

Lie open wide fair ways that lead straight on
Whereto that thing would go, and yet it gnaws
Its burrow by their side ; and stranger yet,
Upon those open paths there, writhing on
Like scaled serpents, they two striving north
But swifter on the ways. Often they turn
Upon a cross-road, seeking for the path
Rent by the kindred shape on through the wood,
And when they find it, there a tumult wakes
'Mid smoke and flame. But straight upon its course
Sweeps the blue serpent, cleaving through the grey
To lodge it once again within the wild,
Leaving the cloven to reshape and crawl
Back to the open fields. — Oh, ye who look
Upon this troubled bit of whirling down
From isles of peace afar, know ye that here
Ye see of all God's realm arch mystery ?
For these contending serpents are men shaped,
As they believe, in fashion of Himself,
And set in His creation for His work.
Those glittering snakes are armies, and each scale
Is that Lord's image striving till it dies
To slay its fellow shape ; and as it falls
Back to the earth that bore it, forth there comes
Another to its place. Yea, ye are far,
But sure ye burn with us when ye behold
Dear men chained in these serpents, creeping on
As in a living prison, pray in vain
Unto the might that rules us that He slay