

THE MINISTER'S DAUGHTER

IN the minister's morning sermon,
He told of the primal fall,
And how thenceforth the wrath of God
Rested on each and all.

And how, of his will and pleasure,
All souls, save a chosen few,
Were doomed to eternal torture,
And held in the way thereto.

Yet never, by faith's unreason,
A saintlier soul was tried,
And never the harsh old lesson
A tenderer heart belied.

And after the painful service,
On that pleasant, bright First day,
He walked with his little daughter
Through the apple bloom of May.

Sweet in the fresh green meadow
Sparrow and blackbird sung;
Above him its tinted petals
The blossoming orchard hung.

Around, on the wonderful glory,
The minister looked and smiled:
"How good is the Lord, who gives us
These gifts from his hand, my child."

"Behold in the bloom of apples,
And the violets in the sward,
A hint of the old, lost beauty
Of the Garden of the Lord!"

Then up spake the little maiden,
Treading on snow and pink,
"O father! these pretty blossoms
Are very wicked, I think!"

"Had there been no Garden of Eden,
There had never been a fall,
And if never a tree had blossomed
God would have loved us all."

"And whether by his ordaining
To us cometh good or ill,
Joy or pain, or light or shadow,
We must fear and love him still."

"Hush, child!" the father answered,
"By his decree man fell;
His ways are in clouds and darkness,
But he doeth all things well."

"O, I fear him!" said the daughter,
"And I try to love him, too;
But I wish he were kind and gentle,
Kind and loving as you."

The minister groaned in spirit,
As the tremulous lips of pain,
And wide, wet eyes uplifted,
Questioned his own in vain.

Bowing his head he pondered
The words of his little one,
Had he erred in his lifelong teachings,
Had he wrong to his Master done?

To what grim and dreadful idol
"Had he lent the holiest name?
Did his own heart, loving and human,
The God of his worship shame?"

And lo! from the bloom and greenness
From the tender skies above,
And the face of his little daughter,
He read a lesson of love.

No more as the cloudy terror
Of Sinai's mount of law,
But as Christ in the Syrian lilies,
The vision of God he saw.

And as when, in the clefts of Horeb,
Of old was his presence known,
The dread, ineffable glory
Was infinite goodness alone.

Thereafter his hearers noted
In his prayers a tenderer strain,
And never the message of hatred
Burned on his lips again.

And the scoffing tongue was prayerful,
And the blinded eyes found sight,
And hearts as flint aforetime
Grew soft in his warmth and light.

