

THE WOOD-CUTTER

We came behind him by the wall, My brethren drew their brands, And they
had strength to strike him down-- And I to bind his hands.

Only once, to a lantern gleam, He turned his face from the wall, And it was
as the accusing angel's face On the day when the stars shall fall.

I grasped the axe with shaking hands, I stared at the grass I trod; For I
feared to see the whole bare heavens Filled with the face of God.

I struck: the serpentine slow blood In four arms soaked the moss-- Before
me, by the living Christ, The blood ran in a cross.

Therefore I toil in forests here And pile the wood in stacks, And take no fee
from the shivering folk Till I have cleansed the axe.

But for a curse God cleared my sight, And where each tree doth grow I see
a life with awful eyes, And I must lay it low.