

Poems From Clarel

DIRGE

Stay, Death, Not mine the Christus-wand  
Wherewith to charge thee and command:  
I plead. Most gently hold the hand  
Of her thou ledest far away;  
Fear thou to let her naked feet  
Tread ashes--but let mosses sweet  
Her footing tempt, where'er ye stray.  
Shun Orcus; win the moonlit land  
Belulled--the silent meadows lone,  
Where never any leaf is blown  
From lily-stem in Azrael's hand.  
There, till her love rejoin her lowly  
(Pensive, a shade, but all her own)  
On honey feed her, wild and holy;  
Or trance her with thy choicest charm.  
And if, ere yet the lover's free,  
Some added dusk thy rule decree--  
That shadow only let it be  
Thrown in the moon-glade by the palm.

## EPILOGUE

If Luther's day expand to Darwin's year,  
Shall that exclude the hope--foreclose the fear?

Unmoved by all the claims our times avow,  
The ancient Sphinx still keeps the porch of  
    shade;  
And comes Despair, whom not her calm may  
    cow,  
And coldly on that adamantine brow  
Scrawls undeterred his bitter pasquinade.  
But Faith (who from the scrawl indignant  
    turns)  
With blood warm oozing from her wounded  
    trust,  
Inscribes even on her shards of broken urns  
The sign o' the cross--the spirit above the dust!

Yea, ape and angel, strife and old debate--  
The harps of heaven and dreary gongs of hell;  
Science the feud can only aggravate--  
No umpire she betwixt the chimes and knell:  
The running battle of the star and clod  
Shall run forever--if there be no God.

Degrees we know, unknown in days before;  
The light is greater, hence the shadow more;  
And tantalized and apprehensive Man  
Appealing--Wherefore ripen us to pain?  
Seems there the spokesman of dumb Nature's  
train.

But through such strange illusions have they  
passed  
Who in life's pilgrimage have baffled striven--  
Even death may prove unreal at the last,  
And stoics be astounded into heaven.

Then keep thy heart, though yet but  
ill-resigned--  
Clarel, thy heart, the issues there but mind;  
That like the crocus budding through the  
snow--  
That like a swimmer rising from the deep--  
That like a burning secret which doth go  
Even from the bosom that would hoard and  
keep;  
Emerge thou mayst from the last whelming  
sea,  
And prove that death but routs life into victory.