
As if he heard strange voices call.

His footsteps echo along the floor  
Of a distant passage, and pause awhile;  
He is standing by an open door  
Looking long, with a sad, sweet smile,  
Into the room of his absent son.  
There is the bed on which he lay,  
There are the pictures bright and gay,  
Horses and hounds and sun-lit seas;  
There are his powder-flask and gun,  
And his hunting-knives in shape of a fan;  
The chair by the window where he sat,  
With the clouded tiger-skin for a mat,  
Looking out on the Pyrenees,  
Looking out on Mount Marbore  
And the Seven Valleys of Lavedan.  
Ah me! he turns away and sighs;  
There is a mist before his eyes.

At night whatever the weather be,  
Wind or rain or starry heaven,  
Just as the clock is striking seven,  
Those who look from the windows see  
The village Curate, with lantern and maid,  
Come through the gateway from the park  
And cross the courtyard damp and dark,--  
A ring of light in a ring of shade.

And now at the old man's side he stands,  
His voice is cheery, his heart expands,

He gossips pleasantly, by the blaze  
Of the fire of fagots, about old days,  
And Cardinal Mazarin and the Fronde,  
And the Cardinal's nieces fair and fond,  
And what they did, and what they said,  
When they heard his Eminence was dead.

And after a pause the old man says,  
His mind still coming back again  
To the one sad thought that haunts his brain,  
"Are there any tidings from over sea?  
Ah, why has that wild boy gone from me?"  
And the Curate answers, looking down,  
Harmless and docile as a lamb,  
"Young blood! young blood! It must so be!"  
And draws from the pocket of his gown  
A handkerchief like an oriflamb,  
And wipes his spectacles, and they play  
Their little game of lansquenet  
In silence for an hour or so,  
Till the clock at nine strikes loud and clear  
From the village lying asleep below,  
And across the courtyard, into the dark  
Of the winding pathway in the park,  
Curate and lantern disappear,  
And darkness reigns in the old chateau.

The ship has come back from over sea,  
She has been signalled from below,  
And into the harbor of Bordeaux  
She sails with her gallant company.  
But among them is nowhere seen  
The brave young Baron of St. Castine;  
He hath tarried behind, I ween,  
In the beautiful land of Acadie!

And the father paces to and fro  
Through the chambers of the old chateau,  
Waiting, waiting to hear the hum  
Of wheels on the road that runs below,  
Of servants hurrying here and there,  
The voice in the courtyard, the step on the stair,  
Waiting for some one who doth not come!  
But letters there are, which the old man reads  
To the Curate, when he comes at night  
Word by word, as an acolyte  
Repeats his prayers and tells his beads;  
Letters full of the rolling sea,  
Full of a young man's joy to be

Abroad in the world, alone and free;  
Full of adventures and wonderful scenes  
Of hunting the deer through forests vast  
In the royal grant of Pierre du Gast;  
Of nights in the tents of the Tarratines;  
Of Madocawando the Indian chief,  
And his daughters, glorious as queens,  
And beautiful beyond belief;  
And so soft the tones of their native tongue,  
The words are not spoken, they are sung!

And the Curate listens, and smiling says:  
"Ah yes, dear friend! in our young days  
We should have liked to hunt the deer  
All day amid those forest scenes,  
And to sleep in the tents of the Tarratines;  
But now it is better sitting here  
Within four walls, and without the fear  
Of losing our hearts to Indian queens;  
For man is fire and woman is tow,  
And the Somebody comes and begins to blow."  
Then a gleam of distrust and vague surmise  
Shines in the father's gentle eyes,  
As fire-light on a window-pane  
Glimmers and vanishes again;  
But naught he answers; he only sighs,  
And for a moment bows his head;  
Then, as their custom is, they play  
Their little gain of lansquenet,  
And another day is with the dead.

Another day, and many a day  
And many a week and month depart,  
When a fatal letter wings its way  
Across the sea, like a bird of prey,  
And strikes and tears the old man's heart.  
Lo! the young Baron of St. Castine,  
Swift as the wind is, and as wild,  
Has married a dusky Tarratine,  
Has married Madocawando's child!

The letter drops from the father's hand;  
Though the sinews of his heart are wrung,  
He utters no cry, he breathes no prayer,  
No malediction falls from his tongue;  
But his stately figure, erect and grand,  
Bends and sinks like a column of sand  
In the whirlwind of his great despair.  
Dying, yes, dying! His latest breath

Of parley at the door of death  
Is a blessing on his wayward son.  
Lower and lower on his breast  
Sinks his gray head; he is at rest;  
No longer he waits for any one;

For many a year the old chateau  
Lies tenantless and desolate;  
Rank grasses in the courtyard grow,  
About its gables caws the crow;  
Only the porter at the gate  
Is left to guard it, and to wait  
The coming of the rightful heir;  
No other life or sound is there;  
No more the Curate comes at night,  
No more is seen the unsteady light,  
Threading the alleys of the park;  
The windows of the hall are dark,  
The chambers dreary, cold, and bare!

At length, at last, when the winter is past,  
And birds are building, and woods are green,  
With flying skirts is the Curate seen  
Speeding along the woodland way,  
Humming gayly, "No day is so long  
But it comes at last to vesper-song."  
He stops at the porter's lodge to say  
That at last the Baron of St. Castine  
Is coming home with his Indian queen,  
Is coming without a week's delay;  
And all the house must be swept and clean,  
And all things set in good array!  
And the solemn porter shakes his head;  
And the answer he makes is: "Lackaday!  
We will see, as the blind man said!"

Alert since first the day began,  
The cock upon the village church  
Looks northward from his airy perch,  
As if beyond the ken of man  
To see the ships come sailing on,  
And pass the isle of Oleron,  
And pass the Tower of Cordouan.

In the church below is cold in clay  
The heart that would have leaped for joy--  
O tender heart of truth and trust!--  
To see the coming of that day;  
In the church below the lips are dust;

Dust are the hands, and dust the feet,  
That would have been so swift to meet  
The coming of that wayward boy.

At night the front of the old chateau  
Is a blaze of light above and below;  
There's a sound of wheels and hoofs in the street,  
A cracking of whips, and scamper of feet,  
Bells are ringing, and horns are blown,  
And the Baron hath come again to his own.  
The Curate is waiting in the hall,  
Most eager and alive of all  
To welcome the Baron and Baroness;  
But his mind is full of vague distress,  
For he hath read in Jesuit books  
Of those children of the wilderness,  
And now, good, simple man! he looks  
To see a painted savage stride  
Into the room, with shoulders bare,  
And eagle feathers in her hair,  
And around her a robe of panther's hide.

Instead, he beholds with secret shame  
A form of beauty undefined,  
A loveliness with out a name,  
Not of degree, but more of kind;  
Nor bold nor shy, nor short nor tall,  
But a new mingling of them all.  
Yes, beautiful beyond belief,  
Transfigured and transfused, he sees  
The lady of the Pyrenees,  
The daughter of the Indian chief.

Beneath the shadow of her hair  
The gold-bronze color of the skin  
Seems lighted by a fire within,  
As when a burst of sunlight shines  
Beneath a sombre grove of pines,--  
A dusky splendor in the air.  
The two small hands, that now are pressed  
In his, seem made to be caressed,  
They lie so warm and soft and still,  
Like birds half hidden in a nest,  
Trustful, and innocent of ill.  
And ah! he cannot believe his ears  
When her melodious voice he hears  
Speaking his native Gascon tongue;  
The words she utters seem to be  
Part of some poem of Goudouli,

They are not spoken, they are sung!  
And the Baron smiles, and says, "You see,  
I told you but the simple truth;  
Ah, you may trust the eyes of youth!"

Down in the village day by day  
The people gossip in their way,  
And stare to see the Baroness pass  
On Sunday morning to early Mass;  
And when she kneeleth down to pray,  
They wonder, and whisper together, and say,  
"Surely this is no heathen lass!"  
And in course of time they learn to bless  
The Baron and the Baroness.

And in course of time the Curate learns  
A secret so dreadful, that by turns  
He is ice and fire, he freezes and burns.  
The Baron at confession hath said,  
That though this woman be his wife,  
He bath wed her as the Indians wed,  
He hath bought her for a gun and a knife!  
And the Curate replies: "O profligate,  
O Prodigal Son! return once more  
To the open arms and the open door  
Of the Church, or ever it be too late.  
Thank God, thy father did not live  
To see what he could not forgive;  
On thee, so reckless and perverse,  
He left his blessing, not his curse.  
But the nearer the dawn the darker the night,  
And by going wrong all things come right;  
Things have been mended that were worse,  
And the worse, the nearer they are to mend.  
For the sake of the living and the dead,  
Thou shalt be wed as Christians wed,  
And all things come to a happy end."

O sun, that followest the night,  
In yon blue sky, serene and pure,  
And pourest thine impartial light  
Alike on mountain and on moor,  
Pause for a moment in thy course,  
And bless the bridegroom and the bride!  
O Gave, that from thy hidden source  
In you mysterious mountain-side  
Pursuest thy wandering way alone,  
And leaping down its steps of stone,  
Along the meadow-lands demure

Stealest away to the Adour,  
Pause for a moment in thy course  
To bless the bridegroom and the bride!

The choir is singing the matin song,  
The doors of the church are opened wide,  
The people crowd, and press, and throng  
To see the bridegroom and the bride.  
They enter and pass along the nave;  
They stand upon the father's grave;  
The bells are ringing soft and slow;  
The living above and the dead below  
Give their blessing on one and twain;  
The warm wind blows from the hills of Spain,  
The birds are building, the leaves are green,  
And Baron Castine of St. Castine  
Hath come at last to his own again.

## FINALE

"Nunc plaudite!" the Student cried,  
When he had finished; "now applaud,  
As Roman actors used to say  
At the conclusion of a play";  
And rose, and spread his hands abroad,  
And smiling bowed from side to side,  
As one who bears the palm away.  
And generous was the applause and loud,  
But less for him than for the sun,  
That even as the tale was done  
Burst from its canopy of cloud,  
And lit the landscape with the blaze  
Of afternoon on autumn days,  
And filled the room with light, and made  
The fire of logs a painted shade.

