COVENTRY PATMORE  
1823–1896

From The Angel in the House

The Spirit’s Epochs

Not in the crises of events,
Of compassed hopes, or fears fulfilled,
Or acts of gravest consequence,
Are life’s delight and depth revealed.

The day of days was not the day;
That went before, or was postponed;
The night Death took our lamp away
Was not the night on which we groaned.

I drew my bride beneath the moon,
Across the threshold; happy hour!

But, ah, the walk that afternoon
We saw the water-flags in flower!

The Kiss

“I saw you take his kiss!” “’Tis true.”
“O, modesty!” “’Twas strictly kept:
He thought me asleep; at least, I knew
He thought I thought he thought I slept.”

1854, 1856

From The Unknown Eros

Magna Est Veritas

Here, in this little bay,
Full of tumultuous life and great repose,
Where, twice a day,
The purposeless, glad ocean comes and goes,

Under high cliffs, and far from the huge town,
I sit me down.

For want of me the world’s course will not fail:
When all its work is done, the lie shall rot;
The truth is great, and shall prevail,

When none cares whether it prevail or not.

1. “Truth is great.”
A Farewell

With all my will, but much against my heart,
We two now part.
My Very Dear,
Our solace is, the sad road lies so clear.
It needs no art,
With faint, averted feet
And many a tear,
In our opposed paths to persevere.
Go thou to East, I West.

We will not say
There’s any hope, it is so far away.
But, O my Best,
When the one darling of our widowhead,
The nursling Grief,

Is dead,
And no dews blur our eyes
To see the peach-bloom come in evening skies,
Perchance we may,
Where now this night is day,
And even through faith of still averted feet,
Making full circle of our banishment,
Amazèd meet;
The bitter journey to the bourn so sweet
Seasoning the termless feast of our content

With tears of recognition never dry.

1877