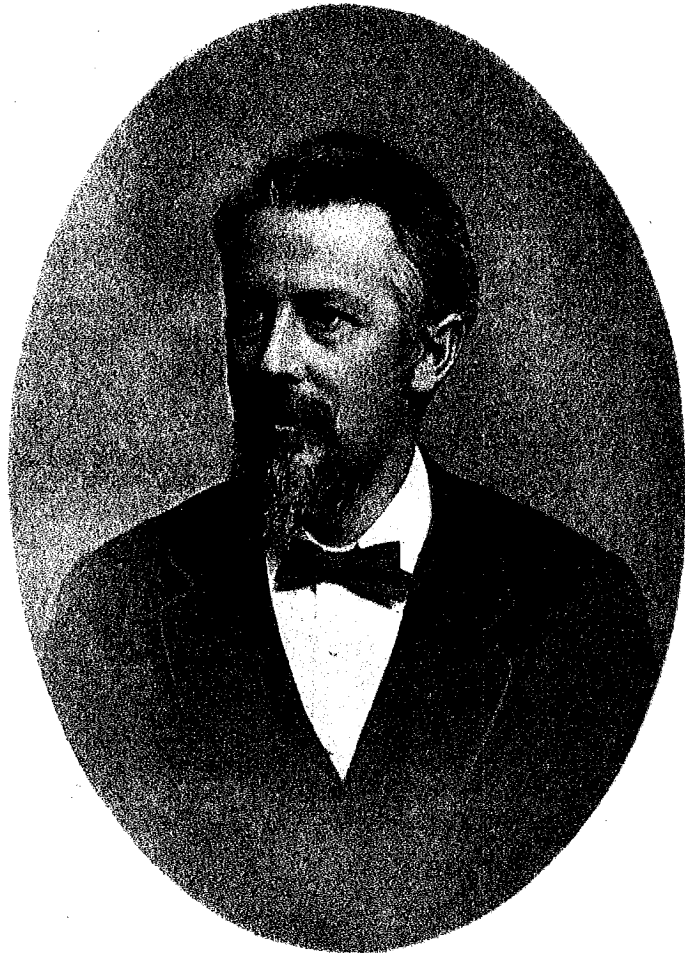




*Edward Dowden.
Aged 43.*

Edward Dowden

A CRITICAL EDITION OF THE COMPLETE POETRY

Edited by Wayne K. Chapman

Chapman, Wayne K., ed. 2015. *Edward Dowden: a critical edition of the complete poetry*. Clemson, SC: Clemson University Press.



UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA LAS VEGAS
LIBRARY



THE HEROINES

HELENA

(TENTH YEAR OF TROY-SIEGE)

- 1 She stood upon the wall of windy Troy,
 2 And lifted high both arms, and cried aloud
 3 With no man near:—
 " Troy-town and glory of Greece
 4 Strive, let the flame aspire, and pride of life
 5 Glow to white heat! Great lords be strong rejoice,
 6 Lament, know victory, know defeat—then die;
 7 Fair is the living many-coloured play
 8 Of hates and loves, and fair it is to cease,
 9 To cease from these and all Earth's comely things.
 10 I, Helena, impatient of a couch
 11 dim-scented, and dark eyes my face had fed,
 12 And soft captivity of circling arms,
 13 come forth to shed my spirit on you, a wind
 14 And sunlight of commingling life and death.
 15 City and tented plain behold who stands
 16 Betwixt you! Seems she worth a play of swords,
 17 And glad expense of rival hopes and Hates?
 18 Have the Gods given a prize which may content,
 19 Who set yours games afoot,—no fictile vase,
 20 But a sufficient goblet of great gold,
 21 Embossed with heroes, filled with perfumed wine?
 22 How! Doubt ye? Thus I draw the robe aside
 23 And bare the breasts of Helen.
- Yesterday
- 24 A mortal maiden I beheld, the light
 25 Tender within her eyes, laying white arms
 26 Around her sire's mailed breast, and heard her chide
 27 Because his cheek was blood-splashed, —I beheld
 28 And did not wish me her. O, not for this
 29 A God's blood thronged within my mother's veins!
 30 For no such tender purpose rose the swan
 31 With ruffled plumes, and hissing in his joy
 32 Flashed up the stream, and held with heavy wings
 33 Leda, and curved the neck to reach her lips,