A sudden wind from out the west  
Blew all its trumpets loud and shrill;  
The windows rattled with the blast,  
The oak-trees shouted as it passed,  
And straight, as if by fear possessed,  
The cloud encampment on the hill  
Broke up, and fluttering flag and tent  
Vanished into the firmament,  
And down the valley fled amain  
The rear of the retreating rain.

Only far up in the blue sky  
A mass of clouds, like drifted snow  
Suffused with a faint Alpine glow,  
Was heaped together, vast and high,  
On which a shattered rainbow hung,  
Not rising like the ruined arch  
Of some aerial aqueduct,  
But like a roseate garland plucked  
From an Olympian god, and flung  
Aside in his triumphal march.

Like prisoners from their dungeon gloom,  
Like birds escaping from a snare,  
Like school-boys at the hour of play,  
All left at once the pent-up room,  
And rushed into the open air;  
And no more tales were told that day.

## PART THIRD

### PRELUDE

The evening came; the golden vane  
A moment in the sunset glanced,  
Then darkened, and then gleamed again,  
As from the east the moon advanced  
And touched it with a softer light;  
While underneath, with flowing mane,  
Upon the sign the Red Horse pranced,  
And galloped forth into the night.

But brighter than the afternoon  
That followed the dark day of rain,  
And brighter than the golden vane  
That glistened in the rising moon,  
Within the ruddy fire-light gleamed;  
And every separate window-pane,  
Backed by the outer darkness, showed  
A mirror, where the flamelets gleamed  
And flickered to and fro, and seemed  
A bonfire lighted in the road.

Amid the hospitable glow,  
Like an old actor on the stage,  
With the uncertain voice of age,  
The singing chimney chanted low  
The homely songs of long ago.

The voice that Ossian heard of yore,  
When midnight winds were in his hall;  
A ghostly and appealing call,  
A sound of days that are no more!  
And dark as Ossian sat the Jew,  
And listened to the sound, and knew  
The passing of the airy hosts,  
The gray and misty cloud of ghosts  
In their interminable flight;  
And listening muttered in his beard,  
With accent indistinct and weird,  
"Who are ye, children of the Night?"

Beholding his mysterious face,  
"Tell me," the gay Sicilian said,  
"Why was it that in breaking bread  
At supper, you bent down your head  
And, musing, paused a little space,  
As one who says a silent grace?"

The Jew replied, with solemn air,  
"I said the Manichæan's prayer.  
It was his faith,--perhaps is mine,--  
That life in all its forms is one,  
And that its secret conduits run  
Unseen, but in unbroken line,  
From the great fountain-head divine  
Through man and beast, through grain and grass.  
Howe'er we struggle, strive, and cry,  
From death there can be no escape,  
And no escape from life, alas  
Because we cannot die, but pass  
From one into another shape:  
It is but into life we die.

"Therefore the Manichæan said  
This simple prayer on breaking bread,  
Lest he with hasty hand or knife  
Might wound the incarcerated life,  
The soul in things that we call dead:  
'I did not reap thee, did not bind thee,  
I did not thrash thee, did not grind thee,  
Nor did I in the oven bake thee!  
It was not I, it was another  
Did these things unto thee, O brother;  
I only have thee, hold thee, break thee!'"

"That birds have souls I can concede,"  
The poet cried, with glowing cheeks;  
"The flocks that from their beds of reed  
Uprising north or southward fly,  
And flying write upon the sky  
The biforked letter of the Greeks,  
As hath been said by Rucellai;  
All birds that sing or chirp or cry,  
Even those migratory bands,  
The minor poets of the air,  
The plover, peep, and sanderling,  
That hardly can be said to sing,  
But pipe along the barren sands,--  
All these have souls akin to ours;  
So hath the lovely race of flowers:  
Thus much I grant, but nothing more.  
The rusty hinges of a door  
Are not alive because they creak;  
This chimney, with its dreary roar,  
These rattling windows, do not speak!"  
"To me they speak," the Jew replied;

"And in the sounds that sink and soar,  
I hear the voices of a tide  
That breaks upon an unknown shore!"

Here the Sicilian interferred:  
"That was your dream, then, as you dozed  
A moment since, with eyes half-closed,  
And murmured something in your beard."

The Hebrew smiled, and answered, "Nay;  
Not that, but something very near;  
Like, and yet not the same, may seem  
The vision of my waking dream;  
Before it wholly dies away,  
Listen to me, and you shall hear."

## THE SPANISH JEW'S TALE

### AZRAEL

King Solomon, before his palace gate  
At evening, on the pavement tessellate  
Was walking with a stranger from the East,  
Arrayed in rich attire as for a feast,  
The mighty Runjeet-Sing, a learned man,  
And Rajah of the realms of Hindostan.  
And as they walked the guest became aware  
Of a white figure in the twilight air,  
Gazing intent, as one who with surprise  
His form and features seemed to recognize;  
And in a whisper to the king he said:  
"What is yon shape, that, pallid as the dead,  
Is watching me, as if he sought to trace  
In the dim light the features of my face?"

The king looked, and replied: "I know him well;  
It is the Angel men call Azrael,  
'T is the Death Angel; what hast thou to fear?"  
And the guest answered: "Lest he should come near,  
And speak to me, and take away my breath!  
Save me from Azrael, save me from death!  
O king, that hast dominion o'er the wind,  
Bid it arise and bear me hence to Ind."

The king gazed upward at the cloudless sky,  
Whispered a word, and raised his hand on high,  
And lo! the signet-ring of chrysoptase  
On his uplifted finger seemed to blaze  
With hidden fire, and rushing from the west  
There came a mighty wind, and seized the guest  
And lifted him from earth, and on they passed,  
His shining garments streaming in the blast,  
A silken banner o'er the walls upreared,  
A purple cloud, that gleamed and disappeared.  
Then said the Angel, smiling: "If this man  
Be Rajah Runjeet-Sing of Hindostan,  
Thou hast done well in listening to his prayer;  
I was upon my way to seek him there."

## INTERLUDE.

"O Edrehi, forbear to-night  
Your ghostly legends of affright,  
And let the Talmud rest in peace;  
Spare us your dismal tales of death  
That almost take away one's breath;  
So doing, may your tribe increase."

Thus the Sicilian said; then went  
And on the spinet's rattling keys  
Played Marianina, like a breeze  
From Naples and the Southern seas,  
That brings us the delicious scent  
Of citron and of orange trees,  
And memories of soft days of ease  
At Capri and Amalfi spent.

"Not so," the eager Poet said;  
"At least, not so before I tell  
The story of my Azrael,  
An angel mortal as ourselves,  
Which in an ancient tome I found  
Upon a convent's dusty shelves,  
Chained with an iron chain, and bound  
In parchment, and with clasps of brass,  
Lest from its prison, some dark day,  
It might be stolen or steal away,  
While the good friars were singing mass.

"It is a tale of Charlemagne,  
When like a thunder-cloud, that lowers  
And sweeps from mountain-crest to coast,  
With lightning flaming through its showers,  
He swept across the Lombard plain,  
Beleaguering with his warlike train  
Pavia, the country's pride and boast,  
The City of the Hundred Towers."  
Thus heralded the tale began,  
And thus in sober measure ran.

## THE POET'S TALE

### CHARLEMAGNE

Olger the Dane and Desiderio,  
King of the Lombards, on a lofty tower  
Stood gazing northward o'er the rolling plains,  
League after league of harvests, to the foot  
Of the snow-crested Alps, and saw approach  
A mighty army, thronging all the roads  
That led into the city. And the King  
Said unto Olger, who had passed his youth  
As hostage at the court of France, and knew  
The Emperor's form and face "Is Charlemagne  
Among that host?" And Olger answered: "No."

And still the innumerable multitude  
Flowed onward and increased, until the King  
Cried in amazement: "Surely Charlemagne  
Is coming in the midst of all these knights!"  
And Olger answered slowly: "No; not yet;  
He will not come so soon." Then much disturbed  
King Desiderio asked: "What shall we do,  
if he approach with a still greater army!"  
And Olger answered: "When he shall appear,  
You will behold what manner of man he is;  
But what will then befall us I know not."

Then came the guard that never knew repose,  
The Paladins of France; and at the sight  
The Lombard King o'ercome with terror cried:  
"This must be Charlemagne!" and as before  
Did Olger answer: "No; not yet, not yet."

And then appeared in panoply complete  
The Bishops and the Abbots and the Priests  
Of the imperial chapel, and the Counts  
And Desiderio could no more endure  
The light of day, nor yet encounter death,  
But sobbed aloud and said: "Let us go down  
And hide us in the bosom of the earth,  
Far from the sight and anger of a foe  
So terrible as this!" And Olger said:  
"When you behold the harvests in the fields  
Shaking with fear, the Po and the Ticino  
Lashing the city walls with iron waves,  
Then may you know that Charlemagne is come.  
And even as he spake, in the northwest,  
Lo! there uprose a black and threatening cloud,

Out of whose bosom flashed the light of arms  
Upon the people pent up in the city;  
A light more terrible than any darkness;  
And Charlemagne appeared;--a Man of Iron!

His helmet was of iron, and his gloves  
Of iron, and his breastplate and his greaves  
And tassets were of iron, and his shield.  
In his left hand he held an iron spear,  
In his right hand his sword invincible.  
The horse he rode on had the strength of iron,  
And color of iron. All who went before him  
Beside him and behind him, his whole host,  
Were armed with iron, and their hearts within them  
Were stronger than the armor that they wore.  
The fields and all the roads were filled with iron,  
And points of iron glistened in the sun  
And shed a terror through the city streets.

This at a single glance Olger the Dane  
Saw from the tower, and turning to the King  
Exclaimed in haste: "Behold! this is the man  
You looked for with such eagerness!" and then  
Fell as one dead at Desiderio's feet.

## **INTERLUDE**

Well pleased all listened to the tale,  
That drew, the Student said, its pith  
And marrow from the ancient myth  
Of some one with an iron flail;  
Or that portentous Man of Brass  
Hephaestus made in days of yore,  
Who stalked about the Cretan shore,  
And saw the ships appear and pass,  
And threw stones at the Argonauts,  
Being filled with indiscriminate ire  
That tangled and perplexed his thoughts;  
But, like a hospitable host,  
When strangers landed on the coast,  
Heated himself red-hot with fire,  
And hugged them in his arms, and pressed  
Their bodies to his burning breast.

