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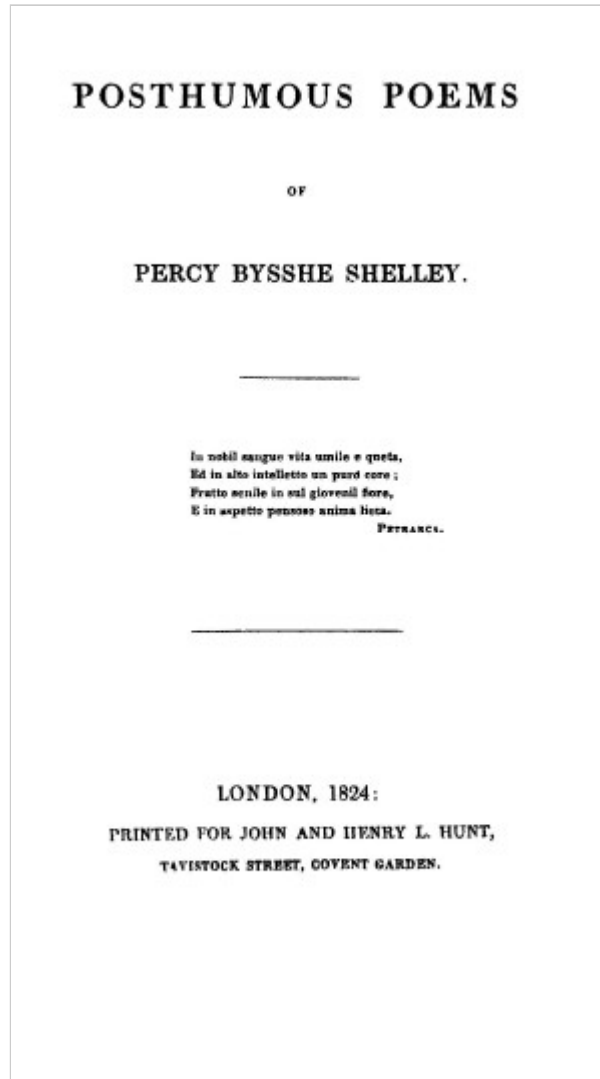
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Foreword: [Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley](#)

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PREFACE.

It had been my wish, on presenting the public with the Posthumous Poems of Mr. Shelley, to have accompanied them by a biographical notice; as it appeared to me, that at this moment, a narration of the events of my husband's life would come more gracefully from other hands than mine, I applied to Mr. Leigh Hunt. The distinguished friendship that Mr. Shelley felt for him, and the enthusiastic affection with which Mr. Leigh Hunt clings to his friend's memory, seemed to point him out as the person best calculated for such an undertaking. His absence from this country, which prevented our mutual explanation, has unfortunately rendered my scheme abortive. I do not doubt but that on some other occasion he will pay this tribute to his lost friend, and sincerely regret that the volume which I edit has not been honoured by its insertion.

The comparative solitude in which Mr. Shelley lived, was the occasion that he was personally known to few; and his fearless enthusiasm in the cause, which he considered the most sacred upon earth, the improvement of the moral and physical state of mankind, was the chief reason why he, like other illustrious reformers, was pursued by hatred and calumny. No man was ever more devoted than he, to the endeavour of making those around him happy; no man ever possessed friends more unfeignedly attached to him. The ungrateful world did not feel his loss, and the gap it made seemed to close as quickly over his memory as the murderous sea above his living frame. Hereafter men will lament that his transcendent powers of intellect were extinguished before they had bestowed on them their choicest treasures. To his friends his loss is irremediable: the wise, the brave, the gentle, is gone for ever! He is to them as a bright vision, whose radiant track, left behind in the memory, is worth all the realities that society can afford. Before the critics contradict me, let them appeal to any one who had ever known him: to see him was to love him; and his presence, like Ithuriel's spear, was alone sufficient to disclose the falsehood of the tale, which his enemies whispered in the ear of the ignorant world.

His life was spent in the contemplation of nature, in arduous study, or in acts of kindness and affection. He was an elegant scholar and a profound metaphysician: without possessing much scientific knowledge, he was unrivalled in the justness and extent of his observations on natural objects; he knew every plant by its name, and was familiar with the history and habits of every production of the earth; he could interpret without a fault each appearance in the sky, and the varied phenomena of heaven and earth filled him with deep emotion. He made his study and reading-room of the shadowed copse, the stream, the lake and the waterfall. Ill health and continual pain preyed upon his powers, and the solitude in which we lived, particularly on our first arrival in Italy, although congenial to his feelings, must frequently have weighed upon his spirits; those beautiful and affecting "Lines, written in dejection at Naples," were composed at such an interval; but when in health, his spirits were buoyant and youthful to an extraordinary degree.

Such was his love for nature, that every page of his poetry is associated in the minds of his friends with the loveliest scenes of the countries which he inhabited. In early

life he visited the most beautiful parts of this country and Ireland. Afterwards the Alps of Switzerland became his inspirers. "Prometheus Unbound" was written among the deserted and flower-grown ruins of Rome, and when he made his home under the Pisan hills, their roofless recesses harboured him as he composed "The Witch of Atlas," "Adonais" and "Hellas." In the wild but beautiful Bay of Spezia, the winds and waves which he loved became his playmates. His days were chiefly spent on the water; the management of his boat, its alterations and improvements, were his principal occupation. At night, when the unclouded moon shone on the calm sea, he often went alone in his little shallop to the rocky caves that bordered it, and sitting beneath their shelter wrote "The Triumph of Life," the last of his productions. The beauty but strangeness of this lonely place, the refined pleasure which he felt in the companionship of a few selected friends, our entire sequestration from the rest of the world, all contributed to render this period of his life one of continued enjoyment. I am convinced that the two months we passed there were the happiest he had ever known: his health even rapidly improved, and he was never better than when I last saw him, full of spirits and joy, embark for Leghorn, that he might there welcome Leigh Hunt to Italy. I was to have accompanied him, but illness confined me to my room, and thus put the seal on my misfortune. His vessel bore out of sight with a favourable wind, and I remained awaiting his return by the breakers of that sea which was about to engulf him.

He spent a week at Pisa, employed in kind offices towards his friend, and enjoying with keen delight the renewal of their intercourse. He then embarked with Mr. Williams, the chosen and beloved sharer of his pleasures and of his fate, to return to us. We waited for them in vain; the sea by its restless moaning seemed to desire to inform us of what we would not learn:—but a veil may well be drawn over such misery. The real anguish of these moments transcended all the fictions that the most glowing imagination ever pourtrayed: our seclusion, the savage nature of the inhabitants of the surrounding villages, and our immediate vicinity to the troubled sea, combined to embue with strange horror our days of uncertainty. The truth was at last known,—a truth that made our loved and lovely Italy appear a tomb, its sky a pall. Every heart echoed the deep lament, and my only consolation was in the praise and earnest love that each voice bestowed and each countenance demonstrated for him we had lost,—not, I fondly hope, for ever: his unearthly and elevated nature is a pledge of the continuation of his being, although in an altered form. Rome received his ashes; they are deposited beneath its weed-grown wall, and "the world's sole monument" is enriched by his remains.

I must add a few words concerning the contents of this volume. "Julian and Maddalo," "The Witch of Atlas," and most of the Translations, were written some years ago, and, with the exception of "The Cyclops," and the Scenes from the "Magico Prodigioso," may be considered as having received the author's ultimate corrections. "The Triumph of Life" was his last work, and was left in so unfinished a state, that I arranged it in its present form with great difficulty. All his poems which were scattered in periodical works are collected in this volume, and I have added a reprint of "Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude:"—the difficulty with which a copy can be obtained, is the cause of its republication. Many of the Miscellaneous Poems, written on the spur of the occasion, and never retouched, I found among his

manuscript books, and have carefully copied: I have subjoined, whenever I have been able, the date of their composition.

I do not know whether the critics will reprehend the insertion of some of the most imperfect among these; but I frankly own, that I have been more actuated by the fear lest any monument of his genius should escape me, than the wish of presenting nothing but what was complete to the fastidious reader. I feel secure that the Lovers of Shelley's Poetry (who know how more than any other poet of the present day every line and word he wrote is instinct with peculiar beauty) will pardon and thank me: I consecrate this volume to them.

The size of this collection has prevented the insertion of any prose pieces. They will hereafter appear in a separate publication.

Mary W. Shelley.

London, June 1st, 1824.

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JULIAN AND MADDALO;

A CONVERSATION.

The meadows with fresh streams, the bees with thyme,
The goats with the green leaves of budding spring,
Are saturated not—nor Love with tears.

Virgil's *Gallus*.

JULIAN AND MADDALO.

Count Maddalo is a Venetian nobleman of ancient family and of great fortune, who, without mixing much in the society of his countrymen, resides chiefly at his magnificent palace in that city. He is a person of the most consummate genius; and capable, if he would direct his energies to such an end, of becoming the redeemer of his degraded country. But it is his weakness to be proud: he derives, from a comparison of his own extraordinary mind with the dwarfish intellects that surround him, an intense apprehension of the nothingness of human life. His passions and his powers are incomparably greater than those of other men, and instead of the latter having been employed in curbing the former, they have mutually lent each other strength. His ambition preys upon itself, for want of objects which it can consider worthy of exertion. I say that Maddalo is proud, because I can find no other word to express the concentered and impatient feelings which consume him; but it is on his own hopes and affections only that he seems to trample, for in social life no human being can be more gentle, patient, and unassuming than Maddalo. He is cheerful, frank, and witty. His more serious conversation is a sort of intoxication; men are held by it as by a spell. He has travelled much; and there is an inexpressible charm in his relation of his adventures in different countries.

Julian is an Englishman of good family, passionately attached to those philosophical notions which assert the power of man over his own mind, and the immense improvements of which, by the extinction of certain moral superstitions, human society may be yet susceptible. Without concealing the evil in the world, he is for ever speculating how good may be made superior. He is a complete infidel, and a scoffer at all things reputed holy; and Maddalo takes a wicked pleasure in drawing out his taunts against religion. What Maddalo thinks on these matters is not exactly known. Julian, in spite of his heterodox opinions, is conjectured by his friends to possess some good qualities. How far this is possible, the pious reader will determine. Julian is rather serious.

Of the Maniac I can give no information. He seems by his own account to have been disappointed in love. He was evidently a very cultivated and amiable person when in his right senses. His story, told at length, might be like many other stories of the same

kind: the unconnected exclamations of his agony will perhaps be found a sufficient comment for the text of every heart.

I rode one evening with Count Maddalo
Upon the bank of land which breaks the flow
Of Adria towards Venice: a bare strand
Of hillocks, heaped from ever-shifting sand,
Matted with thistles and amphibious weeds,
Such as from earth's embrace the salt ooze breeds,
Is this; an uninhabited sea-side,
Which the lone fisher, when his nets are dried,
Abandons; and no other object breaks
The waste, but one dwarf tree and some few stakes
Broken and unrepaired, and the tide makes
A narrow space of level sand thereon,
Where 'twas our wont to ride while day went down.
This ride was my delight. I love all waste
And solitary places; where we taste
The pleasure of believing what we see
Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be:
And such was this wide ocean, and this shore
More barren than its billows; and yet more
Than all, with a remembered friend I love
To ride as then I rode;—for the winds drove
The living spray along the sunny air
Into our faces; the blue heavens were bare,
Stripped to their depths by the awakening north;
And, from the waves, sound like delight broke forth
Harmonising with solitude, and sent
Into our hearts ærial merriment.
So, as we rode, we talked; and the swift thought,
Winging itself with laughter, lingered not,
But flew from brain to brain,—such glee was ours,
Charged with light memories of remembered hours,
None slow enough for sadness: till we came
Homeward, which always makes the spirit tame.
This day had been cheerful but cold, and now
The sun was sinking, and the wind also.
Our talk grew somewhat serious, as may be
Talk interrupted with such raillery
As mocks itself, because it cannot scorn
The thoughts it would extinguish:—'twas forlorn,
Yet pleasing; such as once, so poets tell,
The devils held within the dales of hell,
Concerning God, freewill, and destiny.
Of all that Earth has been, or yet may be;
All that vain men imagine or believe,
Or hope can paint, or suffering can achieve,

We descanted; and I (for ever still
Is it not wise to make the best of ill?)
Argued against despondency; but pride
Made my companion take the darker side.
The sense that he was greater than his kind
Had struck, methinks, his eagle spirit blind
By gazing on its own exceeding light.
Meanwhile the sun paused ere it should alight
Over the horizon of the mountains—Oh!
How beautiful is sunset, when the glow
Of heaven descends upon a land like thee,
Thou paradise of exiles, Italy!
Thy mountains, seas, and vineyards, and the towers
Of cities they encircle!—It was ours
To stand on thee, beholding it: and then,
Just where we had dismounted, the Count's men
Were waiting for us with the gondola.
As those who pause on some delightful way,
Tho' bent on pleasant pilgrimage, we stood,
Looking upon the evening and the flood,
Which lay between the city and the shore,
Paved with the image of the sky: the hoar
And aery Alps, towards the north, appeared,
Thro' mist, an heaven-sustaining bulwark, reared
Between the east and west; and half the sky
Was roofed with clouds of rich emblazonry,
Dark purple at the zenith, which still grew
Down the steep west into a wondrous hue
Brighter than burning gold, even to the rent
Where the swift sun yet paused in his descent
Among the many folded hills—they were
Those famous Euganean hills, which bear,
As seen from Lido thro' the harbour piles,
The likeness of a clump of peaked isles—
And then, as if the earth and sea had been
Dissolved into one lake of fire, were seen
Those mountains towering, as from waves of flame,
Around the vaporous sun, from which there came
The inmost purple spirit of light, and made
Their very peaks transparent. "Ere it fade,"
Said my companion, "I will show you soon
A better station." So, o'er the lagune
We glided; and from that funereal bark
I leaned, and saw the city, and could mark
How from their many isles, in evening's gleam,
Its temples and its palaces did seem
Like fabrics of enchantment piled to heav'n.
I was about to speak, when—"We are even

Now at the point I meant," said Maddalo,
And bade the gondolieri cease to row.
"Look, Julian, on the west, and listen well
If you hear not a deep and heavy bell."
I looked, and saw between us and the sun
A building on an island, such an one
As age to age might add, for uses vile,—
A windowless, deformed and dreary pile;
And on the top an open tower, where hung
A bell, which in the radiance swayed and swung,
We could just hear its hoarse and iron tongue:
The broad sun sank behind it, and it tolled
In strong and black relief.—"What we behold
Shall be the madhouse and its belfry tower;"—
Said Maddalo, "and even at this hour,
Those who may cross the water hear that bell,
Which calls the maniacs, each one from his cell,
To vespers."—"As much skill as need to pray,
In thanks or hope for their dark lot have they,
To their stern maker," I replied.—"O, ho!
You talk as in years past," said Maddalo.
"'Tis strange men change not. You were ever still
Among Christ's flock a perilous infidel,
A wolf for the meek lambs: if you can't swim,
Beware of providence." I looked on him,
But the gay smile had faded from his eye.
"And such," he cried, "is our mortality;
And this must be the emblem and the sign
Of what should be eternal and divine;
And like that black and dreary bell the soul,
Hung in an heav'n-illuminated tower, must toll
Our thoughts and our desires to meet below
Round the rent heart, and pray—as madmen do;
For what? they know not, till the night of death,
As sunset that strange vision, severeth
Our memory from itself, and us from all
We sought, and yet were baffled." I recall
The sense of what he said, although I mar
The force of his expressions. The broad star
Of day meanwhile had sunk behind the hill;
And the black bell became invisible;
And the red tower looked grey; and all between,
The churches, ships, and palaces, were seen
Huddled in gloom; into the purple sea
The orange hues of heaven sunk silently.
We hardly spoke, and soon the gondola
Conveyed me to my lodging by the way.
The following morn was rainy, cold, and dim:

Ere Maddalo arose I called on him,
 And whilst I waited, with his child I played;
 A lovelier toy sweet Nature never made;
 A serious, subtle, wild, yet gentle being;
 Graceful without design, and unforeseeing;
 With eyes—Oh! speak not of her eyes! which seem
 Twin mirrors of Italian Heaven, yet gleam
 With such deep meaning as we never see
 But in the human countenance. With me
 She was a special favourite: I had nursed
 Her fine and feeble limbs, when she came first
 To this bleak world; and she yet seemed to know
 On second sight, her ancient playfellow,
 Less changed than she was by six months or so.
 For, after her first shyness was worn out,
 We sate there, rolling billiard balls about,
 When the Count entered. Salutations past:
 “The words you spoke last night might well have cast
 A darkness on my spirit:—if man be
 The passive thing you say, I should not see
 Much harm in the religions and old saws,
 (Though *I* may never own such leaden laws)
 Which break a teachless nature to the yoke:
 Mine is another faith.”—Thus much I spoke,
 And, noting he replied not, added—“See
 This lovely child; blithe, innocent and free;
 She spends a happy time, with little care;
 While we to such sick thoughts subjected are,
 As came on you last night. It is our will
 Which thus enchains us to permitted ill.
 We might be otherwise; we might be all
 We dream of, happy, high, majestic.
 Where is the love, beauty, and truth we seek,
 But in our minds? And, if we were not weak,
 Should we be less in deed than in desire?”—
 —“Aye, if we were not weak,—and we aspire,
 How vainly! to be strong,” said Maddalo:
 “You talk Utopia”—
 “It remains to know,”
 I then rejoined, “and those who try, may find
 How strong the chains are which our spirit bind:
 Brittle perchance as straw. We are assured
 Much may be conquered, much may be endured,
 Of what degrades and crushes us. We know
 That we have power over ourselves to do
 And suffer—*what*, we know not till we try;
 But something nobler than to live and die:
 So taught the kings of old philosophy,

Who reigned before religion made men blind;
And those who suffer with their suffering kind,
Yet feel this faith, religion.”

“My dear friend,”

Said Maddalo, “my judgment will not bend
To your opinion, though I think you might
Make such a system refutation-tight,
As far as words go. I knew one like you,
Who to this city came some months ago,
With whom I argued in this sort,—and he
Is now gone mad—and so he answered me,
Poor fellow!—But if you would like to go,
We’ll visit him, and his wild talk will shew
How vain are such aspiring theories.”—

“I hope to prove the induction otherwise,
And that a want of that true theory still,
Which seeks a soul of goodness in things ill,
Or in himself or others, has thus bow’d
His being:—there are some by nature proud,
Who, patient in all else, demand but this—
To love and be beloved with gentleness:—
And being scorned, what wonder if they die
Some living death? This is not destiny,
But man’s own wilful ill.”—

As thus I spoke,

Servants announced the gondola, and we
Through the fast-falling rain and high-wrought sea
Sailed to the island where the madhouse stands.

We disembarked. The clap of tortured hands,
Fierce yells, and howlings, and lamentings keen,
And laughter where complaint had merrier been,
Accosted us. We climbed the oozy stairs
Into an old court-yard. I heard on high,
Then, fragments of most touching melody,
But looking up saw not the singer there.—
Thro’ the black bars in the tempestuous air
I saw, like weeds on a wreck’d palace growing,
Long tangled locks flung wildly forth and flowing,
Of those who on a sudden were beguiled
Into strange silence, and looked forth and smiled,
Hearing sweet sounds. Then I:—

“Methinks there were

A cure of these with patience and kind care,
If music can thus move. But what is he,
Whom we seek here?”

“Of his sad history

I know but this,” said Maddalo: “he came
To Venice a dejected man, and fame

Said he was wealthy, or he had been so.
Some thought the loss of fortune wrought him woe;
But he was ever talking in such sort
As you do,—but more sadly;—he seem'd hurt,
Even as a man with his peculiar wrong,
To hear but of the oppression of the strong,
Or those absurd deceits (I think with you
In some respects, you know) which carry thro'
The excellent impostors of this earth
When they outface detection. He had worth,
Poor fellow! but a humourist in his way.”—
—“Alas, what drove him mad!”
“I cannot say:
A lady came with him from France, and when
She left him and returned, he wander'd then
About yon lonely isles of desart sand,
Till he grew wild. He had no cash or land
Remaining:—the police had brought him here—
Some fancy took him, and he would not bear
Removal, so I fitted up for him
Those rooms beside the sea, to please his whim;
And sent him busts, and books, and urns for flowers,
Which had adorned his life in happier hours,
And instruments of music. You may guess
A stranger could do little more or less
For oneso gentle and unfortunate—
And those are his sweet strains which charm the weight
From madmen's chains, and make this hell appear
A heaven of sacred silence, hushed to hear.”
“Nay, this was kind of you,—he had no claim,
As the world says.”
“None but the very same
Which I on all mankind, were I, as he,
Fall'n to such deep reverse. His melody
Is interrupted now; we hear the din
Of madmen, shriek on shriek, again begin:
Let us now visit him: after this strain,
He ever communes with himself again,
And sees and hears not any.”
Having said
These words, we called the keeper, and he led
To an apartment opening on the sea.—
There the poor wretch was sitting mournfully
Near a piano, his pale fingers twined
One with the other; and the ooze and wind
Rushed thro' an open casement, and did sway
His hair, and starred it with the brackish spray;
His head was leaning on a music book,

And he was muttering; and his lean limbs shook;
His lips were pressed against a folded leaf
In hue too beautiful for health, and grief
Smiled in their motions as they lay apart,
As one who wrought from his own fervid heart
The eloquence of passion: soon he raised
His sad meek face, and eyes lustrous and glazed,
And spoke,—sometimes as one who wrote, and thought
His words might move some heart that heeded not,
If sent to distant lands;—and then as one
Reproaching deeds never to be undone,
With wondering self-compassion;—then his speech
Was lost in grief, and then his words came each
Unmodulated and expressionless,—
But that from one jarred accent you might guess
It was despair made them so uniform:
And all the while the loud and gusty storm
Hissed thro' the window, and we stood behind,
Stealing his accents from the envious wind,
Unseen. I yet remember what he said
Distinctly, such impression his words made.
“Month after month,” he cried, “to bear this load,
And, as a jade urged by the whip and goad,
To drag life on—which like a heavy chain
Lengthens behind with many a link of pain,
And not to speak my grief—O, not to dare
To give a human voice to my despair;
But live, and move, and, wretched thing! smile on,
As if I never went aside to groan,
And wear this mask of falsehood even to those
Who are most dear—not for my own repose—
Alas! no scorn, or pain, or hate, could be
So heavy as that falsehood is to me—
But that I cannot bear more altered faces
Than needs must be, more changed and cold embraces,
More misery, disappointment, and mistrust
To own me for their father. Would the dust
Were covered in upon my body now!
That the life ceased to toil within my brow!
And then these thoughts would at the last be fled:
Let us not fear such pain can vex the dead.
“What Power delights to torture us? I know
That to myself I do not wholly owe
What now I suffer, though in part I may.
Alas! none strewed fresh flowers upon the way
Where, wandering heedlessly, I met pale Pain,
My shadow, which will leave me not again.
If I have erred, there was no joy in error,

But pain, and insult, and unrest, and terror;
I have not, as some do, bought penitence
With pleasure, and a dark yet sweet offence;
For then if love, and tenderness, and truth
Had overlived Hope's momentary youth,
My creed should have redeemed me from repenting;
But loathed scorn and outrage unrelenting
Met love excited by far other seeming
Until the end was gained:—as one from dreaming
Of sweetest peace, I woke, and found my state
Such as it is.—

“O, thou, my spirit's mate!

Who, for thou art compassionate and wise,
Wouldst pity me from thy most gentle eyes
If this sad writing thou shouldst ever see,
My secret groans must be unheard by thee;
Thou wouldst weep tears, bitter as blood, to know
Thy lost friend's incommunicable woe.
Ye few by whom my nature has been weighed
In friendship, let me not that name degrade,
By placing on your hearts the secret load
Which crushes mine to dust. There is one road
To peace, and that is truth, which follow ye!
Love sometimes leads astray to misery.
Yet think not, tho' subdued (and I may well
Say that I am subdued)—that the full hell
Within me would infect the untainted breast
Of sacred nature with its own unrest;
As some perverted beings think to find
In scorn or hate a medicine for the mind
Which scorn or hate hath wounded.—O, how vain!
The dagger heals not, but may rend again.
Believe that I am ever still the same
In creed as in resolve; and what may tame
My heart, must leave the understanding free,
Or all would sink under this agony.—
Nor dream that I will join the vulgar eye,
Or with my silence sanction tyranny,
Or seek a moment's shelter from my pain
In any madness which the world calls gain;
Ambition, or revenge, or thoughts as stern
As those which make me what I am, or turn
To avarice or misanthropy or lust.
Heap on me soon, O grave, thy welcome dust!
Till then the dungeon may demand its prey;
And Poverty and Shame may meet and say,
Halting beside me in the public way,—
‘That love-devoted youth is ours: let's sit

Beside him: he may live some six months yet.'—
Or the red scaffold, as our country bends,
May ask some willing victim; or ye, friends!
May fall under some sorrow, which this heart
Or hand may share, or vanquish, or avert;
I am prepared, in truth, with no proud joy,
To do or suffer aught, as when a boy
I did devote to justice, and to love,
My nature, worthless now.

"I must remove
A veil from my pent mind. 'Tis torn aside!
O! pallid as Death's dedicated bride,
Thou mockery which art sitting by my side,
Am I not wan like thee? At the grave's call
I haste, invited to thy wedding-ball,
To meet the ghastly paramour, for whom
Thou hast deserted me,—and made the tomb
Thy bridal bed. But I beside thy feet
Will lie, and watch ye from my winding-sheet
Thus—wide awake tho' dead—Yet stay, O, stay!
Go not so soon—I know not what I say—
Hear but my reasons—I am mad, I fear,
My fancy is o'erwrought—thou art not here.
Pale art thou, 'tis most true—but thou art gone—
Thy work is finished; I am left alone.

* * * * *

"Nay, was it I who wooed thee to this breast,
Which like a serpent thou envenomest
As in repayment of the warmth it lent?
Didst thou not seek me for thine own content?
Did not thy love awaken mine? I thought
That thou wert she who said 'You kiss me not
Ever; I fear you do not love me now.'
In truth I loved even to my overthrow
Her, who would fain forget these words; but they
Cling to her mind, and cannot pass away.

* * * * *

"You say that I am proud; that when I speak,
My lip is tortured with the wrongs, which break
The spirit it expresses.—Never one
Humbled himself before, as I have done!
Even the instinctive worm on which we tread
Turns, tho' it wound not—then, with prostrate head,
Sinks in the dust, and writhes like me—and dies:
—No:—wears a living death of agonies!
As the slow shadows of the pointed grass
Mark the eternal periods, its pangs pass,
Slow, ever-moving, making moments be

As mine seem,—each an immortality!

* * * * *

“That you had never seen me! never heard
My voice! and, more than all, had ne’er endured
The deep pollution of my loathed embrace!
That your eyes ne’er had lied love in my face!
That, like some maniac monk, I had torn out
The nerves of manhood by their bleeding root
With mine own quivering fingers! so that ne’er
Our hearts had for a moment mingled there,
To disunite in horror! These were not
With thee like some suppressed and hideous thought,
Which flits athwart our musings, but can find
No rest within a pure and gentle mind—
Thou sealed’st them with many a bare broad word,
And seard’st my memory o’er them,—for I heard
And can forget not—they were ministered,
One after one, those curses. Mix them up
Like self-destroying poisons in one cup;
And they will make one blessing, which thou ne’er
Didst imprecate for on me—death!

“It were

A cruel punishment for one most cruel,
If such can love, to make that love the fuel
Of the mind’s hell—hate, scorn, remorse, despair:
But *me*, whose heart a stranger’s tear might wear,
As water-drops the sandy fountain stone;
Who loved and pitied all things, and could moan
For woes which others hear not, and could see
The absent with the glass of phantasy,
And near the poor and trampled sit and weep,
Following the captive to his dungeon deep;
Me, who am as a nerve o’er which do creep
The else-unfelt oppressions of this earth,
And was to thee the flame upon thy hearth,
When all beside was cold:—that thou on me
Shouldst rain these plagues of blistering agony—
Such curses are from lips once eloquent
With love’s too partial praise! Let none relent
Who intend deeds too dreadful for a name
Henceforth, if an example for the same
They seek:—for thou on me lookedst so and so,
And didst speak thus and thus. I live to shew
How much men bear and die not.

* * * * *

“Thou wilt tell,
With the grimace of hate, how horrible
It was to meet my love when thine grew less;

Thou wilt admire how I could e'er address
Such features to love's work. . . . This taunt, tho' true,
(For indeed nature nor in form nor hue
Bestowed on me her choicest workmanship)
Shall not be thy defence: for since thy life
Met mine first, years long past,—since thine eye kindled
With soft fire under mine,—I have not dwindled,
Nor changed in mind, or body, or in aught
But as love changes what it loveth not
After long years and many trials.

* * * * *

“How vain
Are words! I thought never to speak again,
Not even in secret, not to my own heart—
But from my lips the unwilling accents start,
And from my pen the words flow as I write,
Dazzling my eyes with scalding tears—my sight
Is dim to see that characted in vain,
On this unfeeling leaf, which burns the brain
And eats into it, blotting all things fair,
And wise and good, which time had written there.
Those who inflict must suffer, for they see
The work of their own hearts, and that must be
Our chastisement or recompense.—O, child!
I would that thine were like to be more mild
For both our wretched sakes,—for thine the most,
Who feel'st already all that thou hast lost,
Without the power to wish it thine again.
And, as slow years pass, a funereal train,
Each with the ghost of some lost hope or friend
Following it like its shadow, wilt thou bend
No thought on my dead memory?

* * * * *

“Alas, love!
Fear me not: against thee I'd not move
A finger in despite. Do I not live
That thou mayst have less bitter cause to grieve?
I give thee tears for scorn, and love for hate;
And, that thy lot may be less desolate
Than his on whom thou tramplest, I refrain
From that sweet sleep which medicines all pain.
Then—when thou speakest of me—never say,
'He could forgive not'—Here I cast away
All human passions, all revenge, all pride;
I think, speak, act no ill; I do but hide
Under these words, like embers, every spark
Of that which has consumed me. Quick and dark
The grave is yawning:—as its roof shall cover

My limbs with dust and worms, under and over;
So let oblivion hide this grief—The air
Closes upon my accents, as despair
Upon my heart—let death upon despair!”
He ceased, and overcome, leant back awhile;
Then rising, with a melancholy smile,
Went to a sofa, and lay down, and slept
A heavy sleep, and in his dreams he wept,
And muttered some familiar name, and we
Wept without shame in his society.
I think I never was impress’d so much;
The man who were not, must have lack’d a touch
Of human nature.—Then we linger’d not,
Although our argument was quite forgot;
But, calling the attendants, went to dine
At Maddalo’s:—yet neither cheer nor wine
Could give us spirits, for we talked of him,
And nothing else, till daylight made stars dim.
And we agreed it was some dreadful ill
Wrought on him boldly, yet unspeakable,
By a dear friend; some deadly change in love
Of one vow’d deeply which he dreamed not of;
For whose sake he, it seemed, had fixed a blot
Of falsehood in his mind, which flourish’d not
But in the light of all-beholding truth;
And having stamped this canker on his youth,
She had abandoned him:—and how much more
Might be his woe, we guessed not:—he had store
Of friends and fortune once, as we could guess
From his nice habits and his gentleness:
These now were lost—it were a grief indeed
If he had changed one unsustaining reed
For all that such a man might else adorn.
The colours of his mind seemed yet unworn;
For the wild language of his grief was high—
Such as in measure were called poetry.
And I remember one remark, which then
Maddalo made: he said—“Most wretched men
Are cradled into poetry by wrong:
They learn in suffering what they teach in song.”
If I had been an unconnected man,
I, from this moment, should have form’d some plan
Never to leave sweet Venice: for to me
It was delight to ride by the lone sea:
And then the town is silent—one may write,
Or read in gondolas by day or night,
Having the little brazen lamp alight,
Unseen, uninterrupted:—books are there,

Pictures, and casts from all those statues fair
Which were twin-born with poetry—and all
We seek in towns, with little to recal
Regret for the green country:—I might sit
In Maddalo's great palace, and his wit
And subtle talk would cheer the winter night,
And make me know myself:—and the fire light
Would flash upon our faces, till the day
Might dawn, and make me wonder at my stay.
But I had friends in London too. The chief
Attraction here was that I sought relief
From the deep tenderness that maniac wrought
Within me—'twas perhaps an idle thought,
But I imagined that if, day by day,
I watched him, and seldom went away,
And studied all the beatings of his heart
With zeal, as men study some stubborn art
For their own good, and could by patience find
An entrance to the caverns of his mind,
I might reclaim him from his dark estate.
In friendships I had been most fortunate,
Yet never saw I one whom I would call
More willingly my friend;—and this was all
Accomplish'd not;—such dreams of baseless good
Oft come and go, in crowds or solitude,
And leave no trace!—but what I now design'd,
Made, for long years, impression on my mind.
—The following morning, urged by my affairs,
I left bright Venice.—
After many years,
And many changes, I returned; the name
Of Venice, and its aspect, was the same;
But Maddalo was travelling, far away,
Among the mountains of Armenia.
His dog was dead: his child had now become
A woman, such as it has been my doom
To meet with few; a wonder of this earth,
Where there is little of transcendent worth,—
Like one of Shakspeare's women. Kindly she,
And with a manner beyond courtesy,
Receiv'd her father's friend; and, when I ask'd
Of the lorn maniac, she her memory task'd,
And told, as she had heard, the mournful tale:
“That the poor sufferer's health began to fail,
Two years from my departure; but that then
The lady, who had left him, came again.
Her mien had been imperious, but she now
Look'd meek; perhaps remorse had brought her low.

Her coming made him better; and they stayed
Together at my father's,—for I played,
As I remember, with the lady's shawl;
I might be six years old:—But, after all,
She left him.”—
“Why, her heart must have been tough;
How did it end?”
“And was not this enough?
They met, they parted.”
“Child, is there no more?”
“Something within that interval, which bore
The stamp of *why* they parted, *how* they met;—
Yet if thine aged eyes disdain to wet
Those wrinkled cheeks with youth's remember'd tears,
Ask me no more; but let the silent years
Be clos'd and cered over their memory,
As yon mute marble where their corpses lie.”
I urged and questioned still: she told me how
All happen'd—but the cold world shall not know.

Rome, May, 1819.

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THE WITCH OF ATLAS.

I.

Before those cruel Twins, whom at one birth
Incestuous Change bore to her father Time,
Error and Truth, bad hunted from the earth
All those bright natures which adorned its prime,
And left us nothing to believe in, worth
The pains of putting into learned rhyme,
A lady-witch there lived on Atlas' mountain
Within a cavern by a secret fountain.

II.

Her mother was one of the Atlantides:
The all-beholding Sun had ne'er beholden
In his wide voyage o'er continents and seas
So fair a creature, as she lay enfolden
In the warm shadow of her loveliness;—
He kissed her with his beams, and made all golden
The chamber of grey rock in which she lay—
She, in that dream of joy, dissolved away.

III.

'Tis said, she was first changed into a vapour,
And then into a cloud, such clouds as flit,
Like splendour-winged moths about a taper,
Round the red west when the sun dies in it:
And then into a meteor, such as caper
On hill-tops when the moon is in a fit;
Then, into one of those mysterious stars
Which hide themselves between the Earth and Mars.

IV.

Ten times the Mother of the Months had bent
Her bow beside the folding-star, and bidden
With that bright sign the billows to indent
The sea-deserted sand: like children chidden,
At her command they ever came and went:—
Since in that cave a dewy splendour hidden,

Took shape and motion: with the living form
Of this embodied Power, the cave grew warm.

V.

A lovely lady garmented in light
From her own beauty—deep her eyes, as are
Two openings of unfathomable night
Seen through a tempest's cloven roof—her hair
Dark—the dim brain whirls dizzy with delight,
Picturing her form; her soft smiles shone afar,
And her low voice was heard like love, and drew
All living things towards this wonder new.

VI.

And first the spotted cameleopard came,
And then the wise and fearless elephant;
Then the sly serpent, in the golden flame
Of his own volumes interolved;—all gaunt
And sanguine beasts her gentle looks made tame.
They drank before her at her sacred fount;
And every beast of beating heart grew bold,
Such gentleness and power even to behold.

VII.

The brinded lioness led forth her young,
That she might teach them how they should forego
Their inborn thirst of death; the pard unstrung
His sinews at her feet, and sought to know
With looks whose motions spoke without a tongue
How he might be as gentle as the doe.
The magic circle of her voice and eyes
All savage natures did imparadise.

VIII.

And old Silenus, shaking a green stick
Of lilies, and the wood-gods in a crew
Came, blithe, as in the olive copses thick
Cicadæ are, drunk with the noonday dew:
And Driope and Faunus followed quick,
Teazing the God to sing them something new,
Till in this cave they found the lady lone,
Sitting upon a seat of emerald stone.

IX.

And Universal Pan, 'tis said, was there,
And though none saw him,—through the adamant
Of the deep mountains, through the trackless air,
And through those living spirits, like a want
He past out of his everlasting lair
Where the quick heart of the great world doth pant,
And felt that wondrous lady all alone,—
And she felt him, upon her emerald throne.

X.

And every nymph of stream and spreading tree,
And every shepherdess of Ocean's flocks,
Who drives her white waves over the green sea;
And Ocean, with the brine on his grey locks,
And quaint Priapus with his company
All came, much wondering how the enwombed rocks
Could have brought forth so beautiful a birth;—
Her love subdued their wonder and their mirth.

XI.

The herdsmen and the mountain maidens came,
And the rude kings of pastoral Garamant—
These spirits shook within them, as a flame
Stirred by the air under a cavern gaunt:
Pigmies, and Polyphemes, by many a name,
Centaur and Satyr, and such shapes as haunt
Wet clefts,—and lumps neither alive nor dead,
Dog-headed, bosom-eyed and bird-footed.

XII.

For she was beautiful: her beauty made
The bright world dim, and every thing beside
Seemed like the fleeting image of a shade:
No thought of living spirit could abide,
Which to her looks had ever been betrayed,
On any object in the world so wide,
On any hope within the circling skies,
But on her form, and in her inmost eyes.

XIII.

Which when the lady knew, she took her spindle
And twined three threads of fleecy mist, and three
Long lines of light, such as the dawn may kindle
The clouds and waves and mountains with, and she
As many star-beams, ere their lamps could dwindle
In the belated moon, wound skilfully;
And with these threads a subtle veil she wove—
A shadow for the splendour of her love.

XIV.

The deep recesses of her odorous dwelling
Were stored with magic treasures—sounds of air,
Which had the power all spirits of compelling,
Folded in cells of chrystal silence there;
Such as we hear in youth, and think the feeling
Will never die—yet ere we are aware,
The feeling and the sound are fled and gone,
And the regret they leave remains alone.

XV.

And there lay Visions swift, and sweet, and quaint,
Each in its thin sheath like a chrysalis;
Some eager to burst forth, some weak and faint
With the soft burthen of intensest bliss;
It is its work to bear to many a saint
Whose heart adores the shrine which holiest is,
Even Love's—and others white, green, grey and black,
And of all shapes—and each was at her beck.

XVI.

And odours in a kind of aviary
Of ever-blooming Eden-trees she kept,
Clipt in a floating net, a love-sick Fairy
Had woven from dew-beams while the moon yet slept;
As bats at the wired window of a dairy,
They beat their vans; and each was an adept,
When loosed and missioned, making wings of winds,
To stir sweet thoughts or sad in destined minds.

XVII.

And liquors clear and sweet, whose healthful might
Could medicine the sick soul to happy sleep,
And change eternal death into a night
Of glorious dreams—or if eyes needs must weep,
Could make their tears all wonder and delight,
She in her chrystal vials did closely keep:
If men could drink of those clear vials, 'tis said
The living were not envied of the dead.

XVIII.

Her cave was stored with scrolls of strange device,
The works of some Saturnian Archimage,
Which taught the expiations at whose price
Men from the Gods might win that happy age
Too lightly lost, redeeming native vice;
And which might quench the earth-consuming rage
Of gold and blood—till men should live and move
Harmonious as the sacred stars above.

XIX.

And how all things that seem untameable,
Not to be checked and not to be confined,
Obey the spells of wisdom's wizard skill;
Time, Earth and Fire—the Ocean and the Wind,
And all their shapes—and man's imperial will;
And other scrolls whose writings did unbind
The inmost lore of Love—let the profane
Tremble to ask what secrets they contain.

XX.

And wondrous works of substances unknown,
To which the enchantment of her father's power
Had changed those ragged blocks of savage stone,
Were heaped in the recesses of her bower;
Carved lamps and chalices, and phials which shone
In their own golden beams—each like a flower,
Out of whose depth a fire-fly shakes his light
Under a cypress in a starless night.

XXI.

At first she lived alone in this wild home,
And her own thoughts were each a minister,
Clothing themselves or with the ocean-foam,
Or with the wind, or with the speed of fire,
To work whatever purposes might come
Into her mind; such power her mighty Sire
Had girt them with, whether to fly or run,
Through all the regions which he shines upon.

XXII.

