



1884

Malcolm's Katie: A Love Story

Isabella Valancy Crawford

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A poem by Isabella Valancy Crawford

Malcolm's Katie: A Love Story

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Title: Malcolm's Katie: A Love Story

Author: Isabella Valancy Crawford [[More Titles by Crawford](#)]

PART I.

Max plac'd a ring on little Katie's hand,
 A silver ring that he had beaten out
 From that same sacred coin--first well-priz'd wage
 For boyish labour, kept thro' many years.
 "See, Kate," he said, "I had no skill to shape
 Two hearts fast bound together, so I grav'd
 Just K. and M., for Katie and for Max."
 "But, look; you've run the lines in such a way,
 That M. is part of K., and K. of M.,"
 Said Katie, smiling. "Did you mean it thus?
 I like it better than the double hearts."
 "Well, well," he said, "but womankind is wise!
 Yet tell me, dear, will such a prophecy
 Not hurt you sometimes, when I am away?
 Will you not seek, keen ey'd, for some small break
 In those deep lines, to part the K. and M.
 For you? Nay, Kate, look down amid the globes
 Of those large lilies that our light canoe
 Divides, and see within the polish'd pool
 That small, rose face of yours,--so dear, so fair,--
 A seed of love to cleave into a rock,
 And bourgeon thence until the granite splits
 Before its subtle strength. I being gone--
 Poor soldier of the axe--to bloodless fields,
 (Inglorious battles, whether lost or won).
 That sixteen summer'd heart of yours may say:
 "I but was budding, and I did not know
 My core was crimson and my perfume sweet;
 I did not know how choice a thing I am;
 I had not seen the sun, and blind I sway'd
 To a strong wind, and thought because I sway'd,
 'Twas to the wooer of the perfect rose--
 That strong, wild wind has swept beyond my ken--
 The breeze I love sighs thro' my ruddy leaves."
 "O, words!" said Katie, blushing, "only words!
 You build them up that I may push them down;
 If hearts are flow'rs, I know that flow'rs can root--
 "Bud, blossom, die--all in the same lov'd soil;
 They do so in my garden. I have made





Your heart my garden. If I am a bud
 And only feel unfoldment--feebly stir
 Within my leaves: wait patiently; some June,
 I'll blush a full-blown rose, and queen it, dear,
 In your lov'd garden. Tho' I be a bud,
 My roots strike deep, and torn from that dear soil
 Would shriek like mandrakes--those witch things I read
 Of in your quaint old books. Are you content?"
 "Yes--crescent-wise--but not to round, full moon.
 Look at yon hill that rounds so gently up
 From the wide lake; a lover king it looks,
 In cloth of gold, gone from his bride and queen;
 And yet delayed, because her silver locks
 Catch in his gilded fringes; his shoulders sweep
 Into blue distance, and his gracious crest,
 Not held too high, is plum'd with maple groves;--
 One of your father's farms. A mighty man,
 Self-hewn from rock, remaining rock through all."
 "He loves me, Max," said Katie: "Yes, I know--
 A rock is cup to many a crystal spring.
 Well, he is rich; those misty, peak-roof'd barns--
 Leviathans rising from red seas of grain--
 Are full of ingots, shaped like grains of wheat.
 His flocks have golden fleeces, and his herds
 Have monarchs worshipful, as was the calf
 Aaron call'd from the furnace; and his ploughs,
 Like Genii chained, snort o'er his mighty fields.
 He has a voice in Council and in Church--"
 "He work'd for all," said Katie, somewhat pain'd.
 "Aye, so, dear love, he did; I heard him tell
 How the first field upon his farm was ploughed.
 He and his brother Reuben, stalwart lads,
 Yok'd themselves, side by side, to the new plough;
 Their weaker father, in the grey of life
 (But rather the wan age of poverty
 Than many winters), in large, gnarl'd hands
 The plunging handles held; with mighty strains
 They drew the ripping beak through knotted sod,
 Thro' tortuous lanes of blacken'd, smoking stumps;
 And past great flaming brush heaps, sending out
 Fierce summers, beating on their swollen brows.
 O, such a battle! had we heard of serfs
 Driven to like hot conflict with the soil,
 Armies had march'd and navies swiftly sail'd
 To burst their gyves. But here's the little point--
 The polish'd di'mond pivot on which spins
 The wheel of Difference--they OWN'D the rugged soil,
 And fought for love--dear love of wealth and pow'r,
 And honest ease and fair esteem of men;
 One's blood heats at it!" "Yet you said such fields
 Were all inglorious," Katie, wondering, said.
 "Inglorious? yes; they make no promises
 Of Star or Garter, or the thundering guns
 That tell the earth her warriors are dead.
 Inglorious! aye, the battle done and won
 Means not--a throne propp'd up with bleaching bones;
 A country sav'd with smoking seas of blood;
 A flag torn from the foe with wounds and death;
 Or Commerce, with her housewife foot upon
 Colossal bridge of slaughter'd savages,
 The Cross laid on her brawny shoulder, and
 In one sly, mighty hand her reeking sword;
 And in the other all the woven cheats
 From her dishonest looms. Nay, none of these.
 It means--four walls, perhaps a lowly roof;
 Kine in a peaceful posture; modest fields;
 A man and woman standing hand in hand
 In hale old age, who, looking o'er the land,
 Say: 'Thank the Lord, it all is mine and thine!'

It means, to such thew'd warriors of the Axe
 As your own father;--well, it means, sweet Kate,
 Outspreading circles of increasing gold,
 A name of weight; one little daughter heir.
 Who must not wed the owner of an axe,
 Who owns naught else but some dim, dusky woods
 In a far land; two arms indifferent strong--"
 "And Katie's heart," said Katie, with a smile;
 For yet she stood on that smooth, violet plain,
 Where nothing shades the sun; nor quite believed
 Those blue peaks closing in were aught but mist
 Which the gay sun could scatter with a glance.
 For Max, he late had touch'd their stones, but yet
 He saw them seam'd with gold and precious ores,
 Rich with hill flow'rs and musical with rills.
 "Or that same bud that will be Katie's heart,
 Against the time your deep, dim woods are clear'd,
 And I have wrought my father to relent."
 "How will you move him, sweet? why, he will rage
 And fume and anger, striding o'er his fields,
 Until the last bought king of herds lets down
 His lordly front, and rumbling thunder from
 His polish'd chest, returns his chiding tones.
 How will you move him, Katie, tell me how?"
 "I'll kiss him and keep still--that way is sure,"
 Said Katie, smiling. "I have often tried."
 "God speed the kiss," said Max, and Katie sigh'd,
 With pray'rful palms close seal'd, "God speed the axe!"

* * * * *

O, light canoe, where dost thou glide?
 Below thee gleams no silver'd tide,
 But concave heaven's chiefest pride.

* * * * *

Above thee burns Eve's rosy bar;
 Below thee throbs her darling star;
 Deep 'neath thy keel her round worlds are!

* * * * *

Above, below, O sweet surprise,
 To gladden happy lover's eyes;
 No earth, no wave--all jewell'd sides!

* * * * *

PART II.

