

Nature and Art

To my friend, Charles Booth Nettleton

I

The young queen Nature, ever sweet and fair,

Once on a time fell upon evil days.

From hearing oft herself discussed with praise,

There grew within her heart the longing rare

To see herself; and every passing air

The warm desire fanned into lusty blaze.

Full oft she sought this end by devious ways,

But sought in vain, so fell she in despair.

For none within her train nor by her side

Could solve the task or give the envied boon.

So day and night, beneath the sun and moon,

She wandered to and fro unsatisfied,

Till Art came by, a blithe inventive elf,
And made a glass wherein she saw herself.

II

Enrapt, the queen gazed on her glorious self,
Then trembling with the thrill of sudden thought,
Commanded that the skillful wight be brought
That she might dower him with lands and pelf.

Then out upon the silent sea-lapt shelf
And up the hills and on the downs they sought
Him who so well and wondrously had wrought;
And with much search found and brought home the elf,

But he put by all gifts with sad replies
And from his lips these words flowed forth like wine:

"Oh, queen, I want no gift but thee," he said.

She heard and looked on him with love-lit eyes,
Gave him her hand, low murmuring, "I am thine,"

And at the morrow's dawning they were wed.