

## IN GUERNSEY

TO THEODORE WATTS

## I

THE heavenly bay, ringed round with cliffs and moors,  
 Storm-stained ravines, and crags that lawns inlay,  
 Soothes as with love the rocks whose guard secures  
     The heavenly bay.

O friend, shall time take ever this away,  
 This blessing given of beauty that endures,  
 This glory shown us, not to pass but stay ?

Though sight be changed for memory, love ensures  
 What memory, changed by love to sight, would say—  
 The word that seals for ever mine and yours  
     The heavenly bay.

## II

My mother sea, my fostress, what new strand,  
 What new delight of waters, may this be,  
 The fairest found since time's first breezes fanned  
     My mother sea ?

Once more I give me body and soul to thee,  
Who hast my soul for ever : cliff and sand  
Recede, and heart to heart once more are we.

My heart springs first and plunges, ere my hand  
Strike out from shore : more close it brings to me,  
More near and dear than seems my fatherland,  
My mother sea.

## III

Across and along, as the bay's breadth' opens, and  
o'er us  
Wild autumn exults in the wind, swift rapture and  
strong  
Impels us, and broader the wide waves brighten before us  
Across and along.

The whole world's heart is uplifted, and knows not  
wrong ;  
The whole world's life is a chant to the sea-tide's chorus ;  
Are we not as waves of the water, as notes of the song ?

Like children unworn of the passions and toils that  
wore us,  
We breast for a season the breadth of the seas that  
throng,  
Rejoicing as they, to be borne as of old they bore us  
Across and along.

## IV

On Dante's track by some funereal spell  
Drawn down through desperate ways that lead not back  
We seem to move, bound forth past flood and fell  
    On Dante's track.

The grey path ends : the gaunt rocks gape : the black  
Deep hollow tortuous night, a soundless shell,  
Glares darkness : are the fires of old grown slack ?

Nay, then, what flames are these that leap and swell  
As 'twere to show, where earth's foundations crack,  
The secrets of the sepulchres of hell  
    On Dante's track ?

## V

By mere men's hands the flame was lit, we know,  
From heaps of dry waste whin and casual brands :  
Yet, knowing, we scarce believe it kindled so  
    By mere men's hands.

Above, around, high-vaulted hell expands,  
Steep, dense, a labyrinth walled and roofed with woe,  
Whose mysteries even itself not understands.

The scorn in Farinata's eyes aglow  
Seems visible in this flame : there Geryon stands ;  
No stage of earth's is here, set forth to show  
    By mere men's hands.

## VI

Night, in utmost noon forlorn and strong, with heart  
athirst and fasting,  
Hungers here, barred up for ever, whence as one whom  
dreams affright  
Day recoils before the low-browed lintel threatening  
doom and casting Night.

All the reefs and islands, all the lawns and highlands,  
clothed with light,  
Laugh for love's sake in their sleep outside: but here  
the night speaks, blasting  
Day with silent speech and scorn of all things known  
from depth to height.

Lower than dive the thoughts of spirit-stricken fear in  
souls forecasting  
Hell, the deep void seems to yawn beyond fear's reach,  
and higher than sight  
Rise the walls and roofs that compass it about with  
everlasting Night.

## VII

The house accurst, with cursing sealed and signed,  
Heeds not what storms about it burn and burst:  
No fear more fearful than its own may find  
The house accurst.

Barren as crime, anhungered and athirst,  
Blank miles of moor sweep inland, sere and blind,  
Where summer's best rebukes not winter's worst.

The low bleak tower with nought save wastes behind  
Stares down the abyss whereon chance reared and nursed  
This type and likeness of the accursed man's mind,  
    The house accursed.

## VIII

Beloved and blest, lit warm with love and fame,  
The house that had the light of the earth for guest  
Hears for his name's sake all men hail its name  
    Beloved and blest.

This eyrie was the homeless eagle's nest  
When storm laid waste his eyrie: hence he came  
Again, when storm smote sore his mother's breast.

Bow down men bade us, or be clothed with blame  
And mocked for madness: worst, they sware, was best:  
But grief shone here, while joy was one with shame,  
    Beloved and blest.