- 34 And stayed, nor left her lightly. It is well
 35 To have quickened into glory one supreme.
 36 wift hour, the century's fiery-hearted bloom,
 37 Which falls,—to stand a splendor paramount,
 38 A beacon of high hearts and fates of men,
 39 A flame blown round by clear, contending winds,
 40 Which gladden in the contest and wax strong.
 41 Cities of Greece, fair islands, and Troy town,
 42 Accept a woman's service; these my hands
 43 Hold not the distaff, ply not at the loom;
 44 I store from year to year no well-wrought web
 45 For daughter's dowry; wide the web I make,
 46 Fine-tissued, costly as the Gods desire,
 47 Shot with a gleaming woof of lives and deaths,
 48 Inwrought with colours flowerlike, piteous, strange.
 49 Oblivion yields before me: ye winged years
 50 Which make escape from darkness, the red light
 51 Of a wild dawn upon your plumes, I stand
 52 The mother of the stars and winds of heaven,
 53 Your eastern Eos; cry across the storm!
 54 Through me man's heart grows wider; little town
 55 Asleep in silent sunshine and smooth air,
 56 While babe grew man beneath your girdling towers,
 57 Wake, wonder, left the eager head alert,
 58 Snake-like, and swift to strike, while altar-flame
 59 Rises for plighted faith with neighbor town
 60 That slept upon the mountain-shelf, and showed
 61 A small white templed in the morning sun.
 62 Oh, ever one way tending you keen brows
 63 Which shear the shadowy waves when stars are faint
 64 And break with emulous cries unto the dawn,
 65 I gaze and draw you onward; splendid names
 66 Lurk in you, and high deeds, and unachieved
 67 Virtues, and house-o'erwhelming crimes, while life
 68 Leaps in sharp flame ere all be ashes grey.
 69 Thus have I willed it ever since the hour
 70 When that great lord, the one man worshipful,
 71 Whose hands had haled the fierce Hippolyta
 72 Lightly form out her throng of martial maids,
 73 Would grace his triumph, strength his large joy
 74 With splendor of the swan-begotten child,

75 Nor asked a ten years' siege to make acquist
 76 Of all her virgin store. No dream that was,—
 77 The moonlight in the woods, our singing stream,
 78 Eurotas, the sleep panther at my feet,
 79 And on my heart a hero's strong right hand.
 80 O draught of love immortal! Dastard world
 81 Too poor for great exchange of soul, too poor
 82 For equal lives made glorious! O too poor
 83 For Theseus and for Helena

Yet now

84 It yields once more a brightness, if no love;
 85 Around me flash the tides, and in my ears
 86 A dangerous melody and piercing-clear
 87 Sing the twin siren-sisters, Death and Life;
 88 I rise and gird my spirit for the close.

89 Last night Cassandra cried 'Ruin, ruin, and ruin!'
 90 I mocked her not, nor disbelieved; the gloom
 91 Gathers, and twilight takes the unwary world.
 92 Hold me, ye Gods, a torch across the night,
 93 With one long flare blown back o'er tower and town,
 94 Till the last things of Troy complete themselves:
 95 —Then blackness, and the grey dust of a heart."

ATALANTA

1 "Millanion, seven years ago this day
 2 You overcame me by a golden fraud,
 3 Traitor, and see I crown your cup with flowers,
 4 With violets and white sorrel from dim haunts,—
 5 A fair libation—ask you to what God?
 6 To Artemis, to Artemis my Queen.

7 Not by my will did you escape the spear
 8 Though piteous I might be for your glad life,
 9 Husband, and for you foolish love: the Gods
 10 Who heard your vows had care of you: I stopped
 11 Half toward the beauty of the shining thing
 12 Through some blind motion of an instant joy,—
 13 As when our babe reached arms to pluck the moon
 14 A great, round, fruit between dark apple-boughs,—

15 And half, marking your wife, to fling away
 16 Needless advantage, conquer carelessly,
 17 And pass the goal with one light finger-touch
 18 Just while you leaned forth the bent body's length
 19 To reach it. Could I guess I strove with three,
 20 With Aphrodite, Eros, and the third—
 21 Milanion? There upon the maple-post
 22 Your right hand rested: the event had sprung
 23 Compete form darkness, and possessed the world
 24 Ere yet conceived: upon the edge of doom
 25 I stood with foot arrested and blind heart,
 26 Aware of nought save some unmastered fate
 27 And reddening neck and brow. I heard you cry
 28 'Judgment, both umpires!' saw you stand erect,
 29 Panting, and with a face so glad, so great
 30 It shone through all my dull bewilderment
 31 A beautiful uncomprehended joy,
 32 One perfect thing and bright in a strange world.
 33 But when I looked to see my father shamed,
 34 A-choke with rage and words of proper scorn,
 35 He nodded, and the beard upon his breast
 36 Pulled twice or thrice, well-pleased, and laughed aloud,
 37 And while the wrinkles gathered round his eyes
 38 Cried 'Girl, well done! My brother's son retain
 39 Shrewd head upon your shoulders! Maidens ho!
 40 A veil for Atalanta, and a zone
 41 Male fingers may unclasp! Lead home the bride,
 42 Prepare the nuptial chamber!' At his word
 43 My life turned round: too great the shame had grown
 44 With all men leagued to mock me. Could I stay,
 45 Confront the vulgar gladness of the world
 46 At high emprise defeated, a free life
 47 Tethered, light dimmed, a virtue singular
 48 Subdued to ways of common use and wont?
 49 Must I become the men's familiar jest,
 50 The comment of the matron-guild? I turned,
 51 I sought the woods, sought silence, solitude,
 52 Green depths divine, where the soft-footed ounce
 53 Lurks, and the light deer comes and drinks and goes,
 54 Familiar paths in which the mind might gain

