

AN ODE.

O VOICE of sightless magic
Clear through day's crystal sky,
Blithe, contemplative, tragic,
As men may laugh or sigh,
As men may love or sorrow,
Their moods thy music borrow
To bid them live or die.
So sweet, so sad, so lonely,
In silent noontide only
Thy song-wings float and lie
On cloud-foam scarred and riven
By God's red lightnings shriven,
And quiet hours are given
To him that lingers nigh.

Fain would I linger near thee
Amid the poppies red,
Forget this world, and hear thee
As one among the dead,
Amid the daffadillies,
Red tulips and white lilies,
Where daisies' tears are shed

Where larkspur and cornflower
Are blue with sunlight's hour,
 And all the earth is spread
As in a dream before me,
While steals divinely o'er me
Love's scented spring to draw me
 From moods of dreamy dread.

O wingèd passion ! Traveler
 Too near to God to see !
O lyrical unraveller
 Of knotted life to me !
O song ! O shining river
Of thought and sound ! O giver
 Of goodly words of glee !
Like to a star that singeth,
A flower that incense bringeth,
 A love-song of the free !
Oh ! let me sing thy glories
While spring winds whisper stories
Of winter past, whose shore is
 Beyond a shoreless sea.

Spring, with the sea for raiment
 Adorned with winds of night ;
Summer, with fruit for payment
 Of a sun's kiss too bright ;
Autumn, with golden tresses ;
Winter, with wildernesses
 Of steel-black frost, and might

Of crystals for his garland,
Are fled beyond the starland
 On wings beyond sound and sight.
Only desire remaineth
That death's bright chalice draineth
Of blood-red wine that staineth
 The brow of love with light.

World in thy music fadeth
 To what is scarce a sleep,
Life's darkest shadow shadeth
 Memories that chide and weep,
Only delights grow clearer,
More exquisite and nearer,
 And new life-arteries leap
To fresh loves, into being,
From blindness into seeing,
 Beyond God's mountains steep.
The words of promise spoken
Flourish and flower unbroken,
And for His holy token
 The mirror of the deep.

Sing on, thou lyric lover,
 Sing on, and thrill me long
With such delights as cover
 The days and deeds of wrong.
Live lyre of songs immortal
That pierce Heaven's fiery portal
 With shafts of splendour strong,

Winged with thought's sharpest fires,
Arrowed with soul's desires
And sped from thunder's thong ;
Heaven's gates rock, rage, and quiver,
Earth's walls gape wide and shiver,
While Freedom doth deliver
Men's spirits with thy song.

Ah, chainless, distant, fleeting,
To lands that know no sea,
Where ocean's stormy greeting
Fills no man's heart with glee ;
Where lovers die or sever,
And death destroys for ever
And God bears slavery.
Fly thither, so thou leave us
That no man's hand may reave us
Of this—that we are free.
Free all men that may heed thee,
On freemen's praises feed thee,
Who chorus full, " God speed thee,
Live lyre of Liberty ! "

And me, ah ! float above me
Unseen in limpid air,
Sing ever, " Love me, love me,"
Or ever I despair.
The longings thou hast given
With death and dust have striven
And risen doubly fair.

The joys thy song createth
No languorous spirit sateth,
Nor things that are or were,
Nor death, nor sorrows fated,
May leave their sweet abated,
With thy bright spirit mated,
White warden of the air.