

ONCE A WEEK

NEW SERIES

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CONTENTS.

Vol. VIII. begins with the number for July 1st, 1871.

	PAGE		PAGE
ON SILVER WINGS. By the Author of "Baf- fled," &c. Chapters XLVII. to End	11, 26	CI-DEVANTS	115
FAITH AND FORTUNE. BY SIR C. L. YOUNG, BART. Chapters VII. to End	3, 37, 59, 80	THE SAND-BLAST AND ITS POWERS . .	125
GRACE SELWODE. BY JULIA GODDARD, Author of "The Search for the Gral," &c. Chapters I. to LIII., 50, 70, 93, 119, 142, 164, 187, 200, 226, 249, 273, 294, 311, 343, 363, 388, 410, 427, 450, 469, 488, 515, 534, 556, 578.		SIR WALTER SCOTT.	136, 160
Z 27 ON THE FORCE	1	STREWN FLOWERS. (<i>Poem</i>)	150
THE LARK'S EVEN-SONG. (<i>Poem</i>)	8	THE WRECK OF THE HOUSATONIC . .	151
ON WAKEFULNESS	8	POPPING THE QUESTION IN SMALL HOUSES	180
"THE MUMMY" AND THE KNITTERS . .	19	FROM COAL TO COLOUR	194
SCRAPS FROM MY NOTE-BOOK, 23, 56, 86, 126, 170.		A WAYSIDE THOUGHT. (<i>Poem</i>) . . .	197
OLD TEXTS AND NEW SETTINGS, 36, 102, 261, 350.		SIR BOYLE ROCHE AND HIS BIRD'. . .	199
STRAY THOUGHTS ON JOKES	45	HINTS TO TALKERS	209
EAST AND WEST. (<i>Poem</i>)	49	THE LAST PRISON OF MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS.	216
FRESH FIELDS FOR TOURISTS	67	A THOUSAND MILES UP THE IRRAWADDY. In Two Parts.	217, 233
ON LIBRARIES.	77	THAT PIANO	221
DAWN. (<i>Poem</i>)	80	FADED FLOWERS. (<i>Poem</i>)	233
ARE OUR PIPES TO BE PUT OUT?	89	UNDER THE HATCHES. In Two Chapters, 243, 265.	
COURT GOSSIP IN LAMBETH	99	TRADITIONARY USAGE OF OLD MAIDS . .	248
LORENZO. (<i>Poem</i>)	102	ANCIENT AND MODERN WAR	256
TORTURE IN INDIA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY	103	SCAMPS	270
JEREMIAH LILLYBOY: In Four Chapters, 111, 133, 155, 177.		BARODA—HOW WE GOT THERE, AND WHAT WE SAW	280
		THE THREE VOICES (<i>Poem</i>)	284
		MR. BROWNSMITH'S ONLY ADVENTURE . .	287
		WILLIAM HONE	290
		EVERYBODY OUT OF TOWN	300
		IL PARADISO. (<i>Poem</i>)	304

	PAGE		PAGE
A FEW WORDS ON DOGS AND THEIR DIET	304	HITS ON THE HEAD	475
BROKEN TRUST. BY SIR C. L. YOUNG, BART. Chapters I. to End, 331, 353, 375, 397, 419, 441.		SALMON	479
THE CIVILIZATION SHELL	309	EYES AND NO EYES. Parts I. and II. . 485,	511
BACHELOR INVALIDS AND MALE NURSES .	317	MUSHROOMS	498
ON HATS	321	THALASSA. (<i>Poem</i>)	503
THE CAVE OF CRO-MAGNON	326	AUSTRALIA AS IT IS. Parts I., II., and III., 507, 551, 573.	
RALPHOS	335	WHAT IS WIT?	520
SUMMER SUNSET. (<i>Poem</i>)	351	JERUSALEM	529
THE INFANCY OF RAILWAYS	358	GOSSIP FROM AN EDITOR'S BOOK . . .	540
A CHOICE LITTLE WATERING-PLACE . .	371	HOW THEY TREAT FOR CHOLERA AT CON- STANTINOPLE	545
IN THE TWILIGHT. (<i>Poem</i>)	373	A MARVELLOUS MACHINE	561
FRENCH VIEWS OF ENGLISH LIFE . . .	382	MYTHOLOGY AND FOLK LORE. Parts I. and II.	567, 576
EDGAR ALLAN POE. Parts I. and II. 404,	447	NOTHING FOR NOTHING	585
A SECOND PAPER ON HATS	424	IN FUTURO	588
WAYS AND MANNERS OF A JAPANESE LAP- DOG	434	TABLE TALK, 21, 43, 63, 87, 109, 130, 152, 175, 197, 219, 241, 263, 285, 306, 330, 351, 373, 395, 417, 440, 461, 483, 503, 525, 547, 570, 588.	
THE EVERLASTING HILLS.—THE ALPS . .	437		
ELEANORE. (<i>Poem</i>)	458		
CONCERNING LETTERS AND LETTER WEL- TERS	458		
TWENTY DAYS IN THE FORT D'ISSY . .	463		