The South Wind laid his moccasins aside,
 Broke his gay calumet of flow'rs, and cast
 His useless wampun, beaded with cool dews,
 Far from him, northward; his long, ruddy spear
 Flung sunward, whence it came, and his soft locks
 Of warm, fine haze grew silver as the birch.
 His wigwam of green leaves began to shake;
 The crackling rice-beds scolded harsh like squaws:
 The small ponds pouted up their silver lips;
 The great lakes ey'd the mountains, whisper'd "Ugh!"
 "Are ye so tall, O chiefs? Not taller than
 Our plumes can reach." And rose a little way,
 As panthers stretch to try their velvet limbs,
 And then retreat to purr and bide their time.
 At morn the sharp breath of the night arose
 From the wide prairies, in deep struggling seas,
 In rolling breakers, bursting to the sky;
 In tumbling surfs, all yellow'd faintly thro'
 With the low sun--in mad, conflicting crests,
 Voic'd with low thunder from the hairy throats

Of the mist-buried herds; and for a man
To stand amid the cloudy roll and moil,
The phantom waters breaking overhead,
Shades of vex'd billows bursting on his breast,
Torn caves of mist wall'd with a sudden gold,
Reseal'd as swift as seen--broad, shaggy fronts,
Fire-ey'd and tossing on impatient horns
The wave impalpable--was but to think
A dream of phantoms held him as he stood.
The late, last thunders of the summer crash'd,
Where shrieked great eagles, lords of naked cliffs.
The pulseless forest, lock'd and interlock'd
So closely, bough with bough, and leaf with leaf,
So serf'd by its own wealth, that while from high
The moons of summer kiss'd its green-gloss'd locks;
And round its knees the merry West Wind danc'd;
And round its ring, compacted emerald;
The south wind crept on moccasins of flame;
And the fed fingers of th' impatient sun
Pluck'd at its outmost fringes--its dim veins
Beat with no life--its deep and dusky heart,
In a deep trance of shadow, felt no throb
To such soft wooing answer: thro' its dream
Brown rivers of deep waters sunless stole;
Small creeks sprang from its mosses, and amaz'd,
Like children in a wigwam curtain'd close
Above the great, dead, heart of some red chief,
Slipp'd on soft feet, swift stealing through the gloom,
Eager for light and for the frolic winds.
In this shrill moon the scouts of winter ran
From the ice-belted north, and whistling shafts
Struck maple and struck sumach--and a blaze
Ran swift from leaf to leaf, from bough to bough;
Till round the forest flash'd a belt of flame.
And inward lick'd its tongues of red and gold
To the deep, tranied inmost heart of all.
Rous'd the still heart--but all too late, too late.
Too late, the branches welded fast with leaves,
Toss'd, loosen'd, to the winds--too late the sun
Pour'd his last vigor to the deep, dark cells
Of the dim wood. The keen, two-bladed Moon
Of Falling Leaves roll'd up on crested mists
And where the lush, rank boughs had foiled the sun
In his red prime, her pale, sharp fingers crept
After the wind and felt about the moss,
And seem'd to pluck from shrinking twig and stem
The burning leaves--while groan'd the shudd'ring wood.
Who journey'd where the prairies made a pause,
Saw burnish'd ramparts flaming in the sun,
With beacon fires, tall on their rustling walls.
And when the vast, horn'd herds at sunset drew
Their sullen masses into one black cloud,
Rolling thund'rous o'er the quick pulsating plain,
They seem'd to sweep between two fierce red suns
Which, hunter-wise, shot at their glaring balls
Keen shafts, with scarlet feathers and gold barbs,
By round, small lakes with thinner, forests fring'd,
More jocund woods that sung about the feet
And crept along the shoulders of great cliffs;
The warrior stags, with does and tripping fawns,
Like shadows black upon the throbbing mist
Of Evening's rose, flash'd thro' the singing woods--
Nor tim'rous, sniff'd the spicy, cone-breath'd air;
For never had the patriarch of the herd
Seen limn'd against the farthest rim of light
Of the low-dipping sky, the plume or bow
Of the red hunter; nor when stoop'd to drink,
Had from the rustling rice-beds heard the shaft
Of the still hunter hidden in its spears;

His bark canoe close-knotted in its bronze,
 His form as stirless as the brooding air,
 His dusky eyes too, fix'd, unwinking, fires;
 His bow-string tighten'd till it subtly sang
 To the long throbs, and leaping pulse that roll'd
 And beat within his knotted, naked breast.
 There came a morn. The Moon of Falling Leaves,
 With her twin silver blades had only hung
 Above the low set cedars of the swamp
 For one brief quarter, when the sun arose
 Lusty with light and full of summer heat,
 And pointing with his arrows at the blue,
 Clos'd wigwam curtains of the sleeping moon,
 Laugh'd with the noise of arching cataracts,
 And with the dove-like cooing of the woods,
 And with the shrill cry of the diving loon
 And with the wash of saltless, rounded seas,
 And mock'd the white moon of the Falling Leaves.
 "Esa! esa! shame upon you, Pale Face!
 "Shame upon you, moon of evil witches!
 "Have you kill'd the happy, laughing Summer?
 "Have you slain the mother of the Flowers
 "With your icy spells of might and magic?
 "Have you laid her dead within my arms?
 "Wrapp'd her, mocking, in a rainbow blanket.
 "Drown'd her in the frost mist of your anger?
 "She is gone a little way before me;
 "Gone an arrow's flight beyond my vision;
 "She will turn again and come to meet me,
 "With the ghosts of all the slain flowers,
 "In a blue mist round her shining tresses;
 "In a blue smoke in her naked forests--
 "She will linger, kissing all the branches,
 "She will linger, touching all the places,
 "Bare and naked, with her golden fingers,
 "Saying, 'Sleep, and dream of me, my children
 "'Dream of me, the mystic Indian Summer;
 "'I, who, slain by the cold Moon of Terror,
 "'Can return across the path of Spirits,
 "'Bearing still my heart of love and fire;
 "'Looking with my eyes of warmth and splendour;
 "'Whisp'ring lowly thro' your sleep of sunshine?
 "'I, the laughing Summer, am not turn'd
 "'Into dry dust, whirling on the prairies,--
 "'Into red clay, crush'd beneath the snowdrifts.
 "'I am still the mother of sweet flowers
 "'Growing but an arrow's flight beyond you--
 "'In the Happy Hunting Ground--the quiver
 "'Of great Manitou, where all the arrows
 "'He has shot from his great bow of Pow'r,
 "'With its clear, bright, singing cord of Wisdom,
 "'Are re-gather'd, plum'd again and brighten'd,
 "'And shot out, re-barb'd with Love and Wisdom;
 "'Always shot, and evermore returning.
 "'Sleep, my children, smiling in your heart-seeds
 "'At the spirit words of Indian Summer!"
 "Thus, O Moon of Falling Leaves, I mock you!
 "Have you slain my gold-ey'd squaw, the Summer?"
 The mighty morn strode laughing up the land,
 And Max, the labourer and the lover, stood
 Within the forest's edge, beside a tree;
 The mossy king of all the woody tribes,
 Whose clatt'ring branches rattl'd, shuddering,
 As the bright axe cleav'd moon-like thro' the air,
 Waking strange thunders, rousing echoes link'd
 From the full, lion-throated roar, to sighs
 Stealing on dove-wings thro' the distant aisles.
 Swift fell the axe, swift follow'd roar on roar,
 Till the bare woodland bellow'd in its rage,

