THE FOSTERING OF ASLAUG.

The Argument.

ASLAUG, THE DAUGHTER OF SIGURD WHO SLEW THE DRAGON, AND OF BRYNHILD WHOM HE LOVED, LOST ALL HER FRIENDS AND KIN, AND WAS NOURISHED AMID GREAT MISERY; YET IN THE END HER FORTUNE, HER GLORY, AND HER BEAUTY PREVAILED, AND SHE CAME TO MIGHTY ESTATE.

FAIR tale might I tell to you
Of Sigurd, who the dragon slew
Upon the murder-wasted heath,
And how love led him unto death,
Through strange wild ways
of joy and pain;
Then such a story should ye gain,
If I could tell it all aright,
As well might win you
some delight.

From out the woefullest of days;
But now have I no heart to raise
That mighty sorrow laid asleep,
That love so sweet, so strong and deep,
That as ye hear the wonder told
In those few strenuous words of old,
The whole world seems to rend apart
When heart is torn away from heart.¹
But the world lives still, and to-day
The green Rhine wendeth on its way
Over the unseen golden curse
That drew its lords to worse and worse,
Till that last dawn in Atli’s hall,
When the red flame flared over all,
Lighting the leaden, sunless sea.²

¹When heart is torn away from heart: Brynhild and Sigurd suffer many harrowing separations in the Volsunga Saga, and Brynhild immolates herself on his funeral pyre after Sigurd’s death.
²Lighting the leaden, sunless sea: In the Volsunga Saga’s final episode, Gudrun sets fire to her husband Atli’s house, and the Niblung and Volsungas perish together in the conflagration.

The Fostering of Aslaug

YET so much told of this must be,
That Sigurd, while his youth was bright
And unstained, ’midst the first delight
Of Brynhild’s love, that him did gain
All joy; all woe, and very bane,
Begat on her a woman-child.
In hope she bore the maid, and smiled
When of its father’s face she thought;
But when sad time the change had brought,
And she to Gunnar’s house must go,
She, thinking how she might bestow
The memory of that lovely eve,
That morn o’er-sweet, the child did leave
With Heimir,³ her old foster-sire,
A mighty lord; then, with the fire
Of her old love still smouldering,
And brooding over many a thing,
She went unto her life and death.
Nought, as I said, the story saith
Of all the wrong and love that led
Her feet astray: together dead
They lie now on their funeral pile,
And now the little one doth smile
Upon the glittering war-array
Of the men come the sooth to say
To Heimir of that bitter end.
SILENT he stared till these did wend
Into the hall to fire and board,
Then by the porch without a word
Long time he sat: then he arose
And drew his sword,⁴ and hard and close

³Heimir: Heimir is described in the Volsunga Saga as a large landowner and husband of Brynhild’s sister Bekkhild. In the opening lines of the Saga of Ragnar Lodbrok, he grieves for Brynhild’s death and fears that Aslaug’s enemies “would strive to destroy her and her race. So great was his grief . . . that he gave no heed to his riches or his rule. He saw that he could not conceal the maid in that place; therefore he made a harp so great that he could put Aslaug into it” (Chapter 1).
⁴his sword: Morris adds the entire scene, including the sword. In the original, Heimir brings only gold and clothes in the harp with Aslaug, and a leek for food.
Gazed on the thin-worn edge, and said:
Smooth cheeks, sweet hands, and art thou dead?
O me thy glory! Woe is me!
I thought once more thine eyes to see.
Had I been young three years ago,
When thou a maiden burd-alone,
Hadst eighteen summers! As he spake,
He gat him swiftly to the brake
Of thorn-trees nigh his house: and some,
When calm once more he sat at home,
Deemed he had wept: but no word more
He spake thereof. A few days wore,
And now alone he oft would be
Within his smithy; heedfully
He guarded it, that none came in;
Nor marvelled men; for he did win
Some work of craftsmanship, said they,
And such before on many a day
Hath been his wont. So it went on
That a long while he wrought alone;
But on the tenth day bore in there
Aslaug, the little maiden fair,
Three winters old; and then the thing
A little set folk marvelling;
Yet none the less in nought dust they
To watch him. So to end of day
Time drew, and still unto the hall
He came not, and a dread 'gan fall
Upon his household, lest some ill
The quiet of their lives should kill;
And so it fell that the next mom
They found them of their lord forlorn,
And Aslaug might they see no more;
Wide open was the smithy door,
The forge a-cold, and hammering tools
Lay on the floor, with woodwright's rules
And chips and shavings of hard wood.
Moreover, when they deemed it good
To seek for him, nought might they do,
The tale says, for so dark it grew

Over all ways, that no man might
Know the green meads from water white.
So back they wended sorrowfully,
And still most like it seemed to be,
That Odin had called Heimir home;
And nothing strange it seemed to some
That with him the sweet youngling was,
Since Brynhild's love might bring to pass
E'en mightier things than this, they said;
And sure the little gold-curl'd head,
The pledge of all her earthly weal,
In Freyja's house she longed to feel. 3
FURTHER the way was than they deemed
Unto that rest whereof they dreamed,
Both to the greybeard and the child;
For now by trodden way and wild
Goes Heimir long: wide-faced is he,
Thin-cheeked, hook-nosed, e'en as might be
An ancient eren; his hair falls down
From 'neath a wide slouched hat of brown,
And mingles white with his white beard;
A broad brown brand, most men have feared,
Hangs by his side, and at his back
Is slung a huge harp, that doth lack
All fairness certes, and so great
It is, that few might bear its weight;
Yea, Heimir even, somewhat slow
Beneath its burden walketh now,
And looketh round, and stayeth soon.
On a calm sunny afternoon,
Within a cleared space of a wood,
At last the huge old warrior stood
And peered about him doubtfully,
Who, when nought living he might see
But mid the beech-boughs high aloft
A blue-winged jay, and squirrel soft,
And in the grass a watchful hare,