ACROSS THE BRIDGE.

The Christmas Number of Once a Week.

. A list of Contents is prefixed.

ONCE A WEEK

NEW SERIES.

No. 195.

September 23, 1871.

Price 2d.

UNDER THE HATCHES.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.—II.



IT was about a year after, and a week before the end of the half-year. In a comfortably furnished oak-panelled room, looking into the quadrangle—the very room from which he

had witnessed the dance of death—sat Andrews, with a small table by his side, on which was a pile of pamphlets, bound in gray paper. He eyed the pile and smiled—as he had every reason to smile, for he had just been appointed Bishop of Heligoland; and the copies of the farewell sermon he had preached in the college chapel the Sunday before—which were appropriately clad in half-mourning—he was about to present to every boy in the school, as a memorial of his mastership. It was rather an inconvenient day for the ceremony, as the annual match between the Harchester boys and the sister College of St. Beata, at Oxford, was being played in the cricket ground; but there was no help for it, as Andrews had announced his intention of leaving on the morrow. So, when the chimes from the chapel tower proclaimed noon, the boys presented themselves singly before

him, and received their sermon and benediction.

When he had nearly got to the end of the list, a puzzled expression came over his face; and after undeservedly complimenting Pickleton minor on his virtues and accomplishments—Pickleton was the wickedest, the stupidest, the laziest, the ugliest, and the youngest boy in the school—he said, in the suave tone of voice he affected when he wanted to make himself insinuatingly agreeable—

“Pickleton, you are Rollington’s fag—are you not?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Has he gone home?”

“No, sir.”

“He has not been to wish me good-bye, and receive my poor little present. Do you know why, Pickleton?”

“Ye—no, sir.”

“Do you think you could find him, Pickleton?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Kindly tell him I have something very particular to say to him; and beg him not to go away without seeing me.”

“Yes, sir.”

Pickleton rushed downstairs, with great glee; and, as he crossed the quadrangle, playfully shied the sermon—boomerang fashion—at the porter’s head, recommending him to read it, and improve his mind, while assuring him that nothing but the interest he took in his mental and moral improvement could have induced him to part with so valuable a work.

Poor Andrews, as he saw the incident, couldn’t help wishing that he had one more day to wield the apple twigs of authority, and introduce Pickleton to the order of flagellants. Perhaps he thought that, with the exception of his immediate toadies, Pickleton’s rapid act might be taken as evidence of the indifference with which his sermon and departure were regarded by the school;

yet I knew that it would not be safe; and I feared more than ever now to raise up any further difficulties.

"Tis all Uncle Oliver's fault, I do believe," continued Clarinda, reverting to her former speech. "He introduced Harry to all these strange people, and Harry has become fascinated; and I should not be a bit surprised if it ended in Uncle Oliver's and Harry's going over to the other side, which would be very mortifying just now, when everything is going our own way."

"Do not be too sure of that," said I. "Our party won't make its way by groping in the dark."

"What do you mean by that?"

"That I hate all intriguing, and that I don't believe any good ever comes of it. Why can't we do openly what we are doing underhand? If the Duke, and my Lord Godolphin, and the rest, are not managing affairs aright, let the voice of the nation speak out against them, and turn them out of office."

"The voice of the nation!" ejaculated Clarinda. "My dear, where have you met with that phrase? Mistress Masham and I have had long communings lately, and we hold that the 'Divine right,' which has grown into disrepute of late, is the true guide of Governments. You must not let my father hear you speak so. I fear you have been dallying with the enemy."

"My father has a judgment in political matters," said I; "and he is too just a man to withhold the right from others."

"So-ho!" quoth she. "Why, my dear, you have been contaminated during my absence, and have lost sight of your own principles. I must inquire into it."