The Ocean-nymphs and Hamadryades,
Oreads and Naiads with long weedy locks,
Offered to do her bidding through the seas,
Under the earth, and in the hollow rocks,
And far beneath the matted roots of trees,
And in the gnarled heart of stubborn oaks,
So they might live forever in the light
Of her sweet presence—each a satellite.

XXIII.

“This may not be,” the wizard maid replied;
“The fountains where the Naiades bedew
Their shining hair, at length are drained and dried;
The solid oaks forget their strength, and strew
Their latest leaf upon the mountains wide;
The boundless ocean, like a drop of dew
Will be consumed—the stubborn centre must
Be scattered, like a cloud of summer dust.

XXIV.

“And ye with them will perish one by one:
If I must sigh to think that this shall be,
If I must weep when the surviving Sun
Shall smile on your decay—Oh, ask not me
To love you till your little race is run;
I cannot die as ye must—over me
Your leaves shall glance—the streams in which ye dwell
Shall be my paths henceforth, and so, farewell!”

XXV.

She spoke and wept: the dark and azure well
Sparkled beneath the shower of her bright tears,
And every little circlet where they fell,
Flung to the cavern-roof inconstant spheres
And intertangled lines of light:—a knell
Of sobbing voices came upon her ears
From those departing Forms, o'er the serene
Of the white streams and of the forest green.

XXVI.

All day the wizard lady sat aloof
Spelling out scrolls of dread antiquity
Under the cavern's fountain-lighted roof;
Or broidering the pictured poesy
Of some high tale upon her growing woof,
Which the sweet splendour of her smiles could dye
In hues outshining heaven—and ever she
Added some grace to the wrought poesy.

XXVII.

While on her hearth lay blazing many a piece
Of sandal wood, rare gums and cinnamon;
Men scarcely know how beautiful fire is,
Each flame of it is as a precious stone
Dissolved in ever moving light, and this
Belongs to each and all who gaze upon.
The Witch beheld it not, for in her hand
She held a woof that dimmed the burning brand.

XXVIII.

This lady never slept, but lay in trance
All night within the fountain—as in sleep.
Its emerald crags glowed in her beauty's glance:
Through the green splendour of the water deep
She saw the constellations reel and dance
Like fire-flies—and withal did ever keep
The tenour of her contemplations calm,
With open eyes, closed feet and folded palm.

XXIX.

And when the whirlwinds and the clouds descended
From the white pinnacles of that cold hill,
She past at dewfall to a space extended,
Where in a lawn of flowering asphodel
Amid a wood of pines and cedars blended,
There yawned an inextinguishable well
Of crimson fire, full even to the brim
And overflowing all the margin trim.

XXX.

Within the which she lay when the fierce war
Of wintry winds shook that innocuous liquor
In many a mimic moon and bearded star,
O'er woods and lawns—the serpent heard it flicker
In sleep, and dreaming still, he crept afar—
And when the windless snow descended thicker
Than autumn leaves, she watched it as it came
Melt on the surface of the level flame.

XXXI.

She had a Boat which some say Vulcan wrought
For Venus, as the chariot of her star;
But it was found too feeble to be fraught
With all the ardours in that sphere which are,
And so she sold it, and Apollo bought,
And gave it to this daughter: from a car
Changed to the fairest and the lightest boat
Which ever upon mortal stream did float.

XXXII.

And others say, that when but three hours old,
The first-born Love out of his cradle leapt,
And clove dun Chaos with his wings of gold,
And like an horticultural adept,
Stole a strange seed, and wrapt it up in mould,
And sowed it in his mother's star, and kept
Watering it all the summer with sweet dew,
And with his wings fanning it as it grew.

XXXIII.

The plant grew strong and green—the snowy flower
Fell, and the long and gourd-like fruit began
To turn the light and dew by inward power
To its own substance; woven tracery ran
Of light firm texture, ribbed and branching, o'er
The solid rind, like a leaf's veined fan,
Of which Love scooped this boat, and with soft motion
Piloted it round the circumfluous ocean.

XXXIV.

This boat she moored upon her fount, and lit
A living spirit within all its frame,
Breathing the soul of swiftmess into it.
Couched on the fountain like a panther tame,
One of the twain at Evan's feet that sit;
Or as on Vesta's sceptre a swift flame,
Or on blind Homer's heart a winged thought,—
In joyous expectation lay the boat.

XXXV.

Then by strange art she kneaded fire and snow
Together, tempering the repugnant mass
With liquid love—all things together grow
Through which the harmony of love can pass;
And a fair Shape out of her hands did flow
A living Image, which did far surpass
In beauty that bright shape of vital stone
Which drew the heart out of Pygmalion.

XXXVI.

A sexless thing it was, and in its growth
It seemed to have developed no defect
Of either sex, yet all the grace of both,—
In gentleness and strength its limbs were decked;
The bosom swelled lightly with its full youth,
The countenance was such as might select
Some artist that his skill should never die,
Imaging forth such perfect purity.

XXXVII.

From its smooth shoulders hung two rapid wings,
Fit to have borne it to the seventh sphere,
Tipt with the speed of liquid lightnings,
Dyed in the ardours of the atmosphere:
She led her creature to the boiling springs
Where the light boat was moored,—and said—“Sit here!”
And pointed to the prow, and took *her* seat
Beside the rudder with opposing feet.

XXXVIII.

And down the streams which clove those mountains vast
Around their inland islets, and amid
The panther-peopled forests, whose shade cast
Darkness and odours, and a pleasure hid
In melancholy gloom, the pinnacle past;
By many a star-surrounded pyramid
Of icy crag cleaving the purple sky,
And caverns yawning round unfathomably.

XXXIX.

The silver noon into that winding dell,
With slanted gleam athwart the forest tops,
Tempered like golden evening, feebly fell;
A green and glowing light, like that which drops
From folded lilies in which glowworms dwell,
When earth over her face night's mantle wraps;
Between the severed mountains lay on high
Over the stream, a narrow rift of sky.

XL.

And ever as she went, the Image lay
With folded wings and unawakened eyes;
And o'er its gentle countenance did play
The busy dreams, as thick as summer flies,
Chasing the rapid smiles that would not stay,
And drinking the warm tears, and the sweet sighs
Inhaling, which, with busy murmur vain,
They had aroused from that full heart and brain.

XLI.

And ever down the prone vale, like a cloud
Upon a stream of wind, the pinnacle went:
Now lingering on the pools, in which abode
The calm and darkness of the deep content
In which they paused; now o'er the shallow road
Of white and dancing waters all besprent
With sand and polished pebbles:—mortal boat
In such a shallow rapid could not float.

XLII.

And down the earthquaking cataracts which shiver
Their snow-like waters into golden air,
Or under chasms unfathomable ever
Sepulchre them, till in their rage they tear
A subterranean portal for the river,
It fled—the circling sunbows did upbear
Its fall down the hoar precipice of spray,
Lighting it far upon its lampless way.

XLIII.

And when the wizard lady would ascend
The labyrinths of some many winding vale,
Which to the inmost mountain upward tend—
She called “Hermaphroditus!” and the pale
And heavy hue which slumber could extend
Over its lips and eyes, as on the gale
A rapid shadow from a slope of grass,
Into the darkness of the stream did pass.

XLIV.

And it unfurled its heaven-coloured pinions,
With stars of fire spotting the stream below;
And from above into the Sun's dominions
Flinging a glory, like the golden glow
In which spring clothes her emerald-winged minions,
All interwoven with fine feathery snow
And moonlight splendour of intensest rime,
With which frost paints the pines in winter time.

XLV.

And then it winnowed the Elysian air
Which ever hung about that lady bright,
With its ethereal vans—and speeding there,
Like a star up the torrent of the night,
Or a swift eagle in the morning glare
Breasting the whirlwind with impetuous flight;
The pinnacle, oared by those enchanted wings,
Clove the fierce streams towards their upper springs.

XLVI.

The water flashed like sunlight, by the prow
Of a noon-wandering meteor flung to Heaven;
The still air seemed as if its waves did flow
In tempest down the mountains,—loosely driven
The lady's radiant hair streamed to and fro:
Beneath, the billows having vainly striven
Indignant and impetuous, roared to feel
The swift and steady motion of the keel.

XLVII.

Or, when the weary moon was in the wane,
Or in the noon of interlunar night,
The lady-witch in visions could not chain
Her spirit; but sailed forth under the light
Of shooting stars, and bade extend amain
His storm-outspeeding wings, th' Hermaphrodite;
She to the Austral waters took her way,
Beyond the fabulous Thamondocona.

XLVIII.

Where, like a meadow which no scythe has shaven,
Which rain could never bend, or whirl-blast shake
With the Antarctic constellations haven,
Canopus and his crew, lay th' Austral lake—
There she would build herself a windless haven
Out of the clouds whose moving turrets make
The bastions of the storm, when through the sky
The spirits of the tempest thundered by.

XLIX.

A haven, beneath whose translucent floor
The tremulous stars sparkled unfathomably,
And around which, the solid vapours hoar,
Based on the level waters, to the sky
Lifted their dreadful crags; and like a shore
Of wintry mountains, inaccessibly
Hemmed in with rifts and precipices grey,
And hanging crags, many a cove and bay.

L.

And whilst the outer lake beneath the lash
Of the winds' scourge, foamed like a wounded thing;
And the incessant hail with stony clash
Ploughed up the waters, and the flagging wing
Of the roused cormorant in the lightning flash
Looked like the wreck of some wind-wandering
Fragment of inky thundersmoke—this haven
Was as a gem to copy Heaven engraven.

LI.

On which that lady played her many pranks,
Circling the image of a shooting star,
Even as a tyger on Hydaspes' banks
Outspeeds the Antelopes which speediest are,
In her light boat; and many quips and cranks
She played upon the water; till the car
Of the late moon, like a sick matron wan,
To journey from the misty east began.

LII.

And then she called out of the hollow turrets
Of those high clouds, white, golden and vermilion,
The armies of her ministering spirits—
In mighty legions million after million
They came, each troop emblazoning its merits
On meteor flags; and many a proud pavilion,
Of the intertexture of the atmosphere,
They pitched upon the plain of the calm mere.

LIII.

They framed the imperial tent of their great Queen
Of woven exhalations, underlaid
With lambent lightning-fire, as may be seen
A dome of thin and open ivory inlaid
With crimson silk—cressets from the serene
Hung there, and on the water for her tread,
A tapestry of fleece-like mist was strewn,
Dyed in the beams of the ascending moon.

LIV.

And on a throne o'erlaid with starlight, caught
Upon those wandering isles of aëry dew,
Which highest shoals of mountain shipwreck not,
She sate, and heard all that had happened new
Between the earth and moon since they had brought
The last intelligence—and now she grew
Pale as that moon, lost in the watery night—
And now she wept, and now she laughed outright.

LV.

These were tame pleasures.—She would often climb
The steepest ladder of the crudded rack
Up to some beaked cape of cloud sublime,
And like Arion on the dolphin's back
Ride singing through the shoreless air. Oft time
Following the serpent lightning's winding track,
She ran upon the platforms of the wind,
And laughed to hear the fire-balls roar behind.

LVI.

And sometimes to those streams of upper air,
Which whirl the earth in its diurnal round,
She would ascend, and win the spirits there
To let her join their chorus. Mortals found
That on those days the sky was calm and fair,
And mystic snatches of harmonious sound
Wandered upon the earth where'er she past,
And happy thoughts of hope, too sweet to last.

LVII.

But her choice sport was, in the hours of sleep,
To glide adown old Nilus, when he threads
Egypt and Æthiopia, from the steep
Of utmost Axumè, until he spreads,
Like a calm flock of silver-fleeced sheep,
His waters on the plain: and crested heads
Of cities and proud temples gleam amid
And many a vapour-belted pyramid.

LVIII.

By Mæris and the Mareotid lakes,
Strewn with faint blooms like bridal chamber floors;
Where naked boys bridling tame water-snakes,
Or charioteering ghastly alligators,
Had left on the sweet waters mighty wakes
Of those huge forms:—within the brazen doors
Of the great Labyrinth slept both boy and beast,
Tired with the pomp of their Osirian feast.

LIX.

And where within the surface of the river
The shadows of the massy temples lie,
And never are erased—but tremble ever
Like things which every cloud can doom to die,
Through lotus-pav'n canals, and wheresoever
The works of man pierced that serenest sky
With tombs, and towers, and fanes, 'twas her delight
To wander in the shadow of the night.

LX.

With motion like the spirit of that wind
Whose soft step deepens slumber, her light feet
Past through the peopled haunts of human kind,
Scattering sweet visions from her presence sweet,
Through fane and palace-court and labyrinth mined
With many a dark and subterranean street
Under the Nile; through chambers high and deep
She past, observing mortals in their sleep.

LXI.

A pleasure sweet doubtless it was to see
Mortals subdued in all the shapes of sleep.
Here lay two sister-twins in infancy;
There, a lone youth who in his dreams did weep;
Within, two lovers linked innocently
In their loose locks which over both did creep
Like ivy from one stem;—and there lay calm,
Old age with snow-bright hair and folded palm.

LXII.

But other troubled forms of sleep she saw,
Not to be mirrored in a holy song,
Distortions foul of supernatural awe,
And pale imaginings of visioned wrong,
And all the code of custom's lawless law
Written upon the brows of old and young:
"This," said the wizard maiden, "is the strife,
Which stirs the liquid surface of man's life."

LXIII.

And little did the sight disturb her soul—
We, the weak mariners of that wide lake
Where'er its shores extend or billows roll,
Our course unpiloted and starless make
O'er its wild surface to an unknown goal—
But she in the calm depths her way could take,
Where in bright bowers immortal forms abide,
Beneath the weltering of the restless tide.

LXIV.

And she saw princes couched under the glow
Of sunlike gems; and round each temple-court
In dormitories ranged, row after row,
She saw the priests asleep,—all of one sort,
For all were educated to be so.—
The peasants in their huts, and in the port
The sailors she saw cradled on the waves,
And the dead lulled within their dreamless graves.

LXV.

And all the forms in which those spirits lay,
Were to her sight like the diaphanous
Veils, in which those sweet ladies oft array
Their delicate limbs, who would conceal from us
Only their scorn of all concealment: they
Move in the light of their own beauty thus.
But these, and all now lay with sleep upon them,
And little thought a Witch was looking on them.

LXVI.

She all those human figures breathing there
Beheld as living spirits—to her eyes
The naked beauty of the soul lay bare,
And often through a rude and worn disguise
She saw the inner form most bright and fair—
And then,—she had a charm of strange device,
Which murmured on mute lips with tender tone,
Could make that spirit mingle with her own.

LXVII.

Alas, Aurora! what wouldst thou have given
For such a charm, when Tithon became grey?
Or how much, Venus, of thy silver Heaven
Wouldst thou have yielded, ere Proserpina
Had half (oh! why not all?) the debt forgiven
Which dear Adonis had been doomed to pay,
To any witch who would have taught you it?
The Heliad doth not know its value yet.

LXVIII.

'Tis said in after times her spirit free
Knew what love was, and felt itself alone—
But holy Dian could not chaster be
Before she stooped to kiss Endymion,
Than now this lady—like a sexless bee
Tasting all blossoms, and confined to none—
Among those mortal forms, the wizard-maiden
Passed with an eye serene and heart unladen.

LXIX.

To those she saw most beautiful, she gave
Strange panacea in a chrystal bowl.
They drank in their deep sleep of that sweet wave,
And lived thenceforth as if some controul
Mightier than life, were in them; and the grave
Of such, when death oppressed the weary soul,
Was as a green and overarching bower
Lit by the gems of many a starry flower.

LXX.

For on the night that they were buried, she
Restored the embalmers ruining, and shook
The light out of the funeral lamps, to be
A mimic day within that deathly nook;
And she unwound the woven imagery
Of second childhood's swaddling bands, and took
The coffin, its last cradle, from its niche,
And threw it with contempt into a ditch.

LXXI.

And there the body lay, age after age,
Mute, breathing, beating, warm, and undecaying
Like one asleep in a green hermitage,
With gentle sleep about its eyelids playing,
And living in its dreams beyond the rage
Of death or life; while they were still arraying
In liveries ever new, the rapid, blind
And fleeting generations of mankind.

LXXII.

And she would write strange dreams upon the brain
Of those who were less beautiful, and make
All harsh and crooked purposes more vain
Than in the desart is the serpent's wake
Which the sand covers,—all his evil gain
The miser in such dreams would rise and shake
Into a beggar's lap;—the lying scribe
Would his own lies betray without a bribe.

LXXIII.

The priests would write an explanation full,
Translating hieroglyphies into Greek,
How the god Apis, really was a bull,
And nothing more; and bid the herald stick
The same against the temple doors, and pull
The old cant down; they licensed all to speak
Whate'er they thought of hawks, and cats, and geese,
By pastoral letters to each diocese.

LXXIV.

The king would dress an ape up in his crown
And robes, and seat him on his glorious seat,
And on the right hand of the sunlike throne
Would place a gaudy mock-bird to repeat
The chatterings of the monkey.—Every one
Of the prone courtiers crawled to kiss the feet
Of their great Emperor when the morning came;
And kissed—alas, how many kiss the same!

LXXV.

The soldiers dreamed that they were blacksmiths, and
Walked out of quarters in somnambulism,
Round the red anvils you might see them stand
Like Cyclopes in Vulcan's sooty abysm,
Beating their swords to ploughshares;—in a band
The jailors sent those of the liberal schism
Free through the streets of Memphis; much, I wis,
To the annoyance of king Amasis.

LXXVI.

And timid lovers who had been so coy,
They hardly knew whether they loved or not,
Would rise out of their rest, and take sweet joy,
To the fulfilment of their inmost thought;
And when next day the maiden and the boy
Met one another, both, like sinners caught,
Blushed at the thing which each believed was done
Only in fancy—till the tenth moon shone;

LXXVII.

And then the Witch would let them take no ill:
Of many thousand schemes which lovers find
The Witch found one,—and so they took their fill
Of happiness in marriage warm and kind.
Friends who by practice of some envious skill,
Were torn apart, a wide wound, mind from mind!
She did unite again with visions clear
Of deep affection and of truth sincere.

LXXVIII.

These were the pranks she played among the cities
Of mortal men, and what she did to sprites
And Gods, entangling them in her sweet ditties
To do her will, and shew their subtle slights,
I will declare another time; for it is
A tale more fit for the weird winter nights—
Than for these garish summer days, when we
Scarcely believe much more than we can see.

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LETTER TO —

Leghorn, July 1, 1820.

The spider spreads her webs, whether she be
In poet's tower, cellar, or barn, or tree;
The silkworm in the dark green mulberry leaves
His winding sheet and cradle ever weaves;
So I, a thing whom moralists call worm,
Sit spinning still round this decaying form,
From the fine threads of rare and subtle thought—
No net of words in garish colours wrought
To catch the idle buzzers of the day—
But a soft cell, where when that fades away,
Memory may clothe in wings my living name
And feed it with the asphodels of fame,
Which in those hearts which most remember me
Grow, making love an immortality.
Whoever should behold me now, I wist,
Would think I were a mighty mechanist,
Bent with sublime Archimedean art
To breathe a soul into the iron lieart
Of some machine portentous, or strange gin,
Which by the force of figured spells might win
Its way over the sea, and sport therein;
For round the walls are hung dread engines, such
As Vulcan never wrought for Jove to clutch
Ixion or the Titan:—or the quick
Wit of that man of God, St. Dominic,
To convince Atheist, Turk, or Heretic;
Or those in philosophic councils met,
Who thought to pay some interest for the debt
They owed * * * * *

By giving a faint foretaste of damnation
To Shakespear, Sidney, Spenser and the rest
Who made our land an island of the blest,
When lamp-like Spain, who now relumes her fire
On Freedom's hearth, grew dim with Empire:—
With thumbscrews, wheels, with tooth and spike and jag,
Which fishes found under the utmost crag
Of Cornwall and the storm-encompassed isles,
Where to the sky the rude sea seldom smiles
Unless in treacherous wrath, as on the morn
When the exulting elements in scorn
Satiated with destroyed destruction, lay
Sleeping in beauty on their mangled prey,

As panthers sleep:—and other strange and dread
Magical forms the brick floor overspread—
Proteus transformed to metal did not make
More figures, or more strange; nor did he take
Such shapes of unintelligible brass,
Or heap himself in such a horrid mass
Of tin and iron not to be understood,
And forms of unimaginable wood,
To puzzle Tubal Cain and all his brood:
Great screws, and cones, and wheels, and grooved blocks,
The elements of what will stand the shocks
Of wave and wind and time.—Upon the table
More knacks and quips there be than I am able
To catalogize in this verse of mine:—
A pretty bowl of wood—not full of wine,
But quicksilver; that dew which the gnomes drink
When at their subterranean toil they swink,
Pledging the demons of the earthquake, who
Reply to them in lava-cry, halloo!
And call out to the cities o'er their head,—
Roofs, towns and shrines,—the dying and the dead
Crash through the chinks of earth—and then all quaff
Another rouse, and hold their sides and laugh.
This quicksilver no gnome has drunk—within
The walnut bowl it lies, veined and thin,
In colour like the wake of light that stains
The Tuscan deep, when from the moist moon rains
The inmost shower of it's white fire—the breeze
Is still—blue heaven smiles over the pale seas.
And in this bowl of quicksilver—for I
Yield to the impulse of an infancy
Outlasting manhood—I have made to float
A rude idealism of a paper boat—
A hollow screw with cogs—Henry will know
The thing I mean and laugh at me,—if so
He fears not I should do more mischief.—Next
Lie bills and calculations much perplexed,
With steam-boats, frigates, and machinery quaint
Traced over them in blue and yellow paint.
Then comes a range of mathematical
Instruments, for plans nautical and statical,
A heap of rosin, a green broken glass
With ink in it;—a china cup that was
What it will never be again, I think,
A thing from which sweet lips were wont to drink
The liquor doctors rail at—and which I
Will quaff in spite of them—and when we die
We'll toss up who died first of drinking tea,

And cry out,—heads or tails? where'er we be.
 Near that a dusty paint box, some old hooks,
 An half-burnt match, an ivory block, three books,
 Where conic sections, spherics, logarithms,
 To great Laplace, from Saunderson and Sims,
 Lie heaped in their harmonious disarray
 Of figures,—disentangle them who may.
 Baron de Tott's memoirs beside them lie,
 And some odd volumes of old chemistry.
 Near them a most inexplicable thing,
 With least in the middle—I'm conjecturing
 How to make Henry understand;—but—no,
 I'll leave, as Spenser says, with many mo,
 This secret in the pregnant womb of time,
 Too vast a matter for so weak a rhyme.
 And here like some weird Archimage sit I,
 Plotting dark spells, and devilish enginery,
 The self-impelling steam-wheels of the mind
 Which pump up oaths from clergymen, and grind
 The gentle spirit of our meek reviews
 Into a powdery foam of salt abuse,
 Ruffling the ocean of their self content;—
 I sit—and smile or sigh as is my bent,
 But not for them—Libeccio rushes round
 With an inconstant and an idle sound,
 I heed him more than them—the thunder-smoke
 Is gathering on the mountains, like a cloak
 Folded athwart their shoulders broad and bare;
 The ripe corn under the undulating air
 Undulates like an ocean;—and the vines
 Are trembling wide in all their trelliced lines—
 The murmur of the awakening sea doth fill
 The empty pauses of the blast;—the hill
 Looks hoary through the white electric rain,
 And from the glens beyond, in sullen strain
 The interrupted thunder howls; above
 One chasm of heaven smiles, like the age of love
 On the unquiet world;—while such things are,
 How could one worth your friendship heed the war
 Of worms? The shriek of the world's carrion jays,
 Their censure, or their wonder, or their praise?
 You are not here! the quaint witch Memory sees
 In vacant chairs, your absent images,
 And points where once you sat, and now should be
 But are not.—I demand if ever we
 Shall meet as then we met;—and she replies,
 Veiling in awe her second-sighted eyes;
 “I know the past alone—but summon home

My sister Hope, she speaks of all to come.”
But I, an old diviner, who know well
Every false verse of that sweet oracle,
Turned to the sad enchantress once again,
And sought a respite from my gentle pain,
In acting every passage o’er and o’er
Of our communion.—How on the sea shore
We watched the ocean and the sky together,
Under the roof of blue Italian weather;
How I ran home through last year’s thunder-storm,
And felt the transverse lightning linger warm
Upon my cheek:—and how we often made
Treats for each other, where good will outweighed
The frugal luxury of our country cheer,
As it well might, were it less firm and clear
Than ours must ever be;—and how we spun
A shroud of talk to hide us from the sun
Of this familiar life, which seems to be
But is not,—or is but quaint mockery
Of all we would believe; or sadly blame
The jarring and inexplicable frame
Of this wrong world:—and then anatomize
The purposes and thoughts of men whose eyes
Were closed in distant years;—or widely guess
The issue of the earth’s great business,
When we shall be as we no longer are;
Like babbling gossips safe, who hear the war
Of winds, and sigh, but tremble not; or how
You listened to some interrupted flow
Of visionary rhyme;—in joy and pain
Struck from the inmost fountains of my brain,
With little skill perhaps;—or how we sought
Those deepest wells of passion or of thought
Wrought by wise poets in the waste of years,
Staining the sacred waters with our tears;
Quenching a thirst ever to be renewed!
Or how I, wisest lady! then indued
The language of a land which now is free,
And winged with thoughts of truth and majesty,
Flits round the tyrant’s sceptre like a cloud,
And bursts the peopled prisons, and cries aloud,
“My name is Legion!”—that majestic tongue
Which Calderon over the desert flung
Of ages and of nations; and which found
An echo in our hearts, and with the sound
Startled oblivion;—thou wert then to me
As is a nurse—when inarticulately
A child would talk as its grown parents do.

If living winds the rapid clouds pursue,
If hawks chase doves through the aerial way,
Huntsmen the innocent deer, and beasts their prey,
Why should not we rouse with the spirit's blast
Out of the forest of the pathless past
These recollected pleasures?

You are now

In London, that great sea, whose ebb and flow
At once is deaf and loud, and on the shore
Vomits its wrecks, and still howls on for more.
Yet in its depth what treasures! You will see

* * * * *

You will see C—; he who sits obscure
In the exceeding lustre and the pure
Intense irradiation of a mind,
Which, with its own internal lustre blind,
Flags wearily through darkness and despair—
A cloud-encircled meteor of the air,
A hooded eagle among blinking owls.
You will see H—t; one of those happy souls
Which are the salt of the earth, and without whom
This world would smell like what it is—a tomb;
Who is, what others seem;—his room no doubt
Is still adorned by many a cast from Shout,
With graceful flowers, tastefully placed about;
And coronals of bay from ribbons hung,
And brighter wreaths in neat disorder flung,
The gifts of the most learn'd among some dozens
Of female friends, sisters-in-law and cousins.
And there is he with his eternal puns,
Which beat the dullest brain for smiles, like duns
Thundering for money at a poet's door;
Alas! it is no use to say, "I'm poor!"
Or oft in graver mood, when he will look
Things wiser than were ever said in book,
Except in Shakespear's wisest tenderness.
You will see H—, and I cannot express
His virtues, though I know that they are great,
Because he locks, then barricades, the gate
Within which they inhabit;—of his wit
And wisdom, you'll cry out when you are bit.
He is a pearl within an oyster shell,
One of the richest of the deep. And there
Is English P— with his mountain Fair
Turned into a Flamingo,—that shy bird
That gleams i'the Indian air. Have you not heard
When a man marries, dies, or turns Hindoo,
His best friends hear no more of him? but you

Will see him and will like him too, I hope,
With the milk-white Snowdonian Antelope
Matched with this cameleopard; his fine wit
Makes such a wound, the knife is lost in it;
A strain too learned for a shallow age,
Too wise for selfish bigots;—let his page
Which charms the chosen spirits of the age,
Fold itself up for a serener clime
Of years to come, and find its recompense
In that just expectation. Wit and sense,
Virtue and human knowledge, all that might
Make this dull world a business of delight,
Are all combined in H. S.—And these,
With some exceptions, which I need not tease
Your patience by descanting on, are all
You and I know in London.

I recal

My thoughts and bid you look upon the night.
As water does a sponge, so the moonlight
Fills the void, hollow, universal air.
What see you?—Unpavilioned heaven is fair,
Whether the moon, into her chamber gone,
Leaves midnight to the golden stars, or wan
Climbs with diminished beams the azure steep;
Or whether clouds sail o'er the inverse deep,
Piloted by the many wandering blast,
And the rare stars rush through them, dim and fast.
All this is beautiful in every land.
But what see you beside? A shabby stand
Of hackney-coaches—a brick house or wall,
Fencing some lonely court, white with the scrawl
Of our unhappy politics;—or worse—
A wretched woman reeling by, whose curse
Mixed with the watchman's, partner of her trade,
You must accept in place of serenade—
I see a chaos of green leaves and fruit
Built round dark caverns, even to the root
Of the living stems who feed them; in whose bowers
There sleep in their dark dew the folded flowers;
Beyond, the surface of the unsickled corn
Trembles not in the slumbering air, and borne
In circles quaint, and ever changing dance,
Like winged stars the fire-flies flash and glance
Pale in the open moonshine; but each one
Under the dark trees seems a little sun,
A meteor tamed; a fixed star gone astray
From the silver regions of the milky way.
Afar the Contadino's song is heard,

Rude, but made sweet by distance;—and a bird
Which cannot be a nightingale, and yet
I know none else that sings so sweet as it
At this late hour;—and then all is still:—
Now Italy or London, which you will!
Next winter you must pass with me; I'll have
My house by that time turned into a grave
Of dead despondence and low-thoughted care,
And all the dreams which our tormentors are,
Oh that H— — and — were there,
With every thing belonging to them fair!—
We will have books; Spanish, Italian, Greek,

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Though we eat little flesh and drink no wine,
Yet let's be merry: we'll have tea and toast;
Custards for supper, and an endless host
Of syllabubs and jellies and mince-pies,
And other such lady-like luxuries,—
Feasting on which we will philosophise.
And we'll have fires out of the Grand Duke's wood,
To thaw the six weeks winter in our blood.
And then we'll talk;—what shall we talk about?
Oh! there are themes enough for many a bout
Of thought-entangled descant;—as to nerves
With cones and parallelograms and curves,
I've sworn to strangle them if once they dare
To bother me,—when you are with me there.
And they shall never more sip laudanum
From Helicon or Himeros;* —we'll come
And in despite of * * * and of the devil,
Will make our friendly philosophic revel
Outlast the leafless time;—till buds and flowers
Warn the obscure, inevitable hours
Sweet meeting by sad parting to renew;—
“To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.”

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THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE.

Swift as a spirit hastening to his task
Of glory and of good, the Sun sprang forth
Rejoicing in his splendour, and the mask
Of darkness fell from the awakened Earth—
The smokeless altars of the mountain snows
Flamed above crimson clouds, and at the birth
Of light, the Ocean's orison arose,
To which the birds tempered their matin lay.
All flowers in field or forest which uncloset
Their trembling eyelids to the kiss of day,
Swinging their censers in the element,
With orient incense lit by the new ray
Burned slow and inconsumably, and sent
Their odorous sighs up to the smiling air;
And, in succession due, did continent,
Isle, ocean, and all things that in them wear
The form and character of mortal mould,
Rise as the sun their father rose, to bear
Their portion of the toil, which he of old
Took as his own and then imposed on them:
But I, whom thoughts which must remain untold
Had kept as wakeful as the stars that gem
The cone of night, now they were laid asleep
Stretched my faint limbs beneath the hoary stem
Which an old chesnut flung athwart the steep
Of a green Apennine: before me fled
The night; behind me rose the day; the deep
Was at my feet, and Heaven above my head,
When a strange trance over my fancy grew
Which was not slumber, for the shade it spread
Was so transparent, that the scene came through
As clear as when a veil of light is drawn
O'er evening hills they glimmer; and I knew
That I had felt the freshness of that dawn,
Bathed in the same cold dew my brow and hair,
And sate as thus upon that slope of lawn
Under the self same bough, and heard as there
The birds, the fountains and the ocean hold
Sweet talk in music through the enamoured air,
And then a vision on my brain was rolled.
As in that trance of wondrous thought I lay,
This was the tenour of my waking dream:—
Methought I sate beside a public way
Thick strewn with summer dust, and a great stream

Of people there was hurrying to and fro,
Numerous as gnats upon the evening gleam,
All hastening onward, yet none seemed to know
Whither he went, or whence he came, or why
He made one of the multitude, and so
Was borne amid the crowd, as through the sky
One of the million leaves of summer's bier;
Old age and youth, manhood and infancy
Mixed in one mighty torrent did appear,
Some flying from the thing they feared, and some
Seeking the object of another's fear;
And others as with steps towards the tomb,
Pored on the trodden worms that crawled beneath,
And others mournfully within the gloom
Of their own shadow walked and called it death;
And some fled from it as it were a ghost,
Half fainting in the affliction of vain breath:
But more with motions, which each other crost,
Pursued or spurned the shadows the clouds threw,
Or birds within the noon-day ether lost,
Upon that path where flowers never grew,
And weary with vain toil and faint for thirst,
Heard not the fountains, whose melodious dew
Out of their mossy cells for ever burst;
Nor felt the breeze which from the forest told
Of grassy paths and wood, lawn-interspersed,
With over-arching elms and caverns cold,
And violet banks where sweet dreams brood, but they
Pursued their serious folly as of old.
And as I gazed, methought that in the way
The throng grew wilder, as the woods of June
When the south wind shakes the extinguished day,
And a cold glare, intenser than the noon,
But icy cold, obscured with [blinding] light
The sun, as he the stars. Like the young moon
When on the sunlit limits of the night
Her white shell trembles amid crimson air,
And whilst the sleeping tempest gathers might,
Doth, as the herald of its coming, bear
The ghost of its dead mother, whose dim frown
Bends in dark ether from her infant's chair,—
So came a chariot on the silent storm
Of its own rushing splendour, and a Shape
So sate within, as one whom years deform,
Beneath a dusky hood and double cape,
Crouching within the shadow of a tomb,
And o'er what seemed the head a cloud-like crape
Was bent, a dun and faint ethereal gloom

Tempering the light upon the chariot beam;
A Janus-visaged shadow did assume
The guidance of that wonder-winged team;
The shapes which drew in thick lightnings
Were lost:—I heard alone on the air's soft stream
The music of their ever-moving wings.
All the four faces of that charioteer
Had their eyes banded; little profit brings
Speed in the van and blindness in the rear,
Nor then avail the beams that quench the sun
Or that with banded eyes could pierce the sphere
Of all that is, has been or will be done;
So ill was the car guided—but it past
With solemn speed majestically on.
The crowd gave way, and I arose aghast,
Or seemed to rise, so mighty was the trance,
And saw, like clouds upon the thunders blast,
The million with fierce song and maniac dance
Raging around—such seemed the jubilee
As when to meet some conqueror's advance
Imperial Rome poured forth her living sea
From senate house, and forum, and theatre,
When [] upon the free
Had bound a yoke, which soon they stooped to bear.
Nor wanted here the just similitude
Of a triumphal pageant, for where'er
The chariot rolled, a captive multitude
Was driven;—all those who had grown old in power
Or misery,—all who had their age subdued
By action or by suffering, and whose hour
Was drained to its last sand in weal or woe,
So that the trunk survived both fruit and flower;—
All those whose fame or infamy must grow
Till the great winter lay the form and name
Of this green earth with them for ever low;—
All but the sacred few who could not tame
Their spirits to the conquerors—but as soon
As they had touched the world with living flame,
Fled back like eagles to their native noon,
Or those who put aside the diadem
Of earthly thrones or gems []
Were there, of Athens or Jerusalem,
Were neither mid the mighty captives seen,
Nor mid the ribald crowd that followed them,
Nor those who went before fierce and obscene.
The wild dance maddens in the van, and those
Who lead it—fleet as shadows on the green,
Outspeed the chariot, and without repose

Mix with each other in tempestuous measure
 To savage music, wilder as it grows,
 They, tortured by their agonizing pleasure,
 Convulsed and on the rapid whirlwinds spun
 Of that fierce spirit, whose unholy leisure
 Was soothed by mischief since the world begun,
 Throw back their heads and loose their streaming hair;
 And in their dance round her who dims the sun,
 Maidens and youths fling their wild arms in air
 As their feet twinkle; they recede, and now
 Bending within each other's atmosphere
 Kindle invisibly—and as they glow,
 Like moths by light attracted and repelled,
 Oft to their bright destruction come and go,
 Till like two clouds into one vale impelled
 That shake the mountains when their lightnings mingle
 And die in rain—the fiery band which held
 Their natures, snaps—the shock still may tingle;
 One falls and then another in the path
 Senseless—nor is the desolation single,
 Yet ere I can say *where*—the chariot hath
 Past over them—nor other trace I find
 But as of foam after the ocean's wrath
 Is spent upon the desert shore;—behind,
 Old men and women foully disarrayed,
 Shake their grey hairs in the insulting wind,
 To seek, to [[]], to strain with limbs decayed,
 Limping to reach the light which leaves them still
 Farther behind and deeper in the shade.
 But not the less with impotence of will
 They wheel, though ghastly shadows interpose
 Round them and round each other, and fulfil
 Their work, and in the dust from whence they rose
 Sink, and corruption veils them as they lie,
 And past in these performs what [] in those.
 Struck to the heart by this sad pageantry,
 Half to myself I said—And what is this?
 Whose shape is that within the car? And why—
 I would have added—is all here amiss?—
 But a voice answered—“Life!”—I turned, and knew
 (Oh Heaven, have mercy on such wretchedness!)
 That what I thought was an old root which grew
 To strange distortion out of the hill side,
 Was indeed one of those deluded crew,
 And that the grass, which methought hung so wide
 And white, was but his thin discoloured hair,
 And that the holes it vainly sought to hide,
 Were or had been eyes:—“If thou canst, forbear

To join the dance, which I had well foreborne!”
Said the grim Feature of my thought: “Aware,
“I will unfold that which to this deep scorn
Led me and my companions, and relate
The progress of the pageant since the morn;
“If thirst of knowledge shall not then abate,
Follow it thou even to the night, but I
Am weary.”—Then like one who with the weight
Of his own words is staggered, wearily
He paused; and ere he could resume, I cried:
“First, who art thou?”—“Before thy memory,
“I feared, loved, hated, suffered, did and died,
And if the spark with which Heaven lit my spirit
Had been with purer sentiment supplied,
“Corruption would not now thus much inherit
Of what was once Rousseau,—nor this disguise
Stained that which ought to have disdained to wear it;
“If I have been extinguished, yet there rise
A thousand beacons from the spark I bore”—
“And who are those chained to the car?”—“The wise,
“The great, the unforgotten,—they who wore
Mitres and helms and crowns, or wreaths of light,
Signs of thought’s empire over thought—their lore
“Taught them not this, to know themselves; their might
Could not repress the mystery within,
And for the morn of truth they feigned, deep night
“Caught them ere evening.”—“Who is he with chin
Upon his breast, and hands crost on his chain?”—
“The Child of a fierce hour; he sought to win
“The world, and lost all that it did contain
Of greatness, in its hope destroyed; and more
Of fame and peace than virtue’s self can gain
“Without the opportunity which bore
Him on its eagle pinions to the peak
From which a thousand climbers have before
“Fall’n, as Napoleon fell.”—I felt my cheek
Alter, to see the shadow pass away
Whose grasp had left the giant world so weak,
That every pigmy kicked it as it lay;
And much I grieved to think how power and will
In opposition rule our mortal day,
And why God made irreconcilable
Good and the means of good; and for despair
I half disdained mine eyes’ desire to fill
With the spent vision of the times that were
And scarce have ceased to be.—“Dost thou behold,”
Said my guide, “those spoilers spoiled, Voltaire,
“Frederic, and Paul, Catherine, and Leopold,

And hoary anarchists, demagogues, and sage—
— name the world thinks always old,
“For in the battle, life and they did wage,
She remained conqueror. I was overcome
By my own heart alone, which neither age,
“Nor tears, nor infamy, nor now the tomb
Could temper to its object.”—“Let them pass,”
I cried, “the world and its mysterious doom
“Is not so much more glorious than it was,
That I desire to worship those who drew
New figures on its false and fragile glass
“As the old faded.”—“Figures ever new
Rise on the bubble, paint them as you may;
We have but thrown, as those before us threw,
“Our shadows on it as it past away.
But mark how chained to the triumphal chair
The mighty phantoms of an elder day;
“All that is mortal of great Plato there
Expiates the joy and woe his master knew not;
The star that ruled his doom was far too fair,
“And life, where long that flower of Heaven grew not,
Conquered that heart by love, which gold, or pain,
Or age, or sloth, or slavery could subdue not.
“And near walk the [] twain,
The tutor and his pupil, whom Dominion
Followed as tame as vulture in a chain.
“The world was darkened beneath either pinion
Of him whom from the flock of conquerors
Fame singled out for her thunder-bearing minion;
“The other long outlived both woes and wars,
Throned in the thoughts of men, and still had kept
The jealous key of truth’s eternal doors,
“If Bacon’s eagle spirit had not leapt
Like lightning out of darkness—he compelled
The Proteus shape of Nature as it slept
“To wake, and lead him to the caves that held
The treasure of the secrets of its reign.
See the great bards of elder time, who quelled
“The passions which they sung, as by their strain
May well be known: their living melody
Tempers its own contagion to the vein
“Of those who are infected with it—I
Have suffered what I wrote, or viler pain!
And so my words have seeds of misery”—