55 Footing, and haply from a vantage-ground
 56 Drive this new fate an arm's-length, hand's-breadth off
 57 A little while, till certitude of sight
 58 And strength retuned.

At evening I went back,
 59 Walked past the idle groups at gossipry,
 60 sought you, and laid my hand upon your wriest,
 61 Drew you apart, and with no shaken voice
 62 Spoke, while the swift, hard strokes my heart out-beat
 63 Seemed growing audible, 'Milanion,
 64 A am your wife for freedom and fair deeds:
 65 Choose: am I such an one a man could love?
 66 What need you? Some soft song to soothe your life,
 67 Or a clear cry at daybreak?' And I ceased.
 68 How deemed you that first moment? That the Gods
 69 Had changed my heart? That I since morn had grown
 70 Haunter of Aphrodite's golden shrine,
 71 had kneeled before the victress, vowed my vow,
 72 Besought her pardon, 'Aphrodite, grace!
 73 Accept the rueful Atalanta's gifts,
 74 Rose wreaths and snow-white doves?'

In the dim woods
 75 There is a sacred place, a solitude
 76 Within their solitude, a heart of strength
 77 Within their strength. The rocks are heaped around
 78 A goblet of great waters ever fed
 79 By one swift stream which flings itself in air
 80 With all the madness, mirth and melody
 81 Of twenty rivulets gathered in the hills
 82 Where might escapes in gladness. Here the trees
 83 Strike deeper roots into the heart of earth,
 84 And hold more high communion with the heavens;
 85 here in the hush of noon the silence broods
 86 More full of vague divinity; the light
 87 Slow-changing and the shadows as they shift
 88 Seem characters of some inscrutable law,
 89 And one who lingers long will almost hope
 90 The secret of the world may be surprised
 91 Ere he depart. It is a haunt beloved
 92 Of Artemis, the echoing rocks have heard
 93 Her laughter and her lore, and the brown stream
 94 Flashed, smitten by the splendor of her limbs.
 95 Hither I came; here turned, and dared confront

96 Pursuing thoughts; here held my life at gaze,
 97 If ruined at least to clear loose wrack away,
 98 Study its lines of bare dismantlement,
 99 And shape a strict despair. With fixed hard lips,
 100 Dry-eyed, I set my face against the stream
 101 To Deal with fate; they play of woven light
 102 Gleaming and glancing on the rippled flood
 103 Grew to a tyranny; and one visioned face
 104 Would glide into the circle of my sight,
 105 Would glide and pass away, so glad, so great
 106 The imminent joy it brought seemed charged with fear.
 107 I rose, paced from trunk to trunk, brief track
 108 This way and that; at least my will maintained
 109 Her law upon my limbs; they needs must turn
 110 At the appointed limit. A keen cry
 111 Rose from heart—"Toils of the world grown strong,
 112 'Yield strength, yield strength to rend them to my hands;
 113 'Be thou apparent, Queen! In dubious ways
 114 'Lo my feet fail; cry down the forest blade,
 115 'Pierce with thry voice the tangle and dark boughs,
 116 'Call, and I follow thee.'

What things made up
 117 Memorial for the Prescene of the place
 118 Thenceforth to hold? Only the torrent's leap
 119 Endlessly vibrating, monotonous rhythm
 120 Of the swift footstep pacing to and fro,
 121 Only a soul's reiterated cry
 122 Under the calm, controlling, ancient trees,
 123 And tutelary ward and watch of heaven
 124 Felt through steep inlets which the upper airs
 125 Blew wider.

On the grass as last I lay
 126 Seized by a pace divine, I know not how;
 127 Passive, yet never so possessed of power,
 128 Strong, yet content to feel not use my strength
 129 Sustained a babe upon the breasts of life
 130 Yet armed with adult will, a shining spear.
 131 O strong deliverance of the larger law
 132 Which strove not with the less! Impetuous youth
 133 Caught up in ampler forced of womanhood!
 134 Co-operant ardours of joined lives! the calls
 135 Of heart to heart in chase of strenuous deeds!