As the first-slain slow topp'd to his fall.
"O King of Desolation, art thou dead?"
Thought Max, and laughing, heart and lips, leap'd on
The vast, prone trunk. "And have I slain a King?
"Above his ashes will I build my house--
No slave beneath its pillars, but--a King!"
Max wrought alone, but for a half-breed lad,
With tough, lithe sinews and deep Indian eyes,
Lit with a Gallic sparkle. Max, the lover, found
The labourer's arms grow mightier day by day--
More iron-welded as he slew the trees;
And with the constant yearning of his heart
Towards little Kate, part of a world away,
His young soul grew and shew'd a virile front,
Full-muscl'd and large statur'd, like his flesh.
Soon the great heaps of brush were builded high,
And like a victor, Max made pause to clear
His battle-field, high strewn with tangl'd dead.
Then roar'd the crackling mountains, and their fires
Met in high heaven, clasping flame with flame.
The thin winds swept a cosmos of red sparks
Across the bleak, midnight sky; and the sun
Walk'd pale behind the resinous, black smoke.
And Max car'd little for the blotted sun,
And nothing for the startl'd, outshone stars;
For Love, once set within a lover's breast,
Has its own Sun--it's own peculiar sky,
All one great daffodil--on which do lie
The sun, the moon, the stars--all seen at once,
And never setting; but all shining straight
Into the faces of the trinity,--
The one belov'd, the lover, and sweet Love!
It was not all his own, the axe-stirr'd waste.
In these new days men spread about the earth,
With wings at heel--and now the settler hears,
While yet his axe rings on the primal woods,
The shrieks of engines rushing o'er the wastes;
Nor parts his kind to hew his fortunes out.
And as one drop glides down the unknown rock
And the bright-threaded stream leaps after it,
With welded billions, so the settler finds
His solitary footsteps beaten out,
With the quick rush of panting, human waves
Upheav'd by throbs of angry poverty;
And driven by keen blasts of hunger, from
Their native strands--so stern, so dark, so dear!
O, then, to see the troubl'd, groaning waves,
Throb down to peace in kindly, valley beds;
Their turbid bosoms clearing in the calm
Of sun-ey'd Plenty--till the stars and moon,
The blessed sun himself, has leave to shine
And laugh in their dark hearts! So shanties grew
Other than his amid the blacken'd stumps;
And children ran, with little twigs and leaves
And flung them, shouting, on the forest pyres,
Where burn'd the forest kings--and in the glow
Paus'd men and women when the day was done.
There the lean weaver ground anew his axe,
Nor backward look'd upon the vanish'd loom,
But forward to the ploughing of his fields;
And to the rose of Plenty in the cheeks.
Of wife and children--nor heeded much the pangs
Of the rous'd muscles tuning to new work.
The pallid clerk look'd on his blister'd palms
And sigh'd and smil'd, but girded up his loins
And found new vigour as he felt new hope.
The lab'rer with train'd muscles, grim and grave,
Look'd at the ground and wonder'd in his soul,
What joyous anguish stirr'd his darken'd heart,

At the mere look of the familiar soil,
 And found his answer in the words--"*Mine own!*"
 Then came smooth-coated men, with eager eyes,
 And talk'd of steamers on the cliff-bound lakes;
 And iron tracks across the prairie lands;
 And mills to crush the quartz of wealthy hills;
 And mills to saw the great, wide-arm'd trees;
 And mills to grind the singing stream of grain;
 And with such busy clamour mingled still
 The throbbing music of the bold, bright Axe--
 The steel tongue of the Present, and the wail
 Of falling forests--voices of the Past.
 Max, social-soul'd, and with his practised thews,
 Was happy, boy-like, thinking much of Kate,
 And speaking of her to the women-folk;
 Who, mostly, happy in new honeymoons
 Of hope themselves, were ready still to hear
 The thrice told tale of Katie's sunny eyes
 And Katie's yellow hair, and household ways:
 And heard so often, "There shall stand our home--
 "On yonder slope, with vines about the door!"
 That the good wives were almost made to see
 The snowy walls, deep porches, and the gleam
 Of Katie's garments flitting through the rooms;
 And the black slope all bristling with burn'd stumps
 Was known amongst them all as "Max's House."

* * * * *

O, Love builds on the azure sea,
 And Love builds on the golden sand;
 And Love builds on the rose-wing'd cloud,
 And sometimes Love builds on the land.

* * * * *

O, if Love build on sparkling sea--
 And if Love build on golden strand--
 And if Love build on rosy cloud--
 To Love these are the solid land.

* * * * *

O, Love will build his lily walls,
 And Love his pearly roof, will rear,--
 On cloud or land, or mist or sea--
 Love's solid land is everywhere!

* * * * *

PART III.

The great farm house of Malcolm Graem stood
 Square shoulder'd and peak roof'd upon a hill,
 With many windows looking everywhere;
 So that no distant meadow might lie hid,
 Nor corn-field hide its gold--nor lowing herd
 Browse in far pastures, out of Malcolm's ken.
 He lov'd to sit, grim, grey, and somewhat stern,
 And thro' the smoke-clouds from his short clay pipe
 Look out upon his riches; while his thoughts
 Swung back and forth between the bleak, stern past,
 And the near future, for his life had come
 To that close balance, when, a pendulum,
 The memory swings between me "Then" and "Now";
 His seldom speech ran thus two diff'rent ways:
 "When I was but a laddie, this I did";
 Or, "Katie, in the Fall I'll see to build
 "Such fences or such sheds about the place;
 "And next year, please the Lord, another barn."
 Katie's gay garden foam'd about the walls,

'Leagur'd the prim-cut modern sills, and rush'd
Up the stone walls--and broke on the peak'd roof.
And Katie's lawn was like a Poet's sward,
Velvet and sheer and di'monded with dew;
For such as win their wealth most aptly take
Smooth, urban ways and blend them with their own;
And Katie's dainty raiment was as fine
As the smooth, silken petals of the rose;
And her light feet, her nimble mind and voice,
In city schools had learn'd the city's ways,
And grafts upon the healthy, lonely vine
They shone, eternal blossoms 'mid the fruit.
For Katie had her sceptre in her hand
And wielded it right queenly there and here,
In dairy, store-room, kitchen--ev'ry spot
Where women's ways were needed on the place.
And Malcolm took her through his mighty fields,
And taught her lore about the change of crops;
And how to see a handsome furrow plough'd;
And how to choose the cattle for the mart;
And how to know a fair day's work when done;
And where to plant young orchards; for he said,
"God sent a lassie, but I need a son--
"Bethankit for His mercies all the same."
And Katie, when he said it, thought of Max--
Who had been gone two winters and two springs,
And sigh'd, and thought, "Would he not be your son?"
But all in silence, for she had too much
Of the firm will of Malcolm in her soul
To think of shaking that deep-rooted rock;
But hop'd the crystal current of his love
For his one child, increasing day by day,
Might fret with silver lip, until it wore
Such channels thro' the rock, that some slight stroke
Of circumstance might crumble down the stone.
The wooer, too, had come, Max prophesied;
Reputed wealthy; with the azure eyes
And Saxon-gilded locks--the fair, clear face,
And stalwart form that most women love.
And with the jewels of some virtues set
On his broad brow. With fires within his soul
He had the wizard skill to fetter down
To that mere pink, poetic, nameless glow,
That need not fright a flake of snow away--
But if unloos'd, could melt an adverse rock
Marrow'd with iron, frowning in his way.
And Malcolm balanc'd him by day and night;
And with his grey-ey'd shrewdness partly saw
He was not one for Kate; but let him come,
And in chance moments thought: "Well, let it be--
"They make a bonnie pair--he knows the ways
"Of men and things: can hold the gear I give,
"And, if the lassie wills it, let it be."
And then, upstarting from his midnight sleep,
With hair erect and sweat upon his brow,
Such as no labor e'er had beaded there;
Would cry aloud, wide-staring thro' the dark--
"Nay, nay; she shall not wed him--rest in peace."
Then fully waking, grimly laugh and say:
"Why did I speak and answer when none spake?"
But still lie staring, wakeful, through the shades;
List'ning to the silence, and beating still
The ball of Alfred's merits to and fro--
Saying, between the silent arguments:
"But would the mother like it, could she know?
"I would there was a way to ring a lad
"Like silver coin, and so find out the true;
"But Kate shall say him 'Nay' or say him 'Yea'
"At her own will." And Katie said him "Nay,"