[There is a chasm here in the MS. which it is impossible to fill up. It appears from the context, that other shapes pass, and that Rousseau still stood beside the dreamer, as]—

— he pointed to a company,
Midst whom I quickly recognised the heirs
Of Cæsar's crime, from him to Constantine;
The anarch chiefs, whose force and murderous snares
Had founded many a sceptre-bearing line,
And spread the plague of gold and blood abroad:
And Gregory and John, and men divine,
Who rose like shadows between man and God;
Till that eclipse, still hanging over heaven,
Was worshipped by the world o'er which they strode,
For the true sun it quenched—"Their power was given
But to destroy," replied the leader:—"I
Am one of those who have created, even
"If it be but a world of agony."—
"Whence comest thou? and whither goest thou?
How did thy course begin?" I said, "and why?
"Mine eyes are sick of this perpetual flow
Of people, and my heart sick of one sad thought—
Speak!"—"Whence I am, I partly seem to know,
"And how and by what paths I have been brought
To this dread pass, methinks even thou mayst guess;—
Why this should be, my mind can compass not;
"Whither the conqueror hurries me, still less;—
But follow thou, and from spectator turn
Actor or victim in this wretchedness,
"And what thou wouldst be taught I then may learn
From thee. Now listen:—In the April prime,
When all the forest tips began to burn
"With kindling green, touched by the azure clime
Of the young year's dawn, I was laid asleep
Under a mountain, which from unknown time
"Had yawned into a cavern, high and deep;
And from it came a gentle rivulet,
Whose water, like clear air, in its calm sweep
"Bent the soft grass, and kept forever wet
The stems of the sweet flowers, and filled the grove
With sounds, which whoso hears must needs forget
"All pleasure and all pain, all hate and love,
Which they had known before that hour of rest;
A sleeping mother then would dream not of
"Her only child who died upon her breast
At eventide—a king would mourn no more
The crown of which his brows were dispossessed
"When the sun lingered o'er his ocean floor,
To gild his rival's new prosperity.
Thou wouldst forget thus vainly to deplore
"Ills, which if ill can find no cure from thee,
The thought of which no other sleep will quell,

Nor other music blot from memory,
“So sweet and deep is the oblivious spell;
And whether life had been before that sleep
The heaven which I imagine, or a hell
“Like this harsh world in which I wake to weep,
I know not. I arose, and for a space
The scene of woods and waters seemed to keep,
“Though it was now broad day, a gentle trace
Of light diviner than the common sun
Sheds on the common earth, and all the place
“Was filled with magic sounds woven into one
Oblivious melody, confusing sense
Amid the gliding waves and shadows dun;
“And, as I looked, the bright omnipresence
Of morning through the orient cavern flowed,
And the sun’s image radiantly intense
“Burned on the waters of the well that glowed
Like gold, and threaded all the forest’s maze
With winding paths of emerald fire; there stood
“Amid the sun, as he amid the blaze
Of his own glory, on the vibrating
Floor of the fountain, paved with flashing rays,
“A Shape all light, which with one hand did fling
Dew on the earth, as if she were the dawn,
And the invisible rain did ever sing
“A silver music on the mossy lawn;
And still before me on the dusky grass,
Iris her many-coloured scarf had drawn:
“In her right hand she bore a crystal glass,
Mantling with bright Nepenthe; the fierce splendour
Fell from her as she moved under the mass
“Out of the deep cavern, with palms so tender,
Their tread broke not the mirror of its billow;
She glided along the river, and did bend her
“Head under the dark boughs, till like a willow,
Her fair hair swept the bosom of the stream
That whispered with delight to be its pillow.
“As one enamoured is upborne in dream
O’er lily-paven lakes mid silver mist,
To wondrous music, so this shape might seem
“Partly to tread the waves with feet which kissed
The dancing foam; partly to glide along
The air which roughened the moist amethyst,
“Or the faint morning beams that fell among
The trees, or the soft shadows of the trees;
And her feet, ever to the ceaseless song
“Of leaves, and winds, and waves, and birds, and bees,
And falling drops, moved to a measure new

Yet sweet, as on the summer evening breeze,
“Up from the lake a shape of golden dew
Between two rocks, athwart the rising moon,
Dances i’ the wind, where never eagle flew;
“And still her feet, no less than the sweet tune
To which they moved, seemed as they moved, to blot
The thoughts of him who gazed on them; and soon
“All that was, seemed as if it had been not;
And all the gazer’s mind was strewn beneath
Her feet like embers; and she, thought by thought,
“Trampled its sparks into the dust of death;
As day upon the threshold of the east
Treads out the lamps of night, until the breath
“Of darkness re-illumine even the least
Of heaven’s living eyes—like day she came,
Making the night a dream; and ere she ceased
“To move, as one between desire and shame
Suspended, I said—If, as it doth seem,
Thou comest from the realm without a name,
“Into this valley of perpetual dream,
Shew whence I came, and where I am, and why—
Pass not away upon the passing stream.
“Arise and quench thy thirst, was her reply.
And as a shut lily, stricken by the wand
Of dewy morning’s vital alchemy,
“I rose; and, bending at her sweet command,
Touched with faint lips the cup she raised,
And suddenly my brain became as sand
“Where the first wave had more than half erased
The track of deer on desert Labrador;
Whilst the wolf, from which they fled amazed,
“Leaves his stamp visibly upon the shore,
Until the second bursts;—so on my sight
Burst a new vision, never seen before,
“And the fair shape waned in the coming light,
As veil by veil the silent splendour drops
From Lucifer, amid the chrysolite
“Of sun-rise, ere it tinge the mountain tops;
And as the presence of that fairest planet,
Although unseen, is felt by one who hopes
“That his day’s path may end as he began it,
In that star’s smile, whose light is like the scent
Of a jonquil when evening breezes fan it,
“Or the soft note in which his dear lament
The Brescian shepherd breathes, or the caress
That turned his weary slumber to content;*
“So knew I in that light’s severe excess
The presence of that shape which on the stream

Moved, as I moved along the wilderness,
“More dimly than a day-appearing dream,
The ghost of a forgotten form of sleep;
A light of heaven, whose half-extinguished beam
“Through the sick day in which we wake to weep,
Glimmers, for ever sought, for ever lost;
So did that shape its obscure tenour keep
“Beside my path, as silent as a ghost;
But the new Vision, and the cold bright car,
With solemn speed and stunning music, crost
“The forest, and as if from some dread war
Triumphantly returning, the loud million
Fiercely extolled the fortune of her star.
“A moving arch of victory, the vermilion
And green and azure plumes of Iris had
Built high over her wind-winged pavilion,
“And underneath ethereal glory clad
The wilderness, and far before her flew
The tempest of the splendour, which forbade
“Shadow to fall from leaf and stone; the crew
Seemed in that light, like atomies to dance
Within a sunbeam;—some upon the new
“Embroidery of flowers, that did enhance
The grassy vesture of the desert, played,
Forgetful of the chariot’s swift advance;
“Others stood gazing, till within the shade
Of the great mountain its light left them dim;
Others outspeded it; and others made
“Circles around it, like the clouds that swim
Round the high moon in a bright sea of air;
And more did follow, with exulting hymn,
“The chariot and the captives fettered there:—
But all like bubbles on an eddying flood
Fell into the same track at last, and were
“Borne onward.—I among the multitude
Was swept—me, sweetest flowers delayed not long;
Me, not the shadow nor the solitude;
“Me, not that falling stream’s Lethean song;
Me, not the phantom of that early form,
Which moved upon its motion—but among
“The thickest billows of that living storm
I plunged, and bared my bosom to the clime
Of that cold light, whose airs too soon deform.
“Before the chariot had begun to climb
The opposing steep of that mysterious dell,
Behold a wonder worthy of the rhyme
“Of him who from the lowest depths of hell,
Through every paradise and through all glory,

Love led serene, and who returned to tell
“The words of hate and care; the wondrous story
How all things are transfigured except Love;
For deaf as is a sea, which wrath makes hoary,
“The world can hear not the sweet notes that move
The sphere whose light is melody to lovers—
A wonder worthy of his rhyme—the grove
“Grew dense with shadows to its inmost covers,
The earth was grey with phantoms, and the air
Was peopled with dim forms, as when there hovers
“A flock of vampire-bats before the glare
Of the tropic sun, bringing, ere evening,
Strange night upon some Indian vale;—thus were
“Phantoms diffused around; and some did fling
Shadows of shadows, yet unlike themselves,
Behind them; some like eaglets on the wing
“Were lost in the white day; others like elves
Danced in a thousand unimagined shapes
Upon the sunny streams and grassy shelves;
“And others sate chattering like restless apes
On vulgar hands, * * * * *
Some made a cradle of the ermined capes
“Of kingly mantles; some across the tire
Of pontiffs rode, like demons; others played
Under the crown which girt with empire
“A baby’s or an idiot’s brow, and made
Their nests in it. The old anatomies
Sate hatching their bare broods under the shade
“Of demon wings, and laughed from their dead eyes
To reassume the delegated power,
Array’d in which those worms did monarchize,
“Who make this earth their charnel. Others more
Humble, like falcons, sate upon the fist
Of common men, and round their heads did soar;
“Or like small gnats and flies, as thick as mist
On evening marshes, thronged about the brow
Of lawyers, statesmen, priest and theorist:—
“And others, like discoloured flakes of snow
On fairest bosoms and the sunniest hair,
Fell, and were melted by the youthful glow
“Which they extinguished; and, like tears, they were
A veil to those from whose faint lids they rained
In drops of sorrow. I became aware
“Of whence those forms proceeded which thus stained
The track in which we moved. After brief space,
From every form the beauty slowly waned;
“From every firmest limb and fairest face
The strength and freshness fell like dust, and left

The action and the shape without the grace
“Of life. The marble brow of youth was cleft
With care; and in those eyes where once hope shone,
Desire, like a lioness bereft
“Of her last cub, glared ere it died; each one
Of that great crowd sent forth incessantly
These shadows, numerous as the dead leaves blown
“In autumn evening from a poplar tree.
Each like himself and like each other were
At first; but some distorted seemed to be
“Obscure clouds, moulded by the casual air;
And of this stuff the car’s creative ray
Wrapt all the busy phantoms that were there,
“As the sun shapes the clouds; thus on the way
Mask after mask fell from the countenance
And form of all; and long before the day
“Was old, the joy which waked like heaven’s glance
The sleepers in the oblivious valley, died;
And some grew weary of the ghastly dance,
“And fell, as I have fallen, by the way side;—
Those soonest from whose forms most shadows past,
And least of strength and beauty did abide.
“Then, what is life? I cried.”—

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FRAGMENTS FROM AN UNFINISHED DRAMA.

He came like a dream in the dawn of life,
He fled like a shadow before its noon;
He is gone, and my peace is turned to strife,
And I wander and wane like the weary moon.
O sweet Echo wake,
And for my sake
Make answer the while my heart shall break!
But heart has a music which Echo's lips,
Though tender and true, yet can answer not,
And the shadow that moves in the soul's eclipse
Can return not the kiss by his now forgot;
Sweet lips! he who hath
On my desolate path
Cast the darkness of absence worse than death!

INDIAN.

And if my grief should still be dearer to me
Than all the pleasure in the world beside,
Why would you lighten it?—

LADY.

I offer only
That which I seek, some human sympathy
In this mysterious island.

THE INDIAN.

Oh! my friend,
My sister, my beloved! What do I say?
My brain is dizzy and I scarce know whether
I speak to thee or her. Peace, perturbed heart!
I am to thee only as thou to mine,
The passing wind which heals the brow at noon,
And may strike cold into the breast at night,
Yet cannot linger where it soothes the most,
Or long soothe could it linger. But you said
You also loved?

LADY.

Loved! Oh, I love. Methinks

This word of love is fit for all the world,
And that for gentle hearts another name
Would speak of gentler thoughts than the world owns.
I have loved.

THE INDIAN.

And thou lovest not? if so
Young as thou art thou canst afford to weep.

LADY.

Oh! would that I could claim exemption
From all the bitterness of that sweet name.
I loved, I love, and when I love no more
Let joys and grief perish, and leave despair
To ring the knell of youth. He stood beside me,
The embodied vision of the brightest dream,
Which like a dawn heralds the day of life;
The shadow of his presence made my world
A paradise. All familiar things he touched,
All common words he spoke, became to me
Like forms and sounds of a diviner world.
He was as is the sun in his fierce youth,
As terrible and lovely as a tempest;
He came, and went, and left me what I am.
Alas! Why must I think how oft we two
Have sate together near the river springs,
Under the green pavilion which the willow
Spreads on the floor of the unbroken fountain,
Strewn by the nurslings that linger there,
Over that islet paved with flowers and moss,
While the musk-rose leaves, like flakes of crimson snow,
Showered on us, and the dove mourned in the pine,
Sad prophetess of sorrows not our own.

INDIAN.

Your breath is like soft music, your words are
The echoes of a voice which on my heart
Sleeps like a melody of early days.
But as you said—

LADY.

He was so awful, yet
So beautiful in mystery and terror,
Calming me as the loveliness of heaven

Soothes the unquiet sea:—and yet not so,
For he seemed stormy, and would often seem
A quenchless sun masked in portentous clouds;
For such his thoughts, and even his actions were;
But he was not of them, nor they of him,
But as they hid his splendour from the earth.
Some said he was a man of blood and peril,
And steeped in bitter infamy to the lips.
More need was there I should be innocent,
More need that I should be most true and kind,
And much more need that there should be found one
To share remorse, and scorn and solitude,
And all the ills that wait on those who do
The tasks of ruin in the world of life.
He fled and I have followed him.

February, 1822.

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PRINCE ATHANASE:

A FRAGMENT.

There was a youth, who, as with toil and travel,
Had grown quite weak and grey before his time;
Nor any could the restless griefs unravel
Which burned within him, withering up his prime
And goading him, like fiends, from land to land.
Not his the load of any secret crime,
For nought of ill his heart could understand,
But pity and wild sorrow for the same;—
Not his the thirst for glory or command
Baffled with blast of hope-consuming shame;
Nor evil joys which fire the vulgar breast
And quench in speedy smoke its feeble flame,
Had left within his soul their dark unrest:
Nor what religion fables of the grave
Feared he,—Philosophy's accepted guest.
For none than he a purer heart could have,
Or that loved good more for itself alone;
Of nought in heaven or earth was he the slave.
What sorrow deep, and shadowy, and unknown,
Sent him, a hopeless wanderer, through mankind?—
If with a human sadness he did groan,
He had a gentle yet aspiring mind;
Just, innocent, with varied learning fed,
And such a glorious consolation find
In others' joy, when all their own is dead:
He loved, and laboured for his kind in grief,
And yet, unlike all others, it is said,
That from such toil he never found relief;
Although a child of fortune and of power,
Of an ancestral name the orphan chief.
His soul had wedded wisdom, and her dower
Is love and justice, clothed in which he sate
Apart from men, as in a lonely tower,
Pitying the tumult of their dark estate—
Yet even in youth did he not e'er abuse
The strength of wealth or thought, to consecrate
Those false opinions which the harsh rich use
To blind the world they famish for their pride;
Nor did he hold from any man his dues,
But like a steward in honest dealings tried,
With those who toiled and wept, the poor and wise

His riches and his cares he did divide.
Fearless he was, and scorning all disguise,
What he dared do or think, though men might start,
He spoke with mild yet unaverted eyes;
Liberal he was of soul, and frank of heart,
And to his many friends—all loved him well—
Whate'er he knew or felt he would impart,
If words he found those inmost thoughts to tell;
If not, he smiled or wept; and his weak foes
He neither spurned nor hated, though with fell
And mortal hate their thousand voices rose,
They past like aimless arrows from his ear—
Nor did his heart or mind its portal close
To those, or them, or any whom life's sphere
May comprehend within its wide array.
What sadness made that vernal spirit sere?
He knew not. Though his life, day after day,
Was failing like an unreplenished stream,
Though in his eyes a cloud and burthen lay,
Through which his soul, like Vespers' serene beam
Piercing the chasms of ever rising clouds,
Shone, softly burning; though his lips did seem
Like reeds which quiver in impetuous floods;
And through his sleep, and o'er each waking hour,
Thoughts after thoughts, unresting multitudes,
Were driven within him, by some secret power,
Which bade them blaze, and live, and roll afar,
Like lights and sounds, from haunted tower to tower
O'er castled mountains borne, when tempest's war
Is levied by the night-contending winds,
And the pale dalesmen watch with eager ear;—
Though such were in his spirit, as the fiends
Which wake and feed on everliving woe,—
What was this grief, which ne'er in other minds
A mirror found,—he knew not—none could know;
But on whoe'er might question him he turned
The light of his frank eyes, as if to show,
He knew not of the grief within that burned,
But asked forbearance with a mournful look;
Or spoke in words from which none ever learned
The cause of his disquietude; or shook
With spasms of silent passion; or turned pale:
So that his friends soon rarely undertook
To stir his secret pain without avail;—
For all who knew and loved him then perceived
That there was drawn an adamantine veil
Between his heart and mind,—both unrelieved
Wrought in his brain and bosom separate strife.

Some said that he was mad, others believed
That memories of an antenatal life
Made this, where now he dwelt, a penal hell;
And others said that such mysterious grief
From God's displeasure, like a darkness, fell
On souls like his which owned no higher law
Than love; love calm, stedfast, invincible
By mortal fear or supernatural awe;
And others,—“ 'Tis the shadow of a dream
Which the veiled eye of memory never saw
“But through the soul's abyss, like some dark stream
Through shattered mines and caverns underground
Rolls, shaking its foundations; and no beam
“Of joy may rise, but it is quenched and drowned
In the dim whirlpools of this dream obscure,
Soon its exhausted waters will have found
“A lair of rest beneath thy spirit pure,
O Athanase!—in one so good and great,
Evil or tumult cannot long endure.”
So spake they: idly of another's state
Babbling vain words and fond philosophy;
This was their consolation; such debate
Men held with one another; nor did he
Like one who labours with a human woe
Decline this talk; as if its theme might be
Another, not himself, he to and fro
Questioned and canvassed it with subtlest wit,
And none but those who loved him best could know
That which he knew not, how it galled and bit
His weary mind, this converse vain and cold;
For like an eyeless night-mare grief did sit
Upon his being; a snake which fold by fold
Pressed out the life of life, a clinging fiend
Which clenched him if he stirred with deadlier hold;—
And so his grief remained—let it remain—untold.*

December, 1817.

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ODE TO NAPLES.*

EPODE I. *α*.

I stood within the city disinterred;†
And heard the autumnal leaves like light footfalls
Of spirits passing through the streets; and heard
The Mountain's slumberous voice at intervals
Thrill through those roofless halls;
The oracular thunder penetrating shook
The listening soul in my suspended blood;
I felt that Earth out of her deep heart spoke—
I felt, but heard not:—through white columns glowed
The isle-sustaining Ocean-flood,
A plane of light between two Heavens of azure:
Around me gleamed many a bright sepulchre
Of whose pure beauty, Time, as if his pleasure
Were to spare Death, had never made erasure;
But every living lineament was clear
As in the sculptor's thought; and there
The wreathes of stony myrtle, ivy and pine,
Like winter leaves o'ergrown by moulded snow,
Seemed only not to move and grow
Because the crystal silence of the air
Weighed on their life; even as the Power divine
Which then lulled all things, brooded upon mine.

EPODE II. *α*.

Then gentle winds arose
With many a mingled close
Of wild Æolian sound and mountain odour keen;
And where the Baian ocean
Welters with airlike motion,
Within, above, around its bowers of starry green,
Moving the sea flowers in those purple caves
Even as the ever stormless atmosphere
Floats o'er the Elysian realm,
It bore me like an Angel, o'er the waves
Of sunlight, whose swift pinnacle of dewy air
No storm can overwhelm;
I sailed, where ever flows
Under the calm Serene
A spirit of deep emotion
From the unknown graves

Of the dead kings of Melody.*
Shadowy Aornos darkened o'er the helm
The horizontal æther; heaven stript bare
Its depths over Elysium, where the prow
Made the invisible water white as snow;
From that Typhæan mount, Inarime
There streamed a sunlike vapour, like the standard
Of some ethereal host;
Whilst from all the coast,
Louder and louder, gathering round, there wandered
Over the oracular woods and divine sea
Prophesyings which grew articulate—
They seize me—I must speak them—be they fate!

STROPHE α. I.

Naples! thou Heart of men which ever pantest
Naked, beneath the lidless eye of heaven!
Elysian City which to calm enchantest
The mutinous air and sea: they round thee, even
As sleep round Love, are driven!
Metropolis of a ruined Paradise
Long lost, late won, and yet but half regained!
Bright Altar of the bloodless sacrifice,
Which armed Victory offers up unstained
To Love, the flower-enchained!
Thou which wert once, and then didst cease to be,
Now art, and henceforth ever shalt be, free,
If Hope, and Truth, and Justice can avail,
Hail, hail, all hail!

STROPHE β. 2.

Thou youngest giant birth
Which from the groaning earth
Leap'st, clothed in armour of impenetrable scale!
Last, of the Intercessors!
Who 'gainst the Crowned Transgressors
Pleaded before God's love! Arrayed in Wisdom's mail,
Wave thy lightning lance in mirth
Nor let thy high heart fail,
Though from their hundred gates the leagued Oppressors,
With hurried legions move!
Hail, hail, all hail!

ANTISTROPHE α .

What though Cimmerian Anarchs dare blaspheme
Freedom and thee? thy shield is as a mirror
To make their blind slaves see, and with fierce gleam
To turn his hungry sword upon the wearer,
A new Acteon's error
Shall their's have been—devoured by their own hounds!
Be thou like the imperial Basilisk
Killing thy foe with unapparent wounds!
Gaze on oppression, till at that dread risk
Aghast she pass from the Earth's disk,
Fear not, but gaze—for freemen mightier grow,
And slaves more feeble, gazing on their foe;
If Hope and Truth and Justice may avail,
Thou shalt be great—All hail!

ANTISTROPHE β . 2.

From Freedom's form divine,
From Nature's inmost shrine,
Strip every impious gawd, rend Error veil by veil:
O'er Ruin desolate,
O'er Falsehood's fallen state
Sit thou sublime, unawed; be the Destroyer pale!
And equal laws be thine,
And winged words let sail,
Freighted with truth even from the throne of God:
That wealth, surviving fate,
Be thine.—All hail!

ANTISTROPHE α . γ .

Didst thou not start to hear Spain's thrilling pæan
From land to land re-echoed solemnly,
Till silence became music? From the Æean*
To the cold Alps, eternal Italy
Starts to hear thine! The Sea
Which paves the desert streets of Venice laughs
In light and music; widowed Genoa wan
By moonlight spells ancestral epitaphs,
Murmuring, where is Doria? fair Milan,
Within whose veins long ran
The vipers† palsyng venom, lifts her heel
To bruise his head. The signal and the seal
(If Hope and Truth and Justice can avail)
Art Thou of all these hopes.—O hail!

ANTISTROPHE β. γ.

Florence! beneath the sun,
Of cities fairest one,
Blushes within her bower for Freedom's expectation:
From eyes of quenchless hope
Rome tears the priestly cope,
As fuling once by power, so now by admiration,
An athlete stript to run
From a remoter station
For the high prize lost on Philippi's shore:—
As then Hope, Truth, and Justice did avail,
So now may Fraud and Wrong! O hail!

EPODE I. β.

Hear ye the march as of the Earth-born Forms
Arrayed against the everliving Gods?
The crash and darkness of a thousand storms
Bursting their inaccessible abodes
Of crags and thunder-clouds?
See ye the banners blazoned to the day,
Inwrought with emblems of barbaric pride?
Dissonant threats kill Silence far away,
The serene Heaven which wraps our Eden wide
With iron light is dyed,
The Anarchs of the North lead forth their legions
Like Chaos o'er creation, uncreating;
An hundred tribes nourished on strange religions
And lawless slaveries,—down the aerial regions
Of the white Alps, desolating,
Famished wolves that bide no waiting,
Blotting the glowing footsteps of old glory,
Trampling our columned cities into dust,
Their dull and savage lust
On Beauty's corse to sickness satiating—
They come! The fields they tread look black and hoary
With fire—from their red feet the streams run gory!

EPODE II. β.

Great Spirit, deepest Love!
Which rulest and dost move
All things which live and are, within the Italian shore;
Who spreadest heaven around it,
Whose woods, rocks, waves, surround it;
Who sittest in thy star, o'er Ocean's western floor,

Spirit of beauty! at whose soft command
The sunbeams and the showers distil its foison
From the Earth's bosom chill;
O bid those beams be each a blinding brand
Of lightning! bid those showers be dews of poison!
Bid the Earth's plenty kill!
Bid thy bright Heaven above,
Whilst light and darkness bound it,
Be their tomb who planned
To make it ours and thine!
Or, with thine harmonizing ardours fill
And raise thy sons, as o'er the prone horizon
Thy lamp feeds every twilight wave with fire—
Be man's high hope and unextinct desire,
The instrument to work thy will divine!
Then clouds from sunbeams, antelopes from leopards,
And frowns and fears from Thee,
Would not more swiftly flee
Than Celtic wolves from the Ausonian shepherds.—
Whatever, Spirit, from thy starry shrine
Thou yieldest or withholdest, Oh let be
This city of thy worship ever free!

September, 1820.

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MARIANNE'S DREAM.

A pale dream came to a Lady fair,
And said, a boon, a boon, I pray!
I know the secrets of the air,
And things are lost in the glare of day,
Which I can make the sleeping see,
If they will put their trust in me.
And thou shalt know of things unknown,
If thou wilt let me rest between
The veiny lids, whose fringe is thrown
Over thine eyes so dark and sheen:
And half in hope, and half in fright,
The Lady closed her eyes so bright.
At first all deadly shapes were driven
Tumultuously across her sleep,
And o'er the vast cope of bending heaven
All ghastly visaged clouds did sweep;
And the Lady ever looked to spy
If the gold sun shone forth on high.
And as towards the east she turned,
She saw aloft in the morning air,
Which now with hues of sunrise burned
A great black Anchor rising there;
And wherever the Lady turned her eyes,
It hung before her in the skies.
The sky was blue as the summer sea,
The depths were cloudless over head,
The air was calm as it could be,
There was no sight or sound of dread,
But that black Anchor floating still
Over the piny eastern hill.
The Lady grew sick with a weight of fear,
To see that Anchor ever hanging,
And veiled her eyes; she then did hear
The sound as of a dim low clanging,
And looked abroad if she might know
Was it aught else, or but the flow
Of the blood in her own veins, to and fro.
There was a mist in the sunless air,
Which shook as it were with an earthquake's shock,
But the very weeds that blossomed there
Were moveless, and each mighty rock
Stood on its basis stedfastly;
The Anchor was seen no more on high.
But piled around, with summits hid

In lines of cloud at intervals,
Stood many a mountain pyramid
Among whose everlasting walls
Two mighty cities shone, and ever
Through the red mist their domes did quiver
On two dread mountains, from whose crest,
Might seem, the eagle, for her brood,
Would ne'er have hung her dizzy nest,
Those tower-encircled cities stood.
A vision strange such towers to see,
Sculptured and wrought so gorgeously,
Where human art could never be.
And columns framed of marble white,
And giant fanes, dome over dome
Piled, and triumphant gates, all bright
With workmanship, which could not come
From touch of mortal instrument,
Shot o'er the vales, or lustre lent
From its own shapes magnificent.
But still the Lady heard that clang
Filling the wide air far away;
And still the mist whose light did hang
Among the mountains shook away,
So that the Lady's heart beat fast,
As half in joy, and half aghast,
On those high domes her look she cast.
Sudden, from out that city sprung
A light that made the earth grow red;
Two flames that each with quivering tongue
Licked its high domes, and over head
Among those mighty towers and fanes
Dropped fire, as a volcano rains
Its sulphurous ruin on the plains.
And hark! a rush as if the deep
Had burst its bonds; she looked behind
And saw over the western steep
A raging flood descend, and wind
Through that wide vale; she felt no fear,
But said within herself, 'tis clear
These towers are Nature's own, and she
To save them has sent forth the sea.
And now those raging billows came
Where that fair Lady sate, and she
Was borne towards the showering flame
By the wild waves heaped tumultuously,
And on a little plank, the flow
Of the whirlpool bore her to and fro.
The waves were fiercely vomited

From every tower and every dome,
And dreary light did widely shed
O'er that vast flood's suspended foam,
Beneath the smoke which hung its night
On the stained cope of heaven's light.
The plank whereon that Lady sate
Was driven through the chasms, about and about,
Between the peaks so desolate
Of the drowning mountain, in and out,
As the thistle-beard on a whirlwind sails—
While the flood was filling those hollow vales.
At last her plank an eddy crost,
And bore her to the city's wall,
Which now the flood had reached almost;
It might the stoutest heart appal
To hear the fire roar and hiss
Through the domes of those mighty palaces.
The eddy whirled her round and round
Before a gorgeous gate, which stood
Piercing the clouds of smoke which bound
Its aery arch with light like blood;
She looked on that gate of marble clear,
With wonder that extinguished fear.
For it was filled with sculptures rarest,
Of forms most beautiful and strange,
Like nothing human, but the fairest
Of winged shapes, whose legions range
Throughout the sleep of those that are,
Like this same Lady, good and fair.
And as she looked, still lovelier grew
Those marble forms;—the sculptor sure
Was a strong spirit, and the hue
Of his own mind did there endure
After the touch, whose power had braided
Such grace, was in some sad change faded.
She looked, the flames were dim, the flood
Grew tranquil as a woodland river
Winding through hills in solitude;
Those marble shapes then seemed to quiver,
And their fair limbs to float in motion,
Like weeds unfolding in the ocean.
And their lips moved; one seemed to speak,
When suddenly the mountain crackt,
And through the chasm the flood did break
With an earth-uplifting cataract:
The statues gave a joyous scream,
And on its wings the pale thin dream
Lifted the Lady from the stream.

The dizzy flight of that phantom pale
Waked the fair Lady from her sleep,
And she arose, while from the veil
Of her dark eyes the dream did creep,
And she walked about as one who knew
That sleep has sights as clear and true
As any waking eyes can view.

Marlow, 1817.

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MONT BLANC.

LINES WRITTEN IN THE VALE OF CHAMOUNI.

I.

The everlasting universe of things
Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,
Now dark—now glittering—now reflecting gloom—
Now lending splendour, where from secret springs
The source of human thought its tribute brings
Of waters,—with a sound but half its own,
Such as a feeble brook will oft assume
In the wild woods, among the mountains lone,
Where waterfalls around it leap for ever,
Where woods and winds contend, and a vast river
Over its rocks ceaselessly bursts and raves.

II.

Thus thou, Ravine of Arve—dark, deep Ravine—
Thou many-coloured, many-voiced vale,
Over whose pines and crags and caverns sail
Fast cloud, shadows, and sunbeams: awful scene,
Where Power in likeness of the Arve comes down
From the ice gulphs that gird his secret throne,
Bursting through these dark mountains like the flame
Of lightning thro' the tempest;—thou dost lie,
Thy giant brood of pines around thee clinging,
Children of elder time, in whose devotion
The chainless winds still come and ever came
To drink their odours, and their mighty swinging
To hear—an old and solemn harmony:
Thine earthly rainbows stretched across the sweep
Of the ethereal waterfall, whose veil
Robes some unsculptured image; the strange sleep
Which, when the voices of the desert fail,
Wraps all in its own deep eternity;—
Thy caverns echoing to the Arve's commotion
A loud, lone sound, no other sound can tame;
Thou art pervaded with that ceaseless motion,
Thou art the path of that unresting sound—
Dizzy Ravine! and when I gaze on thee
I seem as in a trance sublime and strange

To muse on my own separate phantasy,
My own, my human mind, which passively
Now renders and receives fast influencings,
Holding an unremitting interchange
With the clear universe of things around;
One legion of wild thoughts, whose wandering wings
Now float above thy darkness, and now rest
Where that or thou art no unbidden guest,
In the still cave of the witch Poesy,
Seeking among the shadows that pass by
Ghosts of all things that are, some shade of thee,
Some phantom, some faint image; till the breast
From which they fled recalls them, thou art there!

III.

Some say that gleams of a remoter world
Visit the soul in sleep,—that death is slumber,
And that its shapes the busy thoughts outnumber
Of those who wake and live.—I look on high;
Has some unknown omnipotence unfurled
The veil of life and death? or do I lie
In dream, and does the mightier world of sleep
Spread far around and inaccessibly
Its circles? For the very spirit fails,
Driven like a homeless cloud from steep to steep
That vanishes among the viewless gales!
Far, far above, piercing the infinite sky,
Mont Blanc appears,—still, snowy, and serene—
Its subject mountains their unearthly forms
Pile around it, ice and rock; broad vales between
Of frozen floods, unfathomable deeps,
Blue as the overhanging heaven, that spread
And wind among the accumulated steeps;
A desert peopled by the storms alone,
Save when the eagle brings some hunter's bone,
And the wolf tracts her there—how hideously
Its shapes are heaped around! rude, bare, and high,
Ghastly, and scarred, and riven.—Is this the scene
Where the old Earthquake-dæmon taught her young
Ruin? Were these their toys? or did a sea
Of fire envelope once this silent snow?
None can reply—all seems eternal now.
The wilderness has a mysterious tongue
Which teaches awful doubt, or faith so mild,
So solemn, so serene, that man may be
But for such faith with nature reconciled;

Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal
Large codes of fraud and woe; not understood
By all, but which the wise, and great, and good
Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel.

IV.

The fields, the lakes, the forests, and the streams,
Ocean, and all the living things that dwell
Within the dædal earth; lightning, and rain,
Earthquake, and fiery flood, and hurricane,
The torpor of the year when feeble dreams
Visit the hidden buds, or dreamless sleep
Holds every future leaf and flower;—the bound
With which from that detested trance they leap;
The works and ways of man, their death and birth,
And that of him and all that his may be;
All things that move and breathe with toil and sound
Are born and die, revolve, subside and swell.
Power dwells apart in its tranquillity
Remote, serene, and inaccessible:
And *this*, the naked countenance of earth,
On which I gaze, even these primæval mountains,
Teach the adverting mind. The glaciers creep
Like snakes that watch their prey, from their far fountains,
Slow rolling on; there, many a precipice
Frost and the Sun in scorn of mortal power
Have piled—dome, pyramid, and pinnacle,
A city of death, distinct with many a tower
And wall impregnable of beaming ice.
Yet not a city, but a flood of ruin
Is there, that from the boundaries of the sky
Rolls its perpetual stream; vast pines are strewing
Its destined path, or in the mangled soil
Branchless and shattered stand; the rocks, drawn down
From yon remotest waste, have overthrown
The limits of the dead and living world,
Never to be reclaimed. The dwelling-place
Of insects, beasts, and birds becomes its spoil;
Their food and their retreat for ever gone,
So much of life and joy is lost. The race
Of man flies far in dread; his work and dwelling
Vanish, like smoke before the tempest's stream,
And their place is not known. Below, vast caves
Shine in the rushing torrent's restless gleam,
Which from those secret chasms in tumult welling
Meet in the vale, and one majestic River,

The breath and blood of distant lands, for ever
Rolls its loud waters to the ocean waves,
Breathes its swift vapours to the circling air.

V.

Mont Blanc yet gleams on high:—the power is there,
The still and solemn power of many sights
And many sounds, and much of life and death.
In the calm darkness of the moonless nights,
In the lone glare of day, the snows descend
Upon that Mountain; none beholds them there,
Nor when the flakes burn in the sinking sun,
Or the star-beams dart through them:—Winds contend
Silently there, and heap the snow with breath
Rapid and strong, but silently! Its home
The voiceless lightning in these solitudes
Keeps innocently, and like vapour broods
Over the snow. The secret strength of things
Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome
Of heaven is as a law, inhabits thee!
And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
If to the human mind's imaginings
Silence and solitude were vacancy?

Switzerland, June 23, 1816.

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MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

ON THE MEDUSA OF LEONARDO DA VINCI, IN THE FLORENTINE GALLERY.

It lieth, gazing on the midnight sky,
Upon the cloudy mountain peak supine;
Below, far lands are seen tremblingly;
Its horror and its beauty are divine.
Upon its lips and eyelids seem to lie
Loveliness like a shadow, from which shrine,
Fiery and lurid, struggling underneath,
The agonies of anguish and of death.
Yet it is less the horror than the grace
Which turns the gazer's spirit into stone;
Whereon the lineaments of that dead face
Are graven, till the characters be grown
Into itself, and thought no more can trace;
'Tis the melodious hue of beauty thrown
Athwart the darkness and the glare of pain,
Which humanize and harmonize the strain.
And from its head as from one body grow,
As [[]] grass out of a watery rock,
Hairs which are vipers, and they curl and flow
And their long tangles in each other lock,
And with unending involutions shew
Their mailed radiance, as it were to mock
The torture and the death within, and saw
The solid air with many a ragged jaw.
And from a stone beside a poisonous eft
Peeps idly into those Gorgonian eyes;
Whilst in the air a ghastly bat, bereft
Of sense, has flitted with a mad surprise
Out of the cave this hideous light had cleft,
And he comes hastening like a moth that hies
After a taper; and the midnight sky
Flares, a light more dread than obscurity.
'Tis the tempestuous loveliness of terror;
For from the serpents gleams a brazen glare
Kindled by that inextricable error,
Which makes a thrilling vapour of the air
Become a [[]] and evershifting mirror
Of all the beauty and the terror there—
A woman's countenance, with serpent locks,

Gazing in death on heaven from those wet rocks.

Florence, 1819.

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SONG.

Rarely, rarely, comest thou,
Spirit of Delight!
Wherefore hast thou left me now
Many a day and night?
Many a weary night and day
'Tis since thou art fled away.
How shall ever one like me
Win thee back again?
With the joyous and the free
Thou wilt scoff at pain.
Spirit false! thou hast forgot
All but those who need thee not.
As a lizard with the shade
Of a trembling leaf,
Thou with sorrow art dismayed;
Even the sighs of grief
Reproach thee, that thou art not near,
And reproach thou wilt not hear.
Let me set my mournful ditty
To a merry measure,
Thou wilt never come for pity,
Thou wilt come for pleasure,
Pity then will cut away
Those cruel wings, and thou wilt stay.
I love all that thou lovest,
Spirit of Delight!
The fresh Earth in new leaves drest,
And the starry night;
Autumn evening, and the morn
When the golden mists are born.
I love snow, and all the forms
Of the radiant frost;
I love waves, and winds, and storms,
Every thing almost
Which is Nature's, and may be
Untainted by man's misery.
I love tranquil solitude,
And such society
As is quiet, wise and good;
Between thee and me
What difference? but thou dost possess
The things I seek, not love them less.
I love Love—though he has wings,
And like light can flee,

But above all other things,
Spirit, I love thee—
Thou art love and life! O come,
Make once more my heart thy home.

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TO CONSTANTIA,

SINGING.

Thus to be lost and thus to sink and die,
Perchance were death indeed!—Constantia, turn!
In thy dark eyes a power like light doth lie,
Even though the sounds which were thy voice, which burn
Between thy lips, are laid to sleep;
Within thy breath, and on thy hair, like odour it is yet,
And from thy touch like fire doth leap.
Even while I write, my burning cheeks are wet,
Alas, that the torn heart can bleed, but not forget!
A breathless awe, like the swift change
Unseen, but felt in youthful slumbers,
Wild, sweet, but uncommunicably strange,
Thou breathest now in fast ascending numbers.
The cope of heaven seems rent and cloven
By the enchantment of thy strain,
And on my shoulders wings are woven,
To follow its sublime career,
Beyond the mighty moons that wane
Upon the verge of nature's utmost sphere,
'Till the world's shadowy walls are past and disappear.
Her voice is hovering o'er my soul—it lingers
O'ershadowing it with soft and lulling wings,
The blood and life within those snowy fingers
Teach witchcraft to the instrumental strings.
My brain is wild, my breath comes quick—
The blood is listening in my frame,
And thronging shadows, fast and thick,
Fall on my overflowing eyes;
My heart is quivering like a flame;
As morning dew, that in the sunbeam dies,
I am dissolved in these consuming extacies.
I have no life, Constantia, now, but thee,
Whilst, like the world-surrounding air, thy song
Flows on, and fills all things with melody.—
Now is thy voice a tempest swift and strong,
On which, like one in trance upborne,
Secure o'er rocks and waves I sweep,
Rejoicing like a cloud of morn.
Now 'tis the breath of summer night,
Which when the starry waters sleep,
Round western isles, with incense-blossoms bright,

Lingering, suspends my soul in its voluptuous flight.

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THE FUGITIVES.

I.

The waters are flashing,
The white hail is dashing,
The lightnings are glancing,
The hoar-spray is dancing—
Away!
The whirlwind is rolling,
The thunder is tolling,
The forest is swinging,
The minster bells ringing—
Come away!
The Earth is like Ocean,
Wreck-strewn and in motion:
Bird, beast, man and worm
Have crept out of the storm—
Come away!

II.