The Poet answered: "No, not thus  
The legend rose; it sprang at first  
Out of the hunger and the thirst  
In all men for the marvellous.  
And thus it filled and satisfied  
The imagination of mankind,  
And this ideal to the mind  
Was truer than historic fact.  
Fancy enlarged and multiplied  
The tenors of the awful name  
Of Charlemagne, till he became  
Armipotent in every act,  
And, clothed in mystery, appeared  
Not what men saw, but what they feared.  
Besides, unless my memory fail,  
Your some one with an iron flail  
Is not an ancient myth at all,  
But comes much later on the scene  
As Talus in the Faerie Queene,  
The iron groom of Artegall,  
Who threshed out falsehood and deceit,  
And truth upheld, and righted wrong,  
As was, as is the swallow, fleet,  
And as the lion is, was strong."

The Theologian said: "Perchance  
Your chronicler in writing this  
Had in his mind the Anabasis,  
Where Xenophon describes the advance  
Of Artaxerxes to the fight;  
At first the low gray cloud of dust,  
And then a blackness o'er the fields  
As of a passing thunder-gust,  
Then flash of brazen armor bright,  
And ranks of men, and spears up-thrust,  
Bowmen and troops with wicker shields,  
And cavalry equipped in white,  
And chariots ranged in front of these  
With scythes upon their axle-trees."

To this the Student answered: "Well,  
I also have a tale to tell  
Of Charlemagne; a tale that throws  
A softer light, more tinged with rose,  
Than your grim apparition cast  
Upon the darkness of the past.  
Listen, and hear in English rhyme  
What the good Monk of Lauresheim  
Gives as the gossip of his time,

In mediaeval Latin prose."

## THE STUDENT'S TALE

### EMMA AND EGINHARD

When Alcuin taught the sons of Charlemagne,  
In the free schools of Aix, how kings should reign,  
And with them taught the children of the poor  
How subjects should be patient and endure,  
He touched the lips of some, as best befit,  
With honey from the hives of Holy Writ;  
Others intoxicated with the wine  
Of ancient history, sweet but less divine;  
Some with the wholesome fruits of grammar fed;  
Others with mysteries of the stars o'er-head,  
That hang suspended in the vaulted sky  
Like lamps in some fair palace vast and high.

In sooth, it was a pleasant sight to see  
That Saxon monk, with hood and rosary,  
With inkhorn at his belt, and pen and book,  
And mingled lore and reverence in his look,  
Or hear the cloister and the court repeat  
The measured footfalls of his sandaled feet,  
Or watch him with the pupils of his school,  
Gentle of speech, but absolute of rule.

Among them, always earliest in his place.  
Was Eginhard, a youth of Frankish race,  
Whose face was bright with flashes that forerun  
The splendors of a yet unrisen sun.  
To him all things were possible, and seemed  
Not what he had accomplished, but had dreamed,  
And what were tasks to others were his play,  
The pastime of an idle holiday.

Smaragdo, Abbot of St. Michael's, said,  
With many a shrug and shaking of the head,  
Surely some demon must possess the lad,  
Who showed more wit than ever schoolboy had,  
And learned his Trivium thus without the rod;  
But Alcuin said it was the grace of God.

Thus he grew up, in Logic point-device,  
Perfect in Grammar, and in Rhetoric nice;  
Science of Numbers, Geometric art,

And lore of Stars, and Music knew by heart;  
A Minnesinger, long before the times  
Of those who sang their love in Suabian rhymes.

The Emperor, when he heard this good report  
Of Eginhard much buzzed about the court,  
Said to himself, "This stripling seems to be  
Purposely sent into the world for me;  
He shall become my scribe, and shall be schooled  
In all the arts whereby the world is ruled."  
Thus did the gentle Eginhard attain  
To honor in the court of Charlemagne;  
Became the sovereign's favorite, his right hand,  
So that his fame was great in all the land,  
And all men loved him for his modest grace  
And comeliness of figure and of face.  
An inmate of the palace, yet recluse,  
A man of books, yet sacred from abuse  
Among the armed knights with spur on heel,  
The tramp of horses and the clang of steel;  
And as the Emperor promised he was schooled  
In all the arts by which the world is ruled.  
But the one art supreme, whose law is fate,  
The Emperor never dreamed of till too late.

Home from her convent to the palace came  
The lovely Princess Emma, whose sweet name,  
Whispered by seneschal or sung by bard,  
Had often touched the soul of Eginhard.  
He saw her from his window, as in state  
She came, by knights attended through the gate;  
He saw her at the banquet of that day,  
Fresh as the morn, and beautiful as May;  
He saw her in the garden, as she strayed  
Among the flowers of summer with her maid,  
And said to him, "O Eginhard, disclose  
The meaning and the mystery of the rose";  
And trembling he made answer: "In good sooth,  
Its mystery is love, its meaning youth!"

How can I tell the signals and the signs  
By which one heart another heart divines?  
How can I tell the many thousand ways  
By which it keeps the secret it betrays?

O mystery of love! O strange romance!  
Among the Peers and Paladins of France,  
Shining in steel, and prancing on gay steeds,  
Noble by birth, yet nobler by great deeds,

The Princess Emma had no words nor looks  
But for this clerk, this man of thought and books.

The summer passed, the autumn came; the stalks  
Of lilies blackened in the garden walks;  
The leaves fell, russet-golden and blood-red,  
Love-letters thought the poet fancy-led,  
Or Jove descending in a shower of gold  
Into the lap of Danae of old;  
For poets cherish many a strange conceit,  
And love transmutes all nature by its heat.

No more the garden lessons, nor the dark  
And hurried meetings in the twilight park;  
But now the studious lamp, and the delights  
Of firesides in the silent winter nights,  
And watching from his window hour by hour  
The light that burned in Princess Emma's tower.

At length one night, while musing by the fire,  
O'ercome at last by his insane desire, --  
For what will reckless love not do and dare? --  
He crossed the court, and climbed the winding stair,  
With some feigned message in the Emperor's name;  
But when he to the lady's presence came  
He knelt down at her feet, until she laid  
Her hand upon him, like a naked blade,  
And whispered in his ear: "Arise, Sir Knight,  
To my heart's level, O my heart's delight."

And there he lingered till the crowing cock,  
The Alectryon of the farmyard and the flock,  
Sang his aubade with lusty voice and clear,  
To tell the sleeping world that dawn was near.  
And then they parted; but at parting, lo!  
They saw the palace courtyard white with snow,  
And, placid as a nun, the moon on high  
Gazing from cloudy cloisters of the sky.  
"Alas!" he said, "how hide the fatal line  
Of footprints leading from thy door to mine,  
And none returning!" Ah, he little knew  
What woman's wit, when put to proof, can do!

That night the Emperor, sleepless with the cares  
And troubles that attend on state affairs,  
Had risen before the dawn, and musing gazed  
Into the silent night, as one amazed  
To see the calm that reigned o'er all supreme,  
When his own reign was but a troubled dream.

The moon lit up the gables capped with snow,  
And the white roofs, and half the court below,  
And he beheld a form, that seemed to cower  
Beneath a burden, come from Emma's tower,--  
A woman, who upon her shoulders bore  
Clerk Eginhard to his own private door,  
And then returned in haste, but still essayed  
To tread the footprints she herself had made;  
And as she passed across the lighted space,  
The Emperor saw his daughter Emma's face!

He started not; he did not speak or moan,  
But seemed as one who hath been turned to stone;  
And stood there like a statue, nor awoke  
Out of his trance of pain, till morning broke,  
Till the stars faded, and the moon went down,  
And o'er the towers and steeples of the town  
Came the gray daylight; then the sun, who took  
The empire of the world with sovereign look,  
Suffusing with a soft and golden glow  
All the dead landscape in its shroud of snow,  
Touching with flame the tapering chapel spires,  
Windows and roofs, and smoke of household fires,  
And kindling park and palace as he came;  
The stork's nest on the chimney seemed in flame.  
And thus he stood till Eginhard appeared,  
Demure and modest with his comely beard  
And flowing flaxen tresses, come to ask,  
As was his wont, the day's appointed task.

The Emperor looked upon him with a smile,  
And gently said: "My son, wait yet awhile;  
This hour my council meets upon some great  
And very urgent business of the state.  
Come back within the hour. On thy return  
The work appointed for thee shalt thou learn.

Having dismissed this gallant Troubadour,  
He summoned straight his council, and secure  
And steadfast in his purpose, from the throne  
All the adventure of the night made known;  
Then asked for sentence; and with eager breath  
Some answered banishment, and others death.

Then spake the king: "Your sentence is not mine;  
Life is the gift of God, and is divine;  
Nor from these palace walls shall one depart  
Who carries such a secret in his heart;  
My better judgment points another way.

Good Alcuin, I remember how one day  
When my Pepino asked you, 'What are men?'  
You wrote upon his tablets with your pen,  
'Guests of the grave and travellers that pass!'  
This being true of all men, we, alas!  
Being all fashioned of the selfsame dust,  
Let us be merciful as well as just;  
This passing traveller, who hath stolen away  
The brightest jewel of my crown to-day,  
Shall of himself the precious gem restore;  
By giving it, I make it mine once more.  
Over those fatal footprints I will throw  
My ermine mantle like another snow."

Then Eginhard was summoned to the hall,  
And entered, and in presence of them all,  
The Emperor said: "My son, for thou to me  
Hast been a son, and evermore shalt be,  
Long hast thou served thy sovereign, and thy zeal  
Pleads to me with importunate appeal,  
While I have been forgetful to requite  
Thy service and affection as was right.  
But now the hour is come, when I, thy Lord,  
Will crown thy love with such supreme reward,  
A gift so precious kings have striven in vain  
To win it from the hands of Charlemagne."

Then sprang the portals of the chamber wide,  
And Princess Emma entered, in the pride  
Of birth and beauty, that in part o'er-came  
The conscious terror and the blush of shame.  
And the good Emperor rose up from his throne,  
And taking her white hand within his own  
Placed it in Eginhard's, and said: "My son  
This is the gift thy constant zeal hath won;  
Thus I repay the royal debt I owe,  
And cover up the footprints in the snow."