136 Virgin and wedded freedom not disjoined,
 137 And loyal married service to my Queen!

 138 Husband, have lesser gains these seven good years
 139 Been yours because you chose no gracious maid
 140 Whose hands had woven in the women's room
 141 Many fair garments, while her dreaming heart
 142 Had prescience of the bridal; one whose claims,
 143 Tender exactions feminine, had pleased
 144 Fond husband, one whose gentle gifts had pleased,
 145 Soft playful touches, little amorous words,
 146 Untutored thoughts that widened up toward yours,
 147 With trustful homage of uplifted eyes,
 148 And sweetest sorrows lightly comforted?
 149 Have we two challenged each the other's heart
 150 Too highly? Have our joys been all too large,
 151 No gleaming gems on finger or on neck
 152 A man may turn and touch caressingly,
 153 But ampler than this heaven we stand beneath—
 154 Wide wings of Presences august? Our lives,
 155 Were it not better they had stood apart
 156 A little space, letting the sweet sense grow
 157 Of distance bridged by love? Had that full calm,—
 158 I may not question since you call it true,—
 159 Found in some rightness of a women's will,
 160 Been gladder through perturbing touch of doubt,
 161 By brief unrest made exquisitely aware
 162 Of all its dear possession? Have our eyes
 163 Met with too calm directness—soul to soul
 164 Turned with the unerroneous long regard,
 165 Until no stuff remains for dreams to weave,
 166 Nought but unmeasured faithfulness, clear depths
 167 Pierced by the sun, and yielding to the eye
 168 Which searches, yet no fathoms? Did my lips
 169 Lay on your lips too great a pledge of love
 170 With awe too rapturous? Teach me how I fail,
 171 Recount what things your life has missed through me,
 172 Appease me with new needs; my strength is weak
 173 Trembling toward perfect service.”

In her eyes
 174 Tears stood and utterance ceased. Wondering the boy
 175 Parthenopœus stopped his play and gazed.

EUROPA

1 “He stood with head erect fronting the herd;
 2 At the first sight of him I knew the God
 3 And had no fear. The grass is sweet and long
 4 Up the east land backed by a pale blue heaven:
 5 Grey, shining gravel shelves toward the sea
 6 Which sang and sparkled; between these he stood,
 7 Beautiful, with imperious head, firm foot,
 8 And eyes resolved on present victory,
 9 Which swerved not from the full acquist of joy,
 10 Calmly triumphant. Did I see at all
 11 The creamy hide, deep dewlap, little horns,
 12 Or hear the girls describe them? I beheld
 13 Zeus, and the law of my completed life.
 14 Therefore the ravishment of some great calm
 15 Possessed me, and I could not basely start
 16 Or scream; if there was terror in my breast
 17 It was to see the inevitable bliss
 18 In prone descent from heaven; apart I lived
 19 Held in some solitude, intense and clear,
 20 Even while amid the frolic girls I stooped
 21 And praised the flowers we gathered, they and I,
 22 Pink-streaked convolvulus the warm sand bears,
 23 Orchids, dark poppies with the crumpled leaf,
 24 And reeds and giant rushes from a pond
 25 Where the blue dragon-fly shimmers and shifts.
 26 All these were notes of music, harmonies
 27 Fashioned to underlie a resonant song,
 28 Which sang how no more days of flower-culling
 29 Little Europa must desire; henceforth
 30 The large needs of the world resumed her life,
 31 So her least joy must be no trivial thing,
 32 But ordered as the motion of the stars,
 33 Or grand incline of sun-flower to the sun.

[stanza break]

1 “He] He P1877

5 Grey] Gray P1876, P1877

Europa “Feb 24 1873” KSU, UK; 1873 P1914

Europa In Greek mythology, a Phoenician princess who was abducted by Zeus and taken to the island of Crete.