In all the maiden, speechless, gentle ways
 A woman has. But Alfred only laugh'd
 To his own soul, and said in his wall'd mind:
 "O, Kate, were I a lover, I might feel
 "Despair flap o'er my hopes with raven wings;
 "Because thy love is giv'n to other love.
 "And did I love--unless I gain'd thy love,
 "I would disdain the golden hair, sweet lips,
 "Air-blown form and true violet eyes;
 "Nor crave the beauteous lamp without the flame;
 "Which in itself would light a charnel house.
 "Unlov'd and loving, I would find the cure
 "Of Love's despair in nursing Love's disdain--
 "Disdain of lesser treasure than the whole.
 "One cares not much to place against the wheel
 "A diamond lacking flame--nor loves to pluck
 "A rose with all its perfume cast abroad
 "To the bosom of the gale. Not I, in truth!
 "If all man's days are three score years and ten,
 "He needs must waste them not, but nimbly seize
 "The bright consummate blossom that his will
 "Calls for most loudly. Gone, long gone the days
 "When Love within my soul for ever stretch'd
 "Fierce hands of flame, and here and there I found
 "A blossom fitted for him--all up-fill'd
 "With love as with clear dew--they had their hour
 "And burn'd to ashes with him, as he droop'd
 "In his own ruby fires. No Phoenix he,
 "To rise again because of Katie's eyes,
 "On dewy wings, from ashes such as his!
 "But now, another Passion bids me forth.
 "To crown him with the fairest I can find,
 "And makes me lover--not of Katie's face,
 "But of her father's riches! O, high fool,
 "Who feels the faintest pulsing of a wish
 "And fails to feed it into lordly life!
 "So that, when stumbling back to Mother Earth,
 "His freezing lip may curl in cold disdain
 "Of those poor, blighted fools who starward stare
 "For that fruition, nipp'd and scanted here.
 "And, while the clay, o'ermasters all his blood--
 "And he can feel the dust knit with his flesh--
 "He yet can say to them, 'Be ye content;
 "'I tasted perfect fruitage thro' my life,
 "'Lighted all lamps of passion, till the oil
 "'Fail'd from their wicks; and now, O now, I know
 "'There is no Immortality could give
 "'Such boon as this--to simply cease to be!
 "'There lies your Heaven, O ye dreaming slaves,
 "'If ye would only live to make it so;
 "'Nor paint upon the blue skies lying shades
 "'Of--*what is not*. Wise, wise and strong the man
 "'who poisons that fond haunter of the mind,
 "'Craving for a hereafter with deep draughts
 "'Of wild delights--so fiery, fierce, and strong,
 "'That when their dregs are deeply, deeply drain'd,
 "'What once was blindly crav'd of purblind Chance,
 "'Life, life eternal--throbbing thro' all space
 "'Is strongly loath'd--and with his face in dust,
 "'Man loves his only Heav'n--six feet of Earth!
 "So, Katie, tho' your blue eyes say me 'Nay,'
 "My pangs of love for gold must needs be fed,
 "And shall be, Katie, if I know my mind."
 Events were winds close nest'ling in the sails
 Of Alfred's bark, all blowing him direct
 To his wish'd harbour. On a certain day,
 All set about with roses and with fire;
 One of three days of heat which frequent slip,
 Like triple rubies, in between the sweet,

Mild, emerald days of summer, Katie went,
 Drawn by a yearning for the ice-pale blooms,
 Natant and shining--firing all the bay
 With angel fires built up of snow and gold.
 She found the bay close pack'd with groaning logs,
 Prison'd between great arms of close hing'd wood.
 All cut from Malcolm's forests in the west,
 And floated hither to his noisy mills;
 And all stamp'd with the potent "G." and "M.,"
 Which much he lov'd to see upon his goods,
 The silent courtiers owning him their king.
 Out clear beyond the rustling ricebeds sang,
 And the cool lilies starr'd the shadow'd wave.
 "This is a day for lily-love," said Kate,
 While she made bare the lilies of her feet;
 And sang a lily song that Max had made,
 That spoke of lilies--always meaning Kate.

* * * * *

"While Lady of the silver'd lakes,
 Chaste Goddess of the sweet, still shrines.
 The jocund river fitful makes,
 By sudden, deep gloom'd brakes,
 Close shelter'd by close weft and woof of vine,
 Spilling a shadow gloomy-rich as wine,
 Into the silver throne where thou dost sit,
 Thy silken leaves all dusky round thee knit!

* * * * *

"Mild soul of the unsalted wave!
 White bosom holding golden fire
 Deep as some ocean-hidden cave
 Are fix'd the roots of thy desire,
 Thro' limpid currents stealing up,
 And rounding to the pearly cup
 Thou dost desire,
 With all thy trembling heart of sinless fire,
 But to be fill'd
 With dew distill'd
 From clear, fond skies, that in their gloom
 Hold, floating high, thy sister moon,
 Pale chalice of a sweet perfume,
 Whiter-breasted than a dove--
 To thee the dew is--love!"

* * * * *

Kate bared her little feet, and pois'd herself
 On the first log close grating on the shore;
 And with bright eyes of laughter, and wild hair--
 A flying wind of gold--from log to log
 Sped, laughing as they wallow'd in her track,
 Like brown-scal'd monsters rolling, as her foot
 Spurn'd each in turn with its rose-white sole.
 A little island, out in middlewave,
 With its green shoulder held the great drive brac'd
 Between it and the mainland; here it was
 The silver lilies drew her with white smiles;
 And as she touch'd the last great log of all,
 It reel'd, upstarting, like a column brac'd,
 A second on the wave--and when it plung'd
 Rolling upon the froth and sudden foam,
 Katie had vanish'd, and with angry grind
 The vast logs roll'd together,--nor a lock
 Of drifting yellow hair--an upflung hand,
 Told where the rich man's chiefest treasure sank
 Under his wooden wealth. But Alfred, laid
 With pipe and book upon the shady marge,
 Of the cool isle, saw all, and seeing hurl'd

Himself, and hardly knew it, on the logs;
 By happy chance a shallow lapp'd the isle
 On this green bank; and when his iron arms
 Dash'd the bark'd monsters, as frail stems of rice,
 A little space apart, the soft, slow tide
 But reach'd his chest, and in a flash he saw
 Kate's yellow hair, and by it drew her up,
 And lifting her aloft, cried out, "O, Kate!"
 And once again said, "Katie! is she dead?"
 For like the lilies broken by the rough
 And sudden riot of the armor'd logs,
 Kate lay upon his hands; and now the logs
 Clos'd in upon him, nipping his great chest,
 Nor could he move to push them off again
 For Katie in his arms. "And now," he said,
 "If none should come, and any wind arise
 "To weld these woody monsters 'gainst the isle,
 "I shall be crack'd like any broken twig;
 "And as it is, I know not if I die,
 "For I am hurt--aye, sorely, sorely hurt!"
 Then look'd on Katie's lily face, and said,
 "Dead, dead or living? Why, an even chance.
 "O lovely bubble on a troubl'd sea,
 "I would not thou should'st lose thyself again
 "In the black ocean whence thy life emerg'd,
 "But skyward steal on gales as soft as love,
 "And hang in some bright rainbow overhead,
 "If only such bright rainbow spann'd the earth."
 Then shouted loudly, till the silent air
 Rous'd like a frighten'd bird, and on its wings
 Caught up his cry and bore it to the farm.
 There Malcolm, leaping from his noontide sleep,
 Upstarted as at midnight, crying out,
 "She shall not wed him--rest you, wife, in peace!"
 They found him, Alfred, haggard-ey'd and faint,
 But holding Katie ever towards the sun,
 Unhurt, and waking in the fervent heat.
 And now it came that Alfred being sick
 Of his sharp hurts and tended by them both,
 With what was like to love, being born of thanks,
 Had choice of hours most politic to woo,
 And used his deed as one might use the sun,
 To ripen unmellow'd fruit; and from the core
 Of Katie's gratitude hop'd yet to nurse
 A flow'r all to his liking--Katie's love.
 But Katie's mind was like the plain, broad shield
 Of a table di'mond, nor had a score of sides;
 And in its shield, so precious and so plain,
 Was cut, thro' all its clear depths--Max's name!
 And so she said him "Nay" at last, in words
 Of such true sounding silver, that he knew
 He might not win her at the present hour,
 But smil'd and thought--"I go, and come again!
 "Then shall we see. Our three-score years and ten
 "Are mines of treasure, if we hew them deep,
 "Nor stop too long in choosing out our tools!"

