

Sonnet—Baugmaree¹

A sea of foliage girds our garden round,
 But not a sea of dull unvaried green,
 Sharp contrast of all colours here are seen:
 The light-green graceful tamarinds² abound
 Amid the mangoe clumps of green profound,
 And palms arise, like pillars gray, between:
 And o'er the quiet pools the seemuls³ lean,
 Red,—red, and startling like the trumpet's sound.
 But nothing can be lovelier than the ranges
 Of bamboos to the eastward, when the moon
 Looks through their gaps, and the white lotus changes
 Into a cup of silver. One might swoon
 Drunken with beauty then, or gaze and gaze
 On a primeval Eden, in amaze.

Sonnet—The Lotus¹

Love² came to Flora³ asking for a flower
 That would of flowers be undisputed queen,
 The lily and the rose, long had been
 Rivals for that high honour. Bards of power
 Had sung their claims.⁴ 'The rose can never tower
 Like the pale lily with her Juno⁵ mien'—
 'But is the lily lovelier?' Thus between
 Flower-factions rang the strife in Psyche's⁶ bower.
 'Give me a flower delicious as the rose
 And stately as the lily in her pride'—
 'But of what colour?'—'Rose-red,' Love first chose,
 Then prayed,—'No, lily-white,—or, both provide;
 And Flora gave the lotus, 'rose-red' dyed,
 And 'lily-white,'—the queenliest flower that blows.

Our Casuarina¹ Tree

Like a huge Python,² winding round and round
The rugged trunk, indented deep with scars
Up to its very summit near the stars,
A creeper climbs, in whose embraces bound
No other tree could live. But gallantly
The giant wears the scarf, and flowers are hung
In crimson clusters³ all the boughs among,
Whereon all day are gathered bird and bee;
And oft at nights the garden overflows
With one sweet song that seems to have no close,
Sung darkling⁴ from our tree, while men repose.

When first my casement is wide open thrown
At dawn, my eyes delighted on it rest;
Sometimes, and most in winter,—on its crest
A grey baboon sits statue-like alone
Watching the sunrise; while on lower boughs
His puny offspring leap about and play;
And far and near *kokils*⁵ hail the day;
And to their pastures wend our sleepy cows:
and in the shadow, on the broad tank cast
By that hoar tree, so beautiful and vast,
The water-lilies spring, like snow enmassed.

But not because of its magnificence
Dear is the Casuarina to my soul:
Beneath it we have played; though years may roll,
O sweet companions, loved with love intense.
For your sakes, shall the tree be ever dear!
Blent with your images, it shall arise
In memory, till the hot tears blind mine eyes!
What is that dirge-like murmur⁶ that I hear
Like the sea breaking on a shingle-beach?
It is the tree's lament, an eerie speech,
That haply to the unknown land⁷ may reach.

Unknown, yet well-known to the eye of faith!
 Ah, I have heard that wail far, far away
 In distant lands, by many a sheltered bay,
 When slumbered in his cave the water-wraith⁸
 And the waves gently kissed the classic shore
 Of France or Italy, beneath the moon.
 When earth lay⁹ tranced in a dreamless swoon:
 And every time the music rose,—before
 Mine inner vision rose a form sublime,
 Thy form, O Tree, as in my happy prime
 I saw thee, in my own loved native clime.

Therefore I fain would consecrate a lay
 Unto thy honour, Tree, beloved of those
 Who now in blessed sleep, for aye, repose,
 Dearer than life to me, alas! were they!
 Mayst thou be numbered when my days are done
 With deathless trees—like those in Borrowdale.¹⁰
 Under whose awful branches lingered pale
 ‘Fear, trembling Hope, and Death, the skeleton,
 And Time the shadow;’
 and though weak the verse
 That would thy beauty fain, oh fain rehearse
 May Love defend thee from Oblivion’s curse.