## INTERLUDE

Thus ran the Student's pleasant rhyme  
Of Eginhard and love and youth;  
Some doubted its historic truth,  
But while they doubted, ne'ertheless  
Saw in it gleams of truthfulness,  
And thanked the Monk of Lauresheim.

This they discussed in various mood;  
Then in the silence that ensued  
Was heard a sharp and sudden sound  
As of a bowstring snapped in air;  
And the Musician with a bound  
Sprang up in terror from his chair,  
And for a moment listening stood,  
Then strode across the room, and found  
His dear, his darling violin  
Still lying safe asleep within  
Its little cradle, like a child  
That gives a sudden cry of pain,  
And wakes to fall asleep again;  
And as he looked at it and smiled,  
By the uncertain light beguiled,  
Despair! two strings were broken in twain.

While all lamented and made moan,  
With many a sympathetic word  
As if the loss had been their own,  
Deeming the tones they might have heard  
Sweeter than they had heard before,  
They saw the Landlord at the door,  
The missing man, the portly Squire!  
He had not entered, but he stood  
With both arms full of seasoned wood,  
To feed the much-devouring fire,  
That like a lion in a cage  
Lashed its long tail and roared with rage.

The missing man! Ah, yes, they said,  
Missing, but whither had he fled?  
Where had he hidden himself away?  
No farther than the barn or shed;  
He had not hidden himself, nor fled;  
How should he pass the rainy day  
But in his barn with hens and hay,  
Or mending harness, cart, or sled?  
Now, having come, he needs must stay  
And tell his tale as well as they.

The Landlord answered only: "These  
Are logs from the dead apple-trees  
Of the old orchard planted here  
By the first Howe of Sudbury.  
Nor oak nor maple has so clear  
A flame, or burns so quietly,  
Or leaves an ash so clean and white";  
Thinking by this to put aside  
The impending tale that terrified;  
When suddenly, to his delight,  
The Theologian interposed,  
Saying that when the door was closed,  
And they had stopped that draft of cold,  
Unpleasant night air, he proposed  
To tell a tale world-wide apart  
From that the Student had just told;  
World-wide apart, and yet akin,  
As showing that the human heart  
Beats on forever as of old,  
As well beneath the snow-white fold  
Of Quaker kerchief, as within  
Sendal or silk or cloth of gold,  
And without preface would begin.

And then the clamorous clock struck eight,  
Deliberate, with sonorous chime  
Slow measuring out the march of time,  
Like some grave Consul of old Rome  
In Jupiter's temple driving home  
The nails that marked the year and date.  
Thus interrupted in his rhyme,  
The Theologian needs must wait;  
But quoted Horace, where he sings  
The dire Necessity of things,  
That drives into the roofs sublime  
Of new-built houses of the great  
The adamantine nails of Fate.

When ceased the little carillon  
To herald from its wooden tower  
The important transit of the hour,  
The Theologian hastened on,  
Content to be all owed at last  
To sing his Idyl of the Past.

## THE THEOLOGIAN'S TALE

### ELIZABETH

#### I

"Ah, how short are the days! How soon the night overtakes us!  
In the old country the twilight is longer; but here in the forest  
Suddenly comes the dark, with hardly a pause in its coming,  
Hardly a moment between the two lights, the day and the lamplight;  
Yet how grand is the winter! How spotless the snow is, and perfect!"

Thus spake Elizabeth Haddon at nightfall to Hannah the housemaid,  
As in the farm-house kitchen, that served for kitchen and parlor,  
By the window she sat with her work, and looked on a landscape  
White as the great white sheet that Peter saw in his vision,  
By the four corners let down and descending out of the heavens.  
Covered with snow were the forests of pine, and the fields and the meadows.  
Nothing was dark but the sky, and the distant Delaware flowing  
Down from its native hills, a peaceful and bountiful river.

Then with a smile on her lips made answer Hannah the housemaid:  
"Beautiful winter! yea, the winter is beautiful, surely,  
If one could only walk like a fly with one's feet on the ceiling.  
But the great Delaware River is not like the Thames, as we saw it  
Out of our upper windows in Rotherhithe Street in the Borough,  
Crowded with masts and sails of vessels coming and going;  
Here there is nothing but pines, with patches of snow on their branches.  
There is snow in the air, and see! it is falling already;  
All the roads will be blocked, and I pity Joseph to-morrow,  
Breaking his way through the drifts, with his sled and oxen; and then, too,  
How in all the world shall we get to Meeting on First-Day?"

But Elizabeth checked her, and answered, mildly reprovng:  
"Surely the Lord will provide; for unto the snow he sayeth,  
Be thou on the earth, the good Lord sayeth; he is it  
Giveth snow like wool, like ashes scatters the hoar-frost."  
So she folded her work and laid it away in her basket.

Meanwhile Hannah the housemaid had closed and fastened the shutters,  
Spread the cloth, and lighted the lamp on the table, and placed there  
Plates and cups from the dresser, the brown rye loaf, and the butter  
Fresh from the dairy, and then, protecting her hand with a holder,  
Took from the crane in the chimney the steaming and simmering kettle,  
Poised it aloft in the air, and filled up the earthen teapot,  
Made in Delft, and adorned with quaint and wonderful figures.

Then Elizabeth said, "Lo! Joseph is long on his errand.  
I have sent him away with a hamper of food and of clothing  
For the poor in the village. A good lad and cheerful is Joseph;  
In the right place is his heart, and his hand is ready and willing."

Thus in praise of her servant she spake, and Hannah the housemaid  
Laughed with her eyes, as she listened, but governed her tongue, and was silent,  
While her mistress went on: "The house is far from the village;  
We should be lonely here, were it not for Friends that in passing  
Sometimes tarry o'ernight, and make us glad by their coming."

Thereupon answered Hannah the housemaid, the thrifty, the frugal:  
"Yea, they come and they tarry, as if thy house were a tavern;  
Open to all are its doors, and they come and go like the pigeons  
In and out of the holes of the pigeon-house over the hayloft,  
Cooing and smoothing their feathers and basking themselves in the sunshine."

But in meekness of spirit, and calmly, Elizabeth answered:  
"All I have is the Lord's, not mine to give or withhold it;  
I but distribute his gifts to the poor, and to those of his people  
Who in journeyings often surrender their lives to his service.  
His, not mine, are the gifts, and only so far can I make them  
Mine, as in giving I add my heart to whatever is given.  
Therefore my excellent father first built this house in the clearing;  
Though he came not himself, I came; for the Lord was my guidance,  
Leading me here for this service. We must not grudge, then, to others  
Ever the cup of cold water, or crumbs that fall from our table."

Thus rebuked, for a season was silent the penitent housemaid;  
And Elizabeth said in tones even sweeter and softer:  
"Dost thou remember, Hannah, the great May-Meeting in London,  
When I was still a child, how we sat in the silent assembly,  
Waiting upon the Lord in patient and passive submission?  
No one spake, till at length a young man, a stranger, John Estaugh,  
Moved by the Spirit, rose, as if he were John the Apostle,  
Speaking such words of power that they bowed our hearts, as a strong wind  
Bends the grass of the fields, or grain that is ripe for the sickle.  
Thoughts of him to-day have been oft borne inward upon me,  
Wherefore I do not know; but strong is the feeling within me  
That once more I shall see a face I have never forgotten."

## II

E'en as she spake they heard the musical jangle of sleigh-bells,  
First far off, with a dreamy sound and faint in the distance,  
Then growing nearer and louder, and turning into the farmyard,  
Till it stopped at the door, with sudden creaking of runners.  
Then there were voices heard as of two men talking together,

And to herself, as she listened, upbraiding said Hannah the housemaid,  
"It is Joseph come back, and I wonder what stranger is with him?"

Down from its nail she took and lighted the great tin lantern  
Pierced with holes, and round, and roofed like the top of a lighthouse,  
And went forth to receive the coming guest at the doorway,  
Casting into the dark a network of glimmer and shadow  
Over the falling snow, the yellow sleigh, and the horses,  
And the forms of men, snow-covered, looming gigantic.  
Then giving Joseph the lantern, she entered the house with the stranger.  
Youthful he was and tall, and his cheeks aglow with the night air;  
And as he entered, Elizabeth rose, and, going to meet him,  
As if an unseen power had announced and preceded his presence,  
And he had come as one whose coming had long been expected,  
Quietly gave him her hand, and said, "Thou art welcome, John Estaugh."  
And the stranger replied, with staid and quiet behavior,  
"Dost thou remember me still, Elizabeth? After so many  
Years have passed, it seemeth a wonderful thing that I find thee.  
Surely the hand of the Lord conducted me here to thy threshold.  
For as I journeyed along, and pondered alone and in silence  
On his ways, that are past finding out, I saw in the snow-mist,  
Seemingly weary with travel, a wayfarer, who by the wayside  
Paused and waited. Forthwith I remembered Queen Candace's eunuch,  
How on the way that goes down from Jerusalem unto Gaza,  
Reading Esaias the Prophet, he journeyed, and spake unto Philip,  
Praying him to come up and sit in his chariot with him.  
So I greeted the man, and he mounted the sledge beside me,  
And as we talked on the way he told me of thee and thy homestead,  
How, being led by the light of the Spirit, that never deceiveth,  
Full of zeal for the work of the Lord, thou hadst come to this country.  
And I remembered thy name, and thy father and mother in England,  
And on my journey have stopped to see thee, Elizabeth Haddon.  
Wishing to strengthen thy hand in the labors of love thou art doing."

And Elizabeth answered with confident voice, and serenely  
Looking into his face with her innocent eyes as she answered,  
"Surely the hand of the Lord is in it; his Spirit hath led thee  
Out of the darkness and storm to the light and peace of my fireside."

Then, with stamping of feet, the door was opened, and Joseph  
Entered, bearing the lantern, and, carefully blowing the light out,  
Rung it up on its nail, and all sat down to their supper;  
For underneath that roof was no distinction of persons,  
But one family only, one heart, one hearth and one household.

When the supper was ended they drew their chairs to the fireplace,  
Spacious, open-hearted, profuse of flame and of firewood,  
Lord of forests unfelled, and not a gleaner of fagots,  
Spreading its arms to embrace with inexhaustible bounty

All who fled from the cold, exultant, laughing at winter!  
Only Hannah the housemaid was busy in clearing the table,  
Coming and going, and hustling about in closet and chamber.

