

Like splendour-wingéd butterflies
From honey'd hearts of flowers in May:

The fields with bloom flamed out and flusht,
The Roses into crimson year'n'd, 190
With cloudy fire the wall-flowers burn'd,
And blood-red Sunsets bloom'd and blusht —

And still her cheek was pale as pearl, —
It took no tint of Summer's wealth
Of colour, warmth, and wine of Health: — 195
Death's hand so whitely pressed the Girl!

No blushes swarm'd to the Sun's kiss
Where violet-veins ran purple light,
So tenderly thro' Parian white,
Touching you into tenderness. 200

A spirit-look was in her face,
That shadow'd a miraculous range
Of meanings, ever rich and strange,
Or lighten'd glory in the place.

Such mystic lore was in her eyes, 205
And light of other worlds than ours,
She lookt as she had fed on flowers,
And drunk the dews of Paradise.

Her brow — fit home for daintiest dreams —
With such a dawn of light was crown'd, 210
And reeling ringlets shower'd round,
Like sunny sheaves of golden beams:

And she would talk so weirdly-wild,
And grow upon your wonderings,
As tho' her stature rose on wings! 215
And you forgot she was a Child.

Ah! she was one of those who come
With pledgéd promise not to stay
Long, ere the Angels let them stray

To nestle down in earthly home: 220

And, thro' the windows of her eyes,
We often saw her saintly soul,
Serene, and sad, and beautiful,
Go sorrowing for lost Paradise.

Our Lamb in mystic meadows play'd: 225
In some celestial sleep she walkt
Her dream of life, and low we talkt,
As of her waking heart-afraid.

In Earth she took no lusty root,
Her beauty of promise to disclose, 230
And round into the Woman-Rose,
And climb into Life's crowning fruit.

She came — like music in the night
Floating as heaven in the brain,
A moment oped, and shut again, 235
And all is dark where all was light.

She came, — as comes the light of smiles
O'er earth, and every budding thing
Makes quick with beauty — alive with Spring;
Then goeth to Hesperian Isles. 240

Midnight was trancéd solemnly
Thinking of dawn: Her Star-thoughts burn'd!
The Trees like burden'd Prophets yearn'd,
Rapt in a wind of prophecy:

When, like the Night, the shadow of Woe 245
On all things laid its hand death-dark,
Our last hope went out like a spark,
And a cry smote heaven like a blow!

We sat and watcht by Life's dark stream,
Our love-lamp blown about the night, 250

With hearts that lived as lived its light,
And died as died its precious gleam.

In Death's face hers flasht up and smiled,
As smile the young flowers in their prime,
I' the face of their grey murderer Time, 255
And Death for true love kist our child.

She thought our good-night kiss was given,
And like a lily her life did close;
Angels uncurtain'd that repose,
And the next waking dawn'd in heaven. 260

With her white hands claspt she sleepeth; heart is husht, and lips are cold;
Death shrouds up her heaven of beauty, and a weary way I go,
Like the sheep without a Shepherd on the wintry norland wold,
With the face of Day shut out by blinding snow.

O'er its widow'd nest my heart sits moaning for its young that 's fled 265
From this world of wail and weeping, gone to join her starry peers;
And my light of life 's o'ershadow'd where the dear one lieth dead,
And I 'm crying in the dark with many fears.

All last night-tide she seemed near me, like a lost beloved Bird,
Beating at the lattice louder than the sobbing wind and rain; 270
And I call'd across the night with tender name and fondling word;
And I yearn'd out thro' the darkness, all in vain.

Heart will plead, "Eyes cannot see her: they are blind with tears of pain;"
And it climbeth up and straineth, for dear life to look and hark
While I call her once again: but there cometh no refrain, 275
And it droppeth down, and dieth in the dark.

In this dim world of clouding cares,
We rarely know, till wildered eyes
See white wings lessening up the skies,
The Angels with us unawares. 280

And thou hast stolen a jewel, Death!
Shall light thy dark up like a Star,
A Beacon kindling from afar
Our light of love, and fainting faith.

Thro' tears it gleams perpetually, 285
And glitters thro' the thickest glooms,
Till the eternal morning comes
To light us o'er the Jasper Sea.

With our best branch in tenderest leaf,
We 've strewn the way our Lord doth come; 290
And, ready for the harvest-home,
His Reapers bind our ripest sheaf.

Our beautiful Bird of light hath fled:
Awhile she sat with folded wings —
Sang round us a few hoverings — 295
Then straightway into glory sped.

And white-wing'd Angels nurture her;
With heaven's white radiance robed and crown'd,
And all Love's purple glory round,
She summers on the Hills of Myrrh. 300

Thro' Childhood's morning-land, serene
She walkt betwixt us twain, like Love;
While, in a robe of light above,
Her better Angel walkt unseen,

Till Life's highway broke bleak and wild; 305
Then, lest her starry garments trail
In mire, heart bleed, and courage fail,
The Angel's arms caught up the child.

Her wave of life hath backward roll'd
To the great ocean; on whose shore 310
We wander up and down, to store
Some treasures of the times of old:

And aye we seek and hunger on
 For precious pearls and relics rare,
 Strewn on the sands for us to wear
At heart, for love of her that 's gone. 315

O weep no more! there yet is balm
 In Gilead! Love doth ever shed
 Rich healing where it nestles, — spread
O'er desert pillows, some green Palm! 320

Strange glory streams thro' Life's wild rents,
 And thro' the open door of Death
 We see the heaven that beckoneth
To the Beloved going hence.

God's ichor fills the hearts that bleed; 325
 The best fruit loads the broken bough;
 And in the wounds our sufferings plough,
Immortal Love sows sovereign seed.

(From *The Ballad of Babe Christabel with Other Lyrical Poems*.
Fourth Edition, Revised and Enlarged. London, 1854)