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PART IV.

From his far wigwam sprang the strong North Wind
 And rush'd with war-cry down the steep ravines,
 And wrestl'd with the giants of the woods;
 And with his ice-club beat the swelling crests.
 Of the deep watercourses into death,
 And with his chill foot froze the whirling leaves
 Of dun and gold and fire in icy banks;
 And smote the tall reeds to the harden'd earth;

And sent his whistling arrows o'er the plains,
 Scatt'ring the ling'ring herds--and sudden paus'd
 When he had frozen all the running streams,
 And hunted with his war-cry all the things
 That breath'd about the woods, or roam'd the bleak
 Bare prairies swelling to the mournful sky.
 "White squaw," he shouted, troubl'd in his soul,
 "I slew the dead, wrestl'd with naked chiefs
 "Unplum'd before, scalped of their leafy plumes;
 "I bound sick rivers in cold thongs of death,
 "And shot my arrows over swooning plains,
 "Bright with the Paint of death--and lean and bare.
 "And all the braves of my loud tribe will mock
 "And point at me--when our great chief, the Sun,
 "Relights his Council fire in the moon
 "Of Budding Leaves." "Ugh, ugh! he is a brave!
 "He fights with squaws and takes the scalps of babes!
 "And the least wind will blow his calumet--
 "Fill'd with the breath of smallest flow'rs--across
 "The warpaint on my face, and pointing with
 "His small, bright pipe, that never moved a spear
 "Of bearded rice, cry, 'Ugh! he slays the dead!'
 "O, my white squaw, come from thy wigwam grey,
 "Spread thy white blanket on the twice-slain dead;
 "And hide them, ere the waking of the Sun!"

* * * * *

High grew the snow beneath the low-hung sky,
 And all was silent in the Wilderness;
 In trance of stillness Nature heard her God
 Rebuilding her spent fires, and veil'd her face
 While the Great Worker brooded o'er His work.

* * * * *

"Bite deep and wide, O Axe, the tree,
 What doth thy bold voice promise me?"

* * * * *

"I promise thee all joyous things,
 That furnish forth the lives of kings!

* * * * *

"For ev'ry silver ringing blow,
 Cities and palaces shall grow!"

* * * * *

"Bite deep and wide, O Axe, the tree,
 Tell wider prophecies to me."

* * * * *

"When rust hath gnaw'd me deep and red;
 A nation strong shall lift his head!

* * * * *

"His crown the very Heav'ns shall smite,
 Aeons shall build him in his might!"

* * * * *

"Bite deep and wide, O Axe, the tree;
 Bright Seer, help on thy prophecy!"

* * * * *

Max smote the snow-weigh'd tree and lightly laugh'd.
 "See, friend," he cried to one that look'd and smil'd,
 "My axe and I--we do immortal tasks--"

We build up nations--this my axe and I!"
"O," said the other with a cold, short smile,
"Nations are not immortal! is there now
"One nation thron'd upon the sphere of earth,
"That walk'd with the first Gods, and saw
"The budding world unfold its slow-leav'd flow'r?
"Nay; it is hardly theirs to leave behind
"Ruins so eloquent, that the hoary sage
"Can lay his hand upon their stones, and say:
"These once were thrones!' The lean, lank lion peals
"His midnight thunders over lone, red plains,
"Long-ridg'd and crested on their dusty waves,
"With fires from moons red-hearted as the sun;
"And deep re-thunders all the earth to him.
"For, far beneath the flame-fleck'd, shifting sands,
"Below the roots of palms, and under stones
"Of younger ruins, thrones, tow'rs and cities
"Honeycomb the earth. The high, solemn walls
"Of hoary ruins--their foundings all unknown
"(But to the round-ey'd worlds that walk
"In the blank paths of Space and blanker Chance).
"At whose stones young mountains wonder, and the seas'
"New-silv'ring, deep-set valleys pause and gaze;
"Are rear'd upon old shrines, whose very Gods
"Were dreams to the shrine-builders, of a time
"They caught in far-off flashes--as the child
"Half thinks he can remember how one came
"And took him in her hand and shew'd him that
"He thinks, she call'd the sun. Proud ships rear high
"On ancient billows that have torn the roots
"Of cliffs, and bitten at the golden lips
"Of firm, sleek beaches, till they conquer'd all,
"And sow'd the reeling earth with salted waves.
"Wrecks plunge, prow foremost, down still, solemn slopes,
"And bring their dead crews to as dead a quay;
"Some city built before that ocean grew,
"By silver drops from many a floating cloud,
"By icebergs bellowing in their throes of death,
"By lesser seas toss'd from their rocking cups,
"And leaping each to each; by dew-drops flung
"From painted sprays, whose weird leaves and flow'rs
"Are moulded for new dwellers on the earth,
"Printed in hearts of mountains and of mines.
"Nations immortal? where the well-trimm'd lamps
"Of long-past ages, when Time seem'd to pause
"On smooth, dust-blotted graves that, like the tombs
"Of monarchs, held dead bones and sparkling gems?
"She saw no glimmer on the hideous ring
"Of the black clouds; no stream of sharp, clear light
"From those great torches, pass'd into the black
"Of deep oblivion. She seem'd to watch, but she
"Forgot her long-dead nations. When she stirr'd
"Her vast limbs in the dawn that forc'd its fire
"Up the black East, and saw the imperious red
"Burst over virgin dews and budding flow'rs,
"She still forgot her molder'd thrones and kings,
"Her sages and their torches, and their Gods,
"And said, 'This is my birth--my primal day!'
"She dream'd new Gods, and rear'd them other shrines,
"Planted young nations, smote a feeble flame
"From sunless flint, re-lit the torch of mind;
"Again she hung her cities on the hills,
"Built her rich towers, crown'd her kings again,
"And with the sunlight on her awful wings
"Swept round the flow'ry cestus of the earth,
"And said, 'I build for Immortality!'
"Her vast hand rear'd her tow'rs, her shrines, her thrones;
"The ceaseless sweep of her tremendous wings
"Still beat them down and swept their dust abroad;

"Her iron finger wrote on mountain sides
 "Her deeds and prowess--and her own soft plume
 "Wore down the hills! Again drew darkly on
 "A night of deep forgetfulness; once more
 "Time seem'd to pause upon forgotten graves--
 "Once more a young dawn stole into her eyes--
 "Again her broad wings stirr'd, and fresh clear airs,
 "Blew the great clouds apart;--again Time said,
 "'This is my birth--my deeds and handiwork
 "'Shall be immortal.' Thus and so dream on
 "Fool'd nations, and thus dream their dullard sons.
 "Naught is immortal save immortal--Death!"
 Max paus'd and smil'd: "O, preach such gospel, friend,
 "To all but lovers who most truly love;
 "For *them*, their gold-wrought scripture glibly reads
 "All else is mortal but immortal--Love!"
 "Fools! fools!" his friend said, "most immortal fools!--
 "But pardon, pardon, for, perchance, you love?"
 "Yes," said Max, proudly smiling, "thus do I
 "Possess the world and feel eternity!"
 Dark laughter blacken'd in the other's eyes:
 "Eternity! why, did such Iris arch
 "Ent'ring our worm-bored planet, never liv'd
 "One woman true enough such tryst to keep!"
 "I'd swear by Kate," said Max; "and then, I had
 "A mother, and my father swore by her."
 "By Kate? Ah, that were lusty oath, indeed!
 "Some other man will look into her eyes,
 "And swear me roundly, 'By true Catherine!'
 "And Troilus swore by Cressed--so they say."
 "You never knew my Kate," said Max, and pois'd
 His axe again on high, "But let it pass--
 "You are too subtle for me; argument
 "Have I none to oppose yours with--but this,
 "Get you a Kate, and let her sunny eyes
 "Dispel the doubting darkness in your soul."
 "And have not I a Kate? pause, friend, and see.
 "She gave me this faint shadow of herself
 "The day I slipp'd the watch-star of our loves--
 "A ring--upon her hand--she loves me, too;
 "Yet tho' her eyes be suns, no Gods are they
 "To give me worlds, or make me feel a tide
 "Of strong Eternity set towards my soul;
 "And tho' she loves me, yet am I content
 "To know she loves me by the hour--the year--
 "Perchance the second--as all women love."
 The bright axe falter'd in the air, and ripp'd
 Down the rough bark, and bit the drifted snow,
 For Max's arm fell, wither'd in its strength,
 'Long by his side. "Your Kate," he said; "your Kate!"
 "Yes, mine, while holds her mind that way, my Kate;
 "I sav'd her life, and had her love for thanks;
 "Her father is Malcolm Graem--Max, my friend,
 "You pale! what sickness seizes on your soul?"
 Max laugh'd, and swung his bright axe high again:
 "Stand back a pace--a too far reaching blow
 "Might level your false head with yon prone trunk--
 "Stand back and listen while I say, "You lie!
 "That is my Katie's face upon your breast,
 "But 'tis my Katie's love lives in my breast--
 "Stand back, I say! my axe is heavy, and
 "Might chance to cleave a liar's brittle skull.
 "Your Kate! your Kate! your Kate!--hark, how the woods
 "Mock at your lie with all their woody tongues,
 "O, silence, ye false echoes! not his Kate
 "But mine--I'm certain I will have your life!"
 All the blue heav'n was dead in Max's eyes;
 Doubt-wounded lay Kate's image in his heart,
 And could not rise to pluck the sharp spear out.