Then Elizabeth told her story again to John Estaugh,  
Going far back to the past, to the early days of her childhood;  
How she had waited and watched, in all her doubts and besetments  
Comforted with the extendings and holy, sweet inflowings  
Of the spirit of love, till the voice imperative sounded,  
And she obeyed the voice, and cast in her lot with her people  
Here in the desert land, and God would provide for the issue.

Meanwhile Joseph sat with folded hands, and demurely  
Listened, or seemed to listen, and in the silence that followed  
Nothing was heard for a while but the step of Hannah the housemaid  
Walking the floor overhead, and setting the chambers in order.  
And Elizabeth said, with a smile of compassion, "The maiden  
Hath a light heart in her breast, but her feet are heavy and awkward."  
Inwardly Joseph laughed, but governed his tongue, and was silent.

Then came the hour of sleep, death's counterfeit, nightly rehearsal  
Of the great Silent Assembly, the Meeting of shadows, where no man  
Speaketh, but all are still, and the peace and rest are unbroken!  
Silently over that house the blessing of slumber descended.  
But when the morning dawned, and the sun arose in his splendor,  
Breaking his way through clouds that encumbered his path in the heavens,  
Joseph was seen with his sled and oxen breaking a pathway  
Through the drifts of snow; the horses already were harnessed,  
And John Estaugh was standing and taking leave at the threshold,  
Saying that he should return at the Meeting in May; while above them  
Hannah the housemaid, the homely, was looking out of the attic,  
Laughing aloud at Joseph, then suddenly closing the casement,  
As the bird in a cuckoo-clock peeps out of its window,  
Then disappears again, and closes the shutter behind it.

### III

Now was the winter gone, and the snow; and Robin the Redbreast,  
Boasted on bush and tree it was he, it was he and no other  
That had covered with leaves the Babes in the Wood, and blithely  
All the birds sang with him, and little cared for his boasting,  
Or for his Babes in the Wood, or the Cruel Uncle, and only  
Sang for the mates they had chosen, and cared for the nests they were building.  
With them, but more sedately and meekly, Elizabeth Haddon  
Sang in her inmost heart, but her lips were silent and songless.  
Thus came the lovely spring with a rush of blossoms and music,  
Flooding the earth with flowers, and the air with melodies vernal.

Then it came to pass, one pleasant morning, that slowly  
Up the road there came a cavalcade, as of pilgrims  
Men and women, wending their way to the Quarterly Meeting  
In the neighboring town; and with them came riding John Estaugh.  
At Elizabeth's door they stopped to rest, and alighting  
Tasted the currant wine, and the bread of rye, and the honey  
Brought from the hives, that stood by the sunny wall of the garden;  
Then remounted their horses, refreshed, and continued their journey,  
And Elizabeth with them, and Joseph, and Hannah the housemaid.  
But, as they started, Elizabeth lingered a little, and leaning  
Over her horse's neck, in a whisper said to John Estaugh  
"Tarry awhile behind, for I have something to tell thee,  
Not to be spoken lightly, nor in the presence of others;  
Them it concerneth not, only thee and me it concerneth."  
And they rode slowly along through the woods, conversing together.  
It was a pleasure to breathe the fragrant air of the forest;  
It was a pleasure to live on that bright and happy May morning!

Then Elizabeth said, though still with a certain reluctance,  
As if impelled to reveal a secret she fain would have guarded:  
"I will no longer conceal what is laid upon me to tell thee;  
I have received from the Lord a charge to love thee, John Estaugh."

And John Estaugh made answer, surprised by the words she had spoken,  
"Pleasant to me are thy converse, thy ways, thy meekness of spirit;  
Pleasant thy frankness of speech, and thy soul's immaculate whiteness,  
Love without dissimulation, a holy and inward adorning.  
But I have yet no light to lead me, no voice to direct me.  
When the Lord's work is done, and the toil and the labor completed  
He hath appointed to me, I will gather into the stillness  
Of my own heart awhile, and listen and wait for his guidance."

Then Elizabeth said, not troubled nor wounded in spirit,  
"So is it best, John Estaugh. We will not speak of it further.  
It hath been laid upon me to tell thee this, for to-morrow  
Thou art going away, across the sea, and I know not  
When I shall see thee more; but if the Lord hath decreed it,  
Thou wilt return again to seek me here and to find me."  
And they rode onward in silence, and entered the town with the others.

#### IV

Ships that pass in the night, and speak each other in passing,  
Only a signal shown and a distant voice in the darkness;  
So on the ocean of life we pass and speak one another,  
Only a look and a voice, then darkness again and a silence.

Now went on as of old the quiet life of the homestead.  
Patient and unrepining Elizabeth labored, in all things  
Mindful not of herself, but bearing the burdens of others,  
Always thoughtful and kind and untroubled; and Hannah the housemaid  
Diligent early and late, and rosy with washing and scouring,  
Still as of old disparaged the eminent merits of Joseph,  
And was at times reproved for her light and frothy behavior,  
For her shy looks, and her careless words, and her evil surmisings,  
Being pressed down somewhat like a cart with sheaves overladen,  
As she would sometimes say to Joseph, quoting the Scriptures.

Meanwhile John Estaugh departed across the sea, and departing  
Carried hid in his heart a secret sacred and precious,  
Filling its chambers with fragrance, and seeming to him in its sweetness  
Mary's ointment of spikenard, that filled all the house with its odor.  
O lost days of delight, that are wasted in doubting and waiting!  
O lost hours and days in which we might have been happy!  
But the light shone at last, and guided his wavering footsteps,  
And at last came the voice, imperative, questionless, certain.

Then John Estaugh came back o'er the sea for the gift that was offered,  
Better than houses and lands, the gift of a woman's affection.  
And on the First-Day that followed, he rose in the Silent Assembly,  
Holding in his strong hand a hand that trembled a little,  
Promising to be kind and true and faithful in all things.  
Such were the marriage-rites of John and Elizabeth Estaugh.

And not otherwise Joseph, the honest, the diligent servant,  
Sped in his bashful wooing with homely Hannah the housemaid;  
For when he asked her the question, she answered, "Nay"; and then added  
"But thee may make believe, and see what will come of it, Joseph."

## **INTERLUDE**

"A pleasant and a winsome tale,"  
The Student said, "though somewhat pale  
And quiet in its coloring,  
As if it caught its tone and air  
From the gray suits that Quakers wear;  
Yet worthy of some German bard,  
Hebel, or Voss, or Eberhard,  
Who love of humble themes to sing,  
In humble verse; but no more true  
Than was the tale I told to you."

The Theologian made reply,  
And with some warmth, "That I deny;  
'T is no invention of my own,  
But something well and widely known  
To readers of a riper age,  
Writ by the skilful hand that wrote  
The Indian tale of Hobomok,  
And Philothea's classic page.  
I found it like a waif afloat  
Or dulse uprooted from its rock,  
On the swift tides that ebb and flow  
In daily papers, and at flood  
Bear freighted vessels to and fro,  
But later, when the ebb is low,  
Leave a long waste of sand and mud."

"It matters little," quoth the Jew;  
"The cloak of truth is lined with lies,  
Sayeth some proverb old and wise;  
And Love is master of all arts,  
And puts it into human hearts  
The strangest things to say and do."

And here the controversy closed  
Abruptly, ere 't was well begun;  
For the Sicilian interposed  
With, "Lordlings, listen, every one  
That listen may, unto a tale  
That's merrier than the nightingale;  
A tale that cannot boast, forsooth,  
A single rag or shred of truth;  
That does not leave the mind in doubt  
As to the with it or without;  
A naked falsehood and absurd  
As mortal ever told or heard.  
Therefore I tell it; or, maybe,  
Simply because it pleases me."

## THE SICILIAN'S TALE

### THE MONK OF CASAL-MAGGIORE

Once on a time, some centuries ago,  
In the hot sunshine two Franciscan friars  
Wended their weary way with footsteps slow  
Back to their convent, whose white walls and spires  
Gleamed on the hillside like a patch of snow;  
Covered with dust they were, and torn by briars,  
And bore like sumpter-mules upon their backs  
The badge of poverty, their beggar's sacks.

The first was Brother Anthony, a spare  
And silent man, with pallid cheeks and thin,  
Much given to vigils, penance, fasting, prayer,  
Solemn and gray, and worn with discipline,  
As if his body but white ashes were,  
Heaped on the living coals that glowed within;  
A simple monk, like many of his day,  
Whose instinct was to listen and obey.

A different man was Brother Timothy,  
Of larger mould and of a coarser paste;  
A rubicund and stalwart monk was he,  
Broad in the shoulders, broader in the waist,  
Who often filled the dull refectory  
With noise by which the convent was disgraced,  
But to the mass-book gave but little heed,  
By reason he had never learned to read.

Now, as they passed the outskirts of a wood,  
They saw, with mingled pleasure and surprise,  
Fast tethered to a tree an ass, that stood  
Lazily winking his large, limpid eyes.  
The farmer Gilbert of that neighborhood  
His owner was, who, looking for supplies  
Of fagots, deeper in the wood had strayed,  
Leaving his beast to ponder in the shade.

As soon as Brother Timothy espied  
The patient animal, he said: "Good-lack!  
Thus for our needs doth Providence provide;  
We'll lay our wallets on the creature's back."  
This being done, he leisurely untied  
From head and neck the halter of the jack,  
And put it round his own, and to the tree  
Stood tethered fast as if the ass were he.

And, bursting forth into a merry laugh,  
He cried to Brother Anthony: "Away!  
And drive the ass before you with your staff;  
And when you reach the convent you may say  
You left me at a farm, half tired and half  
Ill with a fever, for a night and day,  
And that the farmer lent this ass to bear  
Our wallets, that are heavy with good fare."

Now Brother Anthony, who knew the pranks  
Of Brother Timothy, would not persuade  
Or reason with him on his quirks and cranks,  
But, being obedient, silently obeyed;  
And, smiting with his staff the ass's flanks,  
Drove him before him over hill and glade,  
Safe with his provend to the convent gate,  
Leaving poor Brother Timothy to his fate.