13 Zeus, in Greek mythology, is the ruler of the gods.

34 By this the God was near; my soul waxed strong,
 35 And wider orb'd the vision of the world
 36 As fate drew nigh. He stooped, all gentleness,
 37 Inviting touches of the tender hands,
 38 And wore the wreaths they twisted round his horns
 39 In lordly-playful wise, me all this while
 40 Summoning by great mandates at my heart,
 41 Which silenced every less authentic call,
 42 Away, away, from girlhood, home, sweet friends,
 43 The daily dictates of my mother's will,
 44 Agenor's cherishing hand, and all the ways
 45 Of the calm household. I would fain have felt
 46 Some ruth to part from these, the tender ties
 47 Severing with thrills of passion. Can I blame
 48 My heart for light surrender of things dear,
 49 And hardness of a little selfish soul?
 50 Nay: the decree of joy was over me,
 51 There was the altar, I, the sacrifice
 52 Foredoomed to life, not death; the victim bound
 53 Looked for the stroke, the world's one fact for her,
 54 The blissful consummation: straight to this
 55 Her course had tended from the hour of birth.
 56 Even till this careless morn of maidenhood
 57 A sudden splendour changed to life's high noon:
 58 For this my mother taught me gracious things,
 59 My father's thoughts had dealt with me, for this
 60 The least flower blossomed, the least cloud went by,
 61 All things conspired for this; the glad event
 62 Summed my full past and held it, as the fruit
 63 Holds the fair sequence of the bud and flower
 64 In soft maturity.

Now he bent the knee;

65 I never doubted of my part to do,
 66 Nor lingered idly, since to veil command
 67 In tender invitation pleased my lord;

44 Agenor is a Phoenician king of Tyre and father of Europa.

55 birth.] birth, P1876, P1877

68 I sat, and round his neck one arm I laid
 69 Beyond all chance secure. Whether my weight
 70 Or the soft pressure of the encircling arm
 71 Quickened in him some unexpected bliss
 72 I know not, but his flight was one steep rush.
 73 O uncontrollable and joyous rage!
 74 O splendour of the multitudinous sea!
 75 Swift foam about my feet, the eager stroke
 76 Of the strong swimmer, new sea-creatures brave,
 77 And uproar of blown conch, and shouting lips
 78 Under the open heaven; till Crete rose fair
 79 With steadfast shining peak, and promontories.

80 Shed not a leaf, O plane-tree, not a leaf,
 81 Let sacred shadow, and slumbrous sound remain
 82 Always, where Zeus looked down upon his bride."

ANDROMEDA

1 "This is my joy—that when my soul had wrought
 2 Her single victory over fate and fear,
 3 He came, who was deliverance. At the first,
 4 Though the rough-bearded fellows bruised my wrists
 5 Holding them backwards while they drove the bolts,
 6 And stared around my body, workman-like,
 7 I did not argue nor bewail; but when
 8 The flash and dip of equal oars had passed,
 9 And I was left a thing for sky and sea
 10 To encircle, gaze on, wonder at, not save—
 11 The clear resolve which I had grasped and held,
 12 Slipped as a dew-drop slips from some flower-cup
 13 O'erweighted, and I longed to cry aloud
 14 One sharp, great cry, and scatter the fixed will,
 15 In fond self-pity. Have you watched night-long,

Europa 79 steadfast] stedfast P1876, 1877 82 bride.] bride. P1877

Andromeda 1 "This] This P1876, P1877, PPNC (1891)

Europa 78 Crete is the largest Greek island in the Southern Aegean Sea.

Andromeda 1873 P1914

Andromeda In Greek mythology, Andromeda is an Ethiopian princess and daughter of Casseopeia; she was fastened to a rock and exposed to a sea monster sent by Poseidon, but was rescued by Perseus; also, a constellation that contains the Andromeda Galaxy.

16 Above a face from which the life recedes,
 17 And seen death set his seal before the dawn?
 18 You do not shriek and clasp the hands, but just
 19 When morning finds the world once more all good
 20 And ready for wave's leap and swallow's flight,
 21 There comes a drift from undiscovered flowers,
 22 A drone of a sailing bee, a dance of light
 23 Among the awakened leaves, a touch, a tang,
 24 A nameless nothing, and the world turns round,
 25 And the full soul runs over, and tears flow,
 26 And it is seen a piteous thing to die.
 27 So fared it there with me; the ripple ran
 28 Crisp to my feet; the tufted sea-pink bloomed
 29 From a cleft rock, I saw the insects drop
 30 From blossom into blossom; and the wide
 31 Intolerable splendour of the sea,
 32 Calm in a liquid hush of summer morn,
 33 Girdled me, and no cloud relieved the sky.
 34 I had refused to drink the proffered wine
 35 Before they bound me, and my strength was less
 36 Than needful: yet the cry escaped not, yet
 37 My purpose had not fallen abroad in ruin;
 38 Only the perfect knowledge I had won
 39 Of things which fate decreed deserted me,
 40 The vision I had held of life and death
 41 Was blurred by some vague mist of piteousness,
 42 Nor could I lean upon a steadfast will.
 43 Therefore I closed both eyes resolved to search
 44 Backwards across the abysm, and find Death there,
 45 And hold him with my hand, and scan his face
 46 By my own choice, and read his strict intent
 47 On lip and brow,—not hunted to his feet
 48 And cowering slavewise; 'Death,' I whispered, 'Death,'
 49 Calling him whom I needed: and he came.