“Our boat has one sail,
And the helmsman is pale;—
A bold pilot I trow,
Who should follow us now,”—
Shouted He—
And she cried: “Ply the oar!
Put off gaily from shore!”—
As she spoke, bolts of death
Mixed with hail, specked their path
O’er the sea.
And from isle, tower and rock,
The blue beacon cloud broke,
And though dumb in the blast,
The red cannon flashed fast
From the lee.

III.

“And, fear’st thou, and fear’st thou?
And, see’st thou, and hear’st thou?
And, drive we not free
O’er the terrible sea,

I and thou?"
One boat-cloak did cover
The loved and the lover—
Their blood beats one measure,
They murmur proud pleasure
Soft and low;—
While around the lashed Ocean,
Like mountains in motion,
Is withdrawn and uplifted,
Sunk, shattered and shifted
To and fro.

IV.

In the court of the fortress
Beside the pale portress,
Like a blood-hound well beaten,
The bridegroom stands, eaten
By shame;
On the topmost watch-turret,
As a death-boding spirit,
Stands the grey tyrant father,
To his voice the mad weather
Seems tame;
And with curses as wild
As ere clung to child,
He devotes to the blast
The best, loveliest and last
Of his name!

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A LAMENT.

Swifter far than summer's flight,
Swifter far than youth's delight,
Swifter far than happy night,
Art thou come and gone:
As the earth when leaves are dead,
As the night when sleep is sped,
As the heart when joy is fled,
I am left lone, alone.
The swallow Summer comes again.
The owlet Night resumes her reign,
But the wild swan Youth is fain
To fly with thee, false as thou.
My heart each day desires the morrow,
Sleep itself is turned to sorrow,
Vainly would my winter borrow
Sunny leaves from any bough.
Lilies for a bridal bed,
Roses for a matron's head,
Violets for a maiden dead,
Pansies let my flowers be:
On the living grave I bear,
Scatter them without a tear,
Let no friend, however dear,
Waste one hope, one fear for me.

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THE PINE FOREST

OF THE CASCINE, NEAR PISA.

Dearest, best and brightest,
Come away,
To the woods and to the fields!
Dearer than this fairest day,
Which like thee to those in sorrow,
Comes to bid a sweet good-morrow
To the rough year just awake
In its cradle in the brake.
The eldest of the hours of spring,
Into the winter wandering,
Looks upon the leafless wood;
And the banks all bare and rude
Found it seems this halcyon morn,
In February's bosom born,
Bending from heaven, in azure mirth,
Kissed the cold forehead of the earth,
And smiled upon the silent sea,
And bade the frozen streams be free;
And waked to music all the fountains,
And breathed upon the rigid mountains,
And made the wintry world appear
Like one on whom thou smilest, dear.
Radiant Sister of the Day,
Awake! arise! and come away!
To the wild woods and the plains,
To the pools where winter rains
Image all the roof of leaves,
Where the Pine its garland weaves,
Sapless, grey, and ivy dun
Round stones that never kiss the sun,
To the sandhills of the sea,
Where the earliest violets be.
Now the last day of many days,
All beautiful and bright as thou,
The loveliest and the last, is dead,
Rise Memory, and write its praise,
And do thy wonted work and trace
The epitaph of glory fled:
For the Earth hath changed its face,
A frown is on the Heaven's brow.
We wandered to the Pine Forest

That skirts the Ocean's foam,
The lightest wind was in its nest,
The tempest in its home.
The whispering waves were half asleep,
The clouds were gone to play,
And on the woods, and on the deep,
The smile of Heaven lay.
It seemed as if the day were one
Sent from beyond the skies,
Which shed to earth above the sun
A light of Paradise.
We paused amid the Pines that stood
The giants of the waste,
Tortured by storms to shapes as rude,
With stems like serpents interlaced.
How calm it was—the silence there
By such a chain was bound,
That even the busy woodpecker
Made stiller by her sound
The inviolable quietness;
The breath of peace we drew,
With its soft motion made not less
The calm that round us grew.
It seemed that from the remotest seat
Of the white mountain's waste,
To the bright flower beneath our feet,
A magic circle traced;—
A spirit interfused around,
A thinking silent life,
To momentary peace it bound
Our mortal Nature's strife.—
For still it seemed the centre of
The magic circle there,
Was one whose being filled with love
The breathless atmosphere.
Were not the crocusses that grew
Under that ilex tree,
As beautiful in scent and hue
As ever fed the bee?
We stood beside the pools that lie
Under the forest bough,
And each seemed like a sky
Gulphed in a world below;—
A purple firmament of light,
Which in the dark earth lay,
More boundless than the depth of night,
And clearer than the day—
In which the massy forests grew,

As in the upper air,
More perfect both in shape and hue
Than any waving there.
Like one beloved, the scene had lent
To the dark water's breast
Its every leaf and lineament
With that clear truth expressed.
There lay far glades and neighbouring lawn,
And through the dark green crowd
The white sun twinkling like the dawn
Under a speckled cloud.
Sweet views, which in our world above
Can never well be seen,
Were imaged by the water's love
Of that fair forest green.
And all was interfused beneath
Within an Elysium air,
An atmosphere without a breath,
A silence sleeping there.
Until a wandering wind crept by,
Like an unwelcome thought,
Which from my mind's too faithful eye
Blots thy bright image out.
For thou art good and dear and kind,
The forest ever green,
But less of peace in S—'s mind,
Than calm in waters seen.

February 2, 1822.

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TO NIGHT.

Swiftly walk over the western wave,
Spirit of Night!
Out of the misty eastern cave,
Where, all the long and lone daylight,
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear,
Which make thee terrible and dear,—
Swift be thy flight!
Wrap thy form in a mantle grey,
Star-inwrought!
Blind with thine hair the eyes of day,
Kiss her until she be wearied out,
Then wander o'er city, and sea, and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand—
Come, long sought!
When I arose and saw the dawn,
I sighed for thee;
When light rode high, and the dew was gone,
And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,
And the weary Day turned to his rest,
Lingering like an unloved guest,
I sighed for thee.
Thy brother Death came, and cried,
Wouldst thou me?
Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
Murmured like a noon-tide bee,
Shall I nestle near thy side?
Wouldst thou me?—And I replied,
No, not thee!
Death will come when thou art dead,
Soon, too soon—
Sleep will come when thou art fled,
Of neither would I ask the boon
I ask of thee, beloved Night—
Swift be thine approaching flight,
Come soon, soon!

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EVENING.

PONTE A MARE, PISA.

The sun is set; the swallows are asleep;
The bats are flitting fast in the grey air;
The slow soft toads out of damp corners creep,
And evening's breath, wandering here and there
Over the quivering surface of the stream,
Wakes not one ripple from its silent dream.
There is no dew on the dry grass to-night,
Nor damp within the shadow of the trees;
The wind is intermitting, dry, and light;
And in the inconstant motion of the breeze
The dust and straws are driven up and down,
And whirled about the pavement of the town.
Within the surface of the fleeting river
The wrinkled image of the city lay,
Immoveably unquiet, and for ever
It trembles, but it never fades away;
Go to the []
You, being changed, will find it then as now.
The chasm in which the sun has sunk is shut
By darkest barriers of enormous cloud,
Like mountain over mountain huddled—but
Growing and moving upwards in a crowd,
And over it a space of watery blue,
Which the keen evening star is shining through.

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ARETHUSA.

Arethusa arose
From her couch of snows
In the Acroceraunian mountains,—
From cloud and from crag,
With many a jag,
Shepherding her bright fountains.
She leapt down the rocks
With her rainbow locks
Streaming among the streams;—
Her steps paved with green
The downward ravine
Which slopes to the western gleams:
And gliding and springing,
She went, ever singing,
In murmurs as soft as sleep;
The Earth seemed to love her,
And Heaven smiled above her,
As she lingered towards the deep.
Then Alpheus bold,
On his glacier cold,
With his trident the mountains strook;
And opened a chasm
In the rocks;—with the spasm
All Erymanthus shook.
And the black south wind
It concealed behind
The urns of the silent snow,
And earthquake and thunder
Did rend in sunder
The bars of the springs below:
The beard and the hair
Of the river God were
Seen through the torrent's sweep,
As he followed the light
Of the fleet nymph's flight
To the brink of the Dorian deep.
“Oh, save me! Oh, guide me!
And bid the deep hide me,
For he grasps me now by the hair!”
The loud Ocean heard,
To its blue depth stirred,
And divided at her prayer;
And under the water
The Earth's white daughter

Fled like a sunny beam,
Behind her descended,
Her billows unblended
With the brackish Dorian stream:—
Like a gloomy stain
On the emerald main
Alpheus rushed behind,—
As an eagle pursuing
A dove to its ruin
Down the streams of the cloudy wind.
Under the bowers
Where the Ocean Powers
Sit on their pearled thrones,
Through the coral woods
Of the weltering floods,
Over heaps of unvalued stones:
Through the dim beams
Which amid the streams
Weave a net-work of coloured light;
And under the caves,
Where the shadowy waves
Are as green as the forest's night:—
Outspeeding the shark,
And the sword-fish dark,
Under the ocean foam,
And up through the rifts
Of the mountain clifts
They passed to their Dorian home.
And now from their fountains
In Enna's mountains,
Down one vale where the morning basks,
Like friends once parted
Grown single-hearted,
They ply their watery tasks.
At sun-rise they leap
From their cradles steep
In the cave of the shelving hill;
At noon-tide they flow
Through the woods below
And the meadows of Asphodel;
And at night they sleep
In the rocking deep
Beneath the Ortygian shore;—
Like spirits that lie
In the azure sky
When they love but live no more.

Pisa, 1820.

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THE QUESTION.

I dreamed that, as I wandered by the way,
Bare winter suddenly was changed to spring,
And gentle odours led my steps astray,
Mixed with a sound of waters murmuring
Along a shelving bank of turf, which lay
Under a copse, and hardly dared to fling
Its green arms round the bosom of the stream,
But kissed it and then fled, as thou mightest in dream.
There grew pied wind-flowers and violets,
Daisies, those pearled Arcturi of the earth,
The constellated flower that never sets;
Faint oxlips; tender bluebells, at whose birth
The sod scarce heaved; and that tall flower that wets
Its mother's face with heaven-collected tears,
When the low wind, its playmate's voice, it hears.
And in the warm hedge grew lush eglantine,
Green cow-bind and the moonlight-coloured May,
And cherry blossoms, and white cups, whose wine
Was the bright dew yet drained not by the day;
And wild roses, and ivy serpentine,
With its dark buds and leaves, wandering astray;
And flowers azure, black and streaked with gold,
Fairer than any wakened eyes behold.
And nearer to the river's trembling edge
There grew broad flag flowers, purple pranked with white,
And starry river buds among the sedge,
And floating water-lilies, broad and bright,
Which lit the oak that overhung the hedge
With moonlight beams of their own watery light;
And bulrushes, and reeds of such deep green
As soothed the dazzled eye with sober sheen.
Methought that of these visionary flowers
I made a nosegay, bound in such a way
That the same hues, which in their natural bowers
Were mingled or opposed, the like array
Kept these imprisoned children of the Hours
Within my hand,—and then, elate and gay,
I hastened to the spot whence I had come,
That I might there present it!—Oh! to whom?

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LINES TO AN INDIAN AIR.

I arise from dreams of thee
In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low,
And the stars are shining bright:
I arise from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet
Has led me—who knows how?
To thy chamber window, sweet!
The wandering airs they faint
On the dark, the silent stream—
The champak odours fail
Like sweet thoughts in a dream;
The nightingale's complaint,
It dies upon her heart,
As I must on thine,
Beloved as thou art!
O lift me from the grass!
I die, I faint, I fail!
Let thy love in kisses rain
On my lips and eyelids pale.
My cheek is cold and white, alas!
My heart beats loud and fast,
Oh! press it close to thine again,
Where it will break at last.

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STANZAS

WRITTEN IN DEJECTION, NEAR NAPLES.

The sun is warm, the sky is clear,
The waves are dancing fast and bright,
Blue isles and snowy mountains wear
The purple noon's transparent light
Around its unexpanded buds;
Like many a voice of one delight,
The winds, the birds, the ocean floods,
The City's voice itself is soft, like Solitude's.
I see the Deep's untrampled floor
With green and purple seaweeds strown;
I see the waves upon the shore,
Like light dissolved in star-showers, thrown:
I sit upon the sands alone,
The lightning of the noon-tide ocean
Is flashing round me, and a tone
Arises from its measured motion,
How sweet! did any heart now share in my emotion.
Alas! I have nor hope nor health,
Nor peace within nor calm around,
Nor that content surpassing wealth
The sage in meditation found,
And walked with inward glory crowned—
Nor fame, nor power, nor love, nor leisure.
Others I see whom these surround—
Smiling they live and call life pleasure;—
To me that cup has been dealt in another measure.
Yet now despair itself is mild,
Even as the winds and waters are;
I could lie down like a tired child,
And weep away the life of care
Which I have borne and yet must bear,
Till death like sleep might steal on me,
And I might feel in the warm air
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.
Some might lament that I were cold,
As I, when this sweet day is gone,
Which my lost heart, too soon grown old,
Insults with this untimely moan;
They might lament—for I am one
Whom men love not,—and yet regret,

Unlike this day, which, when the sun
Shall on its stainless glory set,
Will linger, though enjoyed, like joy in memory yet.

December, 1818.

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AUTUMN:

A DIRGE.

The warm sun is failing, the bleak wind is wailing,
The bare boughs are sighing, the pale flowers are dying,
And the year
On the earth her death-bed, in a shroud of leaves dead,
Is lying.
Come, months, come away,
From November to May,
In your saddest array;
Follow the bier
Of the dead cold year,
And like dim shadows watch by her sepulchre.
The chill rain is falling, the nipt worm is crawling,
The rivers are swelling, the thunder is knelling
For the year;
The blithe swallows are flown, and the lizards each gone
To his dwelling;
Come, months, come away;
Put on white, black, and grey,
Let your light sisters play—
Ye, follow the bier
Of the dead cold year,
And make her grave green with tear on tear.

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HYMN OF APOLLO.

The sleepless Hours who watch me as I lie,
Curtained with star-enwoven tapestries,
From the broad moonlight of the sky,
Fanning the busy dreams from my dim eyes,—
Waken me when their Mother, the grey Dawn,
Tells them that dreams and that the moon is gone.
Then I arise, and climbing Heaven's blue dome,
I walk over the mountains and the waves,
Leaving my robe upon the ocean foam;
My footsteps pave the clouds with fire; the caves
Are filled with my bright presence, and the air
Leaves the green earth to my embraces bare.
The sunbeams are my shafts, with which I kill
Deceit, that loves the night and fears the day;
All men who do or even imagine ill
Fly me, and from the glory of my ray
Good minds and open actions take new might,
Until diminished by the reign of night.
I feed the clouds, the rainbows and the flowers
With their ethereal colours; the Moon's globe
And the pure stars in their eternal bowers
Are cinctured with my power as with a robe;
Whatever lamps on Earth or Heaven may shine,
Are portions of one power, which is mine.
I stand at noon upon the peak of Heaven,
Then with unwilling steps I wander down
Into the clouds of the Atlantic even;
For grief that I depart they weep and frown:
What look is more delightful than the smile
With which I soothe them from the western isle?
I am the eye with which the Universe
Beholds itself and knows itself divine;
All harmony of instrument or verse,
All prophesy, all medicine are mine,
All light of art or nature;—to my song,
Victory and praise in their own right belong.

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HYMN OF PAN.

From the forests and highlands
We come, we come;
From the river-girt islands,
Where loud waves are dumb
Listening to my sweet pipings.
The wind in the reeds and the rushes,
The bees on the bells of thyme,
The birds on the myrtle bushes,
The cicale above in the lime,
And the lizards below in the grass,
Were as silent as ever old Tmolus* was,
Listening to my sweet pipings.
Liquid Peneus was flowing,
And all dark Tempe lay
In Pelion's shadow, outgrowing
The light of the dying day,
Speeded by my sweet pipings.
The Sileni, and Sylvans, and Fauns,
And the Nymphs of the woods and waves,
To the edge of the moist river-lawns,
And the brink of the dewy caves,
And all that did then attend and follow
Were silent with love, as you now, Apollo,
With envy of my sweet pipings.
I sang of the dancing stars,
I sang of the dædal Earth,
And of Heaven—and the giant wars,
And Love, and Death, and Birth,—
And then I changed my pipings,—
Singing how down the vale of Menalus
I pursued a maiden and clasped a reed:
Gods and men, we are all deluded thus!
It breaks in our bosom and then we bleed:
All wept, as I think both ye now would,
If envy or age had not frozen your blood,
At the sorrow of my sweet pipings.

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THE BOAT

ON THE SERCHIO.

Our boat is asleep in Serchio's stream,
Its sails are folded like thoughts in a dream,
The helm sways idly, hither and thither;
Dominic, the boat-man, has brought the mast,
And the oars and the sails; but 'tis sleeping fast,
Like a beast, unconscious of its tether.
The stars burnt out in the pale blue air,
And the thin white moon lay withering there,
To tower, and cavern, and rift and tree,
The owl and the bat fled drowsily.
Day had kindled the dewy woods,
And the rocks above and the stream below,
And the vapours in their multitudes,
And the Apennine's shroud of summer snow,
And clothed with light of aery gold
The mists in their eastern caves uprolled.
Day had awakened all things that be,
The lark and the thrush and the swallow free,
And the milkmaid's song and the mower's scythe,
And the matin-bell and the mountain bee:
Fire-flies were quenched on the dewy corn,
Glow-worms went out on the river's brim,
Like lamps which a student forgets to trim:
The beetle forgot to wind his horn,
The crickets were still in the meadow and hill:
Like a flock of rooks at a farmer's gun
Night's dreams and terrors, every one,
Fled from the brains which are their prey,
From the lamp's death to the morning ray:
All rose to do the task He set to each,
Who shaped us to his ends and not our own;
The million rose to learn, and one to teach
What none yet ever knew or can be known;
And many rose
Whose woe was such that fear became desire;—
Melchior and Lionel were not among those;
They from the throng of men had stepped aside,
And made their home under the green hill side.
It was that hill, whose intervening brow
Screens Lucca from the Pisan's envious eye,
Which the circumfluous plain waving below,

Like a wide lake of green fertility,
With streams and fields and marshes bare,
Divides from the far Apennines—which lie
Islanded in the immeasurable air.
“What think you, as she lies in her green cove,
Our little sleeping boat is dreaming of?
If morning dreams are true, why I should guess
That she was dreaming of our idleness,
And of the miles of watery way
We should have led her by this time of day?”—
—“Never mind,” said Lionel,
“Give care to the winds, they can bear it well
About yon poplar tops; and see
The white clouds are driving merrily,
And the stars we miss this morn will light
More willingly our return to-night.—
List, my dear fellow, the breeze blows fair;
How it scatters Dominic’s long black hair,
Singing of us, and our lazy motions,
If I can guess a boat’s emotions.—”
The chain is loosed, the sails are spread,
The living breath is fresh behind,
As with dews and sunrise fed,
Comes the laughing morning wind;—
The sails are full, the boat makes head
Against the Serchio’s torrent fierce,
Then flags with intermitting course,
And hangs upon the wave, [[]]
Which fervid from its mountain source
Shallow, smooth and strong doth come,—
Swift as fire, tempestuously
It sweeps into the affrighted sea;
In morning’s smile its eddies coil,
Its billows sparkle, toss and boil,
Torturing all its quiet light
Into columns fierce and bright.
The Serchio, twisting forth
Between the marble barriers which it clove
At Ripafratta, leads through the dread chasm
The wave that died the death which lovers love,
Living in what it sought; as if this spasm
Had not yet past, the toppling mountains cling,
But the clear stream in full enthusiasm
Pours itself on the plain, until wandering,
Down one clear path of effluence chrystalline
Sends its clear waves, that they may fling
At Arno’s feet tribute of corn and wine,
Then, through the pestilential desarts wild

Of tangled marsh and woods of stunted fir,
It rushes to the Ocean.

July, 1821.

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THE ZUCCA.*

I.

Summer was dead and Autumn was expiring,
And infant Winter laughed upon the land
All cloudlessly and cold;—when I, desiring
More in this world than any understand,
Wept o'er the beauty, which like sea retiring,
Had left the earth bare as the wave-worn sand
Of my poor heart, and o'er the grass and flowers
Pale for the falsehood of the flattering hours.

II.

Summer was dead, but I yet lived to weep
The instability of all but weeping;
And on the earth lulled in her winter sleep
I woke, and envied her as she was sleeping.
Too happy Earth! over thy face shall creep
The wakening vernal airs, until thou, leaping
From unremembered dreams, shalt [[]] see
No death divide thy immortality.

III.

I loved—O no, I mean not one of ye,
Or any earthly one, though ye are dear
As human heart to human heart may be;—
I loved, I know not what—but this low sphere
And all that it contains, contains not thee,
Thou, whom seen no where, I feel everywhere,
Dim object of my soul's idolatry.
Veiled art thou like—

IV.

By Heaven and Earth, from all whose shapes thou flowest,
Neither to be contained, delayed, or hidden,
Making divine the loftiest and the lowest,
When for a moment thou art not forbidden
To live within the life which thou bestowest;
And leaving noblest things vacant and chidden,

Cold as a corpse after the spirit's flight,
Blank as the sun after the birth of night.

V.

In winds, and trees, and streams, and all things common,
In music and the sweet unconscious tone
Of animals, and voices which are human,
Meant to express some feelings of their own;
In the soft motions and rare smile of woman,
In flowers and leaves, and in the fresh grass shewn,
Or dying in the autumn, I the most
Adore thee present or lament thee lost.

VI.

And thus I went, lamenting when I saw
A plant upon the river's margin lie,
Like one who loved beyond his Nature's law,
And in despair had cast him down to die;
Its leaves which had outlived the frost, the thaw
Had blighted as a heart which hatred's eye
Can blast not, but which pity kills; the dew
Lay on its spotted leaves like tears too true.

VII.

The Heavens had wept upon it, but the Earth
Had crushed it on her unmaternal breast.
* * * * *

VIII.

I bore it to my chamber, and I planted
It in a vase full of the lightest mould;
The winter beams which out of Heaven slanted
Fell through the window panes, disrobed of cold,
Upon its leaves and flowers; the star which panted
In evening for the Day, whose car has rolled
Over the horizon's wave, with looks of light
Smiled on it from the threshold of the night.

IX.

The mitigated influences of air

And light revived the plant, and from it grew
Strong leaves and tendrils, and its flowers fair,
Full as a cup with the vine's burning dew,
O'erflowed with golden colours; an atmosphere
Of vital warmth infolded it anew,
And every impulse sent to every part
The unbeheld pulsations of its heart.

X.

Well might the plant grow beautiful and strong,
Even if the sun and air had smiled not on it;
For one wept o'er it all the winter long
Tears pure as Heaven's rain, which fell upon it
Hour after hour; for sounds of softest song
Mixed with the stringed melodies that won it
To leave the gentle lips on which it slept,
Had loosed the heart of him who sat and wept.

XI.

Had loosed his heart, and shook the leaves and flowers
On which he wept, the while the savage storm
Waked by the darkest of December's hours
Was raving round the chamber hushed and warm;
The birds were shivering in their leafless bowers,
The fish were frozen in the pools, the form
Of every summer plant was dead [[]]
Whilst this * * *

January, 1822.

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THE TWO SPIRITS.

AN ALLEGORY.

FIRST SPIRIT.

Oh thou, who plumed with strong desire
Would float above the earth, beware!
A Shadow tracks thy flight of fire—
Night is coming!
Bright are the regions of the air,
And among the winds and beams
It were delight to wander there—
Night is coming!

SECOND SPIRIT.

The deathless stars are bright above;
If I would cross the shade of night,
Within my heart is the lamp of love,
And that is day!
And the moon will smile with gentle light
On my golden plumes where'er they move;
The meteors will linger round my flight
And make night day.

FIRST SPIRIT.

But if the whirlwinds of darkness waken
Hail and lightning and stormy rain;
See the bounds of the air are shaken—
Night is coming!
The red swift clouds of the hurricane
Yon declining sun have overtaken,
The clash of the hail sweeps over the plain—
Night is coming!

SECOND SPIRIT.

I see the light, and I hear the sound;
I'll sail on the flood of the tempest dark
With the calm within and the light around
Which makes night day:
And thou, when the gloom is deep and stark,
Look from thy dull earth, slumber-bound,

My moon-like flight thou then may'st mark
On high, far away.
Some say, there is a precipice
Where one vast pine is frozen to ruin
O'er piles of snow and chasms of ice
Mid Alpine mountains;
And that the languid storm pursuing
That winged shape for ever flies
Round those hoar branches, aye renewing
Its aery fountains.
Some say, when nights are dry and clear,
And the death dews sleep on the morass,
Sweet whispers are heard by the traveller
Which makes night day:
And a silver shape like his early love doth pass
Upborne by her wild and glittering hair,
And when he awakes on the fragrant grass,
He finds night day.

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A FRAGMENT.

They were two cousins, almost like to twins,
Except that from the catalogue of sins
Nature had razed their love—which could not be
But by dissevering their nativity.
And so they grew together, like two flowers
Upon one stem, which the same beams and showers
Lull or awaken in their purple prime,
Which the same hand will gather—the same clime
Shake with decay. This fair day smiles to see
All those who love,—and who ever loved like thee,
Fiordispina? Scarcely Cosimo,
Within whose bosom and whose brain now glow
The ardours of a vision which obscure
The very idol of its portraiture;
He faints, dissolved into a sense of love;
But thou art as a planet sphered above,
But thou art Love itself—ruling the motion
Of his subjected spirit—such emotion
Must end in sin or sorrow, if sweet May
Had not brought forth this morn—your wedding day.

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A BRIDAL SONG.

The golden gates of sleep unbar
Where strength and beauty met together,
Kindle their image like a star
In a sea of glassy weather.
Night, with all thy stars look down,—
Darkness, weep thy holiest dew,—
Never smiled the inconstant moon
On a pair so true.
Let eyes not see their own delight;—
Haste, swift Hour, and thy flight
Oft renew.
Fairies, sprites, and angels keep her!
Holy stars, permit no wrong!
And return to wake the sleeper,
Dawn,—ere it be long.
Oh joy! oh fear! what will be done
In the absence of the sun!
Come along!

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THE SUNSET.

There late was One within whose subtle being,
As light and wind within some delicate cloud
That fades amid the blue noon's burning sky,
Genius and youth contended. None may know
The sweetness of the joy which made his breath
Fail, like the trances of the summer air,
When, with the Lady of his love, who then
First knew the unreserve of mingled being,
He walked along the pathway of a field
Which to the east a hoar wood shadowed o'er,
But to the west was open to the sky.
There now the sun had sunk, but lines of gold
Hung on the ashen clouds, and on the points
Of the far level grass and nodding flowers
And the old dandelion's hoary beard,
And, mingled with the shades of twilight, lay
On the brown massy woods—and in the east
The broad and burning moon lingeringly rose
Between the black trunks of the crowded trees,
While the faint stars were gathering overhead.—
“Is it not strange, Isabel,” said the youth,
“I never saw the sun? We will walk here
To-morrow; thou shalt look on it with me.”
That night the youth and lady mingled lay
In love and sleep—but when the morning came
The lady found her lover dead and cold.
Let none believe that God in mercy gave
That stroke. The lady died not, nor grew wild,
But year by year lived on—in truth I think
Her gentleness and patience and sad smiles,
And that she did not die, but lived to tend
Her aged father, were a kind of madness,
If madness 'tis to be unlike the world.
For but to see her were to read the tale
Woven by some subtlest bard, to make hard hearts
Dissolve away in wisdom-working grief;—
Her eyelashes were worn away with tears,
Her lips and cheeks were like things dead—so pale;
Her hands were thin, and through their wandering veins
And weak articulations might be seen
Day's ruddy light. The tomb of thy dead self
Which one vexed ghost inhabits, night and day,
Is all, lost child, that now remains of thee!
“Inheritor of more than earth can give,

Passionless, calm and silence unproved,
Whether the dead find, oh, not sleep! but rest,
And are the uncomplaining things they seem,
Or live, or drop in the deep sea of Love;
Oh, that like thine, mine epitaph were—Peace!”
This was the only moan she ever made.

1816.

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SONG,

ON A FADED VIOLET.

The odour from the flower is gone,
Which like thy kisses breathed on me;
The colour from the flower is flown,
Which glowed of thee, and only thee!
A shrivelled, lifeless, vacant form,
It lies on my abandoned breast,
And mocks the heart which yet is warm
With cold and silent rest.
I weep—my tears revive it not!
I sigh—it breathes no more on me;
Its mute and uncomplaining lot
Is such as mine should be.

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LINES TO A CRITIC.

Honey from silk-worms who can gather,
Or silk from the yellow bee?
The grass may grow in winter weather
As soon as hate in me.
Hate men who cant, and men who pray,
And men who rail like thee;
An equal passion to repay
They are not coy like me.
Or seek some slave of power and gold,
To be thy dear heart's mate;
Thy love will move that bigot cold,
Sooner than me, thy hate.
A passion like the one I prove
Cannot divided be;
I hate thy want of truth and love—
How should I then hate thee?

December, 1817.

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GOOD NIGHT.

Good night? ah! no; the hour is ill
Which severs those it should unite;
Let us remain together still,
Then it will be *good* night.
How can I call the lone night good,
Though thy sweet wishes wing its flight?
Be it not said, thought, understood,
Then it will be *good* night.
To hearts which near each other move
From evening close to morning light,
The night is good; because, my love,
They never *say* good night.

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TO-MORROW.

Where art thou, beloved, To-morrow?
Whom young and old and strong and weak,
Rich and poor, through joy and sorrow,
Thy sweet smiles we ever seek,—
In thy place—ah! well-a-day!
We find the thing we fled—To-day.

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DEATH.

They die—the dead return not—Misery
Sits near an open grave and calls them over,
A Youth with hoary hair and haggard eye—
They are the names of kindred, friend, and lover,
Which he so feebly called—they all are gone!
Fond wretch, all dead, those vacant names alone,
This most familiar scene, my pain—
These tombs alone remain.
Misery, my sweetest friend—oh! weep no more!
Thou wilt not be consoled—I wonder not!
For I have seen thee from thy dwelling's door
Watch the calm sunset with them, and this spot
Was even as bright and calm, but transitory,
And now thy hopes are gone, thy hair is hoary;
This most familiar scene, my pain—
These tombs alone remain.

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A LAMENT.

Oh, world! oh, life! oh, time!
On whose last steps I climb
Trembling at that where I had stood before;
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more—O, never more!
Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight;
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar,
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more—O, never more!

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LOVE'S PHILOSOPHY.

The fountains mingle with the river,
And the rivers with the ocean,
The winds of heaven mix for ever
With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single;
All things by a law divine
In one another's being mingle—
Why not I with thine?
See the mountains kiss high heaven,
And the waves clasp one another;
No sister flower would be forgiven
If it disdained its brother:
And the sunlight clasps the earth,
And the moonbeams kiss the sea,
What are all these kissings worth,
If thou kiss not me?

January, 1820.

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TO E*** V***

Madonna, wherefore hast thou sent to me
Sweet basil and mignonette?
Embleming love and health, which never yet
In the same wreath might be.
Alas, and they are wet!
Is it with thy kisses or thy tears?
For never rain or dew
Such fragrance drew
From plant or flower—the very doubt endears
My sadness ever new,
The sighs I breathe, the tears I shed for thee.

March, 1821.

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TO —

I fear thy kisses, gentle maiden,
Thou needest not fear mine;
My spirit is too deeply laden
Ever to burthen thine.
I fear thy mien, thy tones, thy motion,
Thou needest not fear mine;
Innocent is the heart's devotion
With which I worship thine.

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LINES.

When the lamp is shattered
The light in the dust lies dead—
When the cloud is scattered
The rainbow's glory is shed.
When the lute is broken,
Sweet tones are remembered not;
When the lips have spoken,
Loved accents are soon forgot.
As music and splendour
Survive not the lamp and the lute,
The heart's echoes render
No song when the spirit is mute:—
No song but sad dirges,
Like the wind through a ruined cell,
Or the mournful surges
That ring the dead seaman's knell.
When hearts have once mingled
Love first leaves the well-built nest,
The weak one is singled
To endure what it once possest.
O, Love! who bewailest
The frailty of all things here,
Why choose you the frailest
For your cradle, your home and your bier?
Its passions will rock thee
As the storms rock the ravens on high:
Bright reason will mock thee,
Like the sun from a wintry sky.
From thy nest every rafter
Will rot, and thine eagle home
Leave the naked to laughter,
When leaves fall and cold winds come.

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TO WILLIAM SHELLEY.

(With what truth I may say—

Roma! Roma! Roma!

Non è più come era prima!)

My lost William, thou in whom
Some bright spirit lived, and did
That decaying robe consume
Which its lustre faintly hid,
Here its ashes find a tomb,
But beneath this pyramid
Thou art not—if a thing divine
Like thee can die, thy funeral shrine
Is thy mother's grief and mine.
Where art thou, my gentle child?
Let me think thy spirit feeds,
Within its life intense and mild,
The love of living leaves and weeds,
Among these tombs and ruins wild;—
Let me think that through low seeds
Of the sweet flowers and sunny grass,
Into their hues and scents may pass
A portion—

June, 1819.

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AN ALLEGORY.

A portal as of shadowy adamant
Stands yawning on the highway of the life
Which we all tread, a cavern huge and gaunt;
Around it rages an unceasing strife
Of shadows, like the restless clouds that haunt
The gap of some cleft mountain, lifted high
Into the whirlwinds of the upper sky.
And many passed it by with careless tread,
Not knowing that a shadowy []
Tracks every traveller even to where the dead
Wait peacefully for their companion new;
But others, by more curious humour led,
Pause to examine,—these are very few,
And they learn little there, except to know
That shadows follow them where'er they go.

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MUTABILITY.

The flower that smiles to-day
To-morrow dies;
All that we wish to stay,
Tempt and then flies;
What is this world's delight?
Lightning that mocks the night,
Brief even as bright.
Virtue, how frail it is!
Friendship too rare!
Love, how it sells poor bliss
For proud despair!
But we, though soon they fall,
Survive their joy and all
Which ours we call.
Whilst skies are blue and bright,
Whilst flowers are gay,
Whilst eyes that change ere night
Make glad the day;
Whilst yet the calm hours creep,
Dream thou—and from thy sleep
Then wake to weep.

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FROM THE ARABIC.

AN IMITATION.

My faint spirit was sitting in the light
Of thy looks, my love;
It panted for thee like the hind at noon
For the brooks, my love.
Thy barb whose hoofs outspeed the tempest's flight
Bore thee far from me;
My heart, for my weak feet were weary soon,
Did companion thee.
Ah! fleeter far than fleetest storm or steed,
Or the death they bear,
The heart which tender thought clothes like a dove
With the wings of care;
In the battle, in the darkness, in the need,
Shall mine cling to thee,
Nor claim one smile for all the comfort, love,
It may bring to thee.

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TO —

One word is too often profaned
For me to profane it,
One feeling too falsely disdained
For thee to disdain it.
One hope is too like despair
For prudence to smother,
And Pity from thee more dear,
Than that from another.
I can give not what men call love,
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the Heavens reject not,
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow?

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MUSIC.

I pant for the music which is divine,
My heart in its thirst is a dying flower;
Pour forth the sound like enchanted wine,
Loosen the notes in a silver shower;
Like a herbless plain, for the gentle rain,
I gasp, I faint, till they wake again.
Let me drink of the spirit of that sweet sound,
More, O more,—I am thirsting yet,
It loosens the serpent which care has bound
Upon my heart to stifle it;
The dissolving strain, through every vein,
Passes into my heart and brain.
As the scent of a violet withered up,
Which grew by the brink of a silver lake;
When the hot noon has drained its dewy cup,
And mist there was none its thirst to slake—
And the violet lay dead while the odour flew
On the wings of the wind o'er the waters blue—
As one who drinks from a charmed cup
Of foaming, and sparkling and murmuring wine
Whom, a mighty Enchantress filling up,
Invites to love with her kiss divine.

* * * * *

* * * * *

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LINES.

The cold earth slept below;
Above the cold sky shone;
And all around,
With a chilling sound,
From caves of ice and fields of snow,
The breath of night like death did flow
Beneath the sinking moon.
The wintry hedge was black,
The green grass was not seen,
The birds did rest
On the bare thorn's breast,
Whose roots, beside the pathway track,
Had bound their folds o'er many a crack
Which the frost had made between.
Thine eyes glowed in the glare
Of the moon's dying light;
As a fen-fire's beam,
On a sluggish stream,
Gleams dimly—so the moon shone there,
And it yellowed the strings of thy tangled hair
That shook in the wind of night.
The moon made thy lips pale, beloved;
The wind made thy bosom chill;
The night did shed
On thy dear head
Its frozen dew, and thou didst lie
Where the bitter breath of the naked sky
Might visit thee at will.

November, 1815.

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DEATH.

Death is here and death is there,
Death is busy every where,
All around, within, beneath,
Above is death—and we are death.
Death has set his mark and seal
On all we are and all we feel,
On all we know and all we fear,
* * * *

First our pleasures die—and then
Our hopes, and then our fears—and when
These are dead, the debt is due,
Dust claims dust—and we die too.
All things that we love and cherish,
Like ourselves must fade and perish,
Such is our rude mortal lot,
Love itself would, did they not.

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TO —

When passion's trance is overpast,
If tenderness and truth could last
Or live, whilst all wild feelings keep
Some mortal slumber, dark and deep,
I should not weep, I should not weep!
It were enough to feel, to see
Thy soft eyes gazing tenderly,
And dream the rest—and burn and be
The secret food of fires unseen,
Couldst thou but be as thou hast been.
After the slumber of the year
The woodland violets re-appear,
All things revive in field or grove,
And sky and sea, but two, which move,
And for all others, life and love.

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PASSAGE OF THE APENNINES.

Listen, listen, Mary mine,
To the whisper of the Apennine,
It bursts on the roof like the thunder's roar,
Or like the sea on a northern shore,
Heard in its raging ebb and flow
By the captives pent in the cave below.
The Apennine in the light of day
Is a mighty mountain dim and grey,
Which between the earth and sky doth lay;
But when night comes, a chaos dread
On the dim starlight then is spread,
And the Apennine walks abroad with the storm.

May 4th, 1818.

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TO MARY —

Oh! Mary dear, that you were here
With your brown eyes bright and clear,
And your sweet voice, like a bird
Singing love to its lone mate
In the ivy bower disconsolate;
Voice the sweetest ever heard!
And your brow more * * *
Than the * * * sky
Of this azure Italy.
Mary dear, come to me soon,
I am not well whilst thou art far;
As sunset to the sphered moon,
As twilight to the western star,
Thou, beloved, art to me.
Oh! Mary dear, that you were here;
The Castle echo whispers “Here!”

Este, September 1818.

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THE PAST.

Wilt thou forget the happy hours
Which we buried in Love's sweet bowers,
Heaping over their corpses cold
Blossoms and leaves, instead of mould?
Blossoms which were the joys that fell,
And leaves, the hopes that yet remain.
Forget the dead, the past? O yet
There are ghosts that may take revenge for it,
Memories that make the heart a tomb,
Regrets which glide through the spirit's gloom,
And with ghastly whispers tell
That joy, once lost, is pain.

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SONG OF A SPIRIT.

Within the silent centre of the earth
My mansion is; where I lived insphered
From the beginning, and around my sleep
Have woven all the wondrous imagery
Of this dim spot, which mortals call the world;
Infinite depths of unknown elements
Massed into one impenetrable mask;
Sheets of immeasurable fire, and veins
Of gold and stone, and adamantine iron.
And as a veil in which I walk through Heaven
I have wrought mountains, seas, and waves, and clouds,
And lastly light, whose interfusion dawns
In the dark space of interstellar air.

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LIBERTY.

The fiery mountains answer each other;
Their thunderings are echoed from zone to zone;
The empestuous oceans awake one another,
And the ice-rocks are shaken round winter's zone
When the clarion of the Typhoon is blown.
From a single cloud the lightning flashes,
Whilst a thousand isles are illumined around,
Earthquake is trampling one city to ashes,
An hundred are shuddering and tottering; the sound
Is bellowing underground.
But keener thy gaze than the lightning's glare,
And swifter thy step than the earthquake's tramp;
Thou deafenest the rage of the ocean; thy stare
Makes blind the volcanos; the sun's bright lamp
To thine is a fen-fire damp.
From billow and mountain and exhalation
The sunlight is darted through vapour and blast;
From spirit to spirit, from nation to nation,
From city to hamlet thy dawning is cast,—
And tyrants and slaves are like shadows of night
In the van of the morning light.

