

AMOR MUNDI

SHALL I FORGET?

Shall I forget on this side of the grave?
I promise nothing: you must wait and see,
~~Patient and brave~~

'Oh where are you going with your love-locks flowing,
On the west wind blowing along this valley track?'
'The downhill path is easy, come with me an it please ye,
We shall escape the uphill by never turning back.'

So they two went together in glowing August weather,
~~The honey breathing heather lay to their left and right:~~

(O my soul, watch with him, and he with me.)

Shall I forget in peace of Paradise?
I promise nothing: follow, friend, and see,
Faithful and wise.
(O my soul, lead the way he walks with me.)

21 February 1865

LONG BARREN

Thou who didst hang upon a barren tree,
My God, for me;
Though I till now be barren, now at length,
Lord, give me strength
To bring forth fruit to Thee.

Thou who didst bear for me the crown of thorn,
Spitting and scorn;
Though I till now have put forth thorns, yet now
Strengthen me Thou
That better fruit be borne.

Thou Rose of Sharon, Cedar of broad roots,
Vine of sweet fruits

And dear she was to doat on, her swift feet seemed to float on
The air like soft twin pigeons too sportive to alight.

'Oh what is that in heaven where grey cloud-flakes are seven,
Where blackest clouds hang riven just at the rainy skirt?'
'Oh that's a meteor sent us, a message dumb, portentous,
An undeciphered solemn signal of help or hurt.'

'Oh what is that glides quickly where velvet flowers grow thickly,
Their scent comes rich and sickly?' 'A scaled and hooded worm.'
'Oh what's that in the hollow, so pale I quake to follow?'
'Oh that's a thin dead body which waits the eternal term.'

'Turn again, O my sweetest, – turn again, false and fleetest:
This beaten way thou beatest, I fear, is hell's own track.'
'Nay, too steep for hill mounting; nay, too late for cost counting:
This downhill path is easy, but there's no turning back.'

21 February 1865

FROM SUNSET TO STAR RISE

Go from me, summer friends, and tarry not:
I am no summer friend, but wintry cold;
A silly sheep benighted from the fold