50 Wherefore record the travail of the soul
 51 Through darkness to grey light, the cloudy war,
 52 The austere calm, the bitter victory?
 53 It seemed that I had mastered fate, and held,
 54 Still with shut eyes, the passion of my heart

21 drift] whiff P1876

29 drop] drop, P1876 rock,] rock; PPNC (1891)

44 abysm,] abysm PPNC (1891)

48 whispered,] whispered P1876, P1877... 'Death,' I whispered, 'Death,'] 'Death,' I whispered,
 "Death," PPNC (1891)

55 Compressed, and cast the election of my will
 56 Into that scale made heavy with the woe
 57 Of all the world, and fair relinquished lives.
 58 Suddenly the broad sea was vibrated,
 59 And the air shaken with confused noise
 60 Not like the steadfast splash and creak of oars,
 61 And higher on my foot the ripple slid.
 62 The monster was abroad beneath the sun.
 63 This therefore was the moment—could my soul
 64 Sustain her trial? And the soul replied
 65 A swift, sure 'Yes': yet must I look forth once,
 66 Confront my anguish, nor drop blindly down
 67 From horror into horror: and I looked—
 68 O thou deliverance, thou bright victory
 69 I saw thee, and was saved! The middle air
 70 Was cleft by thy impatience of revenge,
 71 Thy zeal to render freedom on things bound:
 72 The conquest sitting on thy brow, the joy
 73 Of thy unerring flight became to me
 74 Nowise mere hope, but full enfranchisement.
 75 A sculptor of the isles has carved the deed
 76 Upon a temple's frieze; the maiden chained
 77 Lifts one free arm across her eyes to hide
 78 The terror of the moment, and her head
 79 Sideways averted writhes the slender neck:
 80 While with a careless grace in flying curve,
 81 And glad like Hermes in his aery poise,
 82 Toward the gaping throat a youth extends
 83 The sword held lightly. When to sacrifice
 84 I pass at morn with my tall Sthenelos,

51 grey] gray P1876, P1877

65 'Yes':] 'Yes:' P1876, P1877

71 on] to PPNC (1891)

81 "Hermes" in Greek mythology, is the messenger of the gods.

84 "Sthenelos" in Greek Mythology was the son of Perseus and Andromeda and was a king of Mycenae.

85 I smile, but do not speak. No! when my gaze
 86 First met him I was saved; because the world
 87 Could hold so brave a creature I was free:
 88 Here one had come with not my father's eyes
 89 Which darkened to the clamour of the crowd,
 90 And gave a grieved assent; not with the eyes
 91 Of anguish-stricken Cassiopeia, dry
 92 And staring as I passed her to the boat.
 93 Was not the beauty of his strength and youth
 94 Warrant for many good things in the world
 95 Which could not be so poor while nourishing him?
 96 What faithlessness of heart could countervail
 97 The witness of that brow? What dastard chains?
 98 Did he not testify of sovereign powers
 99 O'ermatching evil, awful charities
 100 Which save and slay, the terror of clear joy,
 101 Unquenchable intolerance of ill,
 102 Order subduing chaos, beauty pledged
 103 To conquest of all foul deformities?
 104 And was there need to turn my head aside,
 105 I, who had one sole thing to do, no more,
 106 To watch the deed? I know the careless grace
 107 My Perseus wears in manage of the steed,
 108 Or shooting the swift disc: not such the mode
 109 Of that victorious moment of descent
 110 When the large tranquil might his soul contains
 111 Was gathered for a swift abolishment
 112 Of proud brute-tyranny. He seemed in air
 113 A shining spear which hisses in its speed
 114 And smites through boss and breastplate. Did he see
 115 Andromeda, who never glanced at her
 116 But set his face against the evil thing?
 117 I know not; yet one truth I may not doubt
 118 How ere the wallowing monster blind and vast
 119 Turned a white belly to the sun, he stood
 120 Beside me with some word of comfort strong
 121 Nourishing the heart like choral harmonies.
 122 O this was then my joy, that I could give
 123 A soul not saved from wretched female fright,

91 Cassiopeia is the mother of Andromeda, a beautiful Queen of Ethiopia who was punished by the gods for her arrogance and vanity.

107 Perseus is a warrior who slew Medusa and married Andromeda after rescuing her from the sea monster.

124 Or anarchy of self-abandoned will,
 125 But one which had achieved deliverance,
 126 And wrought with shaping hands among the stuff
 127 Which fate presented. Had I shrunk from Death?
 128 Might I not therefore unashamed accept—
 129 In a calm wonder of unfaltering joy—
 130 Life, the fair gift he laid before my feet?
 131 Somewhat a partner of his deed I seemed;
 132 His equal? Nay, yet upright at his side
 133 Scarce lower by a head and helmet's height
 134 Touching my Perseus' shoulder.