And all of a sudden there rose up in my mind a remembrance of what my uncle had said to me—

"That the young Whiglins were no whit different to the young Tories in a maiden's eyes; and that when a youth came a-court'ing, I should not stop to inquire after his politics."

And so it has proved. And, somehow or other, I began to perceive that Mr. Lydgate's opinions have insensibly become mine; and that I was ready to swear by him, and renounce all for his sake—even as Juliet had forsworn the Capulets.

Alack! alack! what will not the blind god bring us to? Was I indeed the same Grace Selwode that had read Virgil with my uncle

in the arbour at Selwode, or had some wonderful transformation taken place?

But I must be more careful of my words, or Clarinda may suspect something; for women see clearer into women's hearts than men, in their less acute natures, dream of.

Have I begun already to be a dissembler?

BARODA—HOW WE GOT THERE, AND WHAT WE SAW.

THE death of the Guicowar of Baroda, which has lately been recorded, recalls to my memory a few pleasant days spent in and about his capital town, Baroda. The amusements provided by him possessed at least the charm of novelty, and may be of interest.

There are possibly a few who hardly know where Baroda is; so I would refer them to the happy possessors of shares in the Bombay and Baroda Railway, who are sure to be able to point out the exact spot. In the event, however, of the reader not knowing any of these gentlemen, it is as well to say that the place in question is in the province of Guzerat, near the coast, and between two and three hundred miles northward of Bombay—notice, between two and three hundred. But talking of distances in a large place like India, that is quite near enough; and by talking in that manner, there is a faint hope of doing away with Smith's popular idea that Brown will see his mother because he is going to India, although probably a thousand or more miles will separate them.

I have pointed out the place; but you can't get there, at present, without all the mixture of comforts and discomforts peculiar to a ship. I had just passed that pleasant or unpleasant time called the honeymoon. Don't condemn me as a bad husband. I quite appreciated Flo, and she quite appreciated me; but shut up together in a little cottage by the sea-side, to which we were condemned by the laws and customs of English society, it was possible to see too much of each other. Now, however, for the other extreme. We have just arrived on board H.M.I. troop ship —, a noble vessel, commanded by Captain —, R.N., who, we are told, is a good fellow, sufficiently liberal-minded not to consider the newly joined ensign—who does not quite understand the etiquette of a man-of-war—a

savage for not taking off his cap each time he steps on that sacred spot, the quarter-deck, or in some other manner not conforming to good old customs existing in the British navy.

I have been shown my cabin, Flo hers; for, alas! we are sentenced to separation—thanks be for a time only!—for no fault of mine, except that I am not a field officer. All ladies who, through want of foresight or otherwise, have been guilty of marrying any officer below the rank of major, are thereby condemned to live together in a cabin set apart for them, with a nursery adjoining it; and much as they may appreciate the music that their own first-born is in the habit of making at night, and at other times, it is a question whether the sound will be as pleasant when accompanied by several other little voices, the owners of which seem quite to forget—or rather have never learnt—the laws of harmony.

There is no help for it. Flo, with Spartan fortitude, has made up her mind to make the most of it. I have tossed with Captain —, an old friend, and have won the best berth in the cabin we are to inhabit together; the troops are all on board, and old Topmast, the first lieutenant, is asking the captain of the day to send some of them to assist in hauling in the hawsers.

We are off! The band is playing "Cheer, boys, cheer." Could one but penetrate into the secret thoughts of those on board, what a contrast would be presented! Ladies thinking of the children they have left behind; young soldiers building up castles in the far East; and old Major —, the jolliest fellow on board, rejoicing; but, you see, he has been enjoying himself in England, and the prospect of Indian pay, and soon probably the command of his regiment, make him hope to pacify several friends (?) now lamenting his departure.

Let us pass over the oft-told tales of ship life, resting assured that Malta Opera is as charming as ever, Alexandria as dirty, the donkey boys, if possible, more annoying, and the Pyramids still in the same place, and carry the imagination to the hotel at Suez.