Then Gilbert, laden with fagots for his fire,  
Forth issued from the wood, and stood aghast  
To see the ponderous body of the friar  
Standing where he had left his donkey last.  
Trembling he stood, and dared not venture nigher,  
But stared, and gaped, and crossed himself full fast;  
For, being credulous and of little wit,  
He thought it was some demon from the pit.

While speechless and bewildered thus he gazed,  
And dropped his load of fagots on the ground,  
Quoth Brother Timothy: "Be not amazed  
That where you left a donkey should be found  
A poor Franciscan friar, half-starved and crazed,  
Standing demure and with a halter bound;  
But set me free, and hear the piteous story  
Of Brother Timothy of Casal-Maggiore.

"I am a sinful man, although you see  
I wear the consecrated cowl and cape;  
You never owned an ass, but you owned me,  
Changed and transformed from my own natural shape  
All for the deadly sin of gluttony,  
From which I could not otherwise escape,  
Than by this penance, dieting on grass,  
And being worked and beaten as an ass.

"Think of the ignominy I endured;  
Think of the miserable life I led,  
The toil and blows to which I was inured,  
My wretched lodging in a windy shed,

My scanty fare so grudgingly procured,  
The damp and musty straw that formed my bed!  
But, having done this penance for my sins,  
My life as man and monk again begins."

The simple Gilbert, hearing words like these,  
Was conscience-stricken, and fell down apace  
Before the friar upon his bended knees,  
And with a suppliant voice implored his grace;  
And the good monk, now very much at ease,  
Granted him pardon with a smiling face,  
Nor could refuse to be that night his guest,  
It being late, and he in need of rest.

Upon a hillside, where the olive thrives,  
With figures painted on its white-washed walls,  
The cottage stood; and near the humming hives  
Made murmurs as of far-off waterfalls;  
A place where those who love secluded lives  
Might live content, and, free from noise and brawls,  
Like Claudian's Old Man of Verona here  
Measure by fruits the slow-revolving year.

And, coming to this cottage of content  
They found his children, and the buxom wench  
His wife, Dame Cicely, and his father, bent  
With years and labor, seated on a bench,  
Repeating over some obscure event  
In the old wars of Milanese and French;  
All welcomed the Franciscan, with a sense  
Of sacred awe and humble reverence.

When Gilbert told them what had come to pass,  
How beyond question, cavil, or surmise,  
Good Brother Timothy had been their ass,  
You should have seen the wonder in their eyes;  
You should have heard them cry, "Alas! alas!  
Have heard their lamentations and their sighs!  
For all believed the story, and began  
To see a saint in this afflicted man.

Forthwith there was prepared a grand repast,  
To satisfy the craving of the friar  
After so rigid and prolonged a fast;  
The bustling housewife stirred the kitchen fire;  
Then her two barnyard fowls, her best and last,  
Were put to death, at her express desire,  
And served up with a salad in a bowl,  
And flasks of country wine to crown the whole.

It would not be believed should I repeat  
How hungry Brother Timothy appeared;  
It was a pleasure but to see him eat,  
His white teeth flashing through his russet beard,  
His face aglow and flushed with wine and meat,  
His roguish eyes that rolled and laughed and leered!  
Lord! how he drank the blood-red country wine  
As if the village vintage were divine!

And all the while he talked without surcease,  
And told his merry tales with jovial glee  
That never flagged, but rather did increase,  
And laughed aloud as if insane were he,  
And wagged his red beard, matted like a fleece,  
And cast such glances at Dame Cicely  
That Gilbert now grew angry with his guest,  
And thus in words his rising wrath expressed.

"Good father," said he, "easily we see  
How needful in some persons, and how right,  
Mortification of the flesh may be.  
The indulgence you have given it to-night,  
After long penance, clearly proves to me  
Your strength against temptation is but slight,  
And shows the dreadful peril you are in  
Of a relapse into your deadly sin.

"To-morrow morning, with the rising sun,  
Go back unto your convent, nor refrain  
From fasting and from scourging, for you run  
Great danger to become an ass again,  
Since monkish flesh and asinine are one;  
Therefore be wise, nor longer here remain,  
Unless you wish the scourge should be applied  
By other hands, that will not spare your hide."

When this the monk had heard, his color fled  
And then returned, like lightning in the air,  
Till he was all one blush from foot to head,  
And even the bald spot in his russet hair  
Turned from its usual pallor to bright red!  
The old man was asleep upon his chair.  
Then all retired, and sank into the deep  
And helpless imbecility of sleep.

They slept until the dawn of day drew near,  
Till the cock should have crowed, but did not crow,  
For they had slain the shining chanticleer

And eaten him for supper, as you know.  
The monk was up betimes and of good cheer,  
And, having breakfasted, made haste to go,  
As if he heard the distant matin bell,  
And had but little time to say farewell.

Fresh was the morning as the breath of kine;  
Odors of herbs commingled with the sweet  
Balsamic exhalations of the pine;  
A haze was in the air presaging heat;  
Uprose the sun above the Apennine,  
And all the misty valleys at its feet  
Were full of the delirious song of birds,  
Voices of men, and bells, and low of herds.

All this to Brother Timothy was naught;  
He did not care for scenery, nor here  
His busy fancy found the thing it sought;  
But when he saw the convent walls appear,  
And smoke from kitchen chimneys upward caught  
And whirled aloft into the atmosphere,  
He quickened his slow footsteps, like a beast  
That scents the stable a league off at least.

And as he entered though the convent gate  
He saw there in the court the ass, who stood  
Twirling his ears about, and seemed to wait,  
Just as he found him waiting in the wood;  
And told the Prior that, to alleviate  
The daily labors of the brotherhood,  
The owner, being a man of means and thrift,  
Bestowed him on the convent as a gift.

And thereupon the Prior for many days  
Revolved this serious matter in his mind,  
And turned it over many different ways,  
Hoping that some safe issue he might find;  
But stood in fear of what the world would say,  
If he accepted presents of this kind,  
Employing beasts of burden for the packs,  
That lazy monks should carry on their backs.

Then, to avoid all scandal of the sort,  
And stop the mouth of cavil, he decreed  
That he would cut the tedious matter short,  
And sell the ass with all convenient speed,  
Thus saving the expense of his support,  
And hoarding something for a time of need.  
So he despatched him to the neighboring Fair,

And freed himself from cumber and from care.

It happened now by chance, as some might say,  
Others perhaps would call it destiny,  
Gilbert was at the Fair; and heard a bray,  
And nearer came, and saw that it was he,  
And whispered in his ear, "Ah, lackaday!  
Good father, the rebellious flesh, I see,  
Has changed you back into an ass again,  
And all my admonitions were in vain."

The ass, who felt this breathing in his ear,  
Did not turn round to look, but shook his head,  
As if he were not pleased these words to hear,  
And contradicted all that had been said.  
And this made Gilbert cry in voice more clear,  
"I know you well; your hair is russet-red;  
Do not deny it; for you are the same  
Franciscan friar, and Timothy by name."

The ass, though now the secret had come out,  
Was obstinate, and shook his head again;  
Until a crowd was gathered round about  
To hear this dialogue between the twain;  
And raised their voices in a noisy shout  
When Gilbert tried to make the matter plain,  
And flouted him and mocked him all day long  
With laughter and with jibes and scraps of song.

"If this be Brother Timothy," they cried,  
"Buy him, and feed him on the tenderest grass;  
Thou canst not do too much for one so tried  
As to be twice transformed into an ass."  
So simple Gilbert bought him, and untied  
His halter, and o'er mountain and morass  
He led him homeward, talking as he went  
Of good behavior and a mind content.

The children saw them coming, and advanced,  
Shouting with joy, and hung about his neck,--  
Not Gilbert's, but the ass's,--round him danced,  
And wove green garlands where-withal to deck  
His sacred person; for again it chanced  
Their childish feelings, without rein or check,  
Could not discriminate in any way  
A donkey from a friar of Orders Gray.

"O Brother Timothy," the children said,  
"You have come back to us just as before;

We were afraid, and thought that you were dead,  
And we should never see you any more."  
And then they kissed the white star on his head,  
That like a birth-mark or a badge he wore,  
And patted him upon the neck and face,  
And said a thousand things with childish grace.

Thenceforward and forever he was known  
As Brother Timothy, and led away  
A life of luxury, till he had grown  
Ungrateful being stuffed with corn and hay,  
And very vicious. Then in angry tone,  
Rousing himself, poor Gilbert said one day  
"When simple kindness is misunderstood  
A little flagellation may do good."

His many vices need not here be told;  
Among them was a habit that he had  
Of flinging up his heels at young and old,  
Breaking his halter, running off like mad  
O'er pasture-lands and meadow, wood and wold,  
And other misdemeanors quite as bad;  
But worst of all was breaking from his shed  
At night, and ravaging the cabbage-bed.

So Brother Timothy went back once more  
To his old life of labor and distress;  
Was beaten worse than he had been before.  
And now, instead of comfort and caress,  
Came labors manifold and trials sore;  
And as his toils increased his food grew less,  
Until at last the great consoler, Death,  
Ended his many sufferings with his breath.

Great was the lamentation when he died;  
And mainly that he died impenitent;  
Dame Cicely bewailed, the children cried,  
The old man still remembered the event  
In the French war, and Gilbert magnified  
His many virtues, as he came and went,  
And said: "Heaven pardon Brother Timothy,  
And keep us from the sin of gluttony."

## INTERLUDE

"Signor Luigi," said the Jew,  
When the Sicilian's tale was told,  
"The were-wolf is a legend old,  
But the were-ass is something new,  
And yet for one I think it true.  
The days of wonder have not ceased  
If there are beasts in forms of men,  
As sure it happens now and then,  
Why may not man become a beast,  
In way of punishment at least?"

"But this I will not now discuss,  
I leave the theme, that we may thus  
Remain within the realm of song.  
The story that I told before,  
Though not acceptable to all,  
At least you did not find too long.  
I beg you, let me try again,  
With something in a different vein,  
Before you bid the curtain fall.  
Meanwhile keep watch upon the door,  
Nor let the Landlord leave his chair,  
Lest he should vanish into air,  
And thus elude our search once more."

Thus saying, from his lips he blew  
A little cloud of perfumed breath,  
And then, as if it were a clew  
To lead his footsteps safely through,  
Began his tale as followeth.