135 He has wrought
 136 Great deeds. Athena loves to honour him;
 137 And I have borne him sons. Look, yonder goes
 138 Lifting the bow, Eleios, the last-born."

EURYDICE

1 "Now must this waste of vain desire have end:
 2 Fetter these thoughts which traverse to and fro
 3 The road which has no issue! We are judged.
 4 O wherefore could I not uphold his heart?
 5 Why claimed I not some partnership with him
 6 In the strict test, urging my right of wife?
 7 How have I let him fall? I, knowing thee
 8 My Orpheus, bounteous giver of rich gifts,
 9 Not all inured in practice of the will,

Andromeda 125 which] that PPNC (1891)

133 height] height, P1876, P1877, PPNC (1891)

134 [no stanza break] P1876, P1877, PPNC (1891)

138 last-born." last-born. P1876, P1877, PPNC (1891)

Andromeda 136 Athena is the Greek goddess of wisdom, useful crafts, and prudent warfare. She was also the guardian of the city of Athens.

138 Eleios is the son of Andromeda and Perseus.

Eurydice 1873 P1914

Eurydice is the wife of Orpheus

8 Orpheus in Greek mythology is a great musician and husband of Eurydice. He went to Hades to rescue Eurydice when she died, but ultimately failed to rescue her.

10 Worthier than I, yet weaker to sustain
 11 An inner certitude against the blank
 12 And silence of the senses; so no more
 13 My heart helps thine, and henceforth there remains
 14 No gift to thee from me, who would give all,
 15 Only the memory of me growing faint
 16 Until I seem a thing incredible,
 17 Some high, sweet dream, which was not, nor could be.
 18 Ay, and in idle fields of asphodel
 19 Must it not be that I shall fade indeed,
 20 No memory of me, but myself; these hands
 21 Ceasing from mastery and use, my thoughts
 22 Losing distinction in the vague, sweet air,
 23 The heart's swift pulses slackening to the sob
 24 Of the forgetful river, with no deed
 25 Pre-eminent to dare and to achieve,
 26 No joy for climbing to, no clear resolve
 27 From which the soul swerves never, no ill thing
 28 To rid the world of, till I am no more
 29 Eurydice, and shouldst thou at thy time
 30 Descend, and hope to find a helpmate here,
 31 I were grown slavish, like the girls men buy
 32 Soft-bodied, foolish-faced, luxurious-eyed,
 33 And meet to be another thing than wife.

34 Would that it had been thus: when the song ceased
 35 And laughterless Aidoneus lifted up
 36 The face, and turned his grave persistent eyes
 37 Upon the singer, I had forward stepped
 38 And spoken—'King! he has wrought well, nor failed,
 39 Who ever heard divine large song like this,
 40 Keener than sunbeam, wider than the air,
 41 And shapely as the mould of faultless fruit?
 42 And now his heart upon the gale of song
 43 Soars with wide wing, and he is strong for flight,
 44 Not strong for treading with the careful foot:
 45 Grant me the naked trial of the will
 46 Divested of all colour, scents and song:
 47 The deed concerns the wife; I claim my share.'

18 Ay,] Aye, P1876

35 Aidoneus is the god of the underworld and husband of Persephone. He is also known and referred to as Hades or Pluto.

48 O then because Persephone was by
 49 With shadowed eyes when Orpheus sang of flowers,
 50 He would have yielded. And I stepping forth
 51 From the clear radiance of the singer's heights,
 52 Made calm through vision of his wider truth,
 53 And strengthened by deep beauty to hold fast
 54 The presences of the invisible things,
 55 Had led the way. I know how in that mood
 56 He leans on me as babe on mother's breast,
 57 Nor could he choose but let his foot descend
 58 Where mind left lightest pressure; so are passed
 59 The brute three-visaged, and the flowerless ways,
 60 Nor have I turned my head; and now behold
 61 The greyness of remote terrestrial light,
 62 And I step swifter. Does he follow still?
 63 O surely since his will embraces mine
 64 Closer than clinging hand can clasp a hand:
 65 No need to turn and dull with visible proof
 66 The certitude that soul relies on soul!
 67 So speed we to the day; and now we touch
 68 Warm grass, and drink the Sun. O Earth, O Sun,
 69 Not you I need, but Orpheus' breast, and weep
 70 The gladdest tears that ever woman shed,
 71 And may be weak awhile, and need to know
 72 The sustenance and comfort of his arms.