3Freyja's house: Freyja/Freyia's house was in Ásgard/Asgard.
Eren, eagle.
Gazed on the thin-worn edge, and said:
Smooth cheeks, sweet hands, and art thou dead?
O me thy glory! Woe is me!
I thought once more thine eyes to see.
Had I been young three years agone,
When thou a maiden burdened,
Hast eighteen summers! As he spake,
He get him swiftly to the brake
Of thorn-trees nigh his house: and some,
When calm once more he sat at home,
Deemed he had wept: but no word more
He spake thereof. A few days wore,
And now alone he oft would be
Within his smithy, heedfully
He guarded it, that none came in;
Nor marvelled men; For he doth win
Some work of craftsmanship, said they,
And such before on many a day
Hath been his wont. So it went on
That a long while he wrought alone;
But on the tenth day born in there
Aslaug, the little maiden fair,
Three winters old; and then the thing
A little set folk marvelling;
Yet none the less in nought durst they
To watch him. So to end of day
Time drew, and still unto the hall
He came not, and a dread 'gan fall
Upon his household, lest some ill
The quiet of their lives should kill;
And so it fell that the next morn
They found them of their lord forlorn,
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For now by trodden way and wide
Goes Heimir long: wide-faced is he,
Thin-cheeked, hook-nosed, e'en as might be
An ancient erne; his hair falls down
From 'neath a wide slouched hat of brown,
And mingles white with his white beard;
A broad brown brand, most men have feared,
Hangs by his side, and at his back
Is slung a huge harp, that doth lack
All fairness certes, and so great.
It is, that few might bear its weight;
Yes, Heimir even, somewhat slow
Beneath its burden walketh now,
And looketh round, and stayeth soon.
ON a calm sunny afternoon,
Within a cleared space of a wood,
At last the huge old warrior stood
And peered about him doubtfully.
Who, when nought living he might see
But mid the beech-boughs high aloft
A blue-winged jay, and squirrel soft,
And in the grass a watchful hare.

Freya's house. Freyja/Freyja's house was in Ásagarð/Asgard. thorne: eagle.
Unsung his harp and knelt down there
Beside it, and a little while
Handed the hollow with a smile
Of cunning, and behold, the thing
Opened, as by some secret spring,
And there within the hollow lay,
Clad in gold-fringed well-wrought array,
Aslaug, the golden-headed child,
Asleep and rosy; but she smiled
As Helimir's brown hand drew anear,
And woke up free from any fear,
And stretched her hands out towards his face.
HE sat him down in the green place,
With kind arms round the little one,
Till, fully waked now, to the sun
She turned, and babbling; 'gainst his breast
Her dimpled struggling hands she pressed:
His old lips touched those eyes of hers,
That Sigurd's hope and Brynhild's tears
Made sad e'en in her life's first spring;
Then sweet her chuckling laugh did ring,
As down amid the flowery grass
He set her, and beheld her pass
From flower to flower in utter glee;
Therewith he reached out thoughtfully,
And cast his arms around the harp,
That at the first most strange and sharp
Rang through the still day, and the child
Stopped, startled by that music wild:
But then a change came o'er the strings,
As, tinkling sweet, of merry things
They seemed to tell, and to and fro
Danced Aslaug, till the tune did grow
Fuller and stronger, sweeter still,
And all the woodland place did fill
With sound, not merry now nor sad,
But sweet, heart-raising, as it had
The gathered voice of that fair day
Amidst its measured strains; her play
Amid the flowers grew slower now,
Gazed at him awhile fearfully,
As though she knew he was afraid;
But silently the child he laid
In the harp's hollow place, for now
Drowsy and drooping did she grow
'Neath the strong potion; hastily
He shut the harp, and raised it high
Upon his shoulder, set his sword
Ready to hand, and with no word
Stalked off along the forest glade;
But muttered presently: Afraid
Is a strange word for me to say;
But all is changed in a short day,
And full of death the world seems grown.

Mayhap I shall be left alone
When all are dead beside, to dream
Of happy life that once did seem
So stirring 'midst the folk I loved.

Ahi! is there nought that may be moved
By strong desire? yea, nought that rules
The very Gods who thrust earth's fools
This way and that as foolishly,
For aught I know thereof, as I
Deal with the chess when I am drunk?

HIS head upon his breast was sunk
For a long space, and then again
He spake: My life is on the wane;
Somewhat of this I yet may learn
Ere long; yet I am fain to earn
My rest by reaching Atlil's land;
For surely 'neath his mighty hand
Safe from the Niblungs shall she be,
Safe from the forge of misery,
Grimhild the Wise-wife.8 As a goad

That name was to him; on he strode
Still swifter, silent. But day wore
As fast between the tree-stems hoar
He went his ways; belike it was
That he scarce knew if he did pass
O'er rough or smooth, by dark or light,
Until at last the very night
Had closed round him as thinner grew
The wood that he was hurrying through;
And as he gained a grey hill's brow
He felt the sea-breeze meet him now,
And heard the low surf's measured beat
Upon the beach. He stayed his feet,
And through the dusky gathering dark
Peered round and saw what seemed a spark
Along the hill's ridge; thitherward
He turned, still warily on guard,
Until he came unto the door
Of some stead, lone belike and poor:
There knocking, was he bidden in,
And heedfully he raised the pin,
And entering stood with blinking gaze
Before a fire's unsteady blaze.

THERE sat a woman all alone
Whom some ten years would make a crone,
Yet would they little worsen her;
Her face was sorely pinched with care,
Sour and thin-lipped she was; of hue
E'en like a duck's foot; whitish blue
Her eyes were, seeming as they kept
Wide open even when she slept.
She rose up, and was no less great
Than a tall man; a thing of weight
Was the gaunt hand that held a torch
As Heimir, midmost of the porch,
Fixed his deep grey and solemn eyes
Upon that wretched wife's surprise.

WELL, said she, what may be your will?
Little we have your sack to fill,
If on thieves' errand ye are come;

8Grimhild the Wise-wife: According to the the Saga, Heimir simply reached Norway and came to a dwelling called Spangardeath, where a karl Aki lived with his wife Grimn.
But since the goodman is from home 
I know of none shall say you nay 
If ye have will to bear away 
The goodwife. As on a burned house 
Grown cold, the moon shines dolorous 
From out the rainy lift, so now 
A laugh must crease her lip and brow. 
I am: no thief, goodwife, he said, 
But ask wherein to lay my head 
To-night. Well, goodman, sit, said she: 
Thine ugly box of minstrelsy 
With thine attire befits not ill; 
And both belike may match thy skill. 
So by the fire he sat him down, 
And she too sat, and coarse and brown 
The thread was that her rock gave forth 
As there she spun; of little worth 
Was all the gear that hall did hold. 
Now Heimir new-come from the cold 
Had set his harp down by his side, 
And, turning his grey eyes and wide 
Away from hers, slouched down his hat 
Yet farther o'er his brows, and sat 
With hands outstretched unto the flame. 
But had he noted how there came 
A twinkle into her dead eyes, 
He had been minded to arise, 
Methinks; for better company 
The wild-wood wolf had been than she. 
Because, from out the hdden grey 
That was the great man's poor array, 
Once and again could she behold 
How that the gleam of ruddy gold 
Came forth: so therewith she arose, 
Anc, wandering round the hall, drew close 
Unto the great harp, and could see 
Some fringe of golden bravery 
Hanging therefrom. And the man too, 
In spite of patch and clouted shoe,