The train has just arrived. We have spent a long night, as the Egyptian authorities think little of driving a train full of soldiers on to some siding, and there detaining it for an hour or two, as may be convenient. But we have forgotten all this, and are en-

joying the hot coffee provided for us by a thoughtful Government, to refresh us before embarking on board the steamer and troop boats waiting to convey us to the sister of the troop ship we have just left. We find her just the same, with the exception of being painted white, which colour is supposed not to attract the rays of the sun. The captain is a fine, gentlemanlike old man; the first lieutenant most active—so much so that he wishes to set the troops to work at once, forgetting the long night they have spent; but he is full of zeal, so one can forgive him. Again we are off. We pass Moses's Well, and steam over the spot where the Israelites are supposed to have crossed, and admire their faith in crossing to such a dismal looking wilderness, believing that there they would find a land flowing with milk and honey. Five days in the Red Sea, and we pass through the Straits of Babelmandeb, which have been described by a poet as the Gate of Tears—

"Lone, unheeded from the bay,
The vessel takes her weary way,
Like some ill-destined bark, that steers
In silence—through the Gate of Tears."

On the right is the Island of Perim, a spot about a mile in circumference, where a detachment of native troops, with a European officer, guards the British Jack which is displayed to passing vessels. This island, at present neither useful nor ornamental, if fortified, might in time of war be of the greatest use, being the key to the Red Sea. One of the officers of the ship told us that the French intended taking possession, and despatched a cruiser to hoist their flag; which vessel called in at Aden, and her commander dined with the Resident. "In vino veritas," after dinner, the gallant captain stated his intention; the Resident immediately sent a note to the captain of one of our ships, who steamed off, and welcomed our French friend on his arrival at Perim by displaying the British flag.

But we are a long time *en route* to Bombay, so will pass over Aden, and the description of Bombay harbour, which is to be found in the "Indian Travellers' Guide," and say good-bye to the good ship — and her officers, who have been very kind, and drive out to Malabar-hill, where, thanks to letters of introduction, we are comfortably settled in a cool bungalow.

Our draft is detained at a small military station near Bombay. My subaltern is

proud to command them; so Flo and I are enabled to accept an invitation from an old friend, Captain S., at Baroda, to be present at a series of entertainments to be given by his Highness the Guicowar; and for the first time in India we take our seats in a first-class carriage—with the exception of being doubly roofed and having venetians to keep out the sun, just the same as those in England. Not so the third-class carriages, which have two stories, resembling in some degree the two decks of our old line-of-battle ships, one above the other, which accounts for the nickname which seamen have given them—viz., two-decker carriages, which are crowded in the extreme with native passengers, who, on arrival at each station, seem to consider it necessary to compete against each other in making a noise. The “Pawnee Wallah,” or water carrier, is in great demand, and is called for by numerous thirsty souls in each carriage. He is, however, a philosopher, and does not allow himself to be put out, but goes first to where he sees the chance of most “pice.”

The fair sex—if such a term can be applied to the daughters of Ind—are separated from the men; why, I was not able to ascertain, unless in the Hindoo Church ritual there is some law corresponding to one in force in some of our English churches nowadays.

We have passed over the splendid bridge across the Nerbudda River, stopped for refreshment at Surat, and here we are at Baroda, where we are met by Captain S., and driven to his bungalow, and congratulate ourselves on being well housed, as guests are arriving from all parts of Guzerat, and they are being put up in open bungalows, furnished *pro tem.* by the Resident and officers of the —th Regt., N.I., stationed there. A. sent a basin; B. a table; C., a good fellow, would have sent something, but his house was full of friends—so he couldn't.

To-morrow there is to be a ball at the Muckunpoora Palace. Notwithstanding that argument, frequently urged, that “to-morrow never comes,” to-morrow has come. It is eight p.m., and outside each compound may be seen three or four huge elephants, waiting to take the several guests to the railway station, where a special train is waiting to convey them to a station about a mile and a half from the palace. On arrival there, a strange and novel sight presents

itself. From forty to fifty elephants, several palanquins and carriages, are waiting to convey the guests to the palace; and hundreds of men, bearing torches, are in readiness to light the way. In addition to the latter, lamp-posts are placed at regular intervals along a temporary road over the fields. In the palace yard a regiment of soldiers are drawn up, presenting a soldier-like appearance.

This regiment of Highlanders is part of an army in the service of the Guicowar—officered by Europeans.

The Highland dress is very complete, and, as a matter of course, looks rather ridiculous on natives. What would the gallant 92nd say to seeing the Gordon tartan put to such a use? There is an old Scotch proverb that says, “It is ill to take the breeches off a Highlandman;” but there is an exception to every rule—in this case furnished by the Guicowar's Highlanders, for, if report be true, they wore “flesh-coloured” tights down to the knee.

