With station and with circumstance
Allotted to the task untried,
Yet not without a memory
Of that first life's experience
Moulding upon each thought and deed
The imprint of its first estate."
And One will say, "Unless this soul
Shall prove by word or deed
It merited to walk this earth,
We cannot find here manifest
A purpose to a wise design;
Nor shall we say when Death has come
That this soul lives, nor to what realms
It flies, unless its tenor here
Fulfills a purpose to an end
Beyond the compass of a life
Trammled by earthly circumstance."

Harbored within its suited frame
The young life grows, and finds the world
In stature measured to its own,—
A garden to the childish mind;
A playground to the happy boy;
Fame's high arena to the youth;
And to the sterner man a field
Of conflict, where the small and weak
Wages, with how successful strife,
Battle against the strong and great;
In which, though numbered with the strong,
How oft he falters or deserts,
Or turns against the better cause.
At the rude tasks of husbandmen,
Toiling upon the hill and plain,
Sharing with them the lowly life
The cottage knows, and sharing, too,
Their hopes, their fears, their sufferings,
In trouble, counselor, in grief,
Consoler and a steadfast friend,
He earns their love and reverence.
Men say: "A purpose wise has brought
This soul to us from out the dark,
To labor with us and to teach.
And by the tenor of its life,
In which that purpose still abides,
To span the darker gulf beyond
It cannot fail; nor shall we fail
Learning from it a better hope,
A better fear, to lead us on!"

At twilight, when the gray bats fly
On noiseless wings the gable 'round,
And night moths fare their spectral course
Across the hedge-row top, a light
Startles within the cottage gloom,
And with the hurry of feet there come
Anxious entreaties, and the sound
Of crying, for the life
Is gone at length, and the spent frame
Upon the bed, the memory,
The love of friends, and what the hands
Have done or made, alone attest
That what is dead once nobly lived.
And One will say, trusting his eyes
To prove the dark, "This is the end.
Lost now as utterly this life
As a thin flame flared out, which leaves
A blackened coal to mock the lamp."
And one, whose countenance bespeaks
A better truth, will say, "Who lived,
Lives now; and as the Alchemist,
Seeing the laws of atoms, cries,
'No particle can be destroyed,'
So I, seeing the laws of life,
Declare, 'What lived shall all endure!'"