











He was very dear to me, —  
 And I thought no London merchant  
 Would have stood as high as he! 160

“He grew very strange and moody,  
 What the cause I cannot say; —  
 And he left me when my daughter,  
 My poor Alice, went away!

“I had been a father to him, 165  
 He to me was like a son:  
 Young folks should have more reflection, —  
 ’Twas what *I* could not have done!

“True, he writes me duteous letters;  
 Calls me father, tells me all 170  
 That in foreign parts is doing, —  
 But young people write so small,

“That I’m often forced to leave them,  
 Pleasant letters though they be,  
 Until Alice comes from Richmond, 175  
 Then she reads them out to me.

“Alice fain would have me with her;  
 Leonard well deserves my praise —  
 But he’s not my Richard Burnell,  
 Knows not my old wants and ways! 180

“No, my friends, I’ll not deny it,  
 It has cut me to the heart,  
 That the son of my adoption  
 Thus has played a cruel part!”

So the merchant mourned and murmured; 185  
 And all foreign charms unheeding,  
 Dwelt the lonely Richard Burnell,  
 With his bruised heart still bleeding.



And, when grew the grief too mighty,  
Then — there was no help — I fled.

“Yes, I loved thee, long had loved thee, 225  
And alone the God above,  
He, who at that time sustained me,  
Knows the measure of my love!

“Do not let these words displease thee;  
Life’s sore battle soon will cease; 230  
I have fallen amid the conflict,  
But within my soul is peace.

“It has been a fiery trial,  
But the fiercest pang is past;  
Once more I am come amongst you — 235  
Oh! stand by me at the last!

“Leonard will at times come to me,  
And thy father. I will try  
To be cheerful in his presence,  
As I was in days gone by. 240

“Bitter has it been to leave him;  
But in all my heart’s distress,  
The great anguish which consumed me  
Seemed to swallow up the less.

“Let me go! my soul is wearied, 245  
No fond heart of me has need,  
Life has no more duties for me; —  
I am but a broken reed!

“Let me go, ere courage faileth,  
Gazing, gazing thus on thee! — 250  
But in life’s last awful moment,  
Alice! thou wilt stand by me!”

From her seat rose Alice Woodvil,  
And in steadfast tones began,  
Like a strong consoling angel, 255  
To address the dying man.



“Not in death alone, my brother,  
    Would I aid thee in the strife;  
I would fain be thy sustainer  
    In the fiercer fight of life. 260

“With the help of God, thy spirit  
    Shall not in this conflict yield;  
Prayer, the key which opens heaven,  
    Is the Christian’s sword and shield.

“God will aid thee! We will hold thee 265  
    By our love! — thou shalt not go! —  
And from out thy wounded spirit,  
    We will pluck the thorns of woe.

“Say not life has no more duties 270  
    Which can claim thee! Where are then  
All the sinners; the neglected;  
    All the weeping sons of men?

“Ah, my friend, hast thou forgotten 275  
    All our dreams of early days?  
How we would instruct poor children,  
    How we would the fallen raise!

“God has not to me permitted 280  
    Such great work of human love;  
He has marked me out a lower  
    Path of duty where to move.

“But to thee, His chosen servant,  
    Is this higher lot allowed;  
He has brought thee through deep waters,  
    Through the furnace, through the cloud;

“He has made of thee a mourner, 285  
    Like the Christ, that thou may’st rise  
To a purer height of glory,  
    Through the pangs of sacrifice!

“Tis alone of His appointing,

That thy feet on thorns have trod; 290  
Suffering, woe, renunciation,  
Only bring us nearer God.

“And when nearest Him, then largest  
The enfranchised heart’s embrace: —  
It was Christ, the Man rejected, 295  
Who redeemed the human race.

“Say not, then, thou hast no duties; —  
Friendless outcasts on thee call,  
And the sick and the afflicted,  
And the children, more than all. 300

“Oh, my friend, rise up, and follow  
Where the hand of God shall lead;  
He has brought thee through affliction,  
But to fit thee for His need!”

Thus she spoke; and as from midnight 305  
Springs the opal-tinted morn,  
So, within his dreary spirit,  
A new day of life was born.

Strength sublime may rise from weakness,  
Groans be turned to songs of praise, 310  
Nor are life’s divinest labours  
Only told by length of days.

Young he died: but deeds of mercy  
Beautified his life’s short span,  
And he left his worldly substance 315  
To complete what he began.

(From *The Poets of the Nineteenth Century*. Selected and  
Edited by the Rev. Robert Aris Willmott. New York:  
Harper & Brothers, 1858)