## THE SPANISH JEW'S SECOND TALE

### SCANDERBEG

The battle is fought and won  
By King Ladislaus the Hun,  
In fire of hell and death's frost,  
On the day of Pentecost.  
And in rout before his path  
From the field of battle red  
Flee all that are not dead  
Of the army of Amurath.

In the darkness of the night  
Iskander, the pride and boast  
Of that mighty Othman host,  
With his routed Turks, takes flight  
From the battle fought and lost  
On the day of Pentecost;  
Leaving behind him dead  
The army of Amurath,  
The vanguard as it led,  
The rearguard as it fled,  
Mown down in the bloody swath  
Of the battle's aftermath.

But he cared not for Hospodars,  
Nor for Baron or Voivode,  
As on through the night he rode  
And gazed at the fateful stars,  
That were shining overhead  
But smote his steed with his staff,  
And smiled to himself, and said;  
"This is the time to laugh."

In the middle of the night,  
In a halt of the hurrying flight,  
There came a Scribe of the King  
Wearing his signet ring,  
And said in a voice severe:  
"This is the first dark blot  
On thy name, George Castriot!  
Alas why art thou here,  
And the army of Amurath slain,  
And left on the battle plain?"

And Iskander answered and said:  
"They lie on the bloody sod  
By the hoofs of horses trod;

But this was the decree  
Of the watchers overhead;  
For the war belongeth to God,  
And in battle who are we,  
Who are we, that shall withstand  
The wind of his lifted hand?"

Then he bade them bind with chains  
This man of books and brains;  
And the Scribe said: "What misdeed  
Have I done, that, without need,  
Thou doest to me this thing?"  
And Iskander answering  
Said unto him: "Not one  
Misdeed to me hast thou done;  
But for fear that thou shouldst run  
And hide thyself from me,  
Have I done this unto thee.

"Now write me a writing, O Scribe,  
And a blessing be on thy tribe!  
A writing sealed with thy ring,  
To King Amurath's Pasha  
In the city of Croia,  
The city moated and walled,  
That he surrender the same  
In the name of my master, the King;  
For what is writ in his name  
Can never be recalled."

And the Scribe bowed low in dread,  
And unto Iskander said:  
"Allah is great and just,  
But we are as ashes and dust;  
How shall I do this thing,  
When I know that my guilty head  
Will be forfeit to the King?"

Then swift as a shooting star  
The curved and shining blade  
Of Iskander's scimeter  
From its sheath, with jewels bright,  
Shot, as he thundered: "Write!"  
And the trembling Scribe obeyed,  
And wrote in the fitful glare  
Of the bivouac fire apart,  
With the chill of the midnight air  
On his forehead white and bare,  
And the chill of death in his heart.

Then again Iskander cried:  
"Now follow whither I ride,  
For here thou must not stay.  
Thou shalt be as my dearest friend,  
And honors without end  
Shall surround thee on every side,  
And attend thee night and day."  
But the sullen Scribe replied  
"Our pathways here divide;  
Mine leadeth not thy way."

And even as he spoke  
Fell a sudden scimitar-stroke,  
When no one else was near;  
And the Scribe sank to the ground,  
As a stone, pushed from the brink  
Of a black pool, might sink  
With a sob and disappear;  
And no one saw the deed;  
And in the stillness around  
No sound was heard but the sound  
Of the hoofs of Iskander's steed,  
As forward he sprang with a bound.

Then onward he rode and afar,  
With scarce three hundred men,  
Through river and forest and fen,  
O'er the mountains of Argentar;  
And his heart was merry within,  
When he crossed the river Drin,  
And saw in the gleam of the morn  
The White Castle Ak-Hissar,  
The city Croia called,  
The city moated and walled,  
The city where he was born,--  
And above it the morning star.

Then his trumpeters in the van  
On their silver bugles blew,  
And in crowds about him ran  
Albanian and Turkoman,  
That the sound together drew.  
And he feasted with his friends,  
And when they were warm with wine,  
He said: "O friends of mine,  
Behold what fortune sends,  
And what the fates design!  
King Amurath commands

That my father's wide domain,  
This city and all its lands,  
Shall be given to me again."

Then to the Castle White  
He rode in regal state,  
And entered in at the gate  
In all his arms bedight,  
And gave to the Pasha  
Who ruled in Croia  
The writing of the King,  
Sealed with his signet ring.  
And the Pasha bowed his head,  
And after a silence said:  
"Allah is just and great!  
I yield to the will divine,  
The city and lands are thine;  
Who shall contend with fate?"

Anon from the castle walls  
The crescent banner falls,  
And the crowd beholds instead,  
Like a portent in the sky,  
Iskander's banner fly,  
The Black Eagle with double head;  
And a shout ascends on high,  
For men's souls are tired of the Turks,  
And their wicked ways and works,  
That have made of Ak-Hissar  
A city of the plague;  
And the loud, exultant cry  
That echoes wide and far  
Is: "Long live Scanderbeg!"

It was thus Iskander came  
Once more unto his own;  
And the tidings, like the flame  
Of a conflagration blown  
By the winds of summer, ran,  
Till the land was in a blaze,  
And the cities far and near,  
Sayeth Ben Joshua Ben Meir,  
In his Book of the Words of the Days,  
"Were taken as a man  
Would take the tip of his ear."

## INTERLUDE

"Now that is after my own heart,"  
The Poet cried; "one understands  
Your swarthy hero Scanderbeg,  
Gauntlet on hand and boot on leg,  
And skilled in every warlike art,  
Riding through his Albanian lands,  
And following the auspicious star  
That shone for him o'er Ak-Hissar."

The Theologian added here  
His word of praise not less sincere,  
Although he ended with a jibe;  
"The hero of romance and song  
Was born," he said, "to right the wrong;  
And I approve; but all the same  
That bit of treason with the Scribe  
Adds nothing to your hero's fame."

The Student praised the good old times  
And liked the canter of the rhymes,  
That had a hoofbeat in their sound;  
But longed some further word to hear  
Of the old chronicler Ben Meir,  
And where his volume might he found.  
The tall Musician walked the room  
With folded arms and gleaming eyes,  
As if he saw the Vikings rise,  
Gigantic shadows in the gloom;  
And much he talked of their emprise,  
And meteors seen in Northern skies,  
And Heimdal's horn, and day of doom  
But the Sicilian laughed again;  
"This is the time to laugh," he said,  
For the whole story he well knew  
Was an invention of the Jew,  
Spun from the cobwebs in his brain,  
And of the same bright scarlet thread  
As was the Tale of Kambalu.

Only the Landlord spake no word;  
'T was doubtful whether he had heard  
The tale at all, so full of care  
Was he of his impending fate,  
That, like the sword of Damocles,  
Above his head hung blank and bare,  
Suspended by a single hair,  
So that he could not sit at ease,

But sighed and looked disconsolate,  
And shifted restless in his chair,  
Revolving how he might evade  
The blow of the descending blade.

The Student came to his relief  
By saying in his easy way  
To the Musician: "Calm your grief,  
My fair Apollo of the North,  
Balder the Beautiful and so forth;  
Although your magic lyre or lute  
With broken strings is lying mute,  
Still you can tell some doleful tale  
Of shipwreck in a midnight gale,  
Or something of the kind to suit  
The mood that we are in to-night  
For what is marvellous and strange;  
So give your nimble fancy range,  
And we will follow in its flight."

But the Musician shook his head;  
"No tale I tell to-night," he said,  
"While my poor instrument lies there,  
Even as a child with vacant stare  
Lies in its little coffin dead."

Yet, being urged, he said at last:  
"There comes to me out of the Past  
A voice, whose tones are sweet and wild,  
Singing a song almost divine,  
And with a tear in every line;  
An ancient ballad, that my nurse  
Sang to me when I was a child,  
In accents tender as the verse;  
And sometimes wept, and sometimes smiled  
While singing it, to see arise  
The look of wonder in my eyes,  
And feel my heart with tenor beat.  
This simple ballad I retain  
Clearly imprinted on my brain,  
And as a tale will now repeat"

## THE MUSICIAN'S TALE

### THE MOTHER'S GHOST

Svend Dyring he rideth adown the glade;  
I myself was young!  
There he hath wooed him so winsome a maid;  
Fair words gladden so many a heart.

Together were they for seven years,  
And together children six were theirs.

Then came Death abroad through the land,  
And blighted the beautiful lily-wand.

Svend Dyring he rideth adown the glade,  
And again hath he wooed him another maid,

He hath wooed him a maid and brought home a bride,  
But she was bitter and full of pride.

When she came driving into the yard,  
There stood the six children weeping so hard.

There stood the small children with sorrowful heart;  
From before her feet she thrust them apart.

She gave to them neither ale nor bread;  
"Ye shall suffer hunger and hate," she said.

She took from them their quilts of blue,  
And said: "Ye shall lie on the straw we strew."

She took from them the great waxlight;  
"Now ye shall lie in the dark at night."

In the evening late they cried with cold;  
The mother heard it under the mould.

The woman heard it the earth below:  
"To my little children I must go."

She standeth before the Lord of all:  
"And may I go to my children small?"

She prayed him so long, and would not cease,  
Until he bade her depart in peace.

"At cock-crow thou shalt return again;

Longer thou shalt not there remain!"

She girded up her sorrowful bones,  
And rifted the walls and the marble stones.

As through the village she flitted by,  
The watch-dogs howled aloud to the sky.

When she came to the castle gate,  
There stood her eldest daughter in wait.

"Why standest thou here, dear daughter mine?  
How fares it with brothers and sisters thine?"

"Never art thou mother of mine,  
For my mother was both fair and fine.

"My mother was white, with cheeks of red,  
But thou art pale, and like to the dead."

"How should I be fair and fine?  
I have been dead; pale cheeks are mine.

"How should I be white and red,  
So long, so long have I been dead?"

When she came in at the chamber door,  
There stood the small children weeping sore.

One she braided, another she brushed,  
The third she lifted, the fourth she hushed.

The fifth she took on her lap and pressed,  
As if she would suckle it at her breast.

Then to her eldest daughter said she,  
"Do thou bid Svend Dyring come hither to me."

Into the chamber when he came  
She spake to him in anger and shame.

"I left behind me both ale and bread;  
My children hunger and are not fed.