The guests are introduced to his Highness, who shakes hands in a friendly way. Before the dancing begins, each has a wreath of white flowers placed round his or her neck; the Guicowar himself decorating the ladies and “Burra Sahibs,” or great people; the Prime Minister, or Bhow Sahib, performing the remainder of this ceremony, which at a native court is considered of great importance.

Dancing in India is much the same as dancing at home, except that one can hardly be expected to be so energetic; and the gay young bachelor, who has at home been accustomed to ask only and get as many dances as he pleases, may, in India, be a little annoyed to find that the few “spins” that grace the country are quite alive to the fact that they are valued, and distribute their favours accordingly. Mr. Brown, in the Uncovenanted Civil Service, good-looking, gentlemanlike, approaches Miss —, respectfully saying—

“I think, Miss —, this is our dance.”

“Is it really?” she says. “Well, I suppose we must dance it; but it is so warm.”

The warmth meaning that she wished to dance with So-and-so, of the Civil Service, who is in receipt of three times as much pay as Brown. Poor Brown! Never mind, he has had his dance, and it is time for us to go. So the elephants are drawn up, and

we make a start, looking forward to wild beast fights, which have been promised to us to-morrow. Flo does not like the idea of seeing them; but if she stays away, she will be the only lady that will, and her absence won't stop the cruelty—if such it is—so I have prevailed on her to come; and we step into one of the carriages sent by the Guicowar to convey us to the arena, in the native city, where we find that a separate gallery has been set apart for the ladies and a chosen few to accompany them, and another upstairs for gentlemen, where champagne and B. and S. are amply provided, proving that amongst natives there are observers of men and things who have noticed that Englishmen, on all occasions, seem to consider a little stimulant necessary.

The excitement commences by elephant baiting. One of these playful creatures being let loose in the enclosure, is made still more playful by swarms of men, some holding red cloths, which they wave before him for his amusement; others, with long spears, occasionally reminding him that he must not go to sleep. For a short time he is undecided, and far from pleased; when all of a sudden, and when least expected, he manifests his displeasure by a charge, and a most exciting one for the spectators; for having singled out one of his tormentors, he chases him for a considerable distance, and nothing but the great activity shown by the latter, and the manner in which he keeps turning round and round, saves him. There is a dead silence, and all the spectators have an anxious appearance. The elephant's trunk is within a few inches of the man's shoulder. Well done, my good man—your presence of mind saves you. He has let fall a red cloth. This for a time attracts the elephant's attention. He stops, and tramples on it, and the would-be victim takes refuge in one of the many holes in the wall for that purpose.

Now for elephant fighting! Two are let loose in the ring, covered over with ropes, what a sailor would call rigging. They have each a Mahout or rider on their neck, but seem to require little urging from them; for they no sooner see each other than they charge most desperately—their foreheads, as may be imagined, coming together with considerable force. One of them does not seem to like it, and makes a bolt, closely followed by the other, with his trunk in the air. The Mahout on the fugitive, thinking that the uplifted trunk has a meaning, slips off his neck

and holds on to the ropes on the off side, thus keeping out of sight.

It is considered that they have fought enough, and they are secured. The manner of securing them is worthy of notice. When their whole attention is absorbed in each other, a native creeps up behind, with two iron grips, which are joined by short chains, holding one in each hand. These grips are made to open and shut, and have spikes inside them. By tightening the chain connecting them, they close; so that when one is thrown round each hind leg of the elephant he is powerless, not caring to move on account of the pain he would cause himself by walking, and by so doing tightening the chain. This instrument of torture is not long left on; but the hind legs are secured by ropes, allowing just scope enough for the beast to walk to his stables.

The most exciting fight has yet to come—viz., one between two rhinoceroses. They are no sooner let loose in the arena than they go straight at each other, using their horns nobly for half an hour or so. Poor beasts!—they are bleeding at the neck, and look exhausted, so we are glad to see men rush in with fireworks to separate them, in which they succeed, but not without considerable risk. One rhinoceros charges a man, who, as may be supposed, runs as quickly as he ever ran in his life, but not fast enough to prevent his being tossed. He is on the ground, the beast passes him, and, as soon as he is able, turns to make a second charge. But, fortunately, the wounded man has been dragged into one of the holes. This ends this day's performance, which is fortunate, as the ladies have seen enough, and vow that never again will they be present to witness such sport; but have promised to see the cheetah hunt to-morrow, which, they are assured, will not be such a shock for their feelings.