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TO —

Mine eyes were dim with tears unshed;
Yes, I was firm—thus did not thou;—
My baffled looks did fear yet dread
To meet thy looks—I could not know
How anxiously they sought to shine
With soothing pity upon mine.
To sit and curb the soul's mute rage
Which preys upon itself alone;
To curse the life which is the cage
Of fettered grief that dares not groan,
Hiding from many a careless eye
The scorned load of agony.
Whilst thou alone, then not regarded,
The [[]] thou alone should be,
To spend years thus, and be rewarded,
As thou, sweet love, requited me
When none were near—Oh! I did wake
From torture for that moment's sake.
Upon my heart thy accents sweet
Of peace and pity, fell like dew
On flowers half dead;—thy lips did meet
Mine tremblingly; thy dark eyes threw
Thy soft persuasion on my brain,
Charming away its dream of pain.
We are not happy, sweet; our state
Is strange and full of doubt and fear;
More need of words that ills abate;—
Reserve or censure come not near
Our sacred friendship, lest there be
No solace left for thou and me.
Gentle and good and mild thou art,
Nor I can live if thou appear
Aught but thyself, or turn thine heart
Away from me, or stoop to wear
The mask of scorn, although it be
To hide the love thou feel for me.

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THE ISLE.

There was a little lawny islet
By anemone and violet,
Like mosaic, paven:
And its roof was flowers and leaves
Which the summer's breath enweaves,
Where nor sun nor showers nor breeze
Pierce the pines and tallest trees,
Each a gem engraven.
Girt by many an azure wave
With which the clouds and mountains pave
A lake's blue chasm.

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TO —

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory—
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.
Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heaped for the beloved's bed;
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

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TIME.

Unfathomable Sea! whose waves are years,
Ocean of Time, whose waters of deep woe
Are brackish with the salt of human tears!
Thou shoreless flood, which in thy ebb and flow
Claspest the limits of mortality!
And sick of prey, yet howling on for more,
Vomitest thy wrecks on its inhospitable shore,
Traucherous in calm, and terrible in storm,
Who shall put forth on thee,
Unfathomable Sea?

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LINES.

That time is dead forever, child,
Drowned, frozen, dead forever!
We look on the past
And stare aghast
At the spectres wailing, pale and ghast,
Of hopes which thou and I beguiled
To death on life's dark river.
The stream we gazed on then, rolled by;
Its waves are unreturning;
But we yet stand
In a lone land,
Like tombs to mark the memory
Of hopes and fears, which fade and flee
In the light of life's dim morning.

November 5th, 1817.

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A SONG.

A widow bird sate mourning for her love
Upon a wintry bough;
The frozen wind kept on above,
The freezing stream below.
There was no leaf upon the forest bare,
No flower upon the ground,
And little motion in the air
Except the mill-wheel's sound.

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THE WORLD'S WANDERERS.

Tell me, thou star, whose wings of light
Speed thee in thy fiery flight,
In what cavern of the night
Will thy pinions close now?
Tell me, moon, thou pale and grey
Pilgrim of heaven's homeless way,
In what depth of night or day
Seekest thou repose now?
Weary wind, who wanderest
Like the world's rejected guest,
Hast thou still some secret nest
On the tree or billow?

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A DIRGE.

Rough wind, that moanest loud
Grief too sad for song;
Wild wind, when sullen cloud
Knells all the night long;
Sad storm, whose tears are vain,
Bare woods, whose branches stain,
Deep caves and dreary main,
Wail, for the world's wrong!

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LINES.

Far, far away, O ye
Halcyons of memory,
Seek some far calmer nest
Than this abandoned breast;—
No news of your false spring
To my heart's winter bring,
Once having gone, in vain
Ye come again.
Vultures, who build your bowers
High in the Future's towers,
Withered hopes on hopes are spread,
Dying joys choked by the dead,
Will serve your beaks for prey
Many a day.

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DIRGE FOR THE YEAR.

Orphan hours, the year is dead,
Come and sigh, come and weep!
Merry hours, smile instead,
For the year is but asleep.
See, it smiles as it is sleeping,
Mocking your untimely weeping.
As an earthquake rocks a corpse
In its coffin in the clay,
So White Winter, that rough nurse,
Rocks the death-cold year to-day;
Solemn hours! wait aloud
For your mother in her shroud.
As the wild air stirs and sways
The tree-swung cradle of a child,
So the breath of these rude days
Rocks the year:—be calm and mild,
Trembling hours, she will arise
With new love within her eyes.
January grey is here,
Like a sexton by her grave;
February bears the bier,
March with grief doth howl and rave
And April weeps—but, O, ye hours,
Follow with May's fairest flowers.

January 1st, 1821.

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SONNET I.

Ye hasten to the dead! What seek ye there,
Ye restless thoughts and busy purposes
Of the idle brain, which the world's livery wear?
Oh thou quick Heart which pantest to possess
All that anticipation feigneth fair!
Thou vainly curious mind which wouldest guess
Whence thou didst come, and whither thou may'st go,
And that which never yet was known would know—
Oh, whither hasten ye that thus ye press
With such swift feet life's green and pleasant path,
Seeking alike from happiness and woe
A refuge in the cavern of grey death?
Oh heart, and mind, and thoughts! What thing do you
Hope to inherit in the grave below?

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SONNET II.

POLITICAL GREATNESS.

Nor happiness, nor majesty, nor fame,
Nor peace, nor strength, nor skill in arms or arts,
Shepherd those herds whom tyranny makes tame;
Verse echoes not one beating of their hearts,
History is but the shadow of their shame,
Art veils her glass, or from the pageant starts
As to oblivion their blind millions fleet,
Staining that Heaven with obscene imagery
Of their own likeness. What are numbers knit
By force or custom? Man who man would be,
Must rule the empire of himself; in it
Must be supreme, establishing his throne
On vanquished will, quelling the anarchy
Of hopes and fears, being himself alone.

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SONNET III.

Alas! good friend, what profit can you see
In hating such an hateless thing as me?
There is no sport in hate where all the rage
Is on one side. In vain would you assuage
Your frowns upon an unresisting smile,
In which not even contempt lurks, to beguile
Your heart, by some faint sympathy of hate.
O conquer what you cannot satiate!
For to your passion I am far more coy
Than ever yet was coldest maid or boy
In winter noon. Of your antipathy
If I am the Narcissus, you are free
To pine into a sound with hating me.

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SONNET IV.

Lift not the painted veil which those who live
Call Life: though unreal shapes be pictured there,
And it but mimic all we would believe
With colours idly spread:—behind, lurk Fear
And Hope, twin destinies; who ever weave
The shadows, which the world calls substance, there.
I knew one who lifted it—he sought,
For his lost heart was tender, things to love
But found them not, alas! nor was there aught
The world contains, the which he could approve.
Through the unheeding many he did move,
A splendour among shadows, a bright blot
Upon this gloomy scene, a Spirit that strove
For truth, and like the Preacher found it not.

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FRAGMENTS.

GINEVRA.*

Wild, pale, and wonder-stricken, even as one
Who staggers forth into the air and sun
From the dark chamber of a mortal fever,
Bewildered, and incapable, and ever
Fancying strange comments in her dizzy brain
Of usual shapes, till the familiar train
Of objects and of persons passed like things
Strange as a dreamer's mad imaginings,
Ginevra from the nuptial altar went;
The vows to which her lips had sworn assent
Rung in her brain still with a jarring din,
Deafening the lost intelligence within.
And so she moved under the bridal veil,
Which made the paleness of her cheek more pale,
And deepened the faint crimson of her mouth,
And darkened her dark locks, as moonlight doth,—
And of the gold and jewels glittering there
She scarce felt conscious,—but the weary glare
Lay like a chaos of unwelcome light,
Vexing the sense with gorgeous undelight.
A moonbeam in the shadow of a cloud
Was less heavenly fair—her face was bowed,
And as she passed, the diamonds in her hair
Were mirrored in the polished marble stair
Which led from the cathedral to the street;
And ever as she went her light fair feet
Erased these images.
The bride-maidens who round her thronging came,
Some with a sense of self-rebuke and shame,
Envyng the unenviable; and others
Making the joy which should have been another's
Their own by gentle sympathy; and some
Sighing to think of an unhappy home:
Some few admiring what can ever lure
Maidens to leave the heaven serene and pure
Of parents' smiles for life's great cheat; a thing
Better to taste sweet in imagining.
But they are all dispersed—and, lo! she stands
Looking in idle grief on her white hands,
Alone within the garden now her own;
And through the sunny air, with jangling tone,

The music of the merry marriage bells,
Killing the azure silence, sinks and swells;—
Absorbed like one within a dream who dreams
That he is dreaming, until slumber seems
A mockery of itself—when suddenly
Antonio stood before her, pale as she.
With agony, with sorrow, and with pride,
He lifted his wan eyes upon the bride,
And said—“Is this thy faith?” and then as one
Whose sleeping face is stricken by the sun
With light like a harsh voice, which bids him rise
And look upon his day of life with eyes
Which weep in vain that they can dream no more,
Ginevra saw her lover, and forbore
To shriek or faint, and checked the stifling blood
Rushing upon her heart, and unsubdued
Said—“Friend, if earthly violence or ill,
Suspicion, doubt, or the tyrannic will
Of parents, chance, or custom, time or change,
Or circumstance, or terror, or revenge,
Or wildered looks, or words, or evil speech,
With all their stings [[]] can impeach
Our love,—we love not:—if the grave which hides
The victim from the tyrant, and divides
The cheek that whitens from the eyes that dart
Imperious inquisition to the heart
That is another’s, could dissever ours,
We love not.”—“What do not the silent hours
Beckon thee to Gherardi’s bridal bed?
Is not that ring”—a pledge, he would have said,
Of broken vows, but she with patient look
The golden circle from her finger took,
And said—“Accept this token of my faith,
The pledge of vows to be absolved by death;
And I am dead or shall be soon—my knell
Will mix it’s music with that merry bell,
Does it not sound as if they sweetly said
‘We toll a corpse out of the marriage bed?’
The flowers upon my bridal chamber strewn
Will serve unfaded for my bier—so soon
That even the dying violet will not die
Before Ginevra.” The strong fantasy
Had made her accents weaker and more weak,
And quenched the crimson life upon her cheek,
And glazed her eyes, and spread an atmosphere
Round her, which chilled the burning noon with fear,
Making her but an image of the thought,
Which, like a prophet or a shadow, brought

News of the terrors of the coming time.
Like an accuser branded with the crime
He would have cast on a beloved friend,
Whose dying eyes reproach not to the end
The pale betrayer—he then with vain repentance
Would share, he cannot now avert, the sentence—
Antonio stood and would have spoken, when
The compound voice of women and of men
Was heard approaching; he retired, while she
Was led amid the admiring company
Back to the palace,—and her maidens soon
Changed her attire for the afternoon,
And left her at her own request to keep
An hour of quiet and rest:—like one asleep
With open eyes and folded hands she lay,
Pale in the light of the declining day.
Meanwhile the day sinks fast, the sun is set,
And in the lighted hall the guests are met;
The beautiful looked lovelier in the light
Of love, and admiration, and delight
Reflected from a thousand hearts and eyes
Kindling a momentary Paradise.
This crowd is safer than the silent wood,
Where love's own doubts disturb the solitude;
On frozen hearts the fiery rain of wine
Falls, and the dew of music more divine
Tempers the deep emotions of the time
To spirits cradled in a sunny clime:—
How many meet, who never yet have met,
To part too soon, but never to forget.
How many saw the beauty, power and wit
Of looks and words which ne'er enchanted yet;
But life's familiar veil was now withdrawn,
As the world leaps before an earthquake's dawn,
And unprophetic of the coming hours,
The matin winds from the expanded flowers,
Scatter their hoarded incense, and awaken
The earth, until the dewy sleep is shaken
From every living heart which it possesses,
Through seas and winds, cities and wildernesses,
As if the future and the past were all
Treasured in the instant;—so Gherardi's hall
Laughed in the mirth of its lord's festival,
Till some one asked—"Where is the Bride?" And then
A bride's-maid went,—and ere she came again
A silence fell upon the guests—a pause
Of expectation, as when beauty awes
All hearts with its approach, though unbeheld;

Then wonder, and then fear that wonder quelled;—
For whispers passed from mouth to ear which drew
The colour from the hearer's cheeks, and flew
Louder and swifter round the company;
And then Gherardi entered with an eye
Of ostentatious trouble, and a crowd
Surrounded him, and some were weeping loud.
They found Ginevra dead! if it be death,
To lie without motion, or pulse, or breath,
With waxen cheeks, and limbs cold, stiff, and white,
And open eyes, whose fixed and glassy light
Mocked at the speculation they had owned.
If it be death, when there is felt around
A smell of clay, a pale and icy glare,
And silence, and a sense that lifts the hair
From the scalp to the ancles, as it were
Corruption from the spirit passing forth,
And giving all it shrouded to the earth,
And leaving as swift lightning in its flight
Ashes, and smoke, and darkness: in our night
Of thought we know thus much of death,—no more
Than the unborn dream of our life before
Their barks are wrecked on its inhospitable shore.
The marriage feast and its solemnity
Was turned to funeral pomp—the company
With heavy hearts and looks, broke up; nor they
Who loved the dead went weeping on their way
Alone, but sorrow mixed with sad surprize
Loosened the springs of pity in all eyes,
On which that form, whose fate they weep in vain,
Will never, thought they, kindle smiles again.
The lamps which half extinguished in their haste
Gleamed few and faint o'er the abandoned feast,
Shewed as it were within the vaulted room
A cloud of sorrow hanging, as if gloom
Had passed out of men's minds into the air.
Some few yet stood around Gherardi there,
Friends and relations of the dead,—and he,
A loveless man, accepted torpidly
The consolation that he wanted not,
Awe in the place of grief within him wrought.
Their whispers made the solemn silence seem
More still—some wept, []
Some melted into tears without a sob,
And some with hearts that might be heard to throb
Leant on the table, and at intervals
Shuddered to hear through the deserted halls
And corridors the thrilling shrieks which came

Upon the breeze of night, that shook the flame
Of every torch and taper as it swept
From out the chamber where the women kept;—
Their tears fell on the dear companion cold
Of pleasures now departed; then was knolled
The bell of death, and soon the priests arrived,
And finding death their penitent had shrived,
Returned like ravens from a corpse whereon
A vulture has just feasted to the bone.
And then the mourning women came.—
* * * * *

THE DIRGE.

Old winter was gone
In his weakness back to the mountains hoar,
And the spring came down
From the planet that hovers upon the shore
Where the sea of sunlight encroaches
On the limits of wintry night;—
If the land, and the air, and the sea
Rejoice not when spring approaches,
We did not rejoice in thee,
Ginevra!
She is still, she is cold
On the bridal couch,
One step to the white death bed,
And one to the bier,
And one to the charnel—and one, O where?
The dark arrow fled
In the noon.
Ere the sun through heaven once more has rolled,
The rats in her heart
Will have made their nest,
And the worms be alive in her golden hair,
While the spirit that guides the sun,
Sits throned in his flaming chair,
She shall sleep.
* * * * *

Pisa, 1821.

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CHARLES THE FIRST.

FRAGMENTS.

ACT I. SCENE I.

The Pageant to [celebrate] the arrival of the Queen.

A PURSUIVANT.

Place, for the Marshal of the Masque!

FIRST SPEAKER.

What thinkest thou of this quaint masque, which turns,
Like morning from the shadow of the night,
The night to day, and London to a place
Of peace and joy?

SECOND SPEAKER.

And Hell to Heaven.
Eight years are gone,
And they seem hours, since in this populous street
I trod on grass made green by summer's rain,
For the red plague kept state within that palace
Where now reigns vanity—in nine years more
The roots will be refreshed with civil blood;
And thank the mercy of insulted Heaven
That sin and wrongs wound as an orphan's cry,
The patience of the great avenger's ear.

THIRD SPEAKER.(A *YOUTH*).

Yet, father, tis a happy sight to see,
Beautiful, innocent, and unforbidden
By God or man;—'tis like the bright procession
Of skiey visions in a solemn dream
From which men wake as from a paradise,
And draw new strength to tread the thorns of life.
If God be good, wherefore should this be evil?
And if this be not evil, dost thou not draw
Unseasonable poison from the flowers
Which bloom so rarely in this barren world?

O, kill these bitter thoughts which make the present
Dark as the future!—

* * * * *

When avarice and tyranny, vigilant fear,
And open-eyed conspiracy lie sleeping
As on Hell's threshold; and all gentle thoughts
Waken to worship him who giveth joys
With his own gift.

SECOND SPEAKER.

How young art thou in this old age of time!
How green in this grey world! Canst thou not think
Of change in that low scene, in which thou art
Not a spectator but an actor? []
The day that dawns in fire will die in storms,
Even though the noon be calm. My travel's done;
Before the whirlwind wakes I shall have found
My inn of lasting rest, but thou must still
Be journeying on in this inclement air.

* * * * *

FIRST SPEAKER.

That
Is the Archbishop.

SECOND SPEAKER.

Rather say the Pope.
London will be soon his Rome: he walks
As if he trod upon the heads of men.
He looks elate, drunken with blood and gold;—
Beside him moves the Babylonian woman
Invisibly, and with her as with his shadow,
Mitred adulterer! he is joined in sin,
Which turns Heaven's milk of mercy to revenge.

ANOTHER CITIZEN(*LIFTING UP HIS EYES*).

Good Lord! rain it down upon him. [[]]
Amid her ladies walks the papist queen,
As if her nice feet scorned our English earth.
There's old Sir Henry Vane, the Earl of Pembroke,
Lord Essex, and Lord Keeper Coventry,
And others who make base their English breed
By vile participation of their honours
With papists, atheists, tyrants, and apostates.

When lawyers mask 'tis time for honest men
To strip the vizer from their purposes.
* * * * *

FOURTH SPEAKER(*A PURSUIRANT*)

Give place, give place!—
You torch-bearers advance to the great gate,
And then attend the Marshal of the Masque
Into the Royal presence.

FIFTH SPEAKER(*A LAW STUDENT*).

What thinkest thou
Of this quaint show of ours, my aged friend?

FIRST SPEAKER.

I will not think but that our country's wounds
May yet be healed—The king is just and gracious,
Though wicked counsels now pervert his will:
These once cast off—

SECOND SPEAKER.

As adders cast their skins
And keep their venom, so kings often change;
Councils and counsellors hang on one another,
Hiding the loathsome []
Like the base patchwork of a leper's rags.

THIRD SPEAKER.

O, still those dissonant thoughts—List! loud music
Grows on the enchanted air! And see, the torches
Restlessly flashing, and the crowd divided
Like waves before an Admiral's prow.
* * * * *

ANOTHER SPEAKER.

Give place—
To the Marshal of the Masque!

THIRD SPEAKER.

How glorious! See those thronging chariots

Rolling like painted clouds before the wind:
Some are
Like curved shells dyed by the azure depths
Of Indian seas; some like the new-born moon;
And some like cars in which the Romans climbed
(Canopied by Victory's eagle wings outspread)
The Capitolian—See how gloriously
The mettled horses in the torchlight stir
Their gallant riders, while they check their pride,
Like shapes of some diviner element!

SECOND SPEAKER.

Aye, there they are—
Nobles, and sons of nobles, patentees,
Monopolists, and stewards of this poor farm,
On whose lean sheep sit the prophetic crows.
Here is the pomp that strips the houseless orphan,
Here is the pride that breaks the desolate heart.
These are the lilies glorious as Solomon,
Who toil not, neither do they spin,—unless
It be the webs they catch poor rogues withal.
Here is the surfeit which to them who earn
The niggard wages of the earth, scarce leaves
The tithe that will support them till they crawl
Back to its cold hard bosom. Here is health
Followed by grim disease, glory by shame,
Waste by lame famine, wealth by squalid want,
And England's sin by England's punishment.
And, as the effect pursues the cause foregone,
Lo, giving substance to my words, behold
At once the sign and the thing signified—
A troop of cripples, beggars, and lean outcasts,
Horsed upon stumbling shapes, carted with dung,
Dragged for a day from cellars and low cabins
And rotten hiding-holes to point the moral
Of this presentiment, and bring up the rear
Of painted pomp with misery!

SPEAKER.

'Tis but
The anti-masque, and serves as discords do
In sweetest music. Who would love May flowers
If they succeeded not to Winter's flaw;
Or day unchanged by night; or joy itself
Without the touch of sorrow?

* * * * *

SCENE II.

A Chamber in Whitehall.

Enter the King, Queen, Laud, Wentworth, and Archy.

KING.

Thanks, gentlemen, I heartily accept
This token of your service: your gay masque
Was performed gallantly.

QUEEN.

And, gentlemen,
Call your poor Queen your debtor. Your quaint pageant
Rose on me like the figures of past years,
Treading their still path back to infancy,
More beautiful and mild as they draw nearer
The quiet cradle. I could have almost wept
To think I was in Paris, where these shows
Are well devised—such as I was ere yet
My young heart shared with [[]] the task,
The careful weight of this great monarchy.
There, gentlemen, between the sovereign's pleasure
And that which it regards, no clamour lifts
Its proud interposition.

* * * * *

KING.

My lord of Canterbury.

ARCHY.

The fool is here.

LAUD.

I crave permission of your Majesty
To order that this insolent fellow be
Chastised, he mocks the sacred character,
Scoffs at the stake, and—

KING.

What, my Archy!

He mocks and mimics all he sees and hears,
Yet with a quaint and graceful license—Prithce
For this once do not as Prynne would, were he
Primate of England.
He lives in his own world; and, like a parrot,
Hung in his gilded prison from the window
Of a queen's bower over the public way,
Blasphemes with a bird's mind:—his words, like arrows
Which know no aim beyond the archer's wit,
Strike sometimes what eludes philosophy.

QUEEN.

Go, sirrah, and repent of your offence
Ten minutes in the rain: be it your penance
To bring news how the world goes there. Poor Archy!
He weaves about himself a world of mirth
Out of this wreck of ours.

LAUD.

I take with patience, as my master did,
All scoffs permitted from above.

KING.

My Lord,
Pray overlook these papers. Archy's words
Had wings, but these have talons.

QUEEN.

And the lion
That wears them must be tamed. My dearest lord,
I see the new-born courage in your eye
Armed to strike dead the spirit of the time.

* * * * *

Do thou persist: for, faint but in resolve,
And it were better thou hadst still remained
The slave of thine own slaves, who tear like curs
The fugitive, and flee from the pursuer;
And Opportunity, that empty wolf,
Flies at his throat who falls. Subdue thy actions
Even to the disposition of thy purpose,
And be that tempered as the Ebro's steel;
And banish weak-eyed Mercy to the weak
Whence she will greet thee with a gift of peace,
And not betray thee with a traitor's kiss,

As when she keeps the company of rebels,
Who think that she is fear. This do, lest we
Should fall as from a glorious pinnacle
In a bright dream, and wake as from a dream
Out of our worshipped state.

* * * * *

LAUD.

* * And if this suffice not,
Unleash the sword and fire, that in their thirst
They may lick up that scum of schismatics.
I laugh at those weak rebels who, desiring
What we possess, still prate of christian peace,
As if those dreadful messengers of wrath,
Which play the part of God 'twixt right and wrong,
Should be let loose against innocent sleep
Of templed cities and the smiling fields,
For some poor argument of policy
Which touches our own profit or our pride,
Where it indeed were christian charity
To turn the cheek even to the smiter's hand:
And when our great Redeemer, when our God
Is scorned in his immediate ministers,
They talk of peace!
Such peace as Canaan found, let Scotland now.

* * * * *

QUEEN.

My beloved lord,
Have you not noted that the fool of late
Has lost his careless mirth, and that his words
Sound like the echoes of our saddest fears?
What can it mean? I should be loth to think
Some factious slave had tutored him.

KING.

It partly is,
That our minds piece the vacant intervals
Of his wild words with their own fashioning;
As in the imagery of summer clouds,
Or coals in the winter fire, idlers find
The perfect shadows of their teeming thoughts:
And partly, that the terrors of the time
Are sown by wandering Rumour in all spirits;
And in the lightest and the least, may best

Be seen the current of the coming wind.

QUEEN.

Your brain is overwrought with these deep thoughts;
Come, I will sing to you; let us go try
These airs from Italy,—and you shall see
A cradled miniature of yourself asleep,
Stamped on the heart by never-erring love;
Liker than any Vandyke ever made,
A pattern to the unborn age of thee,
Over whose sweet beauty I have wept for joy
A thousand times, and now should weep for sorrow,
Did I not think that after we were dead
Our fortunes would spring high in him, and that
The cares we waste upon our heavy crown
Would make it light and glorious as a wreath
Of heaven's beams for his dear innocent brow.

KING.

Dear Henrietta!
* * * * *

SCENE III.

Hamiden, Pym, Cromwell, *and the younger* Vane.

HAMPDEN.

England, farewell! thou, who hast been my cradle,
Shalt never be my dungeon or my grave!
I held what I inherited in thee,
As pawn for that inheritance of freedom
Which thou hast sold for thy despoiler's smile:—
How can I call thee England, or my country?
Does the wind hold?

VANE.

The vanes sit steady
Upon the Abbey towers. The silver lightnings
Of the evening star, spite of the city's smoke,
Tell that the north wind reigns in the upper air.
Mark too that flock of fleecy winged clouds
Sailing athwart St. Margaret's.

HAMPDEN.

Hail, fleet herald
 Of tempest! that wild pilot who shall guide
 Hearts free as his, to realms as pure as thee,
 Beyond the shot of tyranny! And thou,
 Fair star, whose beam lies on the wide Atlantic,
 Athwart its zones of tempest and of calm,
 Bright as the path to a beloved home,
 O light us to the isles of th' evening land!
 Like floating Edens, cradled in the glimmer
 Of sunset, through the distant mist of years
 Tinged by departing Hope, they gleam! Lone regions,
 Where power's poor dupes and victims, yet have never
 Propitiated the savage fear of kings
 With purest blood of noblest hearts; whose dew
 Is yet unstained with tears of those who wake
 To weep each day the wrongs on which it dawns;
 Whose sacred silent air owns yet no echo
 Of formal blasphemies; nor impious rites
 Wrest man's free worship from the God who loves
 Towards the worm, who envies us his love,
 Receive thou young [[]] of Paradise,
 These exiles from the old and sinful world!
 This glorious clime, this firmament, whose lights
 Dart mitigated influence through the veil
 Of pale blue atmosphere; whose tears keep green
 The pavement of this moist all-feeding earth,
 This vaporous horizon; whose dim round
 Is bastioned by the circumfluous sea,
 Repelling invasion from the sacred towers,
 Presses upon me like a dungeon's grate,
 A low dark roof, a damp and narrow vault:
 The mighty universe becomes a cell
 Too narrow for the soul that owns no master.
 While the loathliest spot
 Of this wide prison, England, is a nest
 Of cradled peace built on the mountain tops,
 To which the eagle-spirits of the free,
 Which range through heaven and earth, and scorn the storm
 Of time, and gaze upon the light of truth,
 Return to brood over the [[]] thoughts
 That cannot die, and may not be repelled.
 * * * * *

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PRINCE ATHANASE.

PART II.

FRAGMENT I.

Prince Athanase had one beloved friend,
An old, old man, with hair of silver white,
And lips where heavenly smiles would hang and blend
With his wise words; and eyes whose arrowy light
Shone like the reflex of a thousand minds.
He was the last whom superstition's blight
Had spared in Greece—the blight that cramps and blinds,—
And in his olive bower at Cenoë
Had sate from earliest youth. Like one who finds
A fertile island in the barren sea,
One mariner who has survived his mates
Many a drear month in a great ship—so he
With soul-sustaining songs, and sweet debates
Of ancient lore, there fed his lonely being:—
“The mind becomes that which it contemplates,”—
And thus Zonoras, by forever seeing
Their bright creations, grew like wisest men;
And when he heard the crash of nations fleeing
A bloodier power than ruled thy ruins then,
O sacred Hellas! many weary years
He wandered, till the path of Laian's glen
Was grass-grown—and the unremembered tears
Were dry in Laian for their honoured chief,
Who fell in Byzant, pierced by Moslem spears:—
And as the lady looked with faithful grief
From her high lattice o'er the rugged path,
Where she once saw that horseman toil, with brief
And blighting hope, who with the news of death
Struck body and soul as with a mortal blight,
She saw beneath the chesnuts, far beneath,
An old man toiling up, a weary wight;
And soon within her hospitable hall
She saw his white hairs glittering in the light
Of the wood fire, and round his shoulders fall;
And his wan visage and his withered mien
Yet calm and [[]] and majestic.
And Athanase, her child, who must have been
Then three years old, sate opposite and gazed.

FRAGMENT II.

Such was Zonoras; and as daylight finds
An amaranth glittering on the path of frost,
When autumn nights have nipt all weaker kinds,
Thus had his age, dark, cold, and tempest-tost,
Shone truth upon Zonoras; and he filled
From fountains pure, nigh overgrown and lost,
The spirit of Prince Athanase, a child,
With soul-sustaining songs of ancient lore
And philosophic wisdom, clear and mild.
And sweet and subtle talk they evermore,
The pupil and master shared; until,
Sharing the undiminishable store,
The youth, as shadows on a grassy hill
Outran the winds that chase them, soon outran
His teacher, and did teach with native skill
Strange truths and new to that experienced man;
Still they were friends, as few have ever been
Who mark the extremes of life's discordant span.
And in the caverns of the forest green,
Or by the rocks of echoing ocean hoar,
Zonoras and Prince Athanase were seen
By summer woodmen; and when winter's roar
Sounded o'er earth and sea its blast of war,
The Balearic fisher, driven from shore,
Hanging upon the peaked wave afar,
Then saw their lamp from Laian's turret gleam,
Piercing the stormy darkness like a star,
Which pours beyond the sea one stedfast beam,
Whilst all the constellations of the sky
Seemed wrecked. [] They did but seem—
For, lo! the wintry clouds are all gone by,
And bright Arcturus through you pines is glowing,
And far o'er southern waves, immoveably
Belted Orion hangs—warm light is flowing
From the young moon into the sunset's chasm.—
“O, summer night! with power divine, bestowing
“On thine own bird the sweet enthusiasm
Which overflows in notes of liquid gladness,
Filling the sky like light! How many a spasm
“Of fevered brains, oppressed with grief and madness,
Were lulled by thee, delightful nightingale!
And these soft waves, murmuring a gentle sadness,
“And the far sighings of you piny dale
Made vocal by some wind, we feel not here,—
I bear alone what nothing may avail
“To lighten—a strange load!”—No human ear

Heard this lament; but o'er the visage wan
Of Athanase, a ruffling atmosphere
Of dark emotion, a swift shadow ran,
Like wind upon some forest-bosomed lake,
Glassy and dark.—And that divine old man
Beheld his mystic friend's whole being shake,
Even where its inmost depths were gloomiest—
And with a calm and measured voice he spake,
And with a soft and equal pressure, prest
That cold lean hand:—"Dost thou remember yet
When the curved moon then lingering in the west
"Paused in you waves her mighty horns to wet,
How in those beams we walked, half resting on the sea?
'Tis just one year—sure thou dost not forget—
"Then Plato's words of light in thee and me
Lingered like moonlight in the moonless east,
For we had just then read—thy memory
"Is faithful now—the story of the feast;
And Agathon and Diotima seemed
From death and [] released.

FRAGMENT III.

'Twas at the season when the Earth upsprings
From slumber, as a sphered angel's child,
Shadowing its eyes with green and golden wings,
Stands up before its mother bright and mild,
Of whose soft voice the air expectant seems—
So stood before the sun, which shone and smiled
To see it rise thus joyous from its dreams,
The fresh and radiant Earth. The hoary grove
Waxed green—and flowers burst forth like starry beams;—
The grass in the warm sun did start and move,
And sea-buds burst under the waves serene:—
How many a one, though none be near to love,
Loves then the shade of his own soul, half seen
In any mirror—or the spring's young minions,
The winged leaves amid the copses green;—
How many a spirit then puts on the pinions
Of fancy, and outstrips the lagging blast,
And his own steps—and over wide dominions
Sweeps in his dream-drawn chariot, far and fast,
More fleet than storms—the wide world shrinks below,
When winter and despondency are past.
'Twas at this season that Prince Athanase
Past the white Alps—those eagle-baffling mountains
Slept in their shrouds of snow;—beside the ways
The waterfalls were voiceless—for their fountains

Were changed to mines of sunless crystal now,
Or by the curdling winds—like brazen wings
Which clanged alone the mountain's marble brow,
Warped into adamantine fretwork, hung
And filled with frozen light the chasm below.

FRAGMENT IV.

Thou art the wine whose drunkenness is all
We can desire, O Love! and happy souls,
Ere from thy vine the leaves of autumn fall,
Catch thee, and feed from their o'erflowing bowls
Thousands who thirst for thy ambrosial dew;—
Thou art the radiance which where ocean rolls
Invests it; and when heavens are blue
Thou fillest them; and when the earth is fair
The shadow of thy moving wings imbue
Its deserts and its mountains, till they wear
Beauty like some bright robe;—thou ever soarest
Among the towers of men, and as soft air
In spring, which moves the unawakened forest,
Clothing with leaves its branches bare and bleak,
Thou floatest among men; and aye implorest
That which from thee they should implore:—the weak
Alone kneel to thee, offering up the hearts
The strong have broken—yet where shall any seek
A garment whom thou clothest not?

Marlow, 1817.

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MAZENGIH.*

Oh! foster-nurse of man's abandoned glory,
Since Athens, its great mother, sunk in splendour;
Thou shadowest forth that mighty shape in story,
As ocean its wrecked fanes, severe yet tender:—
The light-invested angel Poesy
Was drawn from the dim world to welcome thee.
And thou in painting didst transcribe all taught
By loftiest meditations; marble knew
The sculptor's fearless soul—and as he wrought,
The grace of his own power and freedom grew.
And more than all, heroic, just, sublime
Thou wert among the false—was this thy crime?
Yes; and on Pisa's marble walls the twine
Of direst weeds hangs garlanded—the snake
Inhabits its wrecked palaces;—in thine
A beast of subtler venom now doth make
Its lair, and sits amid their glories overthrown,
And thus thy victim's fate is as thine own.
The sweetest flowers are ever frail and rare,
And love and freedom blossom but to wither;
And good and ill like vines entangled are,
So that their grapes may oft be plucked together;—
Divide the vintage ere thou drink, then make
Thy heart rejoice for dead Mazenghi's sake.
No record of his crime remains in story,
But if the morning bright as evening shone,
It was some high and holy deed, by glory
Pursued into forgetfulness, which won
From the blind crowd he made secure and free
The patriot's meed, toil, death, and infamy.
For when by sound of trumpet was declared
A price upon his life, and there was set
A penalty of blood on all who shared
So much of water with him as might wet
His lips, which speech divided not—he went
Alone, as you may guess, to banishment.
Amid the mountains, like a hunted beast,
He hid himself, and hunger, cold, and toil,
Month after month endured; it was a feast
Whene'er he found those globes of deep red gold
Which in the woods the strawberry-tree doth bear,
Suspended in their emerald atmosphere.
And in the roofless huts of vast morasses,
Deserted by the fever-stricken serf,

All overgrown with reeds and long rank grasses,
And hillocks heaped of moss-inwoven turf,
And where the huge and speckled aloe made,
Rooted in stones, a broad and pointed shade,
He housed himself. There is a point of strand
Near Vada's tower and town; and on one side
The treacherous marsh divides it from the land,
Shadowed by pine and ilex forests wide,
And on the other creeps eternally,
Through muddy weeds, the shallow, sullen sea.

Naples, 1818.

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THE WOODMAN AND THE NIGHTINGALE.

A woodman whose rough heart was out of tune
(I think such hearts yet never came to good)
Hated to hear, under the stars or moon
One nightingale in an interfluous wood
Sate the hungry dark with melody;—
And as a vale is watered by a flood,
Or as the moonlight fills the open sky
Struggling with darkness—as a tuberos
Peoples some Indian dell with scents which lie
Like clouds above the flower from which they rose,
The singing of that happy nightingale
In this sweet forest, from the golden close
Of evening, till the star of dawn may fail,
Was interfused upon the silentness;
The folded roses and the violets pale
Heard her within their slumbers, the abyss
Of heaven with all its planets; the dull ear
Of the night-cradled earth; the loneliness
Of the circumfluous waters,—every sphere
And every flower and beam and cloud and wave,
And every wind of the mute atmosphere,
And every beast stretched in its rugged cave,
And every bird lulled on its mossy bough,
And every silver moth fresh from the grave,
Which is its cradle—ever from below
Aspiring like one who loves too fair, too far,
To be consumed within the purest glow
Of one serene and unapproached star,
As if it were a lamp of earthly light,
Unconscious, as some human lovers are,
Itself how low, how high beyond all height
The heaven where it would perish!—and every form
That worshipped in the temple of the night
Was awed into delight, and by the charm
Girt as with an interminable zone,
Whilst that sweet bird, whose music was a storm
Of sound, shook forth the dull oblivion
Out of their dreams; harmony became love
In every soul but one
And so this man returned with axe and saw
At evening close from killing the tall treen,
The soul of whom by nature's gentle law
Was each a wood-nymph, and kept ever green
The pavement and the roof of the wild copse,

Chequering the sunlight of the blue serene
With jagged leaves,—and from the forest tops
Singing the winds to sleep—or weeping oft
Fast showers of aerial water drops
Into their mother's bosom, sweet and soft,
Nature's pure tears which have no bitterness;—
Around the cradles of the birds aloft
They spread themselves into the loveliness
Of fan-like leaves, and over palid flowers
Hang like moist clouds:—or, where high branches kiss,
Make a green space among the silent bowers,
Like a vast fane in a metropolis,
Surrounded by the columns and the towers
All overwrought with branch-like traceries
In which there is religion—and the mute
Persuasion of unkindled melodies,
Odours and gleams and murmurs, which the lute
Of the blind pilot-spirit of the blast
Stirs as it sails, now grave and now acute,
Wakening the leaves and waves ere it has past
To such brief unison as on the brain
One tone, which never can recur, has cast,
One accent never to return again.

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TO THE MOON.

Art thou pale for weariness
Of climbing heaven, and gazing on the earth,
Wandering companionless
Among the stars that have a different birth,—
And ever changing, like a joyless eye
That finds no object worth its constancy?

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SONG FOR TASSO.

I loved—alas! our life is love;
But when we cease to breathe and move
I do suppose love ceases too.
I thought, but not as now I do,
Keen thoughts and bright of linked lore,
Of all that men had thought before,
And all that nature shows, and more.
And still I love and still I think,
But strangely, for my heart can drink
The dregs of such despair, and live,
And love; []
And if I think, my thoughts come fast,
I mix the present with the past,
And each seems uglier than the last.
Sometimes I see before me flee
A silver spirit's form, like thee,
O Leonora, and I sit
[[]] still watching it,
Till by the grated casement's ledge
It fades, with such a sigh, as sedge
Breathes o'er the breezy streamlet's edge.

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THE WANING MOON.

And like a dying lady, lean and pale,
Who totters forth, wrapt in a gauzy veil,
Out of her chamber, led by the insane
And feeble wanderings of her fading brain,
The moon arose up in the murky earth,
A white and shapeless mass.

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EPITAPH.

These are two friends whose lives were undivided,
So let their memory be, now they have glided
Under the grave; let not their bones be parted,
For their two hearts in life were single hearted.

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ALASTOR; OR THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE.

Nondum amabam, et amare amabam, quærebam quid amarem amans amare.

—Confess. St. August.

