

LAW.

BY THE EDITOR.

I.

No vagrant speck of matter, dream of mind,
Finds being but it straightway finds a mate,
Calm, waiting to receive it,—its own Law.

With fear-constrained eyes men watch this rule
Take silent, sure possession of their lives
Through all the incidents that mark the years.

No change of state so quick, but, ere it work,
The Law of the new state doth rise and come,
With the slow ease of one who takes his own,
To grasp, and hold, and rule its every issue.

Beating sting'd insects, kicking against pricks,
Is all attempt t' avert the course of Law:
Or act, or say, or do but think a thought,
And such, and such, shall surely come to pass,
Fore-ordered sequent of that act, that thought.

O agony of ever-narrowing walls,
That closer, closer, hedge in work and thought
And love and all of life, till the poor soul
Ever more straiten'd, gasps for space to be!

Sweet sudden liberation, then to discern
The true face of the Law! That Law, for us,
Not we for Law exist; that Law is Will;
The present, personal, living Will of God,
Whose every motion is a pulse of love.

In a large room straightway the feet are set,
And all the powers of men do stretch and play,
Expand themselves, break into vig'rous life
In such full inspiration of high air.

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II.

Within our ken; yet, “after God’s own heart”;—
With thought of relaxation, lessen’d strain,
We seek the spring of this accepted life:—

A sense of sin, by shame and sorrow measur’d;
Forgiveness, raising a white heat of love,
A mighty trust, born of Almighty help,—
In no dead letter do we find these writ,
For in like characters is spelt the tale
Of Life in us; e’en to the fullest word
Of sorrow, love and hope that gushes forth:
For not by measure is the Spirit’s work,
And not by meed: but out of His own fulness
Pours He out, till hearts of common men
Find in the yearnings of the King’s great soul
The power of passion’d utterance they crave.

And is there nothing more? Was it for this
That He, tho’ David’s Lord, is called his Son
As tho’ some kindred likeness dwelt in each?

When He stood offering to slow hands the key
Wherewith to ope the Law, and none would take,
Have ye not read, He said, how David used
This pass to freedom ye do now reject?

III.

A Presence, brushing his garments, fanning
His very cheek, is Law to every man;
Yet to dull souls, a presence unperceived,
Things happening day by day, in order due,
Do, to their latest day, but happen still.
Occasional glimpses flash on other minds
Of order, plan and purpose in their lives
More than they wot of; yet are these soon lost
In all the petty press of things immediate.
Others again, of intellect more quick,
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Perceive th’ incessant action of the Law;
Perceive, but to resist: or some, to bow
With a dull acquiescence, as to that
They have no power to hinder nor to help.

But O, the warmth and depth and breadth and height
Of any soul that comprehends the Law,
And, comprehending, loves it! That, looking round,
Sees the commandment is exceeding broad;
Looking within, sees it exceeding near,
Exceeding mighty and exceeding sure!
That looking up, discerns that Law is God:
And, rapt in awe and wonder, gazing still,
Becomes enamoured of the loveliness,
Fair order, use and goodness that appear
In all the workings he has learned to know
As goings forth of God. Henceforth for him,
All strife and bitterness have ceased from life:
Submission sweet, he learns his times to take
In daily portions as dealt out to him;
Meekly to bear, and as courageous, act.

Such he, whose sympathetic thought discerned
The hidden impulse in Messiah's heart,
The Law within—for he too loved the Law,
Not as his Lord, with love strong to fulfil,
Strong only to adore and to desire.

A soul attuned to order; a will to wait
The bidding of the Law or e'er it stir;
A mind, that, with seraphic apprehension
Should grasp the boundless reaches spann'd by Law;
Eyes that should see in all affairs of men
The inevitable sequence which doth yet
Produce as certain good for, this the Law;
And, scanning the great universe, discern
In all the goings of God's creatures lines
That blazon to the worlds His glorious Name;
Nor yet disdain, as in the old star fable,
To predicate the destinies of men:—
Telling to thee and me and every man
Of a fixed course to run, a Law to keep,
Of ruin on the heels of deviation:—

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Such the large longings of this mighty soul:
'Twas not that he attained: alas, his life,
All marr'd by error, strife and failure, proved
A sad, submissive forfeit to the Law
He found no strength to keep. Yet not by this,

His wretched rendering of the thought within,
But by that thought itself, the broken oft
Yet still renewed, true purpose of his soul,
Did the just God interpret his poor life.
“Enlarge my heart, for I Thy Law would know!”
By this, his large desire, is he judged,
And so accepted: while more lawful lives,
That compass the desire of smaller souls,
Unpraisèd are passed by; and he, alone,
The man who well approved himself to God!