73 Self-foolery of dreams; come bitter truth.
 74 Yet he has sung at least a perfect song
 75 While the Gods heard him, and I stood beside
 76 O not applauding, but at last content,
 77 Fearless for him, and calm through perfect joy,
 78 Seeing at length his foot upon the heights
 79 Of highest song, by me discerned from far,
 80 Now suddenly attained in confident
 81 And errorless ascension. Did I ask
 82 The lesser joy, lips' touch and clasping arms,
 83 Or was not this salvation? For I urged
 84 Always, in jealous service to his art,

61 greyness] grayness P1876, P1877

73 [stanza break] P1876, P1877

48 Persephone is the queen of the underworld through marriage to Aidoneus/Hades/Pluto.

85 'Now thou hast told their secrets to the trees
 86 Of which they muse through lullèd summer nights;
 87 Thou hast gazed downwards in the formless gulf
 88 Of the brute-mind, and canst control the will
 89 Of snake, and brooding panther firey-eyed,
 90 And lark in middle heaven: leave these behind!
 91 And let some careless singer of the fields
 92 Set to the shallow sound of cymbal-stroke
 93 The Faun a-dance; some less true-tempered soul,
 94 Which cannot shape to harmony august
 95 The splendour and the tumult of the world,
 96 Inflammèd to frenzy of delirious rage
 97 The Moenad's breast; yea, and the hearts of men,
 98 Smoke of whose fire upcurls from little roofs,
 99 Let singers of the wine-cup and the roast,
 100 The whirling spear, the toy-like chariot-race,
 101 And bickering counsel of contending kings
 102 Delight them: leave thou these; sing thou for Gods.'
 103 And thou hast sung for Gods; and I have heard.

104 I shall not fade beneath this sunless sky,
 105 Mixed in the wandering, ineffectual tribe;
 106 For these have known no moment when the soul
 107 Stood vindicated, laying sudden hands
 108 On immortality of joy, and love
 109 Which sought not, saw not, knew not, could not know
 110 The instruments of sense; I shall not fade.
 111 Yea, and thy face detains me evermore
 112 Within the realm of light. Love, wherefore blame
 113 Thy heart because it sought me? Could the years'
 114 Whole sum of various fashioned happiness
 115 Exceed the measure of that eager face
 116 Importunate and pure, still lit with song,
 117 Turning from song to comfort of my love,
 118 And thirsty for my presence? We are saved!
 119 Yield Heracles, thou brawn and thews of Zeus,
 120 Yield up thy glory on Thessalian ground,
 121 Competitor of Death in single strife!

99 roast,] roast P1876

93 In Greek mythology, a "faun" is a place-spirit of untamed woodlands.

97 In Greek mythology, a moenad is a female follower of Dionysus. This female follower would have been known as an excessively wild or emotional woman.

122 The lyre methinks outdoes the club and fist,
 123 And beauty's ingress the outrageous force
 124 Of tyrant though beneficent; supreme
 125 This feat remains, a memory shaped for Gods.

126 Nor canst thou wholly lose me from thy life;
 127 Still I am with thee; still my hand keeps thine;
 128 Now I restrain from too intemperate grief
 129 Being a portion of the thoughts that claim
 130 Thy service; now I urge with that good pain
 131 Which wastes and feeds the spirit, a desire
 132 Unending; now I lurk within thy will
 133 As vigour; now am gleaming through the world
 134 As beauty; and if greater thoughts must lay
 135 Their solemn light on thee, outshining mine,
 136 And in some far faint-gleaming hour of Hell
 137 I stand unknown and muffled by the boat
 138 Leaning an eager ear to catch some speech
 139 Of thee, and if some comer tell aloud
 140 How Orpheus who had loved Eurydice
 141 Was summoned by the Gods to fill with joy
 142 And clamour of celestial song the courts
 143 Of bright Olympus,—I, with pang of pride
 144 And pain dissolved in rapture, will return
 145 Appeased, with sense of conquest stern and high."

146 But while she spoke, upon a chestnut trunk
 147 Fallen from cliffs of Thracian Rhodope
 148 Sat Orpheus, for he deemed himself alone,
 149 And sang. But bands of wild-eyed women roamed
 150 The hills, whom he had passed with calm disdain.
 151 And now the shrilling Berecynthian pipe
 152 Sounded, blown horn, and frantic female cries:
 153 He ceased from song and looked for the event.

143 Olympus is the highest mountain in Greece and was known in Greek mythology as the home of the gods.

147 The Thracian Rhodope denotes a part of the Rhodope mountain range in Greece that lies within the city of Thrac.

151 A Berecynthian pipe is a type of musical instrument that was very popular in Rome. It is the loudest of the double musical pipes of unequal length and was also known as the "mad pipe" from its featured role in the music of the frenzied dances of the Berecynthian festival.