Earth, ocean, air, beloved brotherhood!
If our great Mother has imbued my soul
With aught of natural piety to feel
Your love, and recompense the boon with mine;
If dewy morn, and odorous noon, and even,
With sunset and its gorgeous ministers,
And solemn midnight's tingling silentness;
If autumn's hollow sighs in the sere wood,
And winter robing with pure snow and crowns
Of starry ice the gray grass and bare boughs;
If spring's voluptuous pantings when she breathes
Her first sweet kisses, have been dear to me;
If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast
I consciously have injured, but still loved
And cherished these my kindred;—then forgive
This boast, beloved brethren, and withdraw
No portion of your wonted favour now!
Mother of this unfathomable world!
Favour my solemn song, for I have loved
Thee ever, and thee only; I have watched
Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps
And my heart ever gazes on the depth
Of thy deep mysteries. I have made my bed
In charnels and on coffins, where black death
Keeps record of the trophies won from thee,
Hoping to still these obstinate questionings
Of thee and thine, by forcing some lone ghost,
Thy messenger, to render up the tale
Of what we are. In lone and silent hours,
When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness,
Like an inspired and desperate alchemist
Staking his very life on some dark hope,
Have I mixed awful talk and asking looks
With my most innocent love, until strange tears
Uniting with those breathless kisses, made
Such magic as compels the charmed night
To render up thy charge: . . . and, though ne'er yet
Thou hast unveiled thy inmost sanctuary,
Enough from incommunicable dream,
And twilight phantasms and deep noonday thought

Has shone within me, that serenely now,
And moveless as a long-forgotten lyre,
Suspended in the solitary dome
Of some mysterious and deserted fane,
I wait thy breath, Great Parent, that my strain
May modulate with murmurs of the air,
And motions of the forests and the sea,
And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
Of night and day, and the deep heart of man.
There was a Poet whose untimely tomb
No human hands with pious reverence reared,
But the charmed eddies of autumnal winds
Built o'er his mouldering bones a pyramid
Of mouldering leaves in the waste wilderness:
A lovely youth,—no mourning maiden decked
With weeping flowers, or votive cypress wreath,
The lone couch of his everlasting sleep:
Gentle, and brave, and generous, no lorn bard
Breathed o'er his dark fate one melodious sigh:
He lived, he died, he sung, in solitude.
Strangers have wept to hear his passionate notes,
And virgins, as unknown he past, have sighed
And wasted for fond love of his wild eyes.
The fire of those soft orbs has ceased to burn,
And Silence, too enamoured of that voice,
Locks its mute music in her rugged cell.
By solemn vision and bright silver dream,
His infancy was nurtured. Every sight
And sound from the vast earth and ambient air,
Sent to his heart its choicest impulses.
The fountains of divine philosophy
Fled not his thirsting lips; and all of great,
Or good, or lovely, which the sacred past
In truth or fable consecrates, he felt
And knew. When early youth had past, he left
His cold fireside and alienated home
To seek strange truths in undiscovered lands.
Many a wide waste and tangled wilderness
Has lured his fearless steps; and as he bought
With his sweet voice and eyes, from savage men,
His rest and food. Nature's most secret steps
He like her shadow, has pursued, where'er
The red volcano overcanopies
Its fields of snow and pinnacles of ice
With burning smoke; or where bitumen lakes,
On black bare pointed islets ever beat
With sluggish surge; or where the secret caves
Rugged and dark, winding among the springs

Of fire and poison, inaccessible
To avarice or pride, their starry domes
Of diamond and of gold expand above
Numberless and immeasurable halls,
Frequent with crystal column, and clear shrines
Of pearl, and thrones radiant with chrysolite.
Nor had that scene of ampler majesty
Than gems or gold, the varying roof of heaven
And the green earth lost in his heart its claims
To love and wonder; he would linger long
In lonesome vales, making the wild his home,
Until the doves and squirrels would partake
From his innocuous hand his bloodless food,
Lured by the gentle meaning of his looks,
And the wild antelope, that starts whene'er
The dry leaf rustles in the brake, suspend
Her timid steps, to gaze upon a form
More graceful than her own.
His wandering step,
Obedient to high thoughts, has visited
The awful ruins of the days of old:
Athens, and Tyre, and Balbec, and the waste
Where stood Jerusalem, the fallen towers
Of Babylon, the eternal pyramids,
Memphis and Thebes, and whatsoe'er of strange
Sculptured on alabaster obelisk,
Or jasper tomb, or mutilated sphinx,
Dark Ethiopia on her desert hills
Conceals. Among the ruined temples there,
Stupendous columns, and wild images
Of more than man, where marble demons watch
The Zodiac's brazen mystery, and dead men
Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around,
He lingered, poring on memorials
Of the world's youth, through the long burning day
Gazed on those speechless shapes, nor, when the moon
Filled the mysterious halls with floating shades
Suspended he that task, but ever gazed
And gazed, till meaning on his vacant mind
Flashed like strong inspiration, and he saw
The thrilling secrets of the birth of time.
Meanwhile an Arab maiden brought his food,
Her daily portion, from her father's tent,
And spread her matting for his couch, and stole
From duties and repose to tend his steps:—
Enamoured, yet not daring for deep awe
To speak her love:—and watched his nightly sleep,
Sleepless herself, to gaze upon his lips

Parted in slumber, whence the regular breath
Of innocent dreams arose: then, when red morn
Made paler the pale moon, to her cold home,
Wildered and wan and panting, she returned.
The Poet wandering on, through Arabie
And Persia, and the wild Carmanian waste,
And o'er the aërial mountains which pour down
Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,
In joy and exultation held his way;
Till in the vale of Cachmire, far within
Its loneliest dell, where odorous plants entwine
Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower,
Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched
His languid limbs. A vision on his sleep
There came, a dream of hopes that never yet
Had flushed his cheek. He dreamed a veiled maid
Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
Heard in the calm of thought; its music long,
Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held
His inmost sense suspended in its web
Of many-coloured woof and shifting hues.
Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,
And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy,
Herself a poet. Soon the solemn mood
Of her pure mind kindled through all her frame
A permeating fire: wild numbers then
She raised, with voice stifled in tremulous sobs
Subdued by its own pathos: her fair hands
Were bare alone, sweeping from some strange harp
Strange symphony, and in their branching veins
The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale.
The beating of her heart was heard to fill
The pauses of her music, and her breath
Tumultuously accorded with those fits
Of intermitted song. Sudden she rose,
As if her heart impatiently endured
Its bursting burthen: at the sound he turned,
And saw by the warm light of their own life
Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil
Of woven wind, her outspread arms now bare,
Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,
Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips
Outstretched, and pale, and quivering eagerly.
His strong heart sunk and sickened with excess
Of love. He reared his shuddering limbs and quelled
His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet

Her panting bosom:—she drew back awhile,
Then, yielding to the irresistible joy,
With frantic gesture and short breathless cry
Folded his frame in her dissolving arms.
Now blackness veiled his dizzy eyes, and night
Involved and swallowed up the vision; sleep,
Like a dark flood suspended in its course,
Rolled back its impulse on his vacant brain.
Roused by the shock, he started from his trance—
The cold white light of morning, the blue moon
Low in the west, the clear and garish hills,
The distinct valley and the vacant woods,
Spread round where he stood.—Whither have fled
The hues of heaven that canopied his bower
Of yesternight? The sounds that soothed his sleep,
The mystery and the majesty of earth,
The joy, the exultation? His wan eyes
Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly
As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven.
The spirit of sweet human love has sent
A vision to the sleep of him who spurned
Her choicest gifts. He eagerly pursues
Beyond the realms of dream that fleeting shade;
He overleaps the bound. Alas! Alas!
Were limbs and breath and being intertwined
Thus treacherously? Lost, lost, for ever lost,
In the wide pathless desert of dim sleep,
That beautiful shape! does the dark gate of death
Conduct to thy mysterious paradise,
O Sleep? Does the bright arch of rainbow clouds,
And pendent mountains seen in the calm lake,
Lead only to a black and watery depth,
While death's blue vault with loathliest vapours hung,
Where every shade which the foul grave exhales
Hides its dead eye from the detested day,
Conduct, O Sleep, to thy delightful realms?
This doubt with sudden tide flowed on his heart,
The insatiate hope which it awakened, stung
His brain even like despair.
While day-light held
The sky, the Poet kept mute conference
With his still soul. At night the passion came,
Like the fierce fiend of a distempered dream,
And shook him from his rest, and led him forth
Into the darkness.—As an eagle grasped
In folds of the green serpent, feels her breast
Burn with the poison, and precipitates
Through night and day, tempest, and calm, and cloud,

Frantic with dizzying anguish, her blind flight
O'er the wide aëry wilderness: thus driven
By the bright shadow of that lovely dream,
Beneath the cold glare of the desolate night,
Through tangled swamps and deep precipitous dells,
Startling with careless step the moon-light snake,
He fled.—Red morning dawned upon his flight,
Shedding the mockery of its vital hues
Upon his cheek of death. He wandered on
Till vast Aornos seen from Petra's steep
Hung o'er the low horizon like a cloud;
Through Balk, and where the desolated tombs
Of Parthian kings scatter to every wind
Their wasting dust, wildly he wandered on,
Day after day, a weary waste of hours,
Bearing within his life the brooding care
That ever fed on its decaying flame.
And now his limbs were lean; his scattered hair,
Sered by the autumn of strange suffering,
Sung dirges in the wind; his listless hand
Hung like dead bone within its withered skin;
Life, and the lustre that consumed it, shone
As in a furnace burning secretly
From his dark eyes alone. The cottagers,
Who ministered with human charity
His human wants, beheld with wondering awe
Their fleeting visitant. The mountaineer,
Encountering on some dizzy precipice
That spectral form, deemed that the Spirit of wind
With lightning eyes, and eager breath, and feet
Disturbing not the drifted snow, had paused
In his career. The infant would conceal
His troubled visage in his mother's robe
In terror at the glare of those wild eyes,
To remember their strange light in many a dream
Of after-times: but youthful maidens taught
By nature, would interpret half the woe
That wasted him, would call him with false names
Brother, and friend, would press his pallid hand
At parting, and watch, dim through tears, the path
Of his departure from their father's door.
At length upon the lone Chorasmian shore
He paused, a wide and melancholy waste
Of putrid marshes—a strong impulse urged
His steps to the sea shore. A swan was there
Beside a sluggish stream among the reeds.
It rose as he approached, and with strong wings
Scaling the upward sky, bent its bright course

High over the immeasurable main.
His eyes pursued its flight.—“Thou hast a home,
Beautiful bird, thou voyagest to thine home,
Where thy sweet mate will twine her downy neck
With thine, and welcome thy return with eyes
Bright in the lustre of their own fond joy.
And what am I that I should linger here
With voice far sweeter than thy dying notes,
Spirit more vast than thine, frame more attuned
To beauty, wasting these surpassing powers
In the deaf air, to the blind earth, and heaven
That echoes not my thoughts?” A gloomy smile
Of desperate hope wrinkled his quivering lips.
For sleep, he knew, kept most relentlessly
Its precious charge, and silent death exposed,
Faithless perhaps as sleep, a shadowy lure,
With doubtful smile mocking its own strange charms.
Startled by his own thoughts he looked around.
There was no fair fiend near him, not a sight
Or sound of awe but in his own deep mind.
A little shallop floating near the shore
Caught the impatient wandering of his gaze.
It had been long abandoned, for its sides
Gaped wide with many a rift, and its frail joints
Swayed with the undulations of the tide.
A restless impulse urged him to embark,
And meet lone Death on the drear ocean’s waste;
For well he knew that mighty Shadow loves
The slimy caverns of the populous deep.
The day was fair and sunny, sea and sky
Drank its inspiring radiance, and the wind
Swept strongly from the shore, blackening the waves.
Following his eager soul, the wanderer
Leaped in the boat, he spread his cloak aloft
On the bare mast, and took his lonely seat,
And felt the boat speed o’er the tranquil sea
Like a torn cloud before the hurricane.
As one that in a silver vision floats
Obedient to the sweep of odorous winds
Upon resplendent clouds, so rapidly
Along the dark and ruffled waters fled
The straining boat.—A whirlwind swept it on,
With fierce gusts and precipitating force,
Through the white ridges of the chafed sea.
The waves arose. Higher and higher still
Their fierce necks writhed beneath the tempest’s scourge
Like serpents struggling in a vulture’s grasp.
Calm and rejoicing in the fearful war

Of wave ruining on wave, and blast on blast
Descending, and black flood on whirlpool driven
With dark obliterating course, he sate:
As if their genii were the ministers
Appointed to conduct him to the light
Of those beloved eyes, the Poet sate
Holding the steady helm. Evening came on,
The beams of sunset hung their rainbow hues
High 'mid the shifting domes of sheeted spray
That canopied his path o'er the waste deep;
Twilight, ascending slowly from the east,
Entwined in dusker wreaths her braided locks
O'er the fair front and radiant eyes of day;
Night followed, clad with stars. On every side
More horribly the multitudinous streams
Of ocean's mountainous waste to mutual war
Rushed in dark tumult thundering, as to mock
The calm and spangled sky. The little boat
Still fled before the storm; still fled, like foam
Down the steep cataract of a wintry river;
Now pausing on the edge of the riven wave;
Now leaving far behind the bursting mass
That fell, convulsing ocean. Safely fled—
As if that frail and wasted human form,
Had been an elemental god.
At midnight
The moon arose: and lo! the ethereal cliffs
Of Caucasus, whose icy summits shone
Among the stars like sunlight, and around
Whose caverned base the whirlpools and the waves
Bursting and eddying irresistibly
Rage and resound for ever.—Who shall save?
The boat fled on,—the boiling torrent drove,—
The crags closed round with black and jagged arms,
The shattered mountain overhung the sea,
And faster still, beyond all human speed,
Suspended on the sweep of the smooth wave,
The little boat was driven. A cavern there
Yawned, and amid its slant and winding depths
Ingulphed the rushing sea. The boat fled on
With unrelaxing speed. "Vision and Love!"
The Poet cried aloud, "I have beheld
The path of thy departure. Sleep and death
Shall not divide us long."
The boat pursued
The windings of the cavern.—Day-light shone
At length upon that gloomy river's flow;
Now, where the fiercest war among the waves

Is calm, on the unfathomable stream
The boat moved slowly. Where the mountain riven
Exposed those black depths to the azure sky,
Ere yet the flood's enormous volume fell
Even to the base of Caucasus, with sound
That shook the everlasting rocks, the mass
Filled with one whirlpool all that ample chasm;
Stair above stair the eddying waters rose,
Circling immeasurably fast, and laved
With alternating dash the gnarled roots
Of mighty trees, that stretched their giant arms
In darkness over it. In the midst was left,
Reflecting, yet distorting every cloud,
A pool of treacherous and tremendous calm.
Seized by the sway of the ascending stream,
With dizzy swiftness, round, and round, and round,
Ridge after ridge the straining boat arose,
Till on the verge of the extremest curve,
Where through an opening of the rocky bank,
The waters overflow, and a smooth spot
Of glassy quiet mid those battling tides
Is left, the boat paused shuddering. Shall it sink
Down the abyss? Shall the reverting stress
Of that resistless gulph embosom it?
Now shall it fall? A wandering stream of wind,
Breathed from the west, has caught the expanded sail,
And, lo! with gentle motion between banks
Of mossy slope, and on a placid stream,
Beneath a woven grove, it sails, and, hark!
The ghastly torrent mingles its far roar
With the breeze murmuring in the musical woods.
Where the embowering trees recede, and leave
A little space of green expanse, the cove
Is closed by meeting banks, whose yellow flowers
Forever gaze on their own drooping eyes,
Reflected in the crystal calm. The wave
Of the boat's motion marred their pensive task,
Which nought but vagrant bird, or wanton wind,
Or falling spear-grass, or their own decay
Had e'er disturbed before. The Poet longed
To deck with their bright hues his withered hair,
But on his heart its solitude returned,
And he forebore. Not the strong impulse hid
In those flushed cheeks, bent eyes, and shadowy frame,
Had yet performed its ministry: it hung
Upon his life, as lightning in a cloud
Gleams, hovering ere it vanish, ere the floods
Of night close over it.

The noonday sun
Now shone upon the forest, one vast mass
Of mingling shade, whose brown magnificence
A narrow vale embosoms. There, huge caves,
Scooped in the dark base of those aëry rocks
Mocking its moans, respond and roar for ever.
The meeting boughs and implicated leaves
Wove twilight o'er the Poet's path, as led
By love, or dream, or god, or mightier Death,
He sought in Nature's dearest haunt, some bank,
Her cradle, and his sepulchre. More dark
And dark the shades accumulate—the oak,
Expanding its immeasurable arms,
Embraces the light beech. The pyramids
Of the tall cedar overarching, frame
Most solemn domes within, and far below,
Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,
The ash and the acacia floating hang
Tremulous and pale. Like restless serpents, clothed
In rainbow and in fire, the parasites,
Starred with ten thousand blossoms, flow around
The gray trunks, and as gamesome infants' eyes,
With gentle meanings, and most innocent wiles,
Fold their beams round the hearts of those that love,
These twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs,
Uniting their close union; the woven leaves
Make net-work of the dark blue light of day,
And the night's noontide clearness, mutable
As shapes in the wierd clouds. Soft mossy lawns
Beneath these canopies extend their swells,
Fragrant with perfumed herbs, and eyed with blooms
Minute yet beautiful. One darkest glen
Sends from its woods of musk-rose, twined with jasmine,
A soul-dissolving odour, to invite
To some more lovely mystery. Through the dell,
Silence and Twilight here, twin-sisters, keep
Their noonday watch, and sail among the shades
Like vaporous shapes half seen; beyond, a well,
Dark, gleaming, and of most translucent wave,
Images all the woven boughs above,
And each depending leaf, and every speck
Of azure sky, darting between their chasms;
Nor aught else in the liquid mirror laves
Its portraiture, but some inconstant star
Between one foliaged lattice twinkling fair,
Or, painted bird, sleeping beneath the moon,
Or gorgeous insect floating motionless,
Unconscious of the day, ere yet his wings

Have spread their glories to the gaze of noon.
Hither the Poet came. His eyes beheld
Their own wan light through the reflected lines
Of his thin hair, distinct in the dark depth
Of that still fountain; as the human heart,
Gazing in dreams over the gloomy grave,
Sees its own treacherous likeness there. He heard
The motion of the leaves, the grass that sprung
Startled and glanced and trembled even to feel
An unaccustomed presence, and the sound
Of the sweet brook that from the secret springs
Of that dark fountain rose. A Spirit seemed
To stand beside him—clothed in no bright robes
Of shadowy silver or enshrining light,
Borrowed from aught the visible world affords
Of grace, or majesty, or mystery;—
But, undulating woods, and silent well,
And reaping rivulet, and evening gloom
Now deepening the dark shades, for speech assuming
Held commune with him, as if he and it
Were all that was,—only . . . when his regard
Was raised by intense pensiveness . . . two eyes,
Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought,
And seemed with their serene and azure smiles
To beckon him.
Obedient to the light
That shone within his soul, he went, pursuing
The windings of the dell.—The rivulet
Wanton and wild, through many a green ravine
Beneath the forest flowed. Sometimes it fell
Among the moss with hollow harmony
Dark and profound. Now on the polished stones
It danced; like childhood laughing as it went:
Then through the plain in tranquil wanderings crept,
Reflecting every herb and drooping bud
That overhung its quietness.—“O stream!
Whose source is inaccessiblely profound,
Whither do thy mysterious waters tend?
Thou imagest my life. Thy darksome stillness,
Thy dazzling waves, thy loud and hollow gulphs,
Thy searchless fountain and invisible course
Have each their type in me: And the wide sky,
And measureless ocean may declare as soon
What oozy cavern or what wandering cloud
Contains thy waters, as the universe
Tell where these livingthoughts reside, when stretched
Upon thy flowers my bloodless limbs shall waste
I’ the passing wind!”

Beside the grassy shore
Of the small stream he went; he did impress
On the green moss his tremulous step, that caught
Strong shuddering from his burning limbs. As one
Roused by some joyous madness from the couch
Of fever, he did move; yet, not like him,
Forgetful of the grave, where, when the flame
Of his frail exultation shall be spent,
He must descend. With rapid steps he went
Beneath the shade of trees, beside the flow
Of the wild babbling rivulet; and now
The forest's solemn canopies were changed
For the uniform and lightsome evening sky.
Gray rocks did peep from the spare moss, and stemmed
The struggling brook: tall spires of windlestrae
Threw their thin shadows down the rugged slope,
And nought but gnarled roots of ancient pines,
Branchless and blasted, clenched with grasping roots
The unwilling soil. A gradual change was here,
Yet ghastly. For, as fast years flow away,
The smooth brow gathers, and the hair grows thin
And white; and where irradiate dewy eyes
Had shone, gleam stony orbs: so from his steps
Bright flowers departed, and the beautiful shade
Of the green groves, with all their odorous winds
And musical motions. Calm, he still pursued
The stream, that with a larger volume now
Rolled through the labyrinthine dell; and there
Fretted a path through its descending curves
With its wintry speed. On every side now rose
Rocks, which, in unimaginable forms,
Lifted their black and barren pinnacles
In the light of evening, and its precipice
Obscuring the ravine, disclosed above,
'Mid toppling stones, black gulphs, and yawning caves,
Whose windings gave ten thousand various tongues
To the loud stream. Lo! Where the pass expands
Its stony jaws, the abrupt mountain breaks,
And seems, with its accumulated crags,
To overhang the world: for wide expand
Beneath the wan stars and descending moon
Islanded seas, blue mountains, mighty streams,
Dim tracts and vast, robed in the lustrous gloom
Of leaden-coloured even, and fiery hills
Mingling their flames with twilight, on the verge
Of the remote horizon. The near scene,
In naked and severe simplicity,
Made contrast with the universe. A pine,

Rock-rooted, stretched athwart the vacancy
Its swinging boughs, to each inconstant blast
Yielding one only response at each pause,
In most familiar cadence, with the howl
The thunder and the hiss of homeless streams
Mingling its solemn song, whilst the broad river,
Foaming and hurrying o'er its rugged path,
Fell into that immeasurable void
Scattering its waters to the passing winds.
Yet the gray precipice, and solemn pine
And torrent, were not all;—one silent nook
Was there. Even on the edge of that vast mountain,
Upheld by knotty roots and fallen rocks,
It overlooked in its serenity
The dark earth, and the bending vault of stars.
It was a tranquil spot, that seemed to smile
Even in the lap of horror. Ivy clasped
The fissured stones with its entwining arms,
And did embower with leaves for ever green,
And berries dark, the smooth and even space
Of its inviolated floor; and here
The children of the autumnal whirlwind bore,
In wanton sport, those bright leaves, whose decay,
Red, yellow, or ethereally pale,
Rival the pride of summer. 'Tis the haunt
Of every gentle wind, whose breath can teach
The wilds to love tranquillity. One step,
One human step alone, has ever broken
The stillness of its solitude:—one voice
Alone inspired its echoes;—even that voice
Which hither came, floating among the winds,
And led the loveliest among human forms
To make their wild haunts the depository
Of all the grace and beauty that endued
Its motions, render up its majesty,
Scatter its music on the unfeeling storm,
And to the damp leaves and blue cavern mould,
Nurses of rainbow flowers and branching moss,
Commit the colours of that varying cheek,
That snowy breast, those dark and drooping eyes.
The dim and horned moon hung low, and poured
A sea of lustre on the horizon's verge
That overflowed its mountains. Yellow mist
Filled the unbounded atmosphere, and drank
Wan moonlight even to fullness: not a star
Shone, not a sound was heard; the very winds,
Danger's grim playmates, on that precipice
Slept, clasped in his embrace.—O, storm of death!

Whose sightless speed divides this sullen night:
And thou, colossal Skeleton, that, still
Guiding its irresistible career
In thy devastating omnipotence,
Art king of this frail world, from the red field
Of slaughter, from the reeking hospital,
The patriot's sacred couch, the snowy bed
Of innocence, the scaffold and the throne,
A mighty voice invokes thee. Ruin calls
His brother Death. A rare and regal prey
He hath prepared, prowling around the world;
Glutted with which thou mayst repose, and men
Go to their graves like flowers or creeping worms,
Nor ever more offer at thy dark shrine
The unheeded tribute of a broken heart.
When on the threshold of the green recess
The wanderer's footsteps fell, he knew that death
Was on him. Yet a little, ere it fled,
Did he resign his high and holy soul
To images of the majestic past,
That paused within his passive being now,
Like winds that bear sweet music, when they breathe
Through some dim latticed chamber. He did place
His pale lean hand upon the rugged trunk
Of the old pine. Upon an ivied stone
Reclined his languid head; his limbs did rest,
Diffused and motionless, on the smooth brink
Of that obscurest chasm;—and thus he lay,
Surrendering to their final impulses
The hovering powers of life. Hope and Despair,
The torturers, slept; no mortal pain or fear
Marred his repose, the influxes of sense,
And his own being unalloyed by pain,
Yet feebler and more feeble, calmly fed
The stream of thought, till he lay breathing there
At peace, and faintly smiling:—his last sight
Was the great moon, which o'er the western line
Of the wide world her mighty horn suspended,
With whose dun beams inwoven darkness seemed
To mingle. Now upon the jagged hills
It rests, and still as the divided frame
Of the vast meteor sunk, the Poet's blood,
That ever beat in mystic sympathy
With nature's ebb and flow, grew feebler still:
And when two lessening points of light alone
Gleamed through the darkness, the alternate gasp
Of his faint respiration scarce did stir
The stagnate night:—till the minutest ray

Was quenched, the pulse yet lingered in his heart.
It paused—it fluttered. But when heaven remained
Utterly black, the murky shades involved
An image, silent, cold, and motionless,
As their own voiceless earth and vacant air.
Even as a vapour fed with golden beams
That ministered on sunlight, ere the west
Eclipses it, was now that wondrous frame—
No sense, no motion, no divinity—
A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings
The breath of heaven did wander—a bright stream
Once fed with many-voiced waves—a dream
Of youth, which night and time have quenched for ever,
Still, dark, and dry, and unremembered now.
O, for Medea's wondrous alchymy,
Which wheresoe'er it fell made the earth gleam
With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs exhale
From vernal blooms fresh fragrance! O, that God,
Profuse of poisons, would concede the chalice
Which but one living man has drained, who now,
Vessel of deathless wrath, a slave that feels
No proud exemption in the blighting curse
He bears, over the world wanders for ever,
Lone as incarnate death! O, that the dream
Of dark magician in his visioned cave,
Raking the cinders of a crucible
For life and power, even when his feeble hand
Shakes in its last decay, were the true law
Of this so lovely world! But thou art fled
Like some frail exhalation, which the dawn
Robes in its golden beams,—ah! thou hast fled!
The brave, the gentle, and the beautiful,
The child of grace and genius. Heartless things
Are done and said i'the world, and many worms
And beasts and men live on, and mighty Earth
From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
In vesper low or joyous orison,
Lifts still its solemn voice:—but thou art fled—
Thou canst no longer know or love the shapes
Of this phantasmal scene, who have to thee
Been purest ministers, who are, alas!
Now thou art not. Upon those pallid lips
So sweet even in their silence, on those eyes
That image sleep in death, upon that form
Yet safe from the worm's outrage, let no tear
Be shed—not even in thought. Nor, when those hues
Are gone, and those divinest lineaments,
Worn by the senseless wind, shall live alone

In the frail pauses of this simple strain,
Let not high verse, mourning the memory
Of that which is no more, or painting's woe
Or sculpture, speak in feeble imagery
Their own cold powers. Art and eloquence,
And all the shows o'the world are frail and vain
To weep a loss that turns their light to shade.
It is a woe too 'deep for tears,' when all
Is reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit,
Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves
Those who remain behind, nor sobs nor groans,
The passionate tumult of a clinging hope;
But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
Birth and the grave, that are not as they were.

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TRANSLATIONS.

HYMN TO MERCURY.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK OF HOMER

I.

Sing, Muse, the son of Maia and of Jove,
The Herald-child, king of Arcadia
And all its pastoral hills, whom in sweet love
Having been interwoven, modest May
Bore Heaven's dread Supreme—an antique grove
Shadowed the cavern where the lovers lay
In the deep night, unseen by Gods or Men,
And white-armed Juno slumbered sweetly then.

II.

Now, when the joy of Jove had its fulfilling,
And Heaven's tenth moon chronicled her relief,
She gave to light a babe all babes excelling,
A schemer subtle beyond all belief;
A shepherd of thin dreams, a cow-stealing,
A night-watching, and door-waylaying thief,
Who mongst the Gods was soon about to thieve
And other glorious actions to achieve.

III.

The babe was born at the first peep of day;
He began playing on the lyre at noon,
And the same evening did he steal away
Apollo's herds;—the fourth day of the moon
On which him bore the venerable May,
From her immortal limbs he leaped full soon,
Nor long could in the sacred cradle keep,
But out to seek Apollo's herds would creep.

IV.

Out of the lofty cavern wandering

He found a tortoise, and cried out—"A treasure!"
(For Mercury first made the tortoise sing)
The beast before the portal at his leisure
The flowery herbage was depasturing,
Moving his feet in a deliberate measure
Over the turf. Jove's profitable son
Eyeing him laughed, and laughing thus begun:—

V.

"A useful god-send are you to me now,
King of the dance, companion of the feast,
Lovely in all your nature! Welcome, you
Excellent plaything! Where, sweet mountain beast,
Got you that speckled shell? Thus much I know,
You must come home with me and be my guest;
You will give joy to me, and I will do
All that is in my power to honour you.

VI.

"Better to be at home than out of door;—
So come with me, and though it has been said
That you alive defend from magic power,
I know you will sing sweetly when you're dead."
Thus having spoken, the quaint infant bore,
Lifting it from the grass on which it fed,
And grasping it in his delighted hold,
His treasured prize into the cavern old.

VII.

Then scooping with a chisel of grey steel
He bored the life and soul out of the beast—
Not swifter a swift thought of woe or weal
Darts through the tumult of a human breast
Which thronging cares annoy—not swifter wheel
The flashes of its torture and unrest
Out of the dizzy eyes—than Maia's son
All that he did devise hath featly done.

VIII.

And through the tortoise's hard strong skin
At proper distances small holes he made,
And fastened the cut stems of reeds within,

And with a piece of leather overlaid
The open space and fixed the cubits in,
Fitting the bridge to both, and stretched o'er all
Symphonious cords of sheep gut rhythmical.

IX.

When he had wrought the lovely instrument,
He tried the chords, and made division meet
Preluding with the plectrum, and there went
Up from beneath his hand a tumult sweet
Of mighty sounds, and from his lips he sent
A strain of unpremeditated wit
Joyous and wild and wanton—such you may
Hear among revellers on a holiday.

X.

He sung how Jove and May of the bright sandal
Dallied in love not quite legitimate;
And his own birth, still scoffing at the scandal,
And naming his own name, did celebrate;
His mother's cave and servant maids he planned all
In plastic verse, her household stuff and state,
Perennial pot, trippet, and brazen pan,—
But singing he conceived another plan.

XI.

Seized with a sudden fancy for fresh meat,
He in his sacred crib deposited
The hollow lyre, and from the cavern sweet
Rushed with great leaps up to the mountain's head,
Revolving in his mind some subtle feat
Of thievish craft, such as a swindler might
Devise in the lone season of dun night.

XII.

Lo! the great Sun under the ocean's bed has
Driven steeds and chariot—the child meanwhile strode
O'er the Pierian mountains clothed in shadows,
Where the immortal oxen of the God
Are pastured in the flowering unmown meadows,
And safely stalled in a remote abode—
The archer Argicide, elate and proud,

Drove fifty from the herd, lowing aloud.

XIII.

He drove them wandering o'er the sandy way,
But, being ever mindful of his craft,
Backward and forward drove he them astray,
So that the tracks which seemed before, were aft;
His sandals then he threw to the ocean spray,
And for each foot he wrought a kind of raft
Of tamarisk, and tamarisk-like sprigs,
And bound them in a lump with withy twigs.

XIV.

And on his feet he tied these sandals light,
The trail of whose wide leaves might not betray
His track; and then, a self-sufficing wight,
Like a man hastening on some distant way,
He from Piera's mountain bent his flight;
But an old man perceived the infant pass
Down green Onchestus heaped like beds with grass.

XV.

The old man stood dressing his sunny vine:
"Halloo! old fellow with the crooked shoulder!
You grub those stumps? before they will bear wine
Methinks even you must grow a little older:
Attend, I pray, to this advice of mine,
As you would 'scape what might appal a bolder—
Seeing, see not—and hearing, hear not—and—
If you have understanding—understand."

XVI.

So saying, Hermes roused the oxen vast;
O'er shadowy mountain and resounding dell,
And flower-paven plains, great Hermes past;
Till the black night divine, which favouring fell
Around his steps, grew grey, and morning fast
Wakened the world to work, and from her cell
Sea-strewn, the Pallantean Moon sublime
Into her watch-tower just began to climb.

XVII.

Now to Alpheus he had driven all
The broad-foreheaded oxen of the Sun;
They came unwearied to the lofty stall
And to the water troughs which ever run
Through the fresh fields—and when with rushgrass tall,
Lotus and all sweet herbage, every one
Had pastured been, the great God made them move
Towards the stall in a collected drove.

XVIII.

A mighty pile of wood the God then heaped,
And having soon conceived the mystery
Of fire, from two smooth laurel branches stript
The bark, and rubbed them in his palms,—on high
Suddenly forth the burning vapour leapt,
And the divine child saw delightedly—
Mercury first found out for human weal
Tinder-box, matches, fire-irons, flint and steel.

XIX.

And fine dry logs and roots innumeros
He gathered in a delve upon the ground—
And kindled them—and instantaneous
The strength of the fierce flame was breathed around:
And whilst the might of glorious Vulcan thus
Wrapt the great pile with glare and roaring sound,
Hermes dragged forth two heifers, lowing loud,
Close to the fire—such might was in the God.

XX.

And on the earth upon their backs he threw
The panting beasts, and rolled them o'er and o'er,
And bored their lives out. Without more ado
He cut up fat and flesh, and down before
The fire, on spits of wood he placed the two,
Toasting their flesh and ribs, and all the gore
Purs'd in the bowels; and while this was done
He stretched their hides over a craggy stone.

XXI.

We mortals let an ox grow old, and then
Cut it up after long consideration,—
But joyous-minded Hermes from the glen
Drew the fat spoils to the more open station
Of a flat smooth space, and portioned them; and when
He had by lot assigned to each a ration
Of the twelve Gods, his mind became aware
Of all the joys which in religion are.

XXII.

For the sweet savour of the roasted meat
Tempted him though immortal. Nathelesse
He checked his haughty will and did not eat,
Though what it cost him words can scarce express,
And every wish to put such morsels sweet
Down his most sacred throat, he did repress;
But soon within the lofty portalled stall
He placed the fat and flesh and bones and all.

XXIII.

And every trace of the fresh butchery
And cooking, the God soon made disappear,
As if it all had vanished through the sky;
He burned the hoofs and horns and head and hair,
The insatiate fire devoured them hungrily;—
And when he saw that everything was clear,
He quenched the coals and trampled the black dust,
And in the stream his bloody sandals tossed.

XXIV.

All night he worked in the serene moonshine—
But when the light of day was spread abroad
He sought his natal mountain peaks divine.
On his long wandering, neither man nor god
Had met him, since he killed Apollo's kine,
Nor house-dog had barked at him on his road;
Now he obliquely through the key-hole past,
Like a thin mist, or an autumnal blast.

XXV.

Right through the temple of the spacious cave
He went with soft light feet—as if his tread
Fell not on earth; no sound their falling gave;
Then to his cradle he crept quick, and spread
The swaddling-clothes about him; and the knave
Lay playing with the covering of the bed
With his left hand about his knees—the right
Held his beloved tortoise-lyre tight.

XXVI.

There he lay innocent as a new born child,
As gossips say; but though he was a god,
The goddess, his fair mother, unbeguiled
Knew all that he had done being abroad:
“Whence come you, and from what adventure wild,
You cunning rogue, and where have you abode
All the long night, clothed in your impudence?
What have you done since you departed hence?”

XXVII.

“Apollo soon will pass within this gate
And bind your tender body in a chain
Inextricably tight, and fast as fate,
Unless you can delude the God again,
Even when within his arms—ah, runagate!
A pretty torment both for gods and men
Your father made when he made you!”—“Dear mother,”
Replied sly Hermes, “Wherefore scold and bother?”

XXVIII.

“As if I were like other babes as old,
And understood nothing of what is what;
And cared at all to hear my mother scold.
I in my subtle brain a scheme have got,
Which whilst the sacred stars round Heaven are rolled
Will profit you and me—nor shall our lot
Be as you counsel, without gifts or food,
To spend our lives in this obscure abode.

XXIX.

“But we will leave this shadow-peopled cave
And live among the Gods, and pass each day
In high communion, sharing what they have
Of profuse wealth and unexhausted prey;
And from the portion which my father gave
To Phœbus, I will snatch my share away,
Which if my father will not—nathelless I,
Who am the king of robbers, can but try.

XXX.

“And, if Latona’s son should find me out,
I’ll countermine him by a deeper plan;
I’ll pierce the Pythian temple-walls, though stout,
And sack the fane of every thing I can—
Cauldrons and tripods of great worth no doubt,
Each golden cup and polished brazen pan,
All the wrought tapestries and garments gay.”—
So they together talked;—meanwhile the Day

XXXI.

Ætherial born arose out of the flood
Of flowing Ocean, bearing light to men.
Apollo past toward the sacred wood,
Which from the inmost depths of its green glen
Echoes the voice of Neptune,—and there stood
On the same spot in green Onchestus then
That same old animal, the vine-dresser,
Who was employed hedging his vineyard there.

XXXII.

Latona’s glorious Son began:—“I pray
Tell, ancient hedger of Onchestus green,
Whether a drove of kine has past this way,
All heifers with crooked horns? for they have been
Stolen from the herd in high Pieria,
Where a black bull was fed apart, between
Two woody mountains in a neighbouring glen,
And four fierce dogs watched there, unanimous as men.

XXXIII.

“And, what is strange, the author of this theft
Has stolen the fatted heifers every one,
But the four dogs and the black bull are left:—
Stolen they were last night at set of sun,
Of their soft beds and their sweet food bereft—
Now tell me, man born ere the world begun,
Have you seen any one pass with the cows?”—
To whom the man of overhanging brows:

XXXIV.

“My friend, it would require no common skill
Justly to speak of everything I see:
On various purposes of good or ill
Many pass by my vineyard,—and to me
'Tis difficult to know the invisible
Thoughts, which in all those many minds may be:—
Thus much alone I certainly can say,
I tilled these vines till the decline of day.

XXXV.

“And then I thought I saw, but dare not speak
With certainty of such a wondrous thing,
A child, who could not have been born a week,
Those fair-horned cattle closely following,
And in his hand he held a polished stick:
And, as on purpose, he walked wavering
From one side to the other of the road,
And with his face opposed the steps he trod.”

XXXVI.

Apollo hearing this, past quickly on—
No winged omen could have shown more clear
That the deceiver was his father's son.
So the God wraps a purple atmosphere
Around his shoulders, and like fire is gone
To famous Pylos, seeking his kine there,
And found their track and his, yet hardly cold,
And cried—“What wonder do mine eyes behold!

XXXVII.

“Here are the footsteps of the horned herd
Turned back towards their fields of asphodel;—
But these! are not the tracks of beast or bird,
Grey wolf, or bear, or lion of the dell,
Or maned Centaur—sand was never stirred
By man or woman thus! Inexplicable!
Who with unwearied feet could e’er impress
The sand with such enormous vestiges?”

XXXVIII.

“That was most strange—but this is stranger still!”
Thus having said, Phœbus impetuously
Sought high Cyllene’s forest-cinctured hill,
And the deep cavern where dark shadows lie,
And where the ambrosial nymph with happy will
Bore the Saturnian’s love-child, Mercury—
And a delightful odour from the dew
Of the hill pastures, at his coming, flew.

XXXIX.

And Phœbus stooped under the craggy roof
Arched over the dark cavern:—Maia’s child
Perceived that he came angry, far aloof,
About the cows of which he had been beguiled,
And over him the fine and fragrant woof
Of his ambrosial swaddling clothes he piled—
As among fire-brands lies a burning spark
Covered, beneath the ashes cold and dark.

XL.

There, like an infant who had sucked his fill
And now was newly washed and put to bed,
Awake, but courting sleep with weary will,
And gathered in a lump hands, feet, and head,
He lay, and his beloved tortoise still
He grasped and held under his shoulder-blade.
Phœbus the lovely mountain-goddess knew,
Not less her subtle, swindling baby, who

XLI.

Lay swathed in his sly wiles. Round every crook
Of the ample cavern, for his kine, Apollo
Looked sharp; and when he saw them not, he took
The glittering key, and opened three great hollow
Recesses in the rock—where many a nook
Was filled with the sweet food immortals swallow,
And mighty heaps of silver and of gold
Were piled within—a wonder to behold!

XLII.

And white and silver robes, all overwrought
With cunning workmanship of tracery sweet—
Except among the Gods there can be nought
In the wide world to be compared with it.
Latona's offspring, after having sought
His herds in every corner, thus did greet
Great Hermes:—"Little cradled rogue, declare
Of my illustrious heifers, where they are!

XLIII.

"Speak quickly! or a quarrel between us
Must rise, and the event will be, that I
Shall hawl you into dismal Tartarus,
In fiery gloom to dwell eternally;
Nor shall your father nor your mother loose
The bars of that black dungeon—utterly
You shall be cast out from the light of day,
To rule the ghosts of men, unblest as they."

XLIV.

To whom thus Hermes sily answered:—"Son
Of great Latona, what a speech is this!
Why come you here to ask me what is done
With the wild oxen which it seems you miss?
I have not seen them, nor from any one
Have heard a word of the whole business;
If you should promise an immense reward,
I could not tell more than you now have heard.

XLV.

“An ox-stealer should be both tall and strong,
And I am but a little new-born thing,
Who, yet at least, can think of nothing wrong:—
My business is to suck, and sleep, and fling
The cradle-clothes about me all day long,—
Or half asleep, hear my sweet mother sing,
And to be washed in water clean and warm,
And hushed and kissed and kept secure from harm.

XLVI.

“O, let not e'er this quarrel be averred!
The astounded Gods would laugh at you, if e'er
You should allege a story so absurd,
As that a new-born infant forth could fare
Out of his home after a savage herd.
I was born yesterday—my small feet are
Too tender for the roads so hard and rough:—
And if you think that this is not enough,

XLVII.

“I swear a great oath, by my father's head,
That I stole not your cows, and that I know
Of no one else, who might, or could, or did.—
Whatever things cows are, I do not know,
For I have only heard the name.”—This said,
He winked as fast as could be, and his brow
Was wrinkled, and a whistle loud gave he,
Like one who hears some strange absurdity.

XLVIII.

Apollo gently smiled and said:—“Aye, aye,—
You cunning little rascal, you will bore
Many a rich man's house, and your array
Of thieves will lay their siege before his door,
Silent as night, in night; and many a day
In the wild glens rough shepherds will deplore
That you or yours, having an appetite,
Met with their cattle, comrade of the night!

XLIX.

“And this among the Gods shall be your gift,
To be considered as the lord of those
Who swindle, house-break, sheep-steal, and shop-lift;—
But now if you would not your last sleep dose,
Crawl out!”—Thus saying, Phœbus did uplift
The subtle infant in his swaddling clothes,
And in his arms, according to his wont,
A scheme devised the illustrious Argiphont.