9clouted: patched.
In brawl with him, as might betide
If thou his coming shouldst abide.
Our barley barn is close hereby,
Wherein a weary man might lie
And be no worse at dawn of day.
Well, goodwife, said he, lead the way!
Worse lodging have I had than that,
Where the wolf howled unto the bat,
And red the woodland stream did run.
SHE started back; he seemed as one
Who might have come back from the dead,
To wreak upon her evil head
Her sour ill life, but nought the more
He heeded her: Go on before,
He said, for I am in no case
To-night to meet an angry face
And hold my hand from my good sword.
SO out she passed without a word,
Though when he took in careful wise
The heavy harp, with greedy eyes
And an ill scowl she gazed theron,
Yet durst say nought. But soon they won
Unto the barn's door; he turned round,
And, gazing down the rugged ground,
Beheld the sea wide reaching, white
Beneath the new-risen moon, and bright
His face waxed for a little while,
And on the still night did he smile,
As into the dark place he went,
And saw no more of the grey bent,
Or sea, or sky, or morrow's sun;
Unless perchance when all is done,
And all the wrongs the Gods have wrought
Come utterly with them to nought,
New heavens and earth he shall behold,
And peaceful folk, and days of gold,
When Baldur is come back again.10

O'er an undying world to reign.
FOR when the carl came home that night,
In every ill wise that she might
She egged him on their guest to slay
As sleeping in the barn he lay;
And, since the man was no ill mate
For her, and heedless evil fate
Had made him big and strong enow,
He plucked up heart to strike the blow
Though but a coward thief he was.
So at the grey dawn did he pass
Unto the barn, and entered there;
But through its dusk therewith did hear
The sound of harp-strings tinkling; then,
As is the wont of such-like men,
Great fear of ghosts fell on his heart;
Yet, trembling sore, he thrust apart
The long stems of the barley-straw,
And, peering round about, he saw
Heimir asleep, his naked brand
Laid o'er his knees, but his right hand
Amid the harp-strings, whence there came
A mournful tinkling; and some name
His lips seemed muttering, and withal
A strange sound on his ears did fall
As of a young child murmuring low
The muffled sounds of passing woe.
Nought dreadful saw he; yet the hair
'Gan bristle on his head with fear,
And twice was he at point to turn
His bread by other craft to earn;
But in the end prevailed in him
His raging greed 'gainst glimmerings dim
Of awe and pity; which but wrought
In such wise in him that he thought
How good it were if all were done,
And day, and noise, and the bright sun
Were come again: he crept along,
Posing a spear, thick shafted, strong,
In his right hand; and ever fast
The Medieval Tale for December

His heart beat as the floor he passed,
And o'er his shoulder gazed for fear
Once and again; he raised the spear,
As Heimir's hand the string still pressed,
And thrust it through his noble breast,
Then turned and fled, and heard behind
A sound as of a wildered wind,
Half moan, half sigh; then all was still.
But yet such fear his soul did fill
That he stayed not until he came
Into the hall, and cried the name
Of his wife, Grimma, in high voice.
Ah well, she said, what needs this noise?
Can ye not see me here? Well then?
Wife, said he, of the sons of men
I deem him not, rather belike
Odin it was that I did strike.
She laughed an ill laugh. Well, she said,
When then, if only he be dead?
What if he only seemed to die?
He said, and when night draweth nigh
Shall come again grown twice as great,
And eat where yesternight he ate?
For certes, wife, that harp of his
No earthly minstrelsy it is,
Since as in sleep the man was laid
Of its own self a tune it played;
Yea, yea, and in a man's voice cried;
Belike a troll therein doth bide.
An ugly, ill-mad minstrel's tool,
She said; thou blundering, faint-hearted fool!
Some wind moaned through the barn belike,
And the man's hand the strings did strike.
AND yet she shivered as she spake,
As though some fear her heart did take,
And neither durst to draw anigh
The barn until the sun was high,
Then in they went together, and saw
The old man lying in the straw,
Scarce otherwise than if asleep,

The Fostering of Adlaug

Though in his heart the spear lay deep,
And round about the floor was red.
Then Grimma went, and from the dead
Stripped off the gold ring, while the man
Stood still apart; then she began
To touch the harp, but in no wise
Might open it to reach the prize.
Wherefore she bade her husband bring
Edge-tools to split the cursed thing.
He brought them trembling, and the twain
Fell to, and soon their end did gain;
But shrank back trembling to see there
The youngling, her grey eyes and clear
Wide open, fearless; but the wife
Knew too much of her own sour life
To fear the other world o'ermuch,
And soon began to pull and touch
The golden raiment of the may;
And at the last took heart to say:
Be comforted! we shall not die;
For no work is this certainly
Wrought in the country never seen,
But raiment of a Hunnish queen:
Gold seest thou, Goodman! gems seest thou!
No ill work hast thou wrought I trow.
But, for the maiden, we must give
Victuall to her that she may live;
For though to-day she is indeed
But one more mouth for us to feed,
Yet as she waxeth shall she do
Right many a thing to help us two;
Yea, whatso hardest work there is,
That shall be hers, no life of bliss
Like sewing gold mid bower-mays;
She shall be strong, too, as the days
Increase on her. Then said the man:
Get speech from her, for sure she can
Tell somewhat of her life and state.
BUT whatso he or his vile mate
Might do, no word at all she spake
Either for threat or promise sake;  
Until at last they deemed that she  
Was tongue-tied: so now presently  
Unto the homestead was she brought,  
And her array all golden-wrought  
Stripped from her, and in rags of grey  
Clad was she. But from light of day  
The carl hid Heimir dead, and all  
Into dull sodden life did fall.