"I left behind me quilts of blue;  
My children lie on the straw ye strew.

"I left behind me the great waxlight;  
My children lie in the dark at night.

"If I come again unto your hall,  
As cruel a fate shall you befall!

"Now crows the cock with feathers red;  
Back to the earth must all the dead.

"Now crows the cock with feathers swart;  
The gates of heaven fly wide apart.

"Now crows the cock with feathers white;  
I can abide no longer to-night."

Whenever they heard the watch-dogs wail,  
They gave the children bread and ale.

Whenever they heard the watch-dogs bay,  
They feared lest the dead were on their way.

Whenever they heard the watch-dogs bark;  
I myself was young!  
They feared the dead out there in the dark.  
Fair words gladden so many a heart.

## **INTERLUDE**

Touched by the pathos of these rhymes,  
The Theologian said: "All praise  
Be to the ballads of old times  
And to the bards of simple ways,  
Who walked with Nature hand in hand,  
Whose country was their Holy Land,  
Whose singing robes were homespun brown  
From looms of their own native town,  
Which they were not ashamed to wear,  
And not of silk or sendal gay,  
Nor decked with fanciful array  
Of cockle-shells from Outre-Mer."

To whom the Student answered: "Yes;  
All praise and honor! I confess  
That bread and ale, home-baked, home-brewed,  
Are wholesome and nutritious food,  
But not enough for all our needs;  
Poets--the best of them--are birds  
Of passage; where their instinct leads  
They range abroad for thoughts and words,

And from all climes bring home the seeds  
That germinate in flowers or weeds.  
They are not fowls in barnyards born  
To cackle o'er a grain of corn;  
And, if you shut the horizon down  
To the small limits of their town,  
What do you but degrade your bard  
Till he at last becomes as one  
Who thinks the all-encircling sun  
Rises and sets in his back yard?"

The Theologian said again:  
"It may be so; yet I maintain  
That what is native still is best,  
And little care I for the rest.  
'T is a long story; time would fail  
To tell it, and the hour is late;  
We will not waste it in debate,  
But listen to our Landlord's tale."

And thus the sword of Damocles  
Descending not by slow degrees,  
But suddenly, on the Landlord fell,  
Who blushing, and with much demur  
And many vain apologies,  
Plucking up heart, began to tell  
The Rhyme of one Sir Christopher.

## THE LANDLORD'S TALE

### THE RHYME OF SIR CHRISTOPHER

It was Sir Christopher Gardiner,  
Knight of the Holy Sepulchre,  
From Merry England over the sea,  
Who stepped upon this continent  
As if his august presence lent  
A glory to the colony.

You should have seen him in the street  
Of the little Boston of Winthrop's time,  
His rapier dangling at his feet  
Doublet and hose and boots complete,  
Prince Rupert hat with ostrich plume,  
Gloves that exhaled a faint perfume,  
Luxuriant curls and air sublime,  
And superior manners now obsolete!

He had a way of saying things  
That made one think of courts and kings,  
And lords and ladies of high degree;  
So that not having been at court  
Seemed something very little short  
Of treason or lese-majesty,  
Such an accomplished knight was he.

His dwelling was just beyond the town,  
At what he called his country-seat;  
For, careless of Fortune's smile or frown,  
And weary grown of the world and its ways,  
He wished to pass the rest of his days  
In a private life and a calm retreat.

But a double life was the life he led,  
And, while professing to be in search  
Of a godly course, and willing, he said,  
Nay, anxious to join the Puritan church,  
He made of all this but small account,  
And passed his idle hours instead  
With roystering Morton of Merry Mount,  
That pettifogger from Furnival's Inn,  
Lord of misrule and riot and sin,  
Who looked on the wine when it was red.

This country-seat was little more  
Than a cabin of log's; but in front of the door  
A modest flower-bed thickly sown

With sweet alyssum and columbine  
Made those who saw it at once divine  
The touch of some other hand than his own.  
And first it was whispered, and then it was known,  
That he in secret was harboring there  
A little lady with golden hair,  
Whom he called his cousin, but whom he had wed  
In the Italian manner, as men said,  
And great was the scandal everywhere.

But worse than this was the vague surmise,  
Though none could vouch for it or aver,  
That the Knight of the Holy Sepulchre  
Was only a Papist in disguise;  
And the more to imbitter their bitter lives,  
And the more to trouble the public mind,  
Came letters from England, from two other wives,  
Whom he had carelessly left behind;  
Both of them letters of such a kind  
As made the governor hold his breath;  
The one imploring him straight to send  
The husband home, that he might amend;  
The other asking his instant death,  
As the only way to make an end.

The wary governor deemed it right,  
When all this wickedness was revealed,  
To send his warrant signed and sealed,  
And take the body of the knight.  
Armed with this mighty instrument,  
The marshal, mounting his gallant steed,  
Rode forth from town at the top of his speed,  
And followed by all his bailiffs bold,  
As if on high achievement bent,  
To storm some castle or stronghold,  
Challenge the warders on the wall,  
And seize in his ancestral hall  
A robber-baron grim and old.

But when though all the dust and heat  
He came to Sir Christopher's country-seat,  
No knight he found, nor warder there,  
But the little lady with golden hair,  
Who was gathering in the bright sunshine  
The sweet alyssum and columbine;  
While gallant Sir Christopher, all so gay,  
Being forewarned, through the postern gate  
Of his castle wall had tripped away,  
And was keeping a little holiday

In the forests, that bounded his estate.

Then as a trusty squire and true  
The marshal searched the castle through,  
Not crediting what the lady said;  
Searched from cellar to garret in vain,  
And, finding no knight, came out again  
And arrested the golden damsel instead,  
And bore her in triumph into the town,  
While from her eyes the tears rolled down  
On the sweet alyssum and columbine,  
That she held in her fingers white and fine.

The governor's heart was moved to see  
So fair a creature caught within  
The snares of Satan and of sin,  
And he read her a little homily  
On the folly and wickedness of the lives  
Of women, half cousins and half wives;  
But, seeing that naught his words availed,  
He sent her away in a ship that sailed  
For Merry England over the sea,  
To the other two wives in the old countree,  
To search her further, since he had failed  
To come at the heart of the mystery.

Meanwhile Sir Christopher wandered away  
Through pathless woods for a month and a day,  
Shooting pigeons, and sleeping at night  
With the noble savage, who took delight  
In his feathered hat and his velvet vest,  
His gun and his rapier and the rest.  
But as soon as the noble savage heard  
That a bounty was offered for this gay bird,  
He wanted to slay him out of hand,  
And bring in his beautiful scalp for a show,  
Like the glossy head of a kite or crow,  
Until he was made to understand  
They wanted the bird alive, not dead;  
Then he followed him whithersoever he fled,  
Through forest and field, and hunted him down,  
And brought him prisoner into the town.

Alas! it was a rueful sight,  
To see this melancholy knight  
In such a dismal and hapless case;  
His hat deformed by stain and dent,  
His plumage broken, his doublet rent,  
His beard and flowing locks forlorn,

Matted, dishevelled, and unshorn,  
His boots with dust and mire besprent;  
But dignified in his disgrace,  
And wearing an unblushing face.  
And thus before the magistrate  
He stood to hear the doom of fate.  
In vain he strove with wonted ease  
To modify and extenuate  
His evil deeds in church and state,  
For gone was now his power to please;  
And his pompous words had no more weight  
Than feathers flying in the breeze.

With suavity equal to his own  
The governor lent a patient ear  
To the speech evasive and highflown,  
In which he endeavored to make clear  
That colonial laws were too severe  
When applied to a gallant cavalier,  
A gentleman born, and so well known,  
And accustomed to move in a higher sphere.

All this the Puritan governor heard,  
And deigned in answer never a word;  
But in summary manner shipped away,  
In a vessel that sailed from Salem bay,  
This splendid and famous cavalier,  
With his Rupert hat and his popery,  
To Merry England over the sea,  
As being unmeet to inhabit here.

Thus endeth the Rhyme of Sir Christopher,  
Knight of the Holy Sepulchre,  
The first who furnished this barren land  
With apples of Sodom and ropes of sand.

## **FINALE**

These are the tales those merry guests  
Told to each other, well or ill;  
Like summer birds that lift their crests  
Above the borders of their nests  
And twitter, and again are still.

These are the tales, or new or old,  
In idle moments idly told;  
Flowers of the field with petals thin,

Lilies that neither toil nor spin,  
And tufts of wayside weeds and gorse  
Hung in the parlor of the inn  
Beneath the sign of the Red Horse.

And still, reluctant to retire,  
The friends sat talking by the fire  
And watched the smouldering embers burn  
To ashes, and flash up again  
Into a momentary glow,  
Lingering like them when forced to go,  
And going when they would remain;  
For on the morrow they must turn  
Their faces homeward, and the pain  
Of parting touched with its unrest  
A tender nerve in every breast.

But sleep at last the victory won;  
They must be stirring with the sun,  
And drowsily good night they said,  
And went still gossiping to bed,  
And left the parlor wrapped in gloom.  
The only live thing in the room  
Was the old clock, that in its pace  
Kept time with the revolving spheres  
And constellations in their flight,  
And struck with its uplifted mace  
The dark, unconscious hours of night,  
To senseless and unlistening ears.

Uprose the sun; and every guest,  
Uprisen, was soon equipped and dressed  
For journeying home and city-ward;  
The old stage-coach was at the door,  
With horses harnessed, long before  
The sunshine reached the withered sward  
Beneath the oaks, whose branches hoar  
Murmured: "Farewell forevermore."

"Farewell!" the portly Landlord cried;  
"Farewell!" the parting guests replied,  
But little thought that nevermore  
Their feet would pass that threshold o'er;  
That nevermore together there  
Would they assemble, free from care,  
To hear the oaks' mysterious roar,  
And breathe the wholesome country air.

Where are they now? What lands and skies

Paint pictures in their friendly eyes?  
What hope deludes, what promise cheers,  
What pleasant voices fill their ears?  
Two are beyond the salt sea waves,  
And three already in their graves.  
Perchance the living still may look  
Into the pages of this book,  
And see the days of long ago  
Floating and fleeting to and fro,  
As in the well-remembered brook  
They saw the inverted landscape gleam,  
And their own faces like a dream  
Look up upon them from below.