L.

* * * * *
* * * * *

And sneezed and shuddered—Phœbus on the grass
Him threw, and whilst all that he had designed
He did perform—eager although to pass,
Apollo darted from his mighty mind
Towards the subtle babe the following scoff:—
“Do not imagine this will get you off,

LI.

“You little swaddled child of Jove and May!”
And seized him:—“By this omen I shall trace
My noble herds, and you shall lead the way.”—
Cyllenian Hermes from the grassy place,
Like one in earnest haste to get away,
Rose, and with hands lifted towards his face
Roused both his ears—up from his shoulders drew
His swaddling clothes, and—“What mean you to do

LII.

“With me, you unkind God?”—said Mercury:
“Is it about these cows you teize me so?
I wished the race of cows were perished!—I
Stole not your cows—I do not even know
What things cows are. Alas! I well may sigh,
That since I came into this world of woe,
I should have ever heard the name of one—
But I appeal to the Saturnian’s throne.”

LIII.

Thus Phœbus and the vagrant Mercury
Talked without coming to an explanation,
With adverse purpose. As for Phœbus, he
Sought not revenge, but only information,
And Hermes tried with lies and roguery
To cheat Apollo—But when no evasion
Served—for the cunning one his match had found—
He paced on first over the sandy ground.

LIV.

He of the Silver Bow the child of Jove
Followed behind, till to their heavenly Sire
Came both his children—beautiful as Love,
And from his equal balance did require
A judgment in the cause wherein they strove.
O'er odorous Olympus and its snows
A murmuring tumult as they came arose,—

LV.

And from the folded depths of the great Hill,
While Hermes and Apollo reverent stood
Before Jove's throne, the indestructible
Immortals rushed in mighty multitude;
And whilst their seats in order due they fill,
The lofty Thunderer in a careless mood
To Phœbus said:—"Whence drive you this sweet prey,
This herald-baby, born but yesterday?—

LVI.

"A most important subject, trifler, this
To lay before the Gods!"—"Nay, father, nay,
When you have understood the business,
Say not that I alone am fond of prey.
I found this little boy in a recess
Under Cyllene's mountains far away—
A manifest and most apparent thief,
A scandal-monger beyond all belief.

LVII.

“I never saw his like either in heaven
Or upon earth for knavery or craft:—
Out of the field my cattle yester-even,
By the low shore on which the loud sea laughed,
He right down to the river-ford had driven;
And mere astonishment would make you daft
To see the double kind of footsteps strange
He has impressed wherever he did range.

LVIII.

“The cattle’s track on the black dust, full well
Is evident, as if they went towards
The place from which they came—that asphodel
Meadow, in which I feed my many herds,—
His steps were most incomprehensible—
I know not how I can describe in words
Those tracks—he could have gone along the sands
Neither upon his feet nor on his hands;—

LIX.

“He must have had some other stranger mode
Of moving on: those vestiges immense,
Far as I traced them on the sandy road,
Seemed like the trail of oak-toppings:—but thence
No mark or track denoting where they trod
The hard ground gave:—but, working at his fence,
A mortal hedger saw him as he past
To Pylos, with the cows, in fiery haste.

LX.

“I found that in the dark he quietly
Had sacrificed some cows, and before light
Had thrown the ashes all dispersedly
About the road—then, still as gloomy night,
Had crept into his cradle, either eye
Rubbing, and cogitating some new sleight.
No eagle could have seen him as he lay
Hid in his cavern from the peering day.

LXI.

“I tax’d him with the fact, when he averred
Most solemnly that he did neither see
Or even had in any manner heard
Of my lost cows, whatever things cows be;
Nor could he tell, though offered a reward,
Not even who could tell of them to me.”
So speaking, Phœbus sate; and Hermes then
Addressed the Supreme Lord of Gods and Men:—

LXII.

“Great Father, you know clearly before hand
That all which I shall say to you is soothe;
I am a most veracious person, and
Totally unacquainted with untruth.
At sunrise, Phœbus came, but with no band
Of Gods to bear him witness, in great wrath,
To my abode, seeking his heifers there,
And saying that I must show him where they are,

LXIII.

“Or he would hurl me down the dark abyss.
I know, that every Apollonian limb
Is clothed with speed and might and manliness,
As a green bank with flowers—but unlike him
I was born yesterday, and you may guess
He well knew this when he indulged the whim
Of bullying a poor little new-born thing
That slept, and never thought of cow-driving.

LXIV.

“Am I like a strong fellow who steals kine?
Believe me, dearest Father, such you are,
This driving of the herds is none of mine;
Across my threshold did I wander ne’er,
So may I thrive! I reverence the divine
Sun and the Gods, and I love you, and care
Even for this hard accuser—who must know
I am as innocent as they or you.

LXV.

“I swear by these most gloriously-wrought portals—
(It is, you will allow, an oath of might)
Through which the multitude of the Immortals
Pass and repass forever, day and night,
Devising schemes for the affairs of mortals—
That I am guiltless; and I will requite,
Although mine enemy be great and strong,
His cruel threat—do thou defend the young!”

LXVI.

So speaking, the Cyllenian Argiphont
Winked, as if now his adversary was fitted:—
And Jupiter according to his wont,
Laughed heartily to hear the subtle-witted
Infant give such a plausible account,
And every word a lie. But he remitted
Judgment at present—and his exhortation
Was, to compose the affair by arbitration.

LXVII.

And they by mighty Jupiter were bidden
To go forth with a single purpose both,
Neither the other chiding nor yet chidden:
And Mercury with innocence and truth
To lead the way, and show where he had hidden
The mighty heifers.—Hermes, nothing loth,
Obeyed the Ægis-bearer’s will—for he
Is able to persuade all easily.

LXVIII.

These lovely children of Heaven’s highest Lord
Hastened to Pylos and the pastures wide
And lofty stalls by the Alphean ford,
Where wealth in the mute night is multiplied
With silent growth. Whilst Hermes drove the herd
Out of the stony cavern, Phœbus spied
The hides of those the little babe had slain,
Stretched on the precipice above the plain.

LXIX.

“How was it possible,” then Phœbus said,
“That you, a little child, born yesterday,
A thing on mother’s milk and kisses fed,
Could two prodigious heifers ever flay?
Even I myself may well hereafter dread
Your prowess, offspring of Cyllenian May,
When you grow strong and tall.”—He spoke, and bound
Stiff withy bands the infant’s wrists around.

LXX.

He might as well have bound the oxen wild;
The withy bands, though starkly interknit,
Fell at the feet of the immortal child,
Loosened by some device of his quick wit.
Phœbus perceived himself again beguiled,
And stared—while Hermes sought some hole or pit,
Looking askance and winking fast as thought,
Where he might hide himself and not be caught.

LXXI.

Sudden he changed his plan, and with strange skill
Subdued the strong Latonian, by the might
Of winning music, to his mightier will;
His left hand held the lyre, and in his right
The plectrum struck the chords—unconquerable
Up from beneath his hand in circling flight
The gathering music rose—and sweet as Love
The penetrating notes did live and move

LXXII.

Within the heart of great Apollo—he
Listened with all his soul, and laughed for pleasure.
Close to his side stood harping fearlessly
The unabashed boy; and to the measure
Of the sweet lyre, there followed loud and free
His joyous voice; for he unlocked the treasure
Of his deep song, illustrating the birth
Of the bright Gods and the dark desert Earth:

LXXIII.

And how to the Immortals every one
A portion was assigned of all that is;
But chief Mnemosyne did Maia's son
Clothe in the light of his loud melodies;—
And as each God was born or had begun
He in their order due and fit degrees
Sung of his birth and being—and did move
Apollo to unutterable love.

LXXIV.

These words were winged with his swift delight:
“You heifer-stealing schemer, well do you
Deserve that fifty oxen should requite
Such minstrelsies as I have heard even now.
Comrade of feasts, little contriving wight,
One of your secrets I would gladly know,
Whether the glorious power you now show forth
Was folded up within you at your birth,

LXXV.

“Or whether mortal taught or God inspired
The power of unpremeditated song?
Many divinest sounds have I admired,
The Olympian Gods and mortal men among;
But such a strain of wondrous, strange, untired,
And soul-awakening music, sweet and strong,
Yet did I never hear except from thee,
Offspring of May, impostor Mercury!

LXXVI.

“What Muse, what skill, what unimagined use,
What exercise of subtlest art, has given
Thy songs such power?—for those who hear may choose
From three, the choicest of the gifts of Heaven,
Delight, and love, and sleep,—sweet sleep, whose dews
Are sweeter than the balmy tears of even:—
And I, who speak this praise, am that Apollo
Whom the Olympian Muses ever follow:

LXXVII.

“And their delight is dance, and the blithe noise
Of song and overflowing poesy;
And sweet, even as desire, the liquid voice
Of pipes, that fills the clear air thrillingly;
But never did my inmost soul rejoice
In this dear work of youthful revelry,
As now I wonder at thee, son of Jove;
Thy harpings and thy song are soft as love.

LXXVIII.

“Now since thou hast, although so very small,
Science of arts so glorious, thus I swear,
And let this cornel javelin, keen and tall,
Witness between us what I promise here,—
That I will lead thee to the Olympian Hall,
Honoured and mighty, with thy mother dear,
And many glorious gifts in joy will give thee,
And even at the end will ne'er deceive thee.”

LXXIX.

To whom thus Mercury with prudent speech:—
“Wisely hast thou enquired of my skill:
I envy thee no thing I know to teach
Even this day:—for both in word and will
I would be gentle with thee; thou canst reach
All things in thy wise spirit, and thy sill
Is highest in heaven among the sons of Jove,
Who loves thee in the fulness of his love.

LXXX.

“The Counsellor Supreme has given to thee
Divinest gifts, out of the amplitude
Of his profuse exhaustless treasury;
By thee, 'tis said, the depths are understood
Of his far voice; by thee the mystery
Of all oracular fates,—and the dread mood
Of the diviner is breathed up, even I—
A child—perceive thy might and majesty—

LXXXI.

“Thou canst seek out and compass all that wit
Can find or teach;—yet since thou wilt, come take
The lyre—be mine the glory giving it—
Strike the sweet chords, and sing aloud, and wake
Thy joyous pleasure out of many a fit
Of tranced sound—and with fleet fingers make
Thy liquid-voiced comrade talk with thee,
It can talk measured music eloquently.

LXXXII.

“Then bear it boldly to the revel loud,
Love-wakening dance, or feast of solemn state,
A joy by night or day—for those endowed
With art and wisdom who interrogate
It teaches, babbling in delightful mood
All things which make the spirit most elate,
Soothing the mind with sweet familiar play,
Chasing the heavy shadows of dismay.

LXXXIII.

“To those who are unskilled in its sweet tongue,
Though they should question most impetuously
Its hidden soul, it gossips something wrong—
Some senseless and impertinent reply.
But thou who art as wise as thou art strong
Can compass all that thou desirest. I
Present thee with this music-flowing shell,
Knowing thou canst interrogate it well.

LXXXIV.

“And let us two henceforth together feed
On this green mountain slope and pastoral plain,
The herds in litigation—they will breed
Quickly enough to recompense our pain,
If to the bulls and cows we take good heed;—
And thou, though somewhat over fond of gain,
Grudge me not half the profit.”—Having spoke,
The shell he proffered, and Apollo took.

LXXXV.

And gave him in return the glittering lash,
Installing him as herdsman;—from the look
Of Mercury then laughed a joyous flash.
And then Apollo with the plectrum strook
The chords, and from beneath his hands a crash
Of mighty sounds rushed up, whose music shook
The soul with sweetness, as of an adept
His sweeter voice a just accordance kept.

LXXXVI.

The herd went wandering o'er the divine mead,
Whilst these most beautiful Sons of Jupiter
Won their swift way up to the snowy head
Of white Olympus, with the joyous lyre
Soothing their journey; and their father dread
Gathered them both into familiar
Affection sweet,—and then, and now, and ever,
Hermes must love Him of the Golden Quiver,

LXXXVII.

To whom he gave the lyre that sweetly sounded,
Which skilfully he held and played thereon.
He piped the while, and far and wide rebounded
The echo of his pipings; every one
Of the Olympians sat with joy astounded,
While he conceived another piece of fun,
One of his old tricks—which the God of Day
Perceiving, said:—"I fear thee, Son of May;—

LXXXVIII.

"I fear thee and thy sly camelion spirit,
Lest thou should steal my lyre and crooked bow;
This glory and power thou dost from Jove inherit,
To teach all craft upon the earth below;
Thieves love and worship thee—it is thy merit
To make all mortal business ebb and flow
By roguery:—now, Hermes, if you dare,
By sacred Styx a mighty oath to swear

LXXXIX.

“That you will never rob me, you will do
A thing extremely pleasing to my heart.”
Then Mercury swore by the Stygian dew,
That he would never steal his bow or dart,
Or lay his hands on what to him was due,
Or ever would employ his powerful art
Against his Pythian fane. Then Phœbus swore
There was no God or man whom he loved more.

XC.

“And I will give thee as a good-will token,
The beautiful wand of wealth and happiness;
A perfect three-leaved rod of gold unbroken,
Whose magic will thy footsteps ever bless;
And whatsoever by Jove’s voice is spoken
Of earthly or divine from its recess,
It, like a loving soul to thee will speak,
And more than this, do thou forbear to seek.

XCI.

“For, dearest child, the divinations high
Which thou requirest, ’tis unlawful ever
That thou, or any other deity
Should understand—and vain were the endeavour;
For they are hidden in Jove’s mind, and I
In trust of them, have sworn that I would never
Betray the counsels of Jove’s inmost will
To any God—the oath was terrible.

XCII.

“Then, golden-wanded brother, ask me not
To speak the fates by Jupiter designed;
But be it mine to tell their various lot
To the unnumbered tribes of human kind.
Let good to these, and ill to those be wrought
As I dispense—but he who comes consigned
By voice and wings of perfect augury
To my great shrine, shall find avail in me.

XCIII.

“Him will I not deceive, but will assist;
But he who comes relying on such birds
As chatter vainly, who would strain and twist
The purpose of the Gods with idle words,
And deems their knowledge light, he shall have mist
His road—whilst I among my other hoards
His gifts deposit. Yet, O son of May,
I have another wondrous thing to say.

XCIV.

“There are three Fates, three virgin Sisters, who
Rejoicing in their wind-outspeeding wings,
Their heads with flour snowed over white and new,
Sit in a vale round which Parnassus flings
Its circling skirts—from these I have learned true
Vaticinations of remotest things.
My father cared not. Whilst they search out dooms,
They sit apart and feed on honeycombs.

XCV.

“They, having eaten the fresh honey, grow
Drunk with divine enthusiasm, and utter
With earnest willingness the truth they know;
But if deprived of that sweet food, they mutter
All plausible delusions;—these to you
I give;—if you inquire, they will not stutter;
Delight your own soul with them:—any man
You would instruct, may profit, if he can.

XCVI.

“Take these and the fierce oxen, Maia’s child—
O’er many a horse and toil-enduring mule,
O’er jagged-jawed lions, and the wild
White-tusked boars, o’er all, by field or pool,
Of cattle which the mighty Mother mild
Nourishes in her bosom, thou shalt rule—
Thou dost alone the veil of death uplift—
Thou givest not—yet this is a great gift.”

XCVII.

Thus king Apollo loved the child of May
In truth, and Jove covered them with love and joy.
Hermes with Gods and men even from that day
Mingled, and wrought the latter much annoy,
And little profit, going far astray
Through the dun night. Farewell, delightful Boy,
Of Jove and Maia sprung,—never by me,
Nor thou, nor other songs shall unremembered be.

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THE CYCLOPS;

A SATYRIC DRAMA.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK OF EURIPIDES.

Silenus.

Chorus of Satyrs.

Ulysses.

The Cyclops.

SILENUS.

O, Bacchus, what a world of toil, both now
And ere these limbs were overworn with age,
Have I endured for thee! First, when thou fled'st
The mountain-nymphs who nurst thee, driven afar
By the strange madness Juno sent upon thee;
Then in the battle of the sons of Earth,
When I stood foot by foot close to thy side,
No unpropitious fellow combatant,
And driving through his shield my winged spear,
Slew vast Enceladus. Consider now,
Is it a dream of which I speak to thee?
By Jove it is not, for you have the trophies!
And now I suffer more than all before.
For when I heard that Juno had devised
A tedious voyage for you, I put to sea
With all my children quaint in search of you,
And I myself stood on the beaked prow
And fixed the naked mast, and all my boys
Leaning upon their oars, with splash and strain
Made white with foam the green and purple sea,—
And so we sought you, king. We were sailing
Near Malea, when an eastern wind arose,
And drove us to this wild Ætnean rock;
The one-eyed children of the Ocean God,
The man-destroying Cyclopes inhabit,
On this wild shore, their solitary caves,
And one of these, named Polypheme, has caught us
To be his slaves; and so, for all delight
Of Bacchic sports, sweet dance and melody,

We keep this lawless giant's wandering flocks.
My sons indeed, on far declivities,
Young things themselves, tend on the youngling sheep,
But I remain to fill the water casks,
Or sweeping the hard floor, or ministering
Some impious and abominable meal
To the fell Cyclops. I am wearied of it!
And now I must scrape up the littered floor
With this great iron rake, so to receive
My absent master and his evening sheep
In a cave neat and clean. Even now I see
My children tending the flocks hitherward.
Ha! what is this? are your Sicinnian measures
Even now the same, as when with dance and song
You brought young Bacchus to Athæa's halls?
* * * * *

CHORUS OF SATYRS.

STROPHE.

Where has he of race divine
Wandered in the winding rocks?
Here the air is calm and fine
For the father of the flocks;—
Here the grass is soft and sweet,
And the river-eddies meet
In the trough beside the cave,
Bright as in their fountain wave.—
Neither here, nor on the dew
Of the lawny uplands feeding?
Oh, you come!—a stone at you
Will I throw to mend your breeding;—
Get along, you horned thing,
Wild, seditious, rambling!

EPODE.*

An Iacchic melody
To the golden Aphrodite
Will I lift, as erst did I
Seeking her and her delight
With the Mænads, whose white feet
To the music glance and fleet.
Bacchus, O beloved, where,
Shaking wide thy yellow hair,
Wanderest thou alone, afar?

To the one-eyed Cyclops, we,
Who by right thy servants are,
Minister in misery,
In these wretched goat-skins clad,
Far from thy delights and thee.

SILENUS.

Be silent, sons; command the slaves to drive
The gathered flocks into the rock-roofed cave.

CHORUS.

Go! But what needs this serious haste, O father?

SILENUS.

I see a Greek ship's boat upon the coast,
And thence the rowers with some general
Approaching to this cave. About their necks
Hang empty vessels, as they wanted food,
And water-flasks.—O, miserable strangers!
Whence come they, that they know not what and who
My master is, approaching in ill hour
The inhospitable roof of Polypheme,
And the Cyclopien jaw-bone, man-destroying?
Be silent, Satyrs, while I ask and hear
Whence coming, they arrive the Ætnean hill.

ULYSSES.

Friends, can you show me some clear water spring,
The remedy of our thirst? Will any one
Furnish with food seamen in want of it?
Ha! what is this? We seem to be arrived
At the blithe court of Bacchus. I observe
This sportive band of Satyrs near the caves.
First let me greet the elder.—Hail!

SILENUS.

Hail thou,
O, Stranger! tell thy country and thy race.

ULYSSES.

The Ithacan Ulysses and the king:

Of Cephalonia.

SILENUS.

Oh! I know the man,
Wordy and shrewd, the son of Sisyphus.

ULYSSES.

I am the same, but do not rail upon me.—

SILENUS.

Whence sailing do you come to Sicily?

ULYSSES.

From Ilion, and from the Trojan toils.

SILENUS.

How, touched you not at your paternal shore?

ULYSSES.

The strength of tempests bore me here by force.

SILENUS.

The self-same accident occurred to me.

ULYSSES.

Were you then driven here by stress of weather?

SILENUS.

Following the Pirates who had kidnapped Bacchus.

ULYSSES.

What land is this, and who inhabit it?—

SILENUS.

Ætna, the loftiest peak in Sicily.

ULYSSES.

And are there walls, and tower-surrounded towns?

SILENUS.

There are not;—These lone rocks are bare of men.

ULYSSES.

And who possess the land? the race of beasts?

SILENUS.

Cyclops, who live in caverns, not in houses.

ULYSSES.

Obeying whom? Or is the state popular?

SILENUS.

Shepherds: no one obeys any in aught.

ULYSSES.

How live they? do they sow the corn of Ceres?

SILENUS.

On milk and cheese, and on the flesh of sheep.

ULYSSES.

Have they the Bromian drink from the vine's stream?

SILENUS.

Ah! no; they live in an ungracious land.

ULYSSES.

And are they just to strangers?—hospitable?

SILENUS.

They think the sweetest thing a stranger brings

Is his own flesh.

ULYSSES.

What! do they eat man's flesh?

SILENUS.

No one comes here who is not eaten up.

ULYSSES.

The Cyclops now—Where is he? Not at home?

SILENUS.

Absent on Ætna, hunting with his dogs.

ULYSSES.

Know'st thou what thou must do to aid us hence?

SILENUS.

I know not: we will help you all we can.

ULYSSES.

Provide us food, of which we are in want.

SILENUS.

Here is not anything, as I said, but meat.

ULYSSES.

But meat is a sweet remedy for hunger.

SILENUS.

Cow's milk there is, and store of curdled cheese.

ULYSSES.

Bring out:—I would see all before I bargain.

SILENUS.

But how much gold will you engage to give?

ULYSSES.

I bring no gold, but Bacchic juice.

SILENUS.

O, joy!
'Tis long since these dry lips were wet with wine.

ULYSSES.

Maron, the son of the God, gave it me.

SILENUS.

Whom I have nursed a baby in my arms.

ULYSSES.

The son of Bacchus, for your clearer knowledge.

SILENUS.

Have you it now?—or is it in the ship?

ULYSSES.

Old man, this skin contains it, which you see.

SILENUS.

Why this would hardly be a mouthful for me.

ULYSSES.

Nay, twice as much as you can draw from thence.

SILENUS.

You speak of a fair fountain, sweet to me.

ULYSSES.

Would you first taste of the unmingled wine?

SILENUS.

'Tis just—tasting invites the purchaser.

ULYSSES.

Here is the cup, together with the skin.

SILENUS.

Pour: that the draught may fillip my remembrance.

ULYSSES.

See!

SILENUS.

Papaiapæx! what a sweet smell it has!

ULYSSES.

You see it then?—

SILENUS.

By Jove, no! but I smell it.

ULYSSES.

Taste, that you may not praise it in words only.

SILENUS.

Babai! Great Bacchus calls me forth to dance!
Joy! joy!

ULYSSES.

Did it flow sweetly down your throat?

SILENUS.

So that it tingled to my very nails.

ULYSSES.

And in addition I will give you gold.

SILENUS.

Let gold alone! only unlock the cask.

ULYSSES.

Bring out some cheeses now, or a young goat.

SILENUS.

That will I do, despising any master.
Yes, let me drink one cup, and I will give
All that the Cyclops feed upon their mountains.
* * * * *

CHORUS.

Ye have taken Troy and laid your hands on Helen?

ULYSSES.

And utterly destroyed the race of Priam.

SILENUS.

* * * * *
The wanton wretch! she was bewitched to see
The many-coloured anklets and the chain
Of woven gold which girt the neck of Paris,
And so she left that good man Menclaus.
There should be no more women in the world
But such as are reserved for me alone.—
See, here are sheep, and here are goats, Ulysses,
Here are unsparing cheeses of pressed milk;
Take them; depart with what good speed ye may;
First leaving my reward, the Bacchic dew
Of joy-inspiring grapes.

ULYSSES.

Ah me! Alas!
What shall we do? the Cyclops is at hand!
Old man, we perish! whither can we fly?

SILENUS.

Hide yourselves quick within that hollow rock.

ULYSSES.

'Twere perilous to fly into the net.

SILENUS.

The cavern has recesses numberless;
Hide yourselves quick.

ULYSSES.

That will I never do!
The mighty Troy would be indeed disgraced
If I should fly one man. How many times
Have I withstood, with shield immoveable,
Ten thousand Phrygians!—if I needs must die,
Yet will I die with glory;—if I live,
The praise which I have gained will yet remain.

SILENUS.

What, ho! assistance, comrades, haste assistance!

The Cyclops, Silenus, Ulysses; Chorus.

CYCLOPS.

What is this tumult? Bacchus is not here,
Nor tympanies nor brazen castanets.
How are my young lambs in the cavern? Milking
Their dams or playing by their sides? And is
The new cheese pressed into the bull-rush baskets?
Speak! I'll beat some of you till you rain tears—
Look up, not downwards when I speak to you.

SILENUS.

See! I now gape at Jupiter himself,
I stare upon Orion and the stars.

CYCLOPS.

Well, is the dinner fitly cooked and laid?

SILENUS.

All ready, if your throat is ready too.

CYCLOPS.

Are the bowls full of milk besides?

SILENUS.

O'er brimming;
So you may drink a tunful if you will.

CYCLOPS.

Is it ewe's milk or cow's milk, or both mixed?—

SILENUS.

Both, either; only pray don't swallow me.

CYCLOPS.

By no means.—

* * *

What is this crowd I see beside the stalls?
Outlaws or thieves? for near my cavern-home,
I see my young lambs coupled two by two
With willow bands; mixed with my cheeses lie
Their implements; and this old fellow here
Has his bald head broken with stripes.

SILENUS.

Ah me!
I have been beaten till I burn with fever.

CYCLOPS.

By whom? Who laid his first upon your head?

SILENUS.

Those men, because I would not suffer them
To steal your goods.

CYCLOPS.

Did not the rascals know
I am a God, sprung from the race of heaven?

SILENUS.

I told them so, but they bore off your things,
And ate the cheese in spite of all I said,
And carried out the lambs—and said, moreover,
They'd pin you down with a three cubit collar,
And pull your vitals out through your one eye,
Torture your back with stripes, then binding you,
Throw you as ballast into the ship's hold,
And then deliver you, a slave, to move
Enormous rocks, or found a vestibule.

CYCLOPS.

In truth? Nay, haste, and place in order quickly
The cooking knives, and heap upon the hearth,
And kindle it, a great faggot of wood—
As soon as they are slaughtered, they shall fill
My belly, broiling warm from the live coals,
Or boiled and seethed within the bubbling cauldron.
I am quite sick of the wild mountain game,
Of stags and lions I have gorged enough,
And I grow hungry for the flesh of men.

SILENUS.

Nay, master, something new is very pleasant
After one thing for ever, and of late
Very few strangers have approached our cave.

ULYSSES.

Hear, Cyclops, a plain tale on the other side.

We, wanting to buy food, came from our ship
Into the neighbourhood of your cave, and here
This old Silenus gave us in exchange
These lambs for wine, the which he took and drank,
And all by mutual compact, without force.
There is no word of truth in what he says,
For sily he was selling all your store.

SILENUS.

I? May you perish, wretch—

ULYSSES.

If I speak false!

SILENUS.

Cyclops, I swear by Neptune who begot thee,
By mighty Triton and by Nereus old,
Calypso and the glaucous ocean Nymphs,
The sacred waves and all the race of fishes—
Be these the witnesses, my dear sweet master,
My darling little Cyclops, that I never
Gave any of your stores to these false strangers:—
If I speak false may those whom most I love,
My children, perish wretchedly!

CHORUS.

There stop!
I saw him giving these things to the strangers,
If I speak false, then may my father perish,
But do not thou wrong hospitality.

CYCLOPS.

You lie! I swear that he is juster far
Than Rhadamanthus—I trust more in him.
But let me ask, whence have ye sailed, O strangers?
Who are you? And what city nourished ye?

ULYSSES.

Our race is Ithacan—having destroyed
The town of Troy, the tempests of the sea
Have driven us on thy land, O Polypheme.

CYCLOPS.

What, have ye shared in the unenvied spoil
Of the false Helen, near Scamander's stream?

ULYSSES.

The same, having endured a woful toil.

CYCLOPS.

O, basest expedition! sailed ye not
From Greece to Phrygia for one woman's sake?

ULYSSES.

'Twas the God's work—no mortal was in fault.
But, O great offspring of the ocean-king,
We pray thee and admonish thee with freedom,
That thou dost spare thy friends who visit thee,
And place no impious food within thy jaws.
For in the depths of Greece we have upreared
Temples to thy great father, which are all
His homes. The sacred bay of Tœnarus
Remains inviolate, and each dim recess
Scooped high on the Malean promontory,
And aery Sunium's silver-veined crag,
Which divine Pallas keeps unprofaned ever,
The Gerastian asylums, and whate'er
Within wide Greece our enterprise has kept
From Phrygian contumely; and in which
You have a common care, for you inhabit
The skirts of Grecian land, under the roots
Of Ætna and its crags, spotted with fire.
Turn then to converse under human laws,
Receive us shipwrecked suppliants, and provide
Food, clothes, and fire, and hospitable gifts;
Nor fixing upon oxen-piercing spits
Our limbs, so fill your belly and your jaws.
Priam's wide land has widowed Greece enough;
And weapon-winged murder heaped together
Enough of dead, and wives are husbandless,
And ancient women and grey fathers wail
Their childless age;—if you should roast the rest,
And 'tis a bitter feast that you prepare,
Where then would any turn? Yet be persuaded;
Forego the lust of your jaw-bone; prefer
Pious humanity to wicked will:

Many have bought too dear their evil joys.

SILENUS.

Let me advise you, do not spare a morsel
Of all his flesh. If you should eat his tongue
You would become most eloquent, O Cyclops?

CYCLOPS.

Wealth, my good fellow, is the wise man's God,
All other things are a pretence and boast.
What are my father's ocean promontories,
The sacred rocks whereon he dwells, to me?
Stranger, I laugh to scorn Jove's thunderbolt,
I know not that his strength is more than mine.
As to the rest I care not:—When he pours
Rain from above, I have a close pavilion
Under this rock, in which I lie supine,
Feasting on a roast calf or some wild beast,
And drinking pans of milk, and gloriously
Emulating the thunder of high heaven.
And when the Thracian wind pours down the snow,
I wrap my body in the skins of beasts,
Kindle a fire, and bid the snow whirl on.
The earth, by force, whether it will or no,
Bringing forth grass, fattens my flocks and herds,
Which, to what other God but to myself
And this great belly, first of deities,
Should I be bound to sacrifice? I well know
The wise man's only Jupiter is this,
To eat and drink during his little day,
And give himself no care. And as for those
Who complicate with laws the life of man,
I freely give them tears for their reward.
I will not cheat my soul of its delight,
Or hesitate in dining upon you:—
And that I may be quit of all demands,
These are my hospitable gifts;—fierce fire
And you ancestral cauldron, which o'er bubbling
Shall finely cook your miserable flesh.
Creep in!—
* * * *

ULYSSES.

Ay! ay! I have escaped the Trojan toils,
I have escaped the sea, and now I fall

Under the cruel grasp of one impious man.
O Pallas, mistress, Goddess, sprung from Jove,
Now, now, assist me! Mightier toils than Troy
Are these;—I totter on the chasms of peril;—
And thou who inhabitest the thrones
Of the bright stars, look, hospitable Jove,
Upon this outrage of thy deity,
Otherwise be considered as no God!

CHORUS(*ALONE*).

For your gaping gulph, and your gullet wide
The ravine is ready on every side,
The limbs of the strangers are cooked and done,
There is boiled meat, and roast meat, and meat from the coal,
You may chop it, and tear it, and gnash it for fun,
An hairy goat's-skin contains the whole.
Let me but escape, and ferry me o'er
The stream of your wrath to a safer shore.
The Cyclops Ætnean is cruel and bold,
He murders the strangers
That sit on his hearth,
And dreads no avengers
To rise from the earth.
He roasts the men before they are cold,
He snatches them broiling from the coal,
And from the cauldron pulls them whole,
And minces their flesh and gnaws their bone
With his cursed teeth, till all begone.
Farewell, foul pavilion!
Farewell, rites of dread!
The Cyclops vermilion,
With slaughter uncloying,
Now feasts on the dead,
In the flesh of strangers joying!

ULYSSES.

O Jupiter! I saw within the cave
Horrible things; deeds to be feigned in words,
But not believed as being done.

CHORUS.

What sawest thou the impious Polypheme
Feasting upon your loved companions now?

ULYSSES.

Selecting two, the plumpest of the crowd,
He grasped them in his hands.—

CHORUS.

Unhappy man
* * * *

ULYSSES.

Soon as we came into this craggy place,
Kindling a fire, he cast on the broad hearth
The knotty limbs of an enormous oak,
Three waggon loads at least, and then he strewed
Upon the ground, beside the red fire light,
His couch of pine leaves; and he milked the cows,
And pouring forth the white milk, filled a bowl
Three cubits wide and four in depth, as much
As would contain four amphoræ, and bound it
With ivy wreaths; then placed upon the fire
A brazen pot to boil, and made red hot
The points of spits, not sharpened with the sickle,
But with a fruit tree bough, and with the jaws
Of axes for Ætnean slaughterings.*
And when this God-abandoned cook of hell
Had made all ready, he seized two of us
And killed them in a kind of measured manner;
For he flung one against the brazen rivets
Of the huge cauldron, and seized the other
By the foot's tendon, and knocked out his brains
Upon the sharp edge of the craggy stone:
Then peeled his flesh with a great cooking knife
And put him down to roast. The other's limbs
He chopped into the cauldron to be boiled.
And I, with the tears raining from my eyes,
Stood near the Cyclops, ministering to him;
The rest, in the recesses of the cave,
Clung to the rock like bats, bloodless with fear.
When he was filled with my companions flesh,
He threw himself upon the ground and sent
A loathsome exhalation from his maw.
Then a divine thought came to me. I filled
The cup of Maron, and I offered him
To taste, and said:—"Child of the Ocean God,
Behold what drink the vines of Greece produce,
The exultation and the joy of Bacchus."

He, satiated with his unnatural food,
Received it, and at one draught drank it off,
And taking my hand, praised me:—"Thou hast given
A sweet draught after a sweet meal, dear guest."
And I perceiving that it pleased him, filled
Another cup, well knowing that the wine
Would wound him soon and take a sure revenge.
And the charm fascinated him, and I
Plied him cup after cup, until the drink
Had warmed his entrails, and he sang aloud
In concert with my wailing fellow-seamen
A hideous discord—and the cavern rung.
I have stolen out, so that if you will
You may achieve my safety and your own.
But say, do you desire, or not, to fly
This uncompanionable man, and dwell
As was your wont among the Grecian Nymphs
Within the fanes of your beloved God?
Your father there within agrees to it,
But he is weak and overcome with wine,
And caught as if with bird-lime by the cup,
He claps his wings and crows in doting joy.
You who are young escape with me, and find
Bacchus your ancient friend; unsuited he
To this rude Cyclops.

CHORUS.

Oh my dearest friend,
That I could see that day, and leave for ever
The impious Cyclops.
* * * *

ULYSSES.

Listen then what a punishment I have
For this fell monster, how secure a flight
From your hard servitude.

CHORUS.

Oh sweeter far
Than is the music of an Asian lyre
Would be the news of Polypheme destroyed.

ULYSSES.

Delighted with the Bacchic drink he goes

To call his brother Cyclops—who inhabit
A village upon Ætna not far off.

CHORUS.

I understand, catching him when alone
You think by some measure to dispatch him,
Or thrust him from the precipice.

ULYSSES.

O no;
Nothing of that kind; my device is subtle.

CHORUS.

How then? I heard of old that thou wert wise.

ULYSSES.

I will dissuade him from this plan, by saying
It were unwise to give the Cyclopes
This precious drink, which if enjoyed alone
Would make life sweeter for a longer time.
When vanquished by the Bacchic power, he sleeps,
There is a trunk of olive wood within,
Whose point having made sharp with this good sword
I will conceal in fire, and when I see
It is alight, will fix it, burning yet,
Within the socket of the Cyclops' eye
And melt it out with fire—as when a man
Turns by its handle a great auger round,
Fitting the frame work of a ship with beams,
So will I, in the Cyclops' fiery eye
Turn round the brand and dry the pupil up.

CHORUS.

Joy! I am mad with joy at your device.

ULYSSES.

And then with you, my friends, and the old man,
We'll load the hollow depth of our black ship,
And row with double strokes from this dread shore.

CHORUS.

May I, as in libations to a God,
Share in the blinding him with the red brand?
I would have some communion in his death.

ULYSSES.

Doubtless: the brand is a great brand to hold.

CHORUS.

Oh! I would lift an hundred waggon loads,
If like a wasp's nest I could scoop the eye out
Of the detested Cyclops.

ULYSSES.

Silence now!
Ye know the close device—and when I call,
Look ye obey the masters of the craft.
I will not save myself and leave behind
My comrades in the cave: I might escape
Having got clear from that obscure recess,
But 'twere unjust to leave in jeopardy
The dear companions who sailed here with me.

CHORUS.

Come! who is first, that with his hand
Will urge down the burning brand
Through the lids, and quench and pierce
The Cyclops' eye so fiery fierce?

SEMI-CHORUS I.

Song within.
Listen! listen! he is coming,
A most hideous discord humming,
Drunken, museless, awkward, yelling,
Far along his rocky dwelling;
Let us with some comic spell
Teach the yet unteachable.
By all means he must be blinded,
If my council be but minded.

SEMI-CHORUS II.

Happy those made odorous
With the dew which sweet grapes weep,
To the village hastening thus,
Seek the vines that soothe to sleep,
Having first embraced thy friend,
There in luxury without end,
With the strings of yellow hair,
Of thy voluptuous leman fair,
Shalt sit playing on a bed!—
Speak what door is opened?

CYCLOPS.

Ha! ha! ha! I'm full of wine,
Heavy with the joy divine,
With the young feast oversated,
Like a merchant's vessel freighted
To the waters edge, my crop
Is laden to the gullet's top.
The fresh meadow grass of spring
Tempt me forth thus wandering
To my brothers on the mountains,
Who shall share the wine's sweet fountains.
Bring the cask, O stranger, bring!

CHORUS.

One with eyes the fairest
Cometh from his dwelling;
Some one loves thee, rarest,
Bright beyond my telling.
In thy grace thou shinest
Like some nymph divinest,
In her caverns dewy:—
All delights pursue thee,
Soon pied flowers, sweet-breathing,
Shall thy head be wreathing.

ULYSSES.

Listen, O Cyclops, for I am well skilled
In Bacchus, whom I gave thee of to drink.

CYCLOPS.

What sort of God is Bacchus then accounted?

ULYSSES.

The greatest among men for joy of life.

CYCLOPS.

I gulpt him down with very great delight.

ULYSSES.

This is a God who never injures men.

CYCLOPS.

How does the God like living in a skin?

ULYSSES.

He is content wherever he is put.

CYCLOPS.

Gods should not have their body in a skin.

ULYSSES.

If he gives joy, what is his skin to you?

CYCLOPS.

I hate the skin, but love the wine within.

ULYSSES.

Stay here, now drink, and make your spirit glad.

CYCLOPS.

Should I not share this liquor with my brothers?

ULYSSES.

Keep it yourself, and be more honoured so.

CYCLOPS.

I were more useful, giving to my friends.

ULYSSES.

But village mirth breeds contests, broils, and blows.

CYCLOPS.

When I am drunk none shall lay hands on me.—

ULYSSES.

A drunken man is better within doors.

CYCLOPS.

He is a fool, who drinking, loves not mirth.

ULYSSES.

But he is wise, who drunk, remains at home.

CYCLOPS.

Whall shall I do, Silenus? Shall I stay?

SILENUS.

Stay—for what need have you of pot companions?

CYCLOPS.

Indeed this place is closely carpeted
With flowers and grass.

SILENUS.

And in the sun-warm noon
'Tis sweet to drink. Lie down beside me now,
Placing your mighty sides upon the ground.

CYCLOPS.

What do you put the cup behind me for?

SILENUS.

That no one here may touch it.

CYCLOPS.

Thievish one!
You want to drink;—here place it in the midst.
And thou, O stranger, tell how art thou called?

ULYSSES.

My name is Nobody. What favour now
Shall I receive to praise you at your hands?

CYCLOPS.

I'll feast on you the last of your companions.

ULYSSES.

You grant your guest a fair reward, O Cyclops.

CYCLOPS.

Ha! what is this? Stealing the wine, you rogue!

SILENUS.

It was this stranger kissing me because
I looked so beautiful.

CYCLOPS.

You shall repent
For kissing the coy wine that loves you not.

SILENUS.

By Jupiter! you said that I am fair.

CYCLOPS.

Pour out, and only give me the cup full.

SILENUS.

How is it mixed? let me observe.

CYCLOPS.

Curse you!
Give it me so.

SILENUS.

Not till I see you wear
That coronal, and taste the cup to you.

CYCLOPS.

Thou wily traitor!

SILENUS.

But the wine is sweet.
Aye, you will roar if you are caught in drinking.

CYCLOPS.

See now, my lip is clean and all my beard.

SILENUS.

Now put your elbow right and drink again.
As you see me drink— * * * *

CYCLOPS.