O with the twain abode the may,  
Waxing in beauty day by day,  
But ever as one tongue-tied was,  
What thing soever came to pass:  
And needs the hag must call her Crow;  
A name, she said, full good enow

For thee, my mother bore it erst.  
So lived the child that she was nursed  
On little meat and plenteous blows;  
Yet nowise would she weep, but close

Would set her teeth therewith, and go  
About what work she had to do,  
And ever wrought most sturdily;  
Until at last she grew to be

More than a child. And now the place  
That once had borne so dull a face  
Grew well-nigh bright to look upon,  
And whatso thing might shine there shone;  
Yea, all but her who brought about  
That change therein; for, past all doubt,

Years bettered in nowise our hag,  
And ever she said that any rag  
Was good enough to clothe the Crow.  
And still her hate did grow and grow  
As Aslaug grew to womanhood:

Oft would she sit in murderous mood  
Long hours, with hand aghast a knife,  
As Aslaug slept, all hate at strife  
With greed within her, yet withal

Something like fear of her did fall  
Upon her heart, and heavy weighed

That awful beauty, that oft stayed  
Her hand from closing on the hilt,  
E'en more than thought of good things spilt.  
Hard words and blows this scarce might stay,  
For like the minutes of the day,

Not looked for, noted not when gone,  
Were all such things unto the crone,  
And, smitten or unsmitten, still  
The Crow was swift to work her will.

IN spring-tide of her seventeenth year,  
On the hill-side the house anear  
Went Aslaug, following up her goats;  
On such a day as when Love floats  
Through the soft air unseen, to touch

Our hearts with longings overmuch  
Unshapen into hopes, to make  
All things seem fairer for the sake

Of that which cometh, who doth bear  
Who knows how much of grief and fear

In his fair arms. So Aslaug went,  
On vague and unnamed thoughts intent,  
That seemed to her full sweet snow,

And ever greater hope did grow,  
And sweet seemed life to her and good,

Small reason why: into the wood  
She turned, and wandered slim and fair

Twixt the dark tree-boles: strange and rare  
The sight was of her golden head,  
So good, uncoifed, unchapereted,  
Above her sordid dark array,

That over her fair body lay  
As dark clouds on a lillied hill.  
The wild things well might gaze their fill,  
As through the wind-flowers brushed her feet,  
As her lips smiled when those did meet

The lush cold blue-bells, or were set  
Light on the pale dog-violet.¹

¹dog-violet: Viola conspersa, a ground-plant with bluish-violet flowers.
The Medieval Tale for December

The Fostering of Aslauð

600 Of those two murderers. While she spake
Her hands were busy with her gown,
And at the end it slipped adown
And left her naked there and white
In the unshadowed noontide light.
Like Freyja in her house of gold,¹

605 A while her limbs did she behold
Clear mirrored in the lake beneath;
Then slowly, with a shuddering breath,
Stepped in the water cold, and played
Amid the ripple that she made,
And spoke again aloud, as though
The lone place of her heart might know:
Soothly, she said, if I knew fear,
Scarcely should I be sporting here,
But blinder surely has the crone

610 In those last months of winter grown,
Nor knows if I be foul or sweet;
Or sharp stripes might I chance to meet,
As heretofore it hath been seen
When I have dared to make me clean
Amid their foulness: loathes her heart
That one she hates should have a part
In the world's joy. Well, time wears by;
I was not made for misery.
Surely if dimly do mine eyes
Behold no sordid tale arise,
No ill life drawing near, who knows
But I am kept for greater woes,
Godlike despair that makes not base,
Though like a stone may grow the face
Because of it, yea, and the heart
A hard-wrought treasure set apart
For the world's glory. Therewith she
Made for the smooth bank leisurely,
And, naked as she was, did pass
Unto the warm and flowery grass

¹ Like Freyja in her house of gold: According to Norse myth, Freyja lived in a gold palace.
All unashamed, and fearing not
For aught that should draw nigh the spot:
And soothly had some hunter been
Near by and all her beauty seen,
He would have deemed he saw a fay
And hastened trembling on his way.
But when full joyance she had had
Of sun and flowers, her limbs she clad
In no long time, forsooth, and then
Called back her wandering flock again
With one strange dumb cry, e’en as though
Their hearts and minds she needs must know;
For hurrying back with many a bleat
They huddled round about her feet.
And back she went unto the stead,
Strange visions pressing round her head,
So light of heart and limb, that though
She went with measured steps and slow,
Each yard seemed but a dance to her.
SO now the thick wood did she clear,
And o’er the bent beheld the sea,
And stood amazed there suddenly,
For a long-ship, with shield-hung sail,
And fair-stained flapping raven-sail,1
And golden dragon-stem, there lay
On balanced oars amidst the bay,
Slow heaving with the unrippled swell.
With a strange hope she might not tell
Her eyes ran down the strand, and there
Lay beached a ship’s boat painted fair,
And on the shingle by her side
Three blue-clad2 axemen did abide
Their fellows, sent belike ashore
To gather victuals for their store.
SHE looked not long; with heart that beat

More quickly and with hurrying feet
Unto the homestead did she pass,
And when anigh the door she was,
She heard men’s voices deep and rough;
Then the shrill crone, who said: Enough
Of work I once had done for you,
But now my days left are but few,
And I am weak; I prithee wait;
Already now the noon is late,
My daughter, Crow, shall soon be here.
Nay, said a shipman, have no fear,
Goodwife, a speedy death to get,
Thou art a sturdy carline yet;
Howbeit, we well may wait a while.
THEREAT Aslaug, with a strange-smile,
Fresh from that water in the wood,
Pushed back the crazy door, and stood
Upon the threshold silently;
Bareheaded and barefoot was she,
And scarce her rage held each to each,
Yet did the shipmen stay their speech
And open-mouthed upon her stare,
As with bright eyes and face flushed fair
She stood; one gleaming lock of gold,
Strayed from her fair head’s plaitted fold,
Fell far below her girdlestead,
And round about her shapely head
A garland of dog-violet
And wind-flowers mostry had she set:
They deemed it little scathe indeed
That her coarse homespun ragged weed
Fell off from her round arms and lithe
Laid on the door-post, that a withe
Of willows was her only belt;
And each as he gazed at her felt
As some gift had been given him.
At last one grumbled: Nowise dim
It is to see, goodwife, that this
No branch of thy great kinship is.
GRIMA was glaring on the may,