"Well, strike, mad fool," said Alfred, somewhat pale;
 "I have no weapon but these naked hands."
 "Aye, but," said Max, "you smote my naked heart!
 "O shall I slay him?--Satan, answer me--
 "I cannot call on God for answer here.
 "O Kate--!"
 A voice from God came thro' the silent woods
 And answer'd him--for suddenly a wind
 Caught the great tree-tops, coned with high-pil'd snow,
 And smote them to and fro, while all the air
 Was sudden fill'd with busy drifts, and high
 White pillars whirl'd amid the naked trunks,
 And harsh, loud groans, and smiting, sapless boughs
 Made hellish clamour in the quiet place.
 With a shrill shriek of tearing fibres, rock'd
 The half-hewn tree above his fated head;
 And, tott'ring, asked the sudden blast, "Which way?"
 And, answer'ing its windy arms, crash'd and broke
 Thro' other lacing boughs, with one loud roar
 Of woody thunder; all its pointed boughs
 Pierc'd the deep snow--its round and mighty corpse,
 Bark-flay'd and shudd'ring, quiver'd into death.
 And Max--as some frail, wither'd reed, the sharp
 And piercing branches caught at him,
 As hands in a death-throe, and beat him to the earth--
 And the dead tree upon its slayer lay.
 "Yet hear we much of Gods;--if such there be,
 "They play at games of chance with thunderbolts,"
 Said Alfred, "else on me this doom had come.
 "This seals my faith in deep and dark unfaith!
 "Now Katie, are you mine, for Max is dead--
 "Or will be soon, imprison'd by those boughs,
 "Wounded and torn, sooth'd by the deadly palms
 "Of the white, trait'rous frost; and buried then
 "Under the snows that fill those vast, grey clouds,
 "Low-sweeping on the fretted forest roof.
 "And Katie shall believe you false--not dead;
 "False, false!--And I? O, she shall find me true--
 "True as a fabl'd devil to the soul
 "He longs for with the heat of all hell's fires.
 "These myths serve well for simile, I see.
 "And yet--Down, Pity! knock not at my breast,
 "Nor grope about for that dull stone my heart;
 "I'll stone thee with it, Pity! Get thee hence,
 "Pity, I'll strangle thee with naked hands;
 "For thou dost bear upon thy downy breast
 "Remorse, shap'd like a serpent, and her fangs
 "Might dart at me and pierce my marrow thro'.
 "Hence, beggar, hence--and keep with fools, I say!
 "He bleeds and groans! Well, Max, thy God or mine
 "Blind Chance, here play'd the butcher--'twas not I.
 "Down, hands! ye shall not lift his fall'n head;
 "What cords tug at ye? What? Ye'd pluck him up
 "And staunch his wounds? There rises in my breast
 "A strange, strong giant, throwing wide his arms
 "And bursting all the granite of my heart!
 "How like to quiv'ring flesh a stone may feel!
 "Why, it has pangs! I'll none of them. I know
 "Life is too short for anguish and for hearts--
 "So I wrestle with thee, giant! and my will
 "Turns the thumb, and thou shalt take the knife.
 "Well done! I'll turn thee on the arena dust,
 "And look on thee--What? thou wert Pity's self,
 "Stol'n in my breast; and I have slaughter'd thee--
 "But hist--where hast thou hidden thy fell snake,
 "Fire-fang'd Remorse? Not in my breast, I know,
 "For all again is chill and empty there,
 "And hard and cold--the granite knitted up.
 "So lie there, Max--poor fond and simple Max,

"'Tis well thou diest: earth's children should not call
 "Such as thee father--let them ever be
 "Father'd by rogues and villains, fit to cope
 "With the foul dragon Chance, and the black knaves
 "Who swarm'd in loathsome masses in the dust.
 "True Max, lie there, and slumber into death."

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PART V.

Said the high hill, in the morning: "Look on me--
 "Behold, sweet earth, sweet sister sky, behold
 "The red flames on my peaks, and how my pines
 "Are cressets of pure gold; my quarried scars
 "Of black crevasse and shadow-fill'd canon,
 "Are trac'd in silver mist. How on my breast
 "Hang the soft purple fringes of the night;
 "Close to my shoulder droops the weary moon,
 "Dove-pale, into the crimson surf the sun
 "Drives up before his prow; and blackly stands
 "On my slim, loftiest peak, an eagle, with
 "His angry eyes set sunward, while his cry
 "Falls fiercely back from all my ruddy heights;
 "And his bald eaglets, in their bare, broad nest,
 "Shrill pipe their angry echoes: "Sun, arise,
 "'And show me that pale dove, beside her nest,
 "'Which I shall strike with piercing beak and tear
 "'With iron talons for my hungry young."
 And that mild dove, secure for yet a space,
 Half waken'd, turns her ring'd and glossy neck
 To watch dawn's ruby pulsing on her breast,
 And see the first bright golden motes slip down
 The gnarl'd trunks about her leaf-deep nest,
 Nor sees nor fears the eagle on the peak.

* * * * *

"Aye, lassie, sing--I'll smoke my pipe the while,
 "And let it be a simple, bonnie song,
 "Such as an old, plain man can gather in
 "His dulling ear, and feel it slipping thro'
 "The cold, dark, stony places of his heart."
 "Yes, sing, sweet Kate," said Alfred in her ear;
 "I often heard you singing in my dreams
 "When I was far away the winter past."
 So Katie on the moonlit window lean'd,
 And in the airy silver of her voice
 Sang of the tender, blue "Forget-me-not."

Could every blossom find a voice,
 And sing a strain to me;
 I know where I would place my choice,
 Which my delight should be.
 I would not choose the lily tall,
 The rose from musky grot;
 But I would still my minstrel call
 The blue "Forget-me-not!"

And I on mossy bank would lie
 Of brooklet, ripp'ling clear;
 And she of the sweet azure eye,
 Close at my list'ning ear,
 Should sing into my soul a strain
 Might never be forgot--
 So rich with joy, so rich with pain
 The blue "Forget-me-not!"

Ah, ev'ry blossom hath a tale
 With silent grace to tell,

From rose that reddens to the gale
 To modest heather bell;
 But O, the flow'r in ev'ry heart
 That finds a sacred spot
 To bloom, with azure leaves apart,
 Is the "Forget-me-not!"

