

Thou say'st: "Man's measured path is all gone o'er:

Up all his years, steeply, with strain and sigh,

Man clomb until he touched the truth; and I,

Even I, am he whom it was destined for."

How should this be? Art thou then so much more

Than they who sowed, that thou shouldst reap thereby?

Nay, come up hither. From this wave-washed mound

Unto the furthest flood-brim look with me;

Then reach on with thy thought till it be drown'd.

Miles and miles distant though the last line be,

And though thy soul sail leagues and leagues beyond, —

Still, leagues beyond those leagues, there is more sea.

[1847-48]

[1870]

#### SONNETS LXXIV, LXXV, LXXVI

#### OLD AND NEW ART

##### I. *St. Luke the Painter*

Give honour unto Luke Evangelist;

For he it was (the aged legends say)

Who first taught Art to fold her hands and pray.

Scarcely at once she dared to rend the mist

Of devious symbols: but soon having wist

How sky-breadth and field-silence and this day

Are symbols also in some deeper way,

She looked through these to God and was God's priest.

And if, past noon, her toil began to irk,

And she sought talismans, and turned in vain

To soulless self-reflections of man's skill, —

Yet now, in this the twilight, she might still

Kneel in the latter grass to pray again,

Ere the night cometh and she may not work.

[1849]

[1870]

##### II. *Not as These*

"I am not as these are," the poet saith

In youth's pride, and the painter, among men

At bay, where never pencil comes nor pen,

And shut about with his own frozen breath.

To others, for whom only rhyme wins faith

As poets, — only paint as painters, — then

He turns in the cold silence; and again

Striking, "I am not as these are," he saith.

And say that this is so, what follows it?

For were thine eyes set backwards in thine head,

Such words were well; but they see on, and far.

Unto the lights of the great Past, new-lit

Fair for the Future's track, look thou instead, —

Say thou instead, "I am not as these are."

[1848]

[1881]

##### III. *The Husbandmen*

Though God, as one that is an householder,

Called these to labour in his vineyard first,

Before the husk of darkness was well burst

Bidding them grope their way out and bestir,

(Who, questioned of their wages, answered, "Sir,

Unto each man a penny:") though the worst

Burthen of heat was theirs and the dry thirst:

Though God hath since found none such as these were

To do their work like them: — Because of this

Stand not ye idle in the market-place.

Which of ye knoweth *he* is not that last

Who may be first by faith and will? — yea, his

The hand which after the appointed days

And hours shall give a Future to their Past?

[1848]

[1881]

#### SONNET LXXVII

#### SOUL'S BEAUTY

Under the arch of Life, where love and death,

Terror and mystery, guard her shrine, I saw

Beauty enthroned; and though her gaze struck awe,

I drew it in as simply as my breath.

Hers are the eyes which, over and beneath,

The sky and sea bend on thee, — which can draw,

By sea or sky or woman, to one law,

The allotted bondman of her pain and wraith.