1ransen-sail: The Sages do not describe Ragnar’s ship; Morris may have
chosen the raven-sail to suggest Ragnar’s slaying of a serpent in the Sages of
Ragnar Lodbrok (Chapters 3 and 4).
2blue-clad: Morris added this description.
And scarce for rage found words to say:
Yes, soothing is she of our kin:
Sixty-five winters changeth skin.
And whatsoever she may be,
Though she is dumb as a dead tree,
She worketh ever double-tide.
So, masters, ope your mealsacks wide
And fall to work; even of wood
There is, I trow. And there she stood,
Shaking all o'er, and when the may
Brushed past her going on her way,
From off the board a knife she caught,
And well-nigh had it in her thought
To end it all. Small heed the men
Would take of her, forsooth; and when
They turned their baking-work to speed,
And Aslaug fell the meal to knead,
He was the happiest of them all
Unto whose portion it did fall
To take the loaves from out her hand;
And gaping often would he stand,
And ever he deemed that he could feel
A trembling all along the peel
Whenas she touched it: sooth to say,
Such bread as there was baked that day
Was never seen. Such as it was
The work was done, and they did pass
Down toward the ship, and as they went
A dull place seemed the thorny bent,
Gilded by sunset; the fair ship,
That soft in the long swell did dip
Her golden dragon, seemed nought worth,
And they themselves, all void of mirth,
Stammering and blundering in their speech,
Still looking back, seemed each to each
Ill-shapen, ugly, rough and base
As might be found in any place.
WELL, saith the tale, and when the bread
Was broken, just as light as lead
Men found the same, as sweet as gall,
Half baked and sodden; one and all
Men gave it to the devil; at last
Unto their lord the story passed,
Who called for them, and bade them say
Why they had wrought in such a way;
They grinned and stammered, till said one:
We did just e'en as must be done
When men are caught; had it been thou,
A-cold had been the oven now.
Ye deal in riddles, said the lord;
Enough brine is there overboard
To fill you full if even so
Ye needs must have it. We did go,
The man said, to a house, and found
That lack of all things did abound;
A yellow-faced and blear-eyed crone
Was in the sooty hall alone;
But as we talked with her, and she
Spake to us ill and craftily,
A wondrous scent was wafted o'er
The space about the open door,
And all the birds drew near to sing,
And summer pushed on into spring,
Until there stood before our eyes
A damsel clad in wretched guise,
Yet surely of the gods I deem,
So fair she was: well then, this dream
Of Freyja on midsommer night,
This breathing love, this once-seen sight,
Flitted amidst us kneeling meal,
And from us all the wits did steal:
Hadst thou been wise? Well, said the lord,
This seemeth but an idle word:
Yet since ye all are in one tale
Somewhat to you it may avail:
Speak out! my lady that is dead,
Thora, the chief of godlihead.

[Thora: In the Saga (Chapters 3 and 4), Harraud, "a rich and mighty jarl in
Gautland," promised the hand of his daughter Thora to the killer of a ravenous
vampyr that encircled her house. Ragnar accomplished this feat, and after their]
That those men gave her little heed,
But stared at Astlaug as she stood
Beside the greasy, blackened wood
Of the hall's uprights, fairest grown
Than yesterday, soft 'neath her gown
Her fair breast heaving, her wide eyes
Mid dreams of far-off things grown wise,
The rock dropped down in her left hand;
There mazed awhile the men did stand,
Then got them back. And so the sun
Waxed hot and waned, and, day nigh done,
Cleared on the ship's side as she lay:
Close in at deepest of the bay,
Her bridge gold-hung on either hand
Cast out upon the hard white sand,
While o'er the bulwarks many a man
Gazed forth; and the great lord began
To fret and fume, till on the brow
Of the low cliff they saw her now,
Who stood a moment to behold
The ship's sun-litten flashing gold;
Then slowly 'gan to get her down
A steep path in the sea-cliff brown,
Till on a sudden did she meet
The slant sun cast about its feet,
And flashed as in a golden cloud;
Since scarcely her poor raiment showed
Beneath the glory of her hair,
Whose last lock touched her ankles bare.
FOR so it was that as she went
Unto this meeting, all intent
Upon the time that was to be,
While yet just hidden from the sea
She stayed her feet a little while,
And, gazing on her raiment vile,
Flushed red, and muttered: Who can tell
But I may love this great lord well?
An evil thing then should it be
If he cast loathing eyes on me
This first time for my vile attire.

marriage the couple had two sons before Thora's death from illness. Ragnar's grief then prompted him to leave for "the wars," and his encounter with Astlaug occurs during one of these sojourns.

16Micklegarth: Mikligårðr, or Constantinople in Byzantium.
Then, while her cheek still burned like fire,
She set hand to her hair of gold
Until its many ripples rolled
All over her, and no great queen
Was e'er more gloriously beseen;
And thus she went upon her way.
NOW when the crew beheld the may
Set foot upon the sand there rose
A mighty shout from midst of those
Rough seafarers; only the lord
Stood silent gazing overboard
With great eyes, till the bridge she gained,
And still the colour waxed and waned
Within his face; but when her foot
First pressed the plank, to his heart's root
Sweet pain there pierced, for her great eyes
Were fixed on his in earnest wise,
E'en as her thoughts were all of him;
And somewhat now all things waxed dim,
As unto her he stretched his hand,
And felt hers; and the twain did stand
Hearkening each other's eager breath.
But she was changed; for pale as death
She was now as she heard his voice.
FULL well may we this eve rejoice,
Fair maid, that thou hast come to us;
That this grey shore and dolorous
Holds greater beauty than the earth
Mid fairer days may bring to birth,
And that I hold it now. But come
Unto the wind-blown woven home,
Where I have dwelt alone awhile,
And with thy speech the hours beguile.
For nothing he remembered
Of what his men unto him said,
That she was dumb. Not once she turned
Her eyes from his; the low sun burned
Within her waving hair, as she
Unto the poop went silently
Beside him, and with faltering feet,