Here we all are, at early dawn, at the railway station, where we all met on the night of the ball, and another special train takes us to the spot where the elephants, &c., were in waiting for us; but this time we have new conveyances—country carts, drawn by bullocks, each holding four. We take our seats. The procession is formed, headed by a cart containing the Bhow Sahib, then another with the cheetahs, or hunting leopards, hooded, and looking anxious to be off. Away we go across country, getting dreadfully knocked about, as we drive over every-

thing, and the carts have no springs. We have got about three miles, and now the excitement begins, as we see an immense herd of antelopes. The Bhow Sahib does not drive straight at them, but keeps working round, and gradually edging in. The cheetahs sniff the air, keeping their noses pointed in the direction of the herd. We are within about two hundred yards: the hood is taken off, and a cheetah let loose. Like the Prime Minister, he starts off almost at right angles to the direction of the herd, gradually working in. Every now and then, the stately old buck throws back his horns, showing symptoms of alarm; but the cunning cheetah crouches down behind some bush, remaining there until the deer begin to graze again, when he steals in a few yards. For a hundred yards or so, a cheetah has greater speed than a deer, but after that distance he is done. This our friend well knows; so he waits till within that distance to discover himself, singles out the buck, chases him for a few minutes, makes a spring on his back, toppling him over and seizing him by the neck. The poor beast suffers; but our attention is attracted by a really pretty sight—the flight of the remainder of the herd—composed of two or three hundred of probably the most graceful little creatures in the world, who, in their retreat, spring over all the little bushes that obstruct their path. The “shirkarees,” or huntsmen, run up to the victim and cut his throat. He is then cut open, and some blood caught in a wooden ladle. This is held near the cheetah’s nose, and is so tempting that he lets go his hold of the neck, drinks the blood, is hooded and again placed in the cart, ready for another run. We have two or three more, and return to an excellent luncheon at the palace, drink the Guicowar’s health, which he gracefully (through an interpreter) acknowledges, expressing his gratitude and the pleasure it gives him to see so many guests. He then takes the ladies to see the Ranees—a privilege denied to the gentlemen. This ends the morning’s amusement; but in the evening we are to see all the jewels, which are to be sent in charge of a mounted escort to the residency. Flo afterwards told me, in confidence, that some of the ladies, when they saw them, were forgetful of the tenth commandment. It was time that they should leave Baroda, which we did, having enjoyed the novel scenery and sport; but after all, in my opinion, exciting as all we have seen

has been, there is no scenery in the world to equal the old gray spire, with the distant pack of hounds, to be seen in our English shires.

THE THREE VOICES.

A VISION.

AS I pondered, chafing sadly,
'Gainst a woman's wayward will,
Came three voices hovering round me,
Whispering, sought to soothe my ill.

Each against the other pleading,
Vie to win my doubt-vexed heart;
Lures of pleasure, memories witching,
Promises and hopes impart.

Working out their earthly mission
In the world's arena wide—
Past, and Present, and the Future,
Stood contending at my side.

Spake the Present, reasoning grossly—
"Mortal, is thy life too long?
Do the moments lost repining
To thy space of life belong?"

"Bitter thoughts and vain regretting
Will recall no joys again;
Warfare with thy fretting spirit
Temper not the aching pain.

"Hour by hour, the moments flying,
Add the present to the past;
He, that tyrant, hung'ring snatches
All within his grasp at last.

"Round thee Earth is joyous singing,
Glorying in its light and sun;
Seize the moments, join thy fellows,
Whilst thy life is yet unrun."

But I answered, chiding harshly—
"How can I find part in mirth?
Shadows from the past are blighting
All the joy for me on earth."

Spake the Future, whispering softly—
"Though the present be so sad,
Though the past have memories bitter,
List to me, and be thou glad.

"I can wipe out sorrow deftly,
Hope bestowing as my boon;
I can make thy lifetime brighter,
Brighten as the summer noon.

"Said'st thou, 'Sweet the moments vanished'?
Times as sweet may be once more;
Said'st thou, 'Pleasures, love are fled'?
Hope, they'll smile as erst of yore.

"Would'st thou scale ambition's summit,
Nations stirring with thy name?
Sorrow banish, and endeavour—
I will lead thee on to fame.

"Would'st thou aim at softer blessings,
Woman's heart and love abiding?
Angel's beauty waits thy wooing,
Angel's worth in mortal hiding."