

Speak it not, or speak it low;
 Name not lightly to be said,
 Gift too precious to be prayed,
 Passion not to be expressed
 But by heaving of the breast:
 Yet,—wouldst thou the mountain find
 Where this deity is shrined,
 Who gives to seas and sunset skies
 Their unspent beauty of surprise,
 And, when it lists him, waken can
 Brute or savage into man;
 Or, if in thy heart he shine,
 Blends the starry fates with thine,
 Draws angels nigh to dwell with thee,
 And makes thy thoughts archangels be;
 Freedom's secret wilt thou know?—
 Counsel not with flesh and blood;
 Loiter not for cloak or food;
 Right thou feelest, rush to do.

Voluntaries (1867)

I.

Low and mournful be the strain,
 Haughty thought be far from me;
 Tones of penitence and pain,
 Moanings of the tropic sea;
 Low and tender in the cell
 Where a captive sits in chains,
 Crooning ditties treasured well
 From his Afric's torrid plains.
 Sole estate his sire bequeathed—
 Hapless sire to hapless son—
 Was the wailing song he breathed,
 And his chain when life was done.

What his fault, or what his crime?
 Or what ill planet crossed his prime?

Heart too soft and will too weak
 To front the fate that crouches near,—
 Dove beneath the vulture's beak;—
 Will song dissuade the thirsty spear?
 Dragged from his mother's arms and breast,
 Displaced, disfurnished here,
 His wistful toil to do his best
 Chilled by a ribald jeer.
 Great men in the Senate sate,
 Sage and hero, side by side,
 Building for their sons the State,
 Which they shall rule with pride.
 They forbore to break the chain
 Which bound the dusky tribe,
 Checked by the owners' fierce disdain,
 Lured by "Union" as the bribe.
 Destiny sat by, and said,
 'Pang for pang your seed shall pay,
 Hide in false peace your coward head,
 I bring round the harvest-day.'

II.

Freedom all winged expands,
 Nor perches in a narrow place;
 Her broad van seeks unplanted lands;
 She loves a poor and virtuous race.
 Clinging to a colder zone
 Whose dark sky sheds the snow-flake down,
 The snow-flake is her banner's star,
 Her stripes the boreal streamers are.
 Long she loved the Northman well;
 Now the iron age is done,
 She will not refuse to dwell
 With the offspring of the Sun;
 Foundling of the desert far,
 Where palms plume, siroccos blaze,
 He roves unhurt the burning ways
 In climates of the summer star.
 He has avenues to God

Hid from men of Northern brain,
 Far beholding, without cloud,
 What these with slowest steps attain.
 If once the generous chief arrive
 To lead him willing to be led,
 For freedom he will strike and strive,
 And drain his heart till he be dead.

III.

In an age of fops and toys,
 Wanting wisdom, void of right,
 Who shall nerve heroic boys
 To hazard all in Freedom's fight,—
 Break sharply off their jolly games,
 Forsake their comrades gay,
 And quit proud homes and youthful dames,
 For famine, toil, and fray?
 Yet on the nimble air benign
 Speed nimbler messages,
 That waft the breath of grace divine
 To hearts in sloth and ease.
 So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
 So near is God to man,
 When Duty whispers low, *Thou must,*
 The youth replies, *I can.*

IV.

O, well for the fortunate soul
 Which Music's wings infold,
 Stealing away the memory
 Of sorrows new and old!
 Yet happier he whose inward sight,
 Stayed on his subtile thought,
 Shuts his sense on toys of time,
 To vacant bosoms brought.
 But best befriended of the God
 He who, in evil times,
 Warned by an inward voice,
 Heeds not the darkness and the dread,

Biding by his rule and choice,
 Feeling only the fiery thread
 Leading over heroic ground,
 Walled with mortal terror round,
 To the aim which him allures,
 And the sweet heaven his deed secures.

Stainless soldier on the walls,
 Knowing this,—and knows no more,—
 Whoever fights, whoever falls,
 Justice conquers evermore,
 Justice after as before,—
 And he who battles on her side,
 God, though he were ten times slain,
 Crowns him victor glorified,
 Victor over death and pain;
 Forever: but his erring foe,
 Self-assured that he prevails,
 Looks from his victim lying low,
 And sees aloft the red right arm
 Redress the eternal scales.
 He, the poor foe, whom angels foil,
 Blind with pride, and fooled by hate,
 Writhes within the dragon coil,
 Reserved to a speechless fate.

V.

Blooms the laurel which belongs
 To the valiant chief who fights;
 I see the wreath, I hear the songs
 Lauding the Eternal Rights,
 Victors over daily wrongs:
 Awful victors, they misguide
 Whom they will destroy,
 And their coming triumph hide
 In our downfall, or our joy:
 They reach no term, they never sleep,
 In equal strength through space abide;
 Though, feigning dwarfs, they crouch and creep,

The strong they slay, the swift outstride:
 Fate's grass grows rank in valley clods,
 And rankly on the castled steep,—
 Speak it firmly, these are gods,
 All are ghosts beside.

Days

Daughters of Time, the hypocritic Days,
 Muffled and dumb like barefoot dervishes,
 And marching single in an endless file,
 Bring diadems and fagots in their hands.
 To each they offer gifts after his will,
 Bread, kingdoms, stars, and sky that holds them all.
 I, in my pleached garden, watched the pomp,
 Forgot my morning wishes, hastily
 Took a few herbs and apples, and the Day
 Turned and departed silent. I, too late,
 Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn.

Sea-Shore

I heard or seemed to hear the chiding Sea
 Say, Pilgrim, why so late and slow to come?
 Am I not always here, thy summer home?
 Is not my voice thy music, morn and eve?
 My breath thy healthful climate in the heats,
 My touch thy antidote, my bay thy bath?
 Was ever building like my terraces?
 Was ever couch magnificent as mine?
 Lie on the warm rock-ledges, and there learn
 A little hut suffices like a town.
 I make your sculptured architecture vain,
 Vain beside mine. I drive my wedges home,
 And carve the coastwise mountain into caves.
 Lo! here is Rome, and Nineveh, and Thebes,
 Karnak, and Pyramid, and Giant's Stairs,
 Half piled or prostrate; and my newest slab
 Older than all thy race.