Because this hour seemed over-sweet,
And still his right hand held her hand.
BUT when at last the twain did stand
Beneath the gold-hung tilt alone,
He said: Thou seemest such an one
As who could love, thou look'st on me
As through thou hoped'st love might be
Bewixt us; thou art pale, my sweet,
Good were it if our lips should meet.
Then mouth to mouth long time they stood,
And when they sundered the red blood
Burnt in her cheek, and tenderly
Trembled her lips, and drew anigh
His lips again: but speech did break
Swiftly from out them, and she spake:
May it be so, fair man, that thou
Art even no less happy now
Than I am. With a joyous cry
He caught her to him hastily;
And mid that kiss the sun went down,
And colder was the dark world grown.
Once more they parted: Ah, my love,
He said, I knew not aught could move
My heart to such joy as thy speech.
SHE made as if she fain would reach
Her lips to his once more; but ere
They touched, as smitten by new fear,
She drew aback and said: Alas!
It darkens, and I needs must pass
Back to the land, to be more sad
Than if this joy I ne'er had had.
And thou, thou shalt be sorry too,
And pity me that it is so.
To-morrow morn comes back the day,
He said, if we should part, sweet may:
Yet why should I be left forlorn
Bewixt this even and the morn?
HIS hand had swept aback her hair,
And on her shoulder, gleaming bare
From midst her rags, was trembling now;
But she drew back, and o'er her brow
Gathered a troubled thoughtful frown,
And on the bench she sat her down
And spake: Nay, it were wise to bide
Awhile. Behold, the world is wide,
Yet have we found each other here,
And each to other seems more dear
Than all the world else. Yet a king
Thou art, and I am such a thing,
By some half-dreamed—of chance cast forth
To live a life of little worth,
A lonely life; and it may be
That thou shouldst weary soon of me
If I abode here now; and I,
How know I? All unhappily
My life has gone; scarce a kind word
Except in dreams my ears have heard
But those thy lovely lips have said:
It might be when all things were weighed
That I too light of soul should prove
To hold for ever this great love.
DOWN at her feet therewith he knelt,
And round her his strong arms she felt
Drawing her to him, as he said:
These are strange words for thee, O maid;
Are those sweet loving lips grown cold
So soon? Yet art thou in my hold,
And certainly my heart is hot.
What help against me hast thou got?
Each unto each their cheeks were laid,
As in a trembling voice she said:
No help, because so dear to me
Thou art, and mighty as may be;
Thou hast seen much, art wiser far:
Than I am; yet strange thoughts there are
In my mind now, some half-told tale
Stirs in me, if I might avail
To tell it. Suddenly she rose,
And thrust him from her. Ah, too close!
Too close now, and too far apart

To-morrow! and a barren heart,
And days that ever fall to worse,
And blind lives struggling with a curse
They cannot grasp! Look on my face,
Because I deem me of a race
That knoweth such a tale too well;
Yet if there be such tale to tell
Of us twain, let it e'en be so,
Rather than we should fail to know
This love. Ah me, my love forbear!
No pain for thee and me I fear;
Yet strive we e'en for more than this!
Thou who hast given me my first bliss
To-day, forgive me, that in turn
I see the pain within thee burn,
And may not help, because mine eyes
The Gods make clear. I am grown wise
With gain of love, and hope of days
That many a coming age shall praise.
AWHILE he gazed on her, and shook
With passion, and his cloak's hem took
With both hands as to rend it down;
Yet from his brow soon cleared the frown:
He said: Yea, such an one thou art,
As needs alone must fill my heart
If I be like my father's kin,
And have a hope great deeds to win;
And surely nought shall hinder me
From living a great life with thee:
Say now what thou wouldst have me do.
Some deed of fame thou goest to,
She said, for surely thou art great;
Go on thy way then, and if fate
So shapen is, that thou mayst come
Once more unto this lonely home,

To the curse! They cannot grasp: In the *Volsunga Saga*, the dwarf Andvari places a car curse on a hoard of gold and all the descendants of the Volsungs. More specifically, Aslaug may forsee Ragnar's death in England at the hand of King Hra, who orders him thrown into a stakepit. In Chapter 15 of the *Saga of Ragnar Lodbrok*. 
There shalt thou find me, who will live
Through whatso days that fate may give,
Till on some happy coming day
Thine ears again make white the bay.
If that might be remembered now,
He said, last Yule I made a vow
In some fair land to win me fame.
Come nigher, sweet, and hear my name
Before thou goest; that if so be
Death take me and my love from thee,
Thou mayst then think of who I was,
Nor let all memory of me pass.
When thou to some great king art wed:
Then shalt thou say: Ragnar is dead,
Who was the son of Sigurd Ring.18
Among the Danes a mighty king.
He might have had me by his side,
Then shalt thou say, that hour he died;
But my heart failed and not his heart.
Nay, make it not too hard to part,
She said, when once again their lips
Had sundered; as gold-bearing ships
Foundered amidmost of the sea,
So shall the loves of most men be,
And leave no trace behind. God wot
This heart of mine shall hate thee not
Whatso befall; but rather bless
Thee and this hour of happiness;
And if this tide shall come again
After hard longing and great pain,
How sweet, how sweet! O love, farewell,
Lest other tale there be to tell:
Yet heed this now lest afterward
It seem to thee a thing too hard
To keep thy faith to such as me;

18 Sigurd Ring: This was the name of a renowned Danish king, mentioned in Saxo Grammaticus's History of the Danes, Books 7-9 (trans. and ed. H. E. Davidson, 1979). One of the final passages of the chronicle identifies a certain "Sivard Ring" (here called King of Norway) as the father of Ragnar (A. P. M. W.).

I am belike what thou dost see,
A goatherd girl, a peasant maid,
Of a poor wretched crone afraid
From dawn to dusk; despite of dreams
In morning tides, and misty gleams
Of wondrous stories, deem me such
As I have said, nor overmuch
Cast thou thy love upon my heart
If even such a man thou art
As needs must wed a great man's child.
HE stepped aback from her and smiled,
And, stooping 'neath the lamp, drew forth
From a great chest a thing of worth,
A silken sarc wrought wonderously
In some fair land across the sea.
One thing this is of many such
That I were fain thy skin should touch,
He said, if thou wouldst have it so.
But his voice faltered and sank low,
As though her great heart he 'gan fear.
She reached her fine strong hand anear
The far-fetch'd thing; then smiling said:
Strange that such fair things can be made
By men who die; and like it is
Thou think'st me worthy of all bliss;
But our rough hills and smoky house
Befit not aught so glorious,
E'en if thou come again to me;
And if not, greater grief to see
The gifts of dead love! what say I?
Our crone should wear these certainly
If I but brought them unto land.
HE flushed red, and his strong right hand
Fell to his sword-hilt. Nay, she said,
All that is nought if rightly weighed;
Hope and desire shall pass the days
If thou come back. Grave was her face
And tremulous: he sighed: Then take
This last gift only for my sake.
And once again their lips did touch
And clinging together. O many such,
She said, if the time did not fail,
And my heart too: of what avail
Against the hand of fate to strive?
Let me begin my life to live,
As it must be a weary space.
The moon smote full upon her face,
As on a trembling sea, as now
From the lamp-litten gold tilt low
She stepped into the fresher air,
He with her. Slow the twain did fare
Amidst the wondering men, till they
Had reached the bridge; then swift away
She turned, and passed the gold-hung rail,
And o'er the sands the moon made pale
Went gleaming, all alone: and he
Watched till her light feet steadily
Stepped up upon the dark cliff's brow:
But no one time she turned her now,
But vanished from him into night.
So there he watched till changing light
Brought the beginning of the tide
Of longing that he needs must bide;
Then he cried out for oars and sail,
And ere the morning star did fail
No more those cliffs his bird beheld,
As 'neath the wind the broad sail swelled.