How now?

SILENUS.

Ye Gods, what a delicious gulp!

CYCLOPS.

Guest, take it;—you pour out the wine for me.

ULYSSES.

The wine is well accustomed to my hand.

CYCLOPS.

Pour out the wine!

ULYSSES.

I pour; only be silent.

CYCLOPS.

Silence is a hard task to him who drinks.

ULYSSES.

Take it and drink it off; leave not a dreg.
O, that the drinker died with his own draught!

CYCLOPS.

Papai! the wine must be a sapient plant.

ULYSSES.

If you drink much after a mighty feast,
Moistening your thirsty maw, you will sleep well;
If you leave aught, Bacchus will dry you up.

CYCLOPS.

Ho! ho! I can scarce rise. What pure delight!
The heavens and earth appear to whirl about
Confusedly. I see the throne of Jove
And the clear congregation of the Gods.
Now if the Graces tempted me to kiss
I would not, for the loveliest of them all
I would not leave this Ganymede.

SILENUS.

Polypheme,
I am the Ganymede of Jupiter.

CYCLOPS.

By Jove you are; I bore you off from Dardanus.

Ulysses and the Chorus.

ULYSSES.

Come boys of Bacchus, children of high race,

This man within is folded up in sleep,
And soon will vomit flesh from his fell maw;
The brand under the shed thrusts out its smoke,
No preparation needs, but to burn out
The monster's eye;—but bear yourselves like men.

CHORUS.

We will have courage like the adamant rock,
All things are ready for you here; go in,
Before our father shall perceive the noise.

ULYSSES.

Vulcan, Ætnean king! burn out with fire
The shining eye of this thy neighbouring monster!
And thou, O Sleep, nursling of gloomy night,
Descend unmixed on this God-hated beast,
And suffer not Ulysses and his comrades,
Returning from their famous Trojan toils,
To perish by this man, who cares not either
For God or mortal; or I needs must think
That Chance is a supreme divinity,
And things divine are subject to her power.

CHORUS.

Soon a crab the throat will seize
Of him who feeds upon his guest,
Fire will burn his lamp-like eyes
In revenge of such a feast!
A great oak stump now is lying
In the ashes yet undying.
Come, Maron, come!
Raging let him fix the doom,
Let him tear the eyelid up,
Of the Cyclops—that his cup
May be evil!
O, I long to dance and revel
With sweet Bromian, long desired,
In loved ivy-wreathes attired;
Leaving this abandoned home—
Will the moment ever come?

ULYSSES.

Be silent, ye wild things! Nay, hold your peace,
And keep your lips quite close; dare not to breathe,

Or spit, or e'en wink, lest ye wake the monster,
Until his eye be tortured out with fire.

CHORUS.

Nay, we are silent, and we chaw the air.

ULYSSES.

Come now, and lend a hand to the great stake
Within—it is delightfully red hot.

CHORUS.

You then command who first should seize the stake
To burn the Cyclops' eye, that all may share
In the great enterprise.

SEMI-CHORUS I.

We are too few,
We cannot at this distance from the door
Thrust fire into his eye.

SEMI-CHORUS II.

And we just now
Have become lame; cannot move hand or foot.

CHORUS.

The same thing has occurred to us,—our ancles
Are sprained with standing here, I know not how.

ULYSSES.

What, sprained with standing still?

CHORUS.

And there is dust
Or ashes in our eyes, I know not whence.

ULYSSES.

Cowardly dogs! ye will not aid me then?

CHORUS.

With pitying my own back and my back bone,
And with not wishing all my teeth knocked out,
This cowardice comes of itself—but stay,
I know a famous Orphic incantation
To make the brand stick of its own accord
Into the skull of this one-eyed son of Earth.

ULYSSES.

Of old I knew ye thus by nature; now
I know ye better.—I will use the aid
Of my own comrades—yet though weak of hand
Speak cheerfully, that so ye may awaken
The courage of my friends with your blithe words.

CHORUS.

This I will do with peril of my life,
And blind you with my exhortations, Cyclops.
Hasten and thrust,
And parch up to dust,
The eye of the beast,
Who feeds on his guest.
Burn and blind
The Ætnean hind!
Scoop and draw,
But beware lest he claw
Your limbs near his maw.

CYCLOPS.

Ah me! my eye-sight is parched up to cinders.

CHORUS.

What a sweet pæan! sing me that again!

CYCLOPS.

Ah me! indeed, what woe has fallen upon me!
But wretched nothings, think ye not to flee
Out of this rock; I, standing at the outlet,
Will bar the way and catch you as you pass.

CHORUS.

What are you roaring out, Cyclops?

CYCLOPS.

I perish!

CHORUS.

For you are wicked.

CYCLOPS.

And besides miserable.

CHORUS.

What, did you fall into the fire when drunk?

CYCLOPS.

'Twas Nobody destroyed me.

CHORUS.

Why then no one
Can be to blame.

CYCLOPS.

I say 'twas Nobody
Who blinded me.

CHORUS.

Why then you are not blind.

CYCLOPS.

I wish you were as blind as I am.

CHORUS.

Nay,
It cannot be that no one made you blind.

CYCLOPS.

You jeer me; where, I ask, is Nobody?

CHORUS.

No where, O Cyclops * * *

CYCLOPS.

It was that stranger ruined me:—the wretch
First gave me wine and then burnt out my eyes,
For wine is strong and hard to struggle with.
Have they escaped, or are they yet within?

CHORUS.

They stand under the darkness of the rock
And cling to it.

CYCLOPS.

At my right hand or left?

CHORUS.

Close on your right.

CYCLOPS.

Where?

CHORUS.

Near the rock itself.
You have them.

CYCLOPS.

Oh, misfortune on misfortune!
I've cracked my skull.

CHORUS.

Now they escape you there.

CYCLOPS.

Not there, although you say so.

CHORUS.

Not on that side.

CYCLOPS.

Where then?

CHORUS.

They creep about you on your left.

CYCLOPS.

Ah! I am mocked! They jeer me in my ills.

CHORUS.

Not there! he is a little there beyond you.

CYCLOPS.

Detested wretch! where are you?

ULYSSES.

Far from you
I keep with care this body of Ulysses.

CYCLOPS.

What do you say? You proffer a new name.

ULYSSES.

My father named me so; and I have taken
A full revenge for your unnatural feast;
I should have done ill to have burned down Troy
And not revenged the murder of my comrades.

CYCLOPS.

Ai! ai! the ancient oracle is accomplished;

It said that I should have my eyesight blinded
By you coming from Troy, yet it foretold
That you should pay the penalty for this
By wandering long over the homeless sea.

ULYSSES.

I bid thee weep—consider what I say,
I go towards the shore to drive my ship
To mine own land, o'er the Sicilian wave.

CYCLOPS.

Not so, if whelming you with this huge stone
I can crush you and all your men together;
I will descend upon the shore, though blind,
Groping my way adown the steep ravine.

CHORUS.

And we, the shipmates of Ulysses now,
Will serve our Bacchus all our happy lives.

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TRANSLATION FROM MOSCHUS.

Pan loved his neighbour Echo—but that child
Of Earth and Air pined for the Satyr leaping;
The Satyr loved with wasting madness wild
The bright nymph Lyda,—and so three went weeping.
As Pan loved Echo, Echo loved the Satyr;
The Satyr, Lyda—and thus love consumed them.—
And thus to each—which was a woful matter—
To bear what they inflicted, justice doomed them;
For inasmuch as each might hate the lover,
Each loving, so was hated.—Ye that love not
Be warned—in thought turn this example over,
That when ye love, the like return ye prove not.

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SCENES

FROM THE “MAGICO PRODIGIOSO” OF CALDERON.

Cyprianas a Student; Clarin and Mosconas poor Scholars, with books.

CYPRIAN.

In the sweet solitude of this calm place,
This intricate wild wilderness of trees
And flowers and undergrowth of odorous plants,
Leave me; the books you brought out of the house
To me are ever best society.
And whilst with glorious festival and song
Antioch now celebrates the consecration
Of a proud temple to great Jupiter,
And bears his image in loud jubilee
To its new shrine, I would consume what still
Lives of the dying day, in studious thought,
Far from the throng and turmoil. You, my friends,
Go and enjoy the festival; it will
Be worth the labour, and return for me
When the sun seeks its grave among the billows,
Which among dim grey clouds on the horizon
Dance like white plumes upon a hearse;—and here
I shall expect you.

MOSCON.

I cannot bring my mind,
Great as my haste to see the festival
Certainly is, to leave you, Sir, without
Just saying some three or four hundred words.
How is it possible that on a day
Of such festivity, you can bring your mind
To come forth to a solitary country
With three or four old books, and turn your back
On all this mirth?

CLARIN.

My master's in the right;
There is not any thing more tiresome
Than a procession day, with troops of men,
And dances, and all that.

MOSCON.

From first to last,
Clarín, you are a temporizing flatterer;
You praise not what you feel but what he does;—
Toadeater!

CLARIN.

You lie—under a mistake—
For this is the most civil sort of lie
That can be given to a man's face. I now
Say what I think.

CYPRIAN.

Enough, you foolish fellows.
Puffed up with your own doting ignorance,
You always take the two sides of one question.
Now go, and as I said, return for me
When night falls, veiling in its shadows wide
This glorious fabric of the universe.

MOSCON.

How happens it, although you can maintain
The folly of enjoying festivals,
That yet you go there?

CLARIN.

Nay, the consequence
Is clear:—who ever did what he advises
Others to do?—

MOSCON.

Would that my feet were wings,
So would I fly to Livia. [*Exit.*]

CLARIN.

To speak truth,
Livia is she who has surprised my heart;
But he is more than half way there.—Soho!
Livia, I come; good sport, Livia, Soho! [*Exit.*]

CYPRIAN.

Now, since I am alone, let me examine
The question which has long disturbed my mind
With doubt; since first I read in Plinius
The words of mystic import and deep sense
In which he defines God. My intellect
Can find no God with whom these marks and signs
Fitly agree. It is a hidden truth
Which I must fathom. [*Reads.*]

Enter the Devil, as a fine Gentleman.

DÆMON.

Search even as thou wilt,
But thou shalt never find what I can hide.

CYPRIAN.

What noise is that among the boughs? Who moves?
What art thou?—

DÆMON.

'Tis a foreign gentleman.
Even from this morning I have lost my way
In this wild place, and my poor horse at last
Quite overcome, has stretched himself upon
The enamelled tapestry of this mossy mountain,
And feeds and rests at the same time. I was
Upon my way to Antioch upon business
Of some importance, but wrapt up in cares
(Who is exempt from this inheritance)
I parted from my company, and lost
My way, and lost my servants and my comrades.

CYPRIAN.

'Tis singular, that even within the sight
Of the high towers of Antioch, you could lose
Your way. Of all the avenues and green paths
Of this wild wood there is not one but leads
As to its centre, to the walls of Antioch;
Take which you will you cannot miss your road.

DÆMON.

And such is ignorance! Even in the sight
Of knowledge it can draw no profit from it.
But as it still is early, and as I
Have no acquaintances in Antioch,
Being a stranger there, I will even wait
The few surviving hours of the day,
Until the night shall conquer it. I see
Both by your dress and by the books in which
You find delight and company, that you
Are a great student;—for my part, I feel
Much sympathy with such pursuits.

CYPRIAN.

Have you
Studied much?—

DÆMON.

No,—and yet I know enough
Not to be wholly ignorant.

CYPRIAN.

Pray, Sir,
What science may you know?—

DÆMON.

Many.

CYPRIAN.

Alas!
Much pains must we expend on one alone,
And even then attain it not;—but you
Have the presumption to assert that you
Know many without study.

DÆMON.

And with truth.
For in the country whence I come, sciences
Require no learning,—they are known.

CYPRIAN.

Oh, would
I were of that bright country! for in this
The more we study, we the more discover
Our ignorance.

DÆMON.

It is so true that I
Had so much arrogance as to oppose
The chair of the most high Professorship,
And obtained many votes, and though I lost,
The attempt was still more glorious, than the failure
Could be dishonourable: if you believe not,
Let us refer it to dispute respecting
That which you know best, and although I
Know not the opinion you maintain, and though
It be the true one, I will take the contrary.

CYPRIAN.

The offer gives me pleasure. I am now
Debating with myself upon a passage
Of Plinius, and my mind is racked with doubt
To understand and know who is the God
Of whom he speaks.

DÆMON.

It is a passage, if
I recollect it right, couched in these words:
“God is one supreme goodness, one pure essence,
One substance, and one sense, all sight, all hands.”

CYPRIAN.

'Tis true.

DÆMON.

What difficulty find you here?

CYPRIAN.

I do not recognise among the Gods
The God defined by Plinius; if he must

Be supreme goodness, even Jupiter
Is not supremely good; because we see
His deeds are evil, and his attributes
Tainted with mortal weakness; in what manner
Can supreme goodness be consistent with
The passions of humanity?

DÆMON.

The wisdom
Of the old world masked with the names of Gods,
The attributes of Nature and of Man;
A sort of popular philosophy.

CYPRIAN.

This reply will not satisfy me, for
Such awe is due to the high name of God
That ill should never be imputed. Then,
Examining the question with more care,
It follows, that the gods should always will
That which is best, were they supremely good.
How then does one will one thing—one another?
And you may not say that I allege
Poetical or philosophic learning:—
Consider the ambiguous responses
Of their oracular statues; from two shrines
Two armies shall obtain the assurance of
One victory. Is it not indisputable
That two contending wills can never lead
To the same end? And being opposite,
If one be good is not the other evil?
Evil in God is inconceivable;
But supreme goodness fails among the gods
Without their union.

DÆMON.

I deny your major.
These responses are means towards some end
Unfathomed by our intellectual beam.
They are the work of providence, and more
The battle's loss may profit those who lose,
Than victory advantage those who win.

CYPRIAN.

That I admit, and yet that God should not

(Falsehood is incompatible with deity)
Assure the victory; it would be enough
To have permitted the defeat; if God
Be all sight,—God, who beheld the truth,
Would not have given assurance of an end
Never to be accomplished; thus, although
The Deity may according to his attributes
Be well distinguished into persons, yet,
Even in the minutest circumstance,
His essence must be one.

DÆMON.

To attain the end
The affections of the actors in the scene
Must have been thus influenced by his voice.

CYPRIAN.

But for a purpose thus subordinate
He might have employed genii, good or evil,—
A sort of spirits called so by the learned,
Who roam about inspiring good or evil,
And from whose influence and existence we
May well infer our immortality:—
Thus God might easily, without descending
To a gross falsehood in his proper person,
Have moved the affections by this mediation
To the just point.

DÆMON.

These trifling contradictions
Do not suffice to impugn the unity
Of the high gods; in things of great importance
They still appear unanimous; consider
That glorious fabric—man,—his workmanship,
Is stamped with one conception.

CYPRIAN.

Who made man
Must have, methinks, the advantage of the others.
If they are equal, might they not have risen
In opposition to the work, and being
All hands, according to our author here,
Have still destroyed even as the other made?
If equal in their power, and only unequal

In opportunity, which of the two
Will remain conqueror?

DÆMON.

On impossible
And false hypothesis there can be built
No argument. Say, what do you infer
From this?

CYPRIAN.

That there must be a mighty God
Of supreme goodness and of highest grace,
All sight, all hands, all truth, infallible,
Without an equal and without a rival;
The cause of all things and the effect of nothing,
One power, one will, one substance, and one essence.
And in whatever persons, one or two,
His attributes may be distinguished, one
Sovereign power, one solitary essence,
One cause of all cause. [*They rise.*]

DÆMON.

How can I impugn
So clear a consequence?

CYPRIAN.

Do you regret
My victory?

DÆMON.

Who but regrets a check
In rivalry of wit? I could reply
And urge new difficulties, but will now
Depart, for I hear steps of men approaching,
And it is time that I should now pursue
My journey to the city.

CYPRIAN.

Go in peace!

DEMON.

Remain in peace! Since thus it profits him
To study, I will wrap his senses up
In sweet oblivion of all thought, but of
A piece of excellent beauty; and as I
Have power given me to wage enmity
Against Justina's soul, I will extract
From one effect two vengeance. [*Exit.*]

CYPRIAN.

I never
Met a more learned person. Let me now
Revolve this doubt again with careful mind. [*He reads.*]

Enter Lelio and Floro.

LELIO.

Here stop. These toppling rocks and tangled boughs,
Impenetrable by the noonday beam,
Shall be sole witnesses of what we —

FLORO.

Draw!
If there were words, here is the place for deeds.

LELIO.

Thou needest not instruct me; well I know
That in the field the silent tongue of steel
Speaks thus. [*They fight.*]

CYPRIAN.

Ha! what is this? Lelio, Floro,
Be it enough that Cyprian stands between you,
Although unarmed.

LELIO.

Whence comest thou, to stand
Between me and my vengeance?

FLORO.

From what rocks
And desert cells?

Enter Moscon and Clarin.

MOSCON.

Run, run! for where we left my master
We hear the clash of swords.

CLARIN.

I never
Run to approach things of this sort, but only
To avoid them. Sir! Cyprian! sir!

CYPRIAN.

Be silent, fellows! What! two friends who are
In blood and fame the eyes and hope of Antioch;
One of the noble men of the Colatti,
The other son of the Governor, adventure
And cast away, on some slight cause no doubt,
Two lives the honour of their country?

LELIO.

Cyprian!
Although my high respect towards your person
Holds now my sword suspended, thou canst not
Restore it to the slumber of its scabbard.
Thou knowest more of science than the duel;
For when two men of honour take the field,
No [[]] or respect can make them friends,
But one must die in the pursuit.

FLORO.

I pray
That you depart hence with your people, and
Leave us to finish what we have begun
Without advantage.

CYPRIAN.

Though you may imagine
That I know little of the laws of duel,
Which vanity and valour instituted,
You are in error. By my birth I am
Held no less than yourselves to know the limits
Of honour and of infamy, nor has study
Quenched the free spirit which first ordered them;
And thus to me, as one well experienced
In the false quicksands of the sea of honour,
You may refer the merits of the case;
And if I should perceive in your relation
That either has the right to satisfaction
From the other, I give you my word of honour
To leave you.

LELIO.

Under this condition then
I will relate the cause, and you will cede
And must confess th' impossibility
Of compromise; for the same lady is
Beloved by Floro and myself.

FLORO.

It seems
Much to me that the light of day should look
Upon that idol of my heart—but he—
Leave us to fight, according to thy word.

CYPRIAN.

Permit one question further: is the lady
Impossible to hope or not?

LELIO.

She is
So excellent, that if the light of day
Should excite Floro's jealousy, it were
Without just cause, for even the light of day
Trembles to gaze on her.

CYPRIAN.

Would you for your
Part marry her?

FLORO.

Such is my confidence.

CYPRIAN.

And you?

LELIO.

O, would that I could lift my hope
So high? for though she is extremely poor,
Her virtue is her dowry.

CYPRIAN.

And if you both
Would marry her, is it not weak and vain,
Culpable and unworthy, thus beforehand
To slur her honour. What would the world say
If one should slay the other, and if she
Should afterwards espouse the murderer?

[The rivals agree to refer their quarrel to Cyprian; who in consequence visits Justina, and becomes enamoured of her: she disdains him, and he retires to a solitary sea-shore.]

SCENE II.

CYPRIAN.

Oh, memory! permit it not
That the tyrant of my thought
Be another soul that still
Holds dominion o'er the will,
That would refuse, but can no more,
To bend, to tremble, and adore.
Vain idolatry!—I saw,
And gazing, became blind with error;
Weak ambition, which the awe
Of her presence bound to terror!
So beautiful she was—and I,

Between my love and jealousy,
Am so convulsed with hope and fear,
Unworthy as it may appear;—
So bitter is the life I live,
That, hear me, Hell! I now would give
To thy most detested spirit
My soul, for ever to inherit,
To suffer punishment and pine,
So this woman may be mine.
Hear'st thou, Hell! dost thou reject it?
My soul is offered!

DÆMON(*UNSEEN*).

I accept it.

[*Tempest, with thunder and lightning.*]

CYPRIAN.

What is this? ye heavens for ever pure,
At once intensely radiant and obscure!
Athwart the etherial halls
The lightning's arrow and the thunder-balls
The day affright.
As from the horizon round,
Burst with earthquake sound,
In mighty torrents the electric fountains;—
Clouds quench the sun, and thunder smoke
Strangles the air, and fire eclipses heaven.
Philosophy, thou canst not even
Compel their causes underneath thy yoke,
From yonder clouds even to the waves below
The fragments of a single ruin choke
Imagination's flight;
For, on flakes of surge, like feathers light,
The ashes of the desolation cast
Upon the gloomy blast,
Tell of the footsteps of the storm.
And nearer see the melancholy form
Of a great ship, the outcast of the sea,
Drives miserably!
And it must fly the pity of the port,
Or perish, and its last and sole resort
Is its own raging enemy.
The terror of the thrilling cry
Was a fatal prophesy
Of coming death, who hovers now

Upon that shattered prow,
That they who die not may be dying still.
And not alone the insane elements
Are populous with wild portents,
But that sad ship is as a miracle
Of sudden ruin, for it drives so fast
It seems as if it had arrayed its form
With the headlong storm.
It strikes—I almost feel the shock,—
It stumbles on a jagged rock,—
Sparkles of blood on the white foam are cast.

A Tempest—All exclaim within,

We are all lost!

DÆMON(*WITHIN*).

Now from this plank will I
Pass to the land and thus fulfil my scheme.

CYPRIAN.

As in contempt of the elemental rage
A man comes forth in safety, while the ship's
Great form is in a watery eclipse
Obliterated from the Ocean's page,
And round its wreck the huge sea-monsters sit,
A horrid conclave, and the whistling wave
Are heaped over its carcase, like a grave.

The Dæmon enters, as escaped from the sea.

DÆMON(*ASIDE*).

It was essential to my purposes
To wake a tumult on the sapphire ocean,
That in this unknown form I might at length
Wipe out the blot of the discomfiture
Sustained upon the mountain, and assail
With a new war the soul of Cyprian,
Forging the instruments of his destruction
Even from his love and from his wisdom.—Oh!
Beloved earth, dear mother, in thy bosom
I seek a refuge from the monster who
Precipitates itself upon me.

CYPRIAN.

Friend,
Collect thyself; and be the memory
Of thy late suffering, and thy greatest sorrow
But as a shadow of the past,—for nothing
Beneath the circle of the moon, but flows
And changes, and can never know repose.

DÆMON.

And who art thou, before whose feet my fate
Has prostrated me?

CYPRIAN.

One who moved with pity,
Would soothe its stings.

DÆMON.

Oh! that can never be!
No solace can my lasting sorrows find.

CYPRIAN.

Wherefore?

DÆMON.

Because my happiness is lost.
Yet I lament what has long ceased to be
The object of desire or memory,
And my life is not life.

CYPRIAN.

Now, since the fury
Of this earthquaking hurricane is still,
And the crystalline heaven has reassumed
Its windless calm so quickly, that it seems
As if its heavy wrath had been awakened
Only to overwhelm that vessel,—speak,
Who art thou, and whence comest thou?

DÆMON.

Far more
My coming hither cost, than thou hast seen
Or I can tell. Among my misadventures
This shipwreck is the least. Wilt thou hear?

CYPRIAN.

Speak.

DÆMON.

Since thou desirest, I will then unveil
Myself to thee;—for in myself I am
A world of happiness and misery;
This I have lost, and that I must lament
For ever. In my attributes I stood
So high and so heroically great,
In lineage so supreme, and with a genius
Which penetrated with a glance the world
Beneath my feet, that won by my high merit
A king—whom I may call the king of kings,
Because all others tremble in their pride
Before the terrors of his countenance,
In his high palace roofed with brightest gems
Of living light—call them the stars of Heaven—
Named me his counsellor. But the high praise
Stung me with pride and envy, and I rose
In mighty competition, to ascend
His seat and place my foot triumphantly
Upon his subject thrones. Chastised, I know
The depth to which ambition falls; too mad
Was the attempt, and yet more mad were now
Repentance of the irrevocable deed:—
Therefore I chose this ruin with the glory
Of not to be subdued, before the shame
Of reconciling me with him who reigns
By coward cession.—Nor was I alone,
Nor am I now, nor shall I be alone;
And there was hope, and there may still be hope,
For many suffrages among his vassals
Hailed me their lord and king, and many still
Are mine, and many more, perchance shall be.
Thus vanquished, though in fact victorious,
I left his seat of empire, from mine eye
Shooting forth poisonous lightning, while my words
With inauspicious thunderings shook Heaven,

Proclaiming vengeance, public as my wrong,
 And imprecating on his prostrate slaves
 Rapine, and death, and outrage. Then I sailed
 Over the mighty fabric of the world,
 A pirate ambushed in its pathless sands,
 A lynx crouched watchfully among its caves
 And craggy shores; and I have wandered over
 The expanse of these wide wildernesses
 In this great ship, whose bulk is now dissolved
 In the light breathings of the invisible wind,
 And which the sea has made a dustless ruin,
 Seeking ever a mountain, through whose forests
 I seek a man, whom I must now compel
 To keep his word with me. I came arrayed
 In tempest, and although my power could well
 Bridle the forest winds in their career,
 For other causes I forbore to soothe
 Their fury to Favonian gentleness,
 I could and would not; (thus I wake in him [*Aside*.
 A love of magic art.) Let not this tempest,
 Nor the succeeding calm excite thy wonder;
 For by my art the sun would turn as pale
 As his weak sister with unwonted fear.
 And in my wisdom are the orbs of Heaven
 Written as in a record; I have pierced
 The flaming circles of their wondrous spheres
 And know them as thou knowest every corner
 Of this dim spot. Let it not seem to thee
 That I boast vainly; wouldst thou that I work
 A charm over this waste and savage wood,
 This Babylon of crags and aged trees,
 Filling its leafy coverts with a horror
 Thrilling and strange? I am the friendless guest
 Of these wild oaks and pines—and as from thee
 I have received the hospitality
 Of this rude place, I offer thee the fruit
 Of years of toil in recompense; whate'er
 Thy wildest dream presented to thy thought
 As object of desire, that shall be thine.

* * * *

And thenceforth shall so firm an amity
 'Twixt thou and me be, that neither fortune,
 The monstrous phantom which pursues success,
 That careful miser, that free prodigal,
 Who ever alternates with changeful hand,
 Evil and good, reproach and fame; nor Time,
 That loadstar of the ages, to whose beam
 The winged years speed o'er the intervals

Of their unequal revolutions; nor
Heaven itself, whose beautiful bright stars
Rule and adorn the world, can ever make
The least division between thee and me,
Since now I find a refuge in thy favour.

SCENE III.

The Dæmon tempts Justina, who is a Christian.

DÆMON.

Abyss of Hell! I call on thee,
Thou wild misrule of thine own anarchy!
From thy prison-house set free
The spirits of voluptuous death,
That with their mighty breath
They may destroy a world of virgin thoughts;
Let her chaste mind with fancies thick as motes
Be peopled from thy shadowy deep,
Till her guiltless phantasy
Full to overflowing be!
And with sweetest harmony,
Let birds, and flowers, and leaves, and all things move
To love, only to love.
Let nothing meet her eyes
But signs of Love's soft victories;
Let nothing meet her ear
But sounds of love's sweet sorrow,
So that from faith no succour she may borrow,
But, guided by my spirit blind
And in a magic snare entwined,
She may now seek Cyprian.
Begin, while I in silence bind
My voice, when thy sweet song thou hast began.

A VOICE WITHIN.

What is the glory far above
All else in human life?

ALL.

Love! love!

[While these words are sung, the Dæmon goes out at one door, and Justina enters at another.]

THE FIRST VOICE.

There is no form in which the fire
Of love its traces has impressed not.
Man lives far more in love's desire
Than by life's breath, soon possessed not.
If all that lives must love or die,
All shapes on earth, or sea, or sky,
With one consent to Heaven cry
That the glory far above
All else in life is—

ALL.

Love! O love!

JUSTINA.

Thou melancholy thought which art
So fluttering and so sweet, to thee
When did I give the liberty
Thus to afflict my heart?
What is the cause of this new power
Which doth my fevered being move,
Momently raging more and more?
What subtle pain is kindled now
Which from my heart doth overflow
Into my senses?—

ALL.

Love, O, love!

JUSTINA.

'Tis that enamoured nightingale
Who gives me the reply;
He ever tells the same soft tale
Of passion and of constancy
To his mate, who rapt and fond
Listening sits, a bough beyond.
Be silent, Nightingale—no more
Make me think, in hearing thee
Thus tenderly thy love deplore,
If a bird can feel his so,
What a man would feel for me.
And, voluptuous vine, O thou
Who seekest most when least pursuing,—

To the trunk thou interlacest
Art the verdure which embracest,
And the weight which is its ruin,—
No more, with green embraces, vine,
Make me think on what thou lovest,—
For whilst thou thus thy boughs entwine,
I fear lest thou should'st teach me, sophist,
How arms might be entangled too.
Light-enchanted sunflower, thou
Who gazest ever true and tender
On the sun's revolving splendour!
Follow not his faithless glance
With thy faded countenance,
Nor teach my beating heart to fear,
If leaves can mourn without a tear,
How eyes must weep! O Nightingale,
Cease from thy enamoured tale,—
Leafy vine, unwreath thy bower,
Restless sunflower, cease to move,—
Or tell me all, what poisonous power
Ye use against me—

ALL.

Love! love! love!

JUSTINA.

It cannot be!—Whom have I ever loved?
Trophies of my oblivion and disdain,
Floro and Lelio did I not reject?
And Cyprian?—

[She becomes troubled at the name of Cyprian.]

Did I not requite him
With such severity, that he has fled
Where none has ever heard of him again?—
Alas! I now begin to fear that this
May be the occasion whence desire grows bold,
As if there were no danger. From the moment
That I pronounced to my own listening heart,
Cyprian is absent, O me miserable!
I know not what I feel! *[More calmly.]*
It must be pity
To think that such a man, whom all the world
Admired, should be forgot by all the world,
And I the cause. *[She again becomes troubled.]*

And yet if it were pity,
Floro and Lelio might have equal share,
For they are both imprisoned for my sake. [*Calmly.*
Alas! what reasonings are these? it is
Enough I pity him, and that, in vain,
Without this ceremonious subtlety.
And woe is me! I know not where to find him now,
Even should I seek him through this wide world.

*Enter*Dæmon.

DÆMON.

Follow, and I will lead thee where he is.

JUSTINA.

And who art thou, who hast found entrance hither,
Into my chamber through the doors and locks?
Art thou a monstrous shadow which my madness
Has formed in the idle air?

DÆMON.

No. I am one
Called by the thought which tyrannizes thee
From his eternal dwelling; who this day
Is pledged to bear thee unto Cyprian.

JUSTINA.

So shall thy promise fail. This agony
Of passion which afflicts my heart and soul
May sweep imagination in its storm,
The will is firm.

DÆMON.

Already half is done
In the imagination of an act.
The sin incurred, the pleasure then remains,
Let not the will stop half-way on the road.

JUSTINA.

I will not be discouraged, nor despair,
Although I thought it, and although 'tis true,

That thought is but a prelude to the deed:—
Thought is not in my power, but action is:
I will not move my foot to follow thee.

DÆMON.

But far a mightier wisdom than thine own
Exerts itself within thee, with such power
Compelling thee to that which it inclines
That it shall force thy step; how wilt thou then
Resist, Justina?

JUSTINA.

By my free-will.

DÆMON.

I
Must force thy will.

JUSTINA.

It is invincible;
It were not free if thou hadst power upon it.

[He draws, but cannot move her.]

DÆMON.

Come, where a pleasure waits thee.

JUSTINA.

It were bought
Too dear.

DÆMON.

'Twill soothe thy heart to softest peace.

JUSTINA.

'Tis dread captivity.

DÆMON.

'Tis joy, 'tis glory.

JUSTINA.

'Tis shame, 'tis torment, 'tis despair.

DÆMON.

But how
Canst thou defend thyself from that or me,
If my power drags thee onward?

JUSTINA.

My defence
Consists in God.

[He vainly endeavours to force her, and at last releases her.]

DÆMON.

Woman, thou hast subdued me,
Only by not owning thyself subdued.
But since thou thus findest defence in God,
I will assume a feigned form, and thus
Make thee a victim of my baffled rage.
For I will mask a spirit in thy form
Who will betray thy name to infamy,
And doubly shall I triumph in thy loss,
First by dishonouring thee, and then by turning
False pleasure to true ignominy. *[Exit.]*

JUSTINA.

I
Appeal to Heaven against thee; so that Heaven
May scatter thy delusions, and the blot
Upon my fame vanish in idle thought,
Even as flame dies in the envious air,
And as the flowret wanes at morning frost,
And thou shouldst never—But, alas! to whom
Do I still speak?—Did not a man but now
Stand here before me?—No, I am alone,
And yet I saw him. Is he gone so quickly?
Or can the heated mind engender shapes
From its own fear? Some terrible and strange

Peril is near. Lisander! father! lord!
Livia!—

Enter Lisander and Livia.

LISANDER.

O, my daughter! What?

LIVIA.

What?

JUSTINA.

Saw you
A man go forth from my apartment now?—
I scarce sustain myself!

LISANDER.

A man here!

JUSTINA.

Have you not seen him?

LIVIA.

No, Lady.

JUSTINA.

I saw him.

LISANDER.

'Tis impossible; the doors
Which led to this apartment were all locked.

LIVIA (*ASIDE*).

I dare say it was Moscon whom she saw,
For he was locked up in my room.

LISANDER.

It must
Have been some image of thy phantasy.
Such melancholy as thou feedest, is
Skilful in forming such in the vain air
Out of the motes and atoms of the day.

LIVIA.

My master's in the right.

JUSTINA.

O, would it were
Delusion; but I fear some greater ill.
I feel as if out of my bleeding bosom
My heart were torn in fragments; aye,
Some mortal spell is wrought against my frame;
So potent was the charm, that had not God
Shielded my humble innocence from wrong,
I should have sought my sorrow and my shame
With willing steps.—Livia, quick bring my cloak,
For I must seek refuge from these extremes
Even in the temple of the highest God
Which secretly the faithful worship.

LIVIA.

Here.

JUSTINA(*PUTTING ON HER CLOAK*).

In this, as in a shroud of snow, may I
Quench the consuming fire in which I burn,
Wasting away!

LISANDER.

And I will go with thee.

LIVIA.

When I once see them safe out of the house
I shall breathe freely.

JUSTINA.

So do I confide
In thy just favour, Heaven!

LISANDER.

Let us go.

JUSTINA.

Thine is the cause, great God! turn for my sake,
And for thine own, mercifully to me!

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SCENES

FROM THE FAUST OF GOËTHE.

PROLOGUE IN HEAVEN.

The Lord and the Host of Heaven. Enter three Archangels.

RAPHAEL.

The sun makes music as of old
Amid the rival spheres of Heaven,
On its predestined circle rolled
With thunder speed: the Angels even
Draw strength from gazing on its glance,
Though none its meaning fathom may:—
The world's unwithered countenance
Is bright as at creation's day.

GABRIEL.

And swift and swift, with rapid lightness,
The adorned Earth spins silently,
Alternating Elysian brightness
With deep and dreadful night; the sea
Foams in broad billows from the deep
Up to the rocks, and rocks and ocean,
Onward, with spheres which never sleep,
Are hurried in eternal motion.

MICHAEL.

And tempests in contention roar
From land to sea, from sea to land;
And, raging, weave a chain of power,
Which girds the earth, as with a band.—
A flashing desolation there,
Flames before the thunder's way;
But thy servants, Lord, revere
The gentle changes of thy day.

CHORUS OF THE THREE.

The Angels draw strength from thy glance,

Though no one comprehend thee may;—
Thy world's unwithered countenance
Is bright as on creation's day.*

Enter Mephistopheles.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

As thou, O Lord, once more art kind enough
To interest thyself in our affairs—
And ask, "How goes it with you there below?"
And as indulgently at other times
Thou tookedst not my visits in ill part,
Thou seest me here once more among thy household.
Though I should scandalize this company,
You will excuse me if I do not talk
In the high style which they think fashionable;
My pathos would certainly make you laugh too,
Had you not long since given over laughing.
Nothing know I to say of suns and worlds;
I observe only how men plague themselves;—
The little god o' the world keeps the same stamp,
As wonderful as on creation's day:—
A little better would he live, hadst thou
Not given him a glimpse of heaven's light
Which he calls reason, and employs it only
To live more beastlily than any beast.
With reverence to your Lordship be it spoken,
He's like one of those long-legged grasshoppers,
Who flits and jumps about, and sings for ever
The same old song i' the grass. There let him lie,
Burying his nose in every heap of dung.

THE LORD.

Have you no more to say? Do you come here
Always to scold, and cavil, and complain?
Seems nothing ever right to you on earth?

MEPHISTOPHELES.

No, Lord! I find all there, as ever, bad at best.
Even I am sorry for man's days of sorrow;
I could myself almost give up the pleasure
Of plaguing the poor things.

THE LORD.

Knowest thou Faust?

MEPHISTOPHELES.

The Doctor?

THE LORD.

Aye; my servant Faust.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

In truth
He serves you in a fashion quite his own;
And the fool's meat and drink are not of earth.
His aspirations bear him on so far
That he is half aware of his own folly,
For he demands from Heaven its fairest star,
And from the earth the highest joy it bears,
Yet all things far, and all things near, are vain
To calm the deep emotions of his breast.

THE LORD.

Though he now serves me in a cloud of error,
I will soon lead him forth to the clear day.
When trees look green full well the gardener knows
That fruits and blooms will deck the coming year.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

What will you bet?—now I am sure of winning—
Only, observe you give me full permission
To lead him softly on my path.

THE LORD.

As long
As he shall live upon the earth, so long
Is nothing unto thee forbidden—Man
Must err till he has ceased to struggle.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

Thanks.

And that is all I ask; for willingly
I never make acquaintance with the dead.
The full fresh cheeks of youth are food for me,
And if a corpse knocks, I am not at home.
For I am like a cat—I like to play
A little with the mouse before I eat it.

THE LORD.

Well, well! it is permitted thee. Draw thou
His spirit from its springs; as thou find'st power,
Seize him and lead him on thy downward path;
And stand ashamed when failure teaches thee
That a good man, even in his darkest longings,
Is well aware of the right way.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

Well and good.
I am not in much doubt about my bet,
And if I lose, then 'tis your turn to crow;
Enjoy your triumph then with a full breast.
Aye; dust shall he devour, and that with pleasure,
Like my old paramour, the famous Snake.

THE LORD.

Pray come here when it suits you; for I never
Had much dislike for people of your sort.
And, among all the Spirits who rebelled,
The knave was ever the least tedious to me.
The active spirit of man soon sleeps, and soon
He seeks unbroken quiet; therefore I
Have given him the Devil for a companion,
Who may provoke him to some sort of work,
And must create for ever.—But ye, pure
Children of God, enjoy eternal beauty;—
Let that which ever operates and lives
Clasp you within the limits of its love;
And seize with sweet and melancholy thoughts
The floating phantoms of its loveliness.

[Heaven closes; the Archangels exeunt.]

MEPHISTOPHELES.

From time to time I visit the old fellow,
And I take care to keep on good terms with him.

Civil enough is this same God Almighty,
To talk so freely with the Devil himself.

SCENES

FROM THE FAUST OF GOËTHE.

MAY-DAY NIGHT.

Scene—*The Hartz Mountain, a desolate Country.*

Faust, Mephistopheles.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

Would you not like a broomstick? As for me
I wish I had a good stout ram to ride;
For we are still far from th' appointed place.

FAUST.

This knotted staff is help enough for me,
Whilst I feel fresh upon my legs. What good
Is there in making short a pleasant way?
To creep along the labyrinths of the vales,
And climb those rocks, where ever-babbling springs
Precipitate themselves in waterfalls,
Is the true sport that seasons such a path.
Already Spring kindles the birchen spray,
And the hoar pines already feel her breath:
Shall she not work also within our limbs?

MEPHISTOPHELES.

Nothing of such an influence do I feel.
My body is all wintry, and I wish
The flowers upon our path were frost and snow.
But see, how melancholy rises now,
Dimly uplifting her belated beam,
The blank unwelcome round of the red moon,
And gives so bad a light, that every step
One stumbles 'gainst some crag. With your permission,
I'll call an Ignis-fatuus to our aid:
I see one yonder burning jollily.
Halloo, my friend! may I request that you
Would favour us with your bright company?

Why should you blaze away there to no purpose?
Pray be so good as light us up this way.

IGNIS-FATUUS.

With reverence be it spoken, I will try
To overcome the lightness of my nature;
Our course, you know, is generally zig-zag.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

Ha, ha! your worship thinks you have to deal
With men. Go strait on, in the Devil's name,
Or I shall puff your flickering life out.

IGNIS-FATUUS.

Well,
I see you are the master of the house;
I will accommodate myself to you.
Only consider, that to-night this mountain
Is all enchanted, and if Jack-a-lantern
Shows you his way, though you should miss your own,
You ought not to be too exact with him.

faust, mephistopheles, and ignis-fatuus, in alternate Chorus.

The limits of the sphere of dream,
The bounds of true and false, are past.
Lead us on, thou wandering Gleam,
Lead us onward, far and