Love plucks it from the mosses green
 When parting hours are nigh,
 And places it loves palms between,
 With many an ardent sigh;
 And bluely up from grassy graves
 In some lov'd churchyard spot,
 It glances tenderly and waves,
 The dear "Forget-me-not!"

And with the faint last cadence, stole a glance
 At Malcolm's soften'd face--a bird-soft touch
 Let flutter on the rugged silver snarls
 Of his thick locks, and laid her tender lips
 A second on the iron of his hand.
 "And did you ever meet," he sudden ask'd,
 Of Alfred, sitting pallid in the shade,
 "Out by yon unco place, a lad,--a lad
 "Nam'd Maxwell Gordon; tall, and straight, and strong;
 "About my size, I take it, when a lad?"
 And Katie at the sound of Max's name,
 First spoken for such space by Malcolm's lips,
 Trembl'd and started, and let down her brow,
 Hiding its sudden rose on Malcolm's arm.
 "Max Gordon? Yes. Was he a friend of yours?"
 "No friend of mine, but of the lassie's here--
 "How comes he on? I wager he's a drone,
 "And never will put honey in the hive."
 "No drone," said Alfred, laughing; "when I left
 "He and his axe were quarr'ling with the woods
 "And making forests reel--love steels a lover's arm."
 O, blush that stole from Katie's swelling heart,
 And with its hot rose brought the happy dew
 Into her hidden eyes. "Aye, aye! is that the way?"
 Said Malcolm smiling. "Who may be his love?"
 "In that he is a somewhat simple soul,
 "Why, I suppose he loves--" he paused, and Kate
 Look'd up with two "forget-me-nots" for eyes,
 With eager jewels in their centres set
 Of happy, happy tears, and Alfred's heart
 Became a closer marble than before.
 "--Why I suppose he loves--his lawful wife."
 "His wife! his wife!" said Malcolm, in a maze,
 And laid his heavy hand on Katie's head;
 "Did you play me false, my little lass?
 "Speak and I'll pardon! Katie, lassie, what?"
 "He has a wife," said Alfred, "lithe and bronz'd,
 "An Indian woman, comelier than her kind;
 "And on her knee a child with yellow locks,
 "And lake-like eyes of mystic Indian brown.
 "And so you knew him? He is doing well."
 "False, false!" said Katie, lifting up her head.
 "O, you know not the Max my father means!"
 "He came from yonder farm-house on the slope."
 "Some other Max--we speak not of the same."
 "He has a red mark on his temple set."
 "It matters not--'tis not the Max we know."
 "He wears a turquoise ring slung round his neck."
 "And many wear them--they are common stones."
 "His mother's ring--her name was Helen Wynde."
 "And there be many Helens who have sons."
 "O Katie, credit me--it is the man."
 "O not the man! Why, you have never told
 "Us of the true soul that the true Max has;

"The Max we know has such a soul, I know."
 "How know you that, my foolish little lass?"
 Said Malcolm, a storm of anger bound
 Within his heart, like Samson with green withs--
 "Belike it is the false young cur we know!"
 "No, no," said Katie, simply, and low-voic'd;
 "If he were traitor I must needs be false,
 "For long ago love melted our two hearts.
 "And time has moulded those two hearts in one,
 "And he is true since I am faithful still."
 She rose and parted, trembling as she went,
 Feeling the following steel of Alfred's eyes,
 And with the icy hand of scorn'd mistrust
 Searching about the pulses of her heart--
 Feeling for Max's image in her breast.
 "To-night she conquers Doubt; to-morrow's noon
 "His following soldiers sap the golden wall,
 "And I shall enter and possess the fort,"
 Said Alfred, in his mind. "O Katie, child,
 "Wilt thou be Nemesis, with yellow hair,
 "To rend my breast? for I do feel a pulse
 "Stir when I look into thy pure-barb'd eyes--
 "O, am I breeding that false thing, a heart?
 "Making my breast all tender for the fangs
 "Of sharp Remorse to plunge their hot fire in.
 "I am a certain dullard! Let me feel
 "But one faint goad, fine as a needle's point,
 "And it shall be the spur in my soul's side
 "To urge the madd'ning thing across the jags
 "And cliffs of life, into the soft embrace
 "Of that cold mistress, who is constant too,
 "And never flings her lovers from her arms--
 "Not Death, for she is still a fruitful wife,
 "Her spouse the Dead, and their cold marriage yields
 "A million children, born of mould'ring flesh--
 "So Death and Flesh live on--immortal they!
 "I mean the blank-ey'd queen whose wassail bowl
 "Is brimm'd from Lethe, and whose porch is red
 "With poppies, as it waits the panting soul--
 "She, she alone is great! No scepter'd slave
 "Bowling to blind creative giants, she;
 "No forces seize her in their strong, mad hands,
 "Nor say, "'Do this--be that!'" Were there a God,
 "His only mocker, she, great Nothingness!
 "And to her, close of kin, yet lover too,
 "Flies this large nothing that we call the soul."

* * * * *

"Doth true Love lonely grow?
 Ah, no! ah, no!
 Ah, were it only so--
 That it alone might show
 Its ruddy rose upon its sapful tree,
 Then, then in dewy morn,
 Joy might his brow adorn
 With Love's young rose as fair and glad as he."

* * * * *

But with Love's rose doth blow
 Ah, woe! ah, woe!
 Truth with its leaves of snow,
 And Pain and Pity grow
 With Love's sweet roses on its sapful tree!
 Love's rose buds not alone,
 But still, but still doth own
 A thousand blossoms cypress-hued to see!

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PART VI.

"Who curseth Sorrow knows her not at all.
 Dark matrix she, from which the human soul
 Has its last birth; whence, with its misty thews,
 Close-knitted in her blackness, issues out;
 Strong for immortal toil up such great heights,
 As crown o'er crown rise through Eternity,
 Without the loud, deep clamour of her wail,
 The iron of her hands; the biting brine
 Of her black tears; the Soul but lightly built
 of indeterminate spirit, like a mist
 Would lapse to Chaos in soft, gilded dreams,
 As mists fade in the gazing of the sun.
 Sorrow, dark mother of the soul, arise!
 Be crown'd with spheres where thy bless'd children dwell,
 Who, but for thee, were not. No lesser seat
 Be thine, thou Helper of the Universe,
 Than planet on planet pil'd!--thou instrument,
 Close-clasp'd within the great Creative Hand!"

* * * * *

The Land had put his ruddy gauntlet on,
 Of Harvest gold, to dash in Famine's face.
 And like a vintage wain, deep dy'd with juice,
 The great moon falter'd up the ripe, blue sky,
 Drawn by silver stars--like oxen white
 And horn'd with rays of light--Down the rich land
 Malcolm's small valleys, fill'd with grain, lip-high,
 Lay round a lonely hill that fac'd the moon,
 And caught the wine-kiss of its ruddy light.
 A cusp'd, dark wood caught in its black embrace
 The valleys and the hill, and from its wilds,
 Spic'd with dark cedars, cried the Whip-poor-will.
 A crane, belated, sail'd across the moon;
 On the bright, small, close link'd lakes green islets lay,
 Dusk knots of tangl'd vines, or maple boughs,
 Or tuft'd cedars, boss'd upon the waves.
 The gay, enamell'd children of the swamp
 Roll'd a low bass to treble, tinkling notes
 Of little streamlets leaping from the woods.
 Close to old Malcolm's mills, two wooden jaws
 Bit up the water on a sloping floor;
 And here, in season, rush'd the great logs down,
 To seek the river winding on its way.
 In a green sheen, smooth as a Naiad's locks,
 The water roll'd between the shudd'ring jaws--
 Then on the river level roar'd and reel'd--
 In ivory-arm'd conflict with itself.
 "Look down," said Alfred, "Katie, look and see
 "How that but pictures my mad heart to you.
 "It tears itself in fighting that mad love
 "You swear is hopeless--hopeless--is it so?"
 "Ah, yes!" said Katie, "ask me not again."
 "But Katie, Max is false; no word has come,
 "Nor any sign from him for many months,
 "And--he is happy with his Indian wife."
 She lifted eyes fair as the fresh grey dawn
 with all its dews and promises of sun.
 "O, Alfred!--saver of my little life--
 "Look in my eyes and read them honestly."
 He laugh'd till all the isles and forests laugh'd.
 "O simple child! what may the forest flames
 "See in the woodland ponds but their own fires?
 "And have you, Katie, neither fears nor doubts?"
 She, with the flow'r soft pinkness of her palm
 Cover'd her sudden tears, then quickly said:

