

April 1868

From childhood I hear a voice
An echo from the heart's first choice
Sweet notes to me. But still I feel
A pang which time can never heal

Still glancing back per memories train
My soul leaps forth. But O how vain
It never can be mine again

Those guileless years alas have gone
And vain regrets I drag along
Since all was truth within the past
Which fleet. Now time must ever last

I oft have climbed the craggy cliffs
Whose dusky peaks are bared on high
Dipping nature's gathering drifts
Whose masses on the lowlands lie

And even there in memory
The past comes fleeting back to me
Which rides on fancies wide-spread wings
And leaves with me ten thousand things

Such as regrets of gathering years
Belating in retrospection's tears

Then to the future I look and here
I turn me but no vision there
As in the past marks the right way
And another where I went astray

But there upon the wings of doubt
Between me and a deeper shade
Hope spreads her tattered banners out
Which hastens on the retrograde

To Mary

Yes Mary lingering years have past
And you and I are not the same
Those fairy visions could not last
And never can return again
Nor would I be what I have been
And trace life's pathway back to them
Even now the next thought is pain
That backward life though I were dead
Would haunt me with its living dead

But I must tell and it is true
Since those enchanted years are past
This world has brought me something new
Which proves the pearl of hope at least
But still you were a brilliant beam
Which sparkled in my boyhood dream
And we were all such youths could ask
Our dolls and toys were thrown aside
To dream of bairn and of bride

But somehow we did not aspire
To living pledges. We but aspired
To stay the march of youthful fire
Whilst in its brighter beam he basked
A girl, a walk, an evening chat
A few shy kisses. What was that
Nothing. But some would call us fast
If they but knew. Mary farewell
Farewell, me, I shall never tell