UT' for the maiden, back she went
Unto the stead, and her intent
She changed in nought: no word she spake
What wrath soe'er on her might break
From the fell crone, on whom withal
Still heavier did that strange awe fall;
As well might be, for from the may
Had girlish lightness passed away
Into a sweet grave majesty,
That scarce elsewhere the world might see.
So wore the spring, and summer came
And went, and all the woods did flame
With autumn, as in that old tide

When slowly by the mirk hill-side
Went Heimir to his unseen death:
Then came the first frost's windless breath,
The steaming sea, the world all white,
And glittering mom and silent night,
As when the little one first felt
The world a-cold; and still she dwelt
Unchanged since that first spark of love
Wrought the great change, that so did move
Her heart to perfect loveliness.
Nor overmuch did the days press
Upon her with the weary waste
Of short life, that too quick doth haste
When joy is gained: if any thought
Thereof unto her heart was brought,
Rather it was: Ah, over-long
For brooding over change and wrong
When that shall come! Good gain to me
My soul's eyes one more time to see,
To feel once more his lips' delight,
And die with the short summer night,
Not shamed nor sorry! But if I
Must bear the weight of misery
In the after days, yet even then
May I not leave to unborn men
A savour of sweet things, a tale
That midst all woes shall yet prevail
To make the world seem something worth?
So passed the winter of the North,
And once again was come the spring:
Then whiles would she go loitering
Slow-footed, and with hanging head,
Through budding brake, o'er flowery mead,
With blood that throbbed full quickly now
If o'er the flowers her feet were slow,
And bonds about her seemed to be.
Yet wore the spring-tide lingeringly
Till on a morn of latter May,
When her soft sleep had passed away,
Nought but the bright-billed sweet-throat bird
Within the thorn at first she heard;
But, even as her heart did meet
The first wave of desire o'er-sweet,
The winding of a mighty horn
Adown the breeze of May was borne,
And throbbing hope on her did fall:
Yet from her bed she leapt withal,
And clad herself, and went about
Her work, as though with ne'er a doubt
That this day e'en such like should be
As was the last; and so while she
Quickened the fire and laid the board,
Mid the crone's angry, peevish word
Of surly wonder, the goodman,
With axe on shoulder, swiftly ran
Adown the slope; but presently
Came breathless back: Ah, here they be!
Come back again for something worse,
Said he. This dumb maid is some curse
Laid on us. Well, the goodwife said,
Who be they? They who baked their bread
Within this house last spring, said he.
Oft did I marvel then why she,
This witch-maid, went unto the strand
That eve. Nay, maybe comes to hand
Some luck, the crone said. Hold thy peace,
He said. What good hap or increase
From that ill night shall ever come?
Rather I deem that now come home
Those fifteen years of murder: lo,
The worst of all we soon shall know;
I hear their voices. Silently,
If somewhat pale, Aslaug passed by
From fire to board, as though she heard
And noted nothing of that word,
What'er it was: yet now, indeed,
The clink of sword on iron weed,
And voices of the seafarers,
Came clear snow unto her ears;
Nor was it long or e'er the door
Was darkened, as one stood before
The light and cried: Hal! to this house,
If here still dwells the glorious
Fair maiden, that across the seas
We come for! Aslaug on her knees
Kneel by the brightening fire and dropped
The meal into the pot, nor stopped
For all their words, but with her hand
Screened her fair face. Then up did stand
The goodman, quaking: Well, he said,
Good be my meed! for we have fed
This dumb maid all for kindness' sake.
No need, he said, long words to make,
And little heed we thy lies now,
But if she doom thee to the bough.
All hail, our Lady and our Queen!
FOR she, arisen, with glorious men
Was drawing near the board, and bare
The porridge-bowl and such-like gear
Past where the men stood; tremblingly
The leader of them drew anigh,
And would have taken them, but she
Sweared from his strong hand daintily,
Smiled on him and passed by, and when
They were set down turned back again
And spoke, and well then might rejoice
That dusky place to hear her voice
For the first time: I doubt me not,
O seafarers, but ye have got
A message from that goodly lord
Who spake last year a pleasant word,
Hard to believe for a poor maid.
TREMBLED the twain at what she said
Less than the unexpected sound,
For death seemed in the air around.
But the man spake: E'en thus he saith,
That he, who heretofore feared death
In nowise, feared this morn to come

19meed: reward.
And seek thee out in thy poor home,
Lest he should find thee dead or gone;
For scarce he deemed so sweet a one
Could be for him: But if she live,
He said, and still her love can give
To me, let her make no delay,
For fear we see no other day
Wherein to love. She said: Come, then!
It shame me not that of all men
I love him best. But have ye there
Somewhat these twain might reckon dear?
Their life is ill enow to live
But that withal they needs must strive
With griping want when I am gone.
He answered: O thou goodly one,
Here have we many a dear-bought thing,
Because our master bade us bring
All queenly gear for thee, and dears
That thou, so clad as well besems
That lovely body, wouldst aboard;
But all we have is at thy word
To keep or spend. Nay, friends, she said,
If thy lord love my goodliehead,
Fain would I bear alone to him
What wealth I have of face or limb,
For him to deck when all is his,
So full enow shall even this
That I am dight with be for me;
But since indeed of his bounty
He giveth unto me to give,
Take ye this gold, ye twain, and live
E'en as ye may; small need to bless
Or curse your sordid churlishness,
Because methinks, without fresh curse,
Each day that comes shall still be worse
Than the past day, and worst of all
Your ending day on you shall fall.
Yet, if it may be, fare ye well,
Since in your house I came to dwell
Some wearing of my early days.