"Fears--never doubts, for true love never doubts."
 Then Alfred paus'd a space, as one who holds
 A white doe by the throat and searches for
 The blade to slay her. "This your answer still--
 "You doubt not--doubt not this far love of yours,
 "Tho' sworn a false young recreant, Kate, by me?"
 "He is as true as I am," Katie said;
 "And did I seek for stronger simile,
 "I could not find such in the universe!"
 "And were he dead? what, Katie, were he dead--
 "A handful of brown dust, a flame blown out--
 "What then would love be strongly, true to--Naught?"
 "Still, true to love my love would be," she said,
 And faintly smiling, pointed to the stars.
 "O fool!" said Alfred, stirr'd--as craters rock
 "To their own throes--and over his pale lips
 Roll'd flaming stone, his molten heart. "Then, fool--
 "Be true to what thou wilt--for he is dead.
 "And there have grown this gilded summer past
 "Grasses and buds from his unburied flesh.
 "I saw him dead. I heard his last, loud cry:
 "'O Kate!' ring thro' the woods; in truth I did."
 She half-raised up a piteous, pleading hand,
 Then fell along the mosses at his feet.
 "Now will I show I love you, Kate," he said,
 "And give you gift of love; you shall not wake
 "To feel the arrow, feather-deep, within
 "Your constant heart. For me, I never meant
 "To crawl an hour beyond what time I felt
 "The strange, fang'd monster that they call Remorse
 "Fold found my waken'd heart. The hour has come;
 "And as Love grew, the welded folds of steel
 "Slipp'd round in horrid zones. In Love's flaming eyes
 "Stared its fell eyeballs, and with Hydra head
 "It sank hot fangs in breast, and brow and thigh.
 "Come, Kate! O Anguish is a simple knave
 "Whom hucksters could outwit with small trade lies,
 "When thus so easily his smarting thralls,
 "May flee his knout! Come, come, my little Kate;
 "The black porch with its fringe of poppies waits--
 "A propylaeum hospitably wide.
 "No lictors with their fasces at its jaws,
 "Its floor as kindly to my fire-vein'd feet
 "As to thy silver, lillied, sinless ones.
 "O you shall slumber soundly, tho' the white,
 "Wild waters pluck the crocus of your hair;
 "And scaly spies stare with round, lightless eyes
 "At your small face laid on my stony breast.
 "Come, Kate! I must not have you wake, dear heart,
 "To hear you cry, perchance, on your dead Max."
 He turn'd her still, face close upon his breast,
 And with his lips upon her soft, ring'd hair,
 Leap'd from the bank, low shelving o'er the knot
 Of frantic waters at the long slide's foot.
 And as the sever'd waters crash'd and smote
 Together once again,--within the wave
 Stunn'd chamber of his ear there peal'd a cry:
 "O Kate! stay, madman; traitor, stay! O Kate!"

* * * * *

Max, gaunt as prairie wolves in famine time,
 With long drawn sickness, reel'd upon the bank--
 Katie, new-rescu'd, waking in his arms.
 On the white riot of the waters gleam'd,
 The face of Alfred, calm, with close-seal'd eyes,
 And blood red on his temple where it smote
 The mossy timbers of the groaning slide.
 "O God!" said Max, as Katie's opening eyes
 Looked up to his, slow budding to a smile

Of wonder and of bliss, "My Kate, my Kate!"
 She saw within his eyes a larger soul
 Than that light spirit that before she knew,
 And read the meaning of his glance and words.
 "Do as you will, my Max. I would not keep
 "You back with one light-falling finger-tip!"
 And cast herself from his large arms upon
 The mosses at his feet, and hid her face
 That she might not behold what he would do;
 Or lest the terror in her shining eyes
 Might bind him to her, and prevent his soul
 Work out its greatness; and her long, wet hair
 Drew, mass'd, about her ears, to shut the sound
 Of the vex'd waters from her anguish'd brain.
 Max look'd upon her, turning as he look'd.
 A moment came a voice in Katie's soul:
 "Arise, be not dismay'd; arise and look;
 "If he should perish, 'twill be as a God,
 "For he would die to save his enemy."
 But answer'd her torn heart: "I cannot look--
 "I cannot look and see him sob and die;
 "In those pale, angry arms. O, let me rest
 "Blind, blind and deaf until the swift pac'd end.
 "My Max! O God--was that his Katie's name?"
 Like a pale dove, hawk-hunted, Katie ran,
 Her fear's beak in her shoulder; and below,
 Where the coil'd waters straighten'd to a stream,
 Found Max all bruise'd and bleeding on they bank,
 But smiling with man's triumph in his eyes,
 When he has on fierce Danger's lion neck
 Plac'd his right hand and pluck'd the prey away.
 And at his feet lay Alfred, still and while,
 A willow's shadow tremb'ling on his face,
 "There lies the false, fair devil, O my Kate,
 "Who would have parted us, but could not, Kate!"
 "But could not, Max," said Katie. "Is he dead?"
 But, swift perusing Max's strange, dear face,
 Close clasp'd against his breast--forgot him straight
 And ev'ry other evil thing upon
 The broad green earth.

* * * * *

PART VII

Again rang out the music of the axe,
 And on the slope, as in his happy dreams,
 The home of Max with wealth of drooping vines
 On the rude walls, and in the trellis'd porch
 Sat Katie, smiling o'er the rich, fresh fields;
 And by her side sat Malcolm, hale and strong;
 Upon his knee a little, smiling child,
 Nam'd--Alfred, as the seal of pardon set
 Upon the heart of one who sinn'd and woke
 to sorrow for his sins--and whom they lov'd
 With gracious joyousness--nor kept the dusk
 Of his past deeds between their hearts and his.
 Malcolm had follow'd with his flocks and herds
 When Max and Katie, hand in hand, went out
 From his old home; and now, with slow, grave smile
 He said to Max, who twisted Katie's hair
 About his naked arm, bare from his toil:
 "It minds me of old times, this house of yours;
 "It stirs my heart to hearken to the axe,
 "And hear the windy crash of falling trees;
 "Aye, these fresh forests make an old man young."
 "Oh, yes!" said Max, with laughter in his eyes;
 "And I do truly think that Eden bloom'd
 "Deep in the heart of tall, green maple groves,

"With sudden scents of pine from mountain sides
"And prairies with their breasts against the skies.
"And Eve was only little Katie's height."
"Hoot, lad! you speak as ev'ry Adam speaks
"About his bonnie Eve; but what says Kate?"
"O Adam had not Max's soul,' she said;
"And these wild woods and plains are fairer far
"Than Eden's self. O bounteous mothers they!
"Beck'ning pale starvelings with their fresh, green hands,
"And with their ashes mellowing the earth,
"That she may yield her increase willingly.
"I would not change these wild and rocking woods,
"Dotted by little homes of unbark'd trees,
"Where dwell the fleers from the waves of want,--
"For the smooth sward of selfish Eden bowers,
"Nor--Max for Adam, if I knew my mind!"

[The end]

Isabella Valancy Crawford's poem: Malcolm's Katie: A Love Story

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