

## HERSE

WHEN grace is given us ever to behold  
     A child some sweet months old,  
 Love, laying across our lips his finger, saith,  
     Smiling, with bated breath,  
 Hush! for the holiest thing that lives is here,  
     And heaven's own heart how near!  
 How dare we, that may gaze not on the sun,  
     Gaze on this verier one?  
 Heart, hold thy peace; eyes, be cast down for shame;  
     Lips, breathe not yet its name.  
 In heaven they know what name to call it; we,  
     How should we know? For, see!  
 The adorable sweet living marvellous  
     Strange light that lightens us  
 Who gaze, desertless of such glorious grace,  
     Full in a babe's warm face!  
 All roses that the morning rears are nought,  
     All stars not worth a thought,  
 Set this one star against them, or suppose  
     As rival this one rose.

What price could pay with earth's whole weight of gold  
    One least flushed roseleaf's fold  
Of all this dimpling store of smiles that shine  
    From each warm curve and line,  
Each charm of flower-sweet flesh, to reillumine  
    The dappled rose-red bloom  
Of all its dainty body, honey-sweet  
    Clenched hands and curled-up feet,  
That on the roses of the dawn have trod  
    As they came down from God,  
And keep the flush and colour that the sky  
    Takes when the sun comes nigh,  
And keep the likeness of the smile their grace  
    Evoked on God's own face  
When, seeing this work of his most heavenly mood,  
    He saw that it was good ?  
For all its warm sweet body seems one smile,  
    And mere men's love too vile  
To meet it, or with eyes that worship dims  
    Read o'er the little limbs,  
Read all the book of all their beauties o'er,  
    Rejoice, revere, adore,  
Bow down and worship each delight in turn,  
    Laugh, wonder, yield, and yearn.  
But when our trembling kisses dare, yet dread,  
    Even to draw nigh its head,  
And touch, and scarce with touch or breath surprise  
    Its mild miraculous eyes

Out of their viewless vision—O, what then,  
    What may be said of men ?  
What speech may name a new-born child ? what word  
    Earth ever spake or heard ?  
The best men's tongue that ever glory knew  
    Called that a drop of dew  
Which from the breathing creature's kindly womb  
    Came forth in blameless bloom.  
We have no word, as had those men most high,  
    To call a baby by.  
Rose, ruby, lily, pearl of stormless seas—  
    A better word than these,  
A better sign it was than flower or gem  
    That love revealed to them :  
They knew that whence comes light or quickening flame  
    Thence only this thing came,  
And only might be likened of our love  
    To somewhat born above,  
Not even to sweetest things dropped else on earth,  
    Only to dew's own birth.  
Nor doubt we but their sense was heavenly true,  
    Babe, when we gaze on you,  
A dew-drop out of heaven whose colours are  
    More bright than sun or star,  
As now, ere watching love dare fear or hope,  
    Lips, hands, and eyelids ope,  
And all your life is mixed with earthly leaven.  
    O child, what news from heaven ?