E'EN as she spake, her glorious face
Shone the last time on that abode,
And her light feet the daisies trod
Outside the threshold. But the twain
Stood 'mazed above the bounteous gain
Of rings and gems and money bright,
And a long while, for mere affright
And wonder, durst not handle it.
BUT while the butterfly did flit
White round about the feet of her,
Above the little May-flowers fair,
She went adown the hill with these,
Until the low wash of the seas
They heard, and murmuring of the men
Who manned the long-ships; quickly then
They showed above the grey bent's brow,
And all the folk beheld them now
Twixt oar and gunwale that abode,
And to the sky their shout rose loud.
But when upon the beach she came,
A bright thing in the sun did flame
Twixt sun and ship-side, and the sea
Foamed, as one waded eagerly
Unto the smooth and sea-beat sand,
And for one moment did she stand
Breathless, with beating heart, and then
To right and left drew back the men;
She heard a voice she deemed well known,
Long waited through dull hours bygone,
And round her mighty arms were cast:
But when her trembling red lips passed
From out the heaven of that dear kiss,
And eyes met eyes, she saw in his
Fresh pride, fresh hope, fresh love, and saw
The long sweet days still onward draw,
Themselves still going hand in hand,
As now they went adown the strand.
EXT' morn, when they awoke to see
Each other's hands draw lovingly
Each unto each, awhile they lay
Silent, as though night passed away
They grudged full sore: till the King said
Unto the happy golden head

That lay upon his breast: What thought
By those few hours of dark was brought
Unto thy heart, my love? Did dreams
Make strange thy loving sleep with gleams
Of changing days that yet may be?
She answered, but still dreamily:

In sleep a little while ago
O'er a star-litten world of snow
I fared, till suddenly nearby
A swirling fire blazed up on high;
Thereto I went, and without scathe
Passed through the flame, as one doth bathe
Within a summer stream, and there
I saw a golden palace fair
Ringed round about with roaring flame.
Unto an open door I came,
And entered a great hall thereby,
And saw where 'neath a canopy
A King and Queen there sat: more fair
Than the world knoweth otherwhere:
And much methought my heart smiled then
Upon that goodliest of all men,
That sweetest of all womankind.
Then one methought a horn did wind
Without, and the King turned and spake:
Wherewith do the hall pillars shake,
O Queen, O love? She moved her head,
And in a voice like music said:
This is the fame of Ragnar's life,
The breath of all the glorious strife

Wherewith his days shall wear. Then he:
What is the shadow that I see
Adown the hall? Then said the Queen:
Our daughter surely hast thou seen
If thine eyes saw as clear as mine:
Well worth she is our love divine,
And unto Ragnar she is wed,
The best man since that thou art dead,
My King, my love, mine own, mine own.
Then the twain kissed upon the throne,
And the dream passed and sleep passed too.
THEREWITH the King her body drew
Nearer to him, if it might be,
And spake: A strange dream came to me.
Upon a waste at dawn I went
And wandered over vale and bent,
And ever was it dawn of day,
And still upon all sides there lay
The bones of men, and war-gear turned
To shards and rust; then far off burned
A fire, and thither quick I passed.
And when I came to it at last
Dreadful it seemed, impassable;
But I, fain of that land to tell
What things soever might be known,
Went round about, and up and down,
And gat no passing by the same;
Until, methought, just where the flame
Burned highest, through the midst I saw
A man and woman toward me draw,
Even as through a flowery wood:
So came they unto where I stood,
And glad at heart therewith I grew,
For such fair folk as were the two
Ne'er had I seen: then the man cried:
Hail to thee, Ragnar! well betide
This dawn of day. Stretch forth thine hand.
E'en as he bade me did I stand,
Abiding what should hap, but he
Turned to the woman lovingly,
And from her bosom’s fresh delight
Drew forth a blooming lily white,
And set it in mine hand, and then
Both through the flame went back again.
Then afterwards in earth I set
This lily, and with soft regret
Watched for its fading; but withal
Great light upon the world did fall,
And fair the sun rose o’er the earth,
And blithe I grew and full of mirth:
And no more on a waste I was,
But in a green world, where the grass
White lily-blooms well-nigh did hide;
O’er hill and valley far and wide
They waved in the warm wind; the sun
Seemed shining upon everyone,
As though it loved it; and with that
I woke, and up in bed I sat
And saw thee waking, O my sweet!
With that last word their lips did meet,
And even the fresh May morning bright
Was noted not in their delight.
LET be; as ancient stories tell,
Full knowledge upon Ragnar fell
In lapse of time, that this was she
Begot in the felicity,
Swift-fleeting, of the wondrous twain
Who afterwards through change and pain
Must live apart to meet in death.
BUT, would ye know what the tale saith,
In the old Danish tongue is writ21
Full many a word concerning it;
The days through which these lovers passed,
Till death made end of all at last.
But so great Ragnar’s glory seemed
To Northern folk, that many deemed
That for his death, when song arose

22 Adder-close: snakepit (cf. 1. 1027n.)
23 Senlac field: At the Battle of Hastings in 1066, William of Normandy defeated the Saxon king Harold II on the “hill of Senlac.”

In the old Danish tongue is writ: Modern Icelandic is the closest twentieth-century counterpart of Old Norse, the language of The Saga of Ragnar Lodbrok.
In the dim place that the sun knew no more
He rose up when his tale was fully o'er,
And 'gan to pace the long hall to and fro
With old eyes looking downward, e'en as though
None else were there: at last with upraised face

He walked back swiftly to his fire-lit place,
And sat him down, and turned to the young folk
Smiling perchance; then from their lips outbroke
The murmuring speech his moody looks had stilled,
And with a sweet sound was the hall full filled;
E'en like the noise that from the thin wood's side
Swims through the dawning day at April-tide
Across the speckled eggs, when from the brown
Soft feathers glittering eyes are looking down
Over the dewy meads, too fresh and fair
For aught but lovely feet to wander there.
Drag on, long night of winter, in whose heart,
Nurse of regret, the dead spring yet has part!
Drag on, O night of dreams! O night of fears!
Fed by the summers of the bygone years!

From this dull rainy undersky and low,
This murky ending of a leaden day,
That never knew the sun, this half-thawed snow,
These tossing black boughs faint against the grey
Of gathering night, thou turnest, dear, away

Silent, but with thy scarce-seen kindly smile
Sent through the dusk my longing to beguile.

There, the lights gleam, and all is dark without!
And in the sudden change our eyes meet dazed:
O look, love, look again! the veil of doubt
Just for one flash, past counting, then was raised!
O eyes of heaven, as clear thy sweet soul blazed
On mine a moment! O come back again
Strange rest and dear amid the long dull pain!

Nay, nay, gone by! though there she sitteth still,
With wide grey eyes so frank and fathomless:
Be patient, heart, thy days they yet shall fill
With utter rest: Yea, now thy pain they bless,
And feed thy last hope of the world's redress.
O unseen hurrying rack! O wailing wind!
What rest and where go ye this night to find?

\textsuperscript{24}rack: a wind-driven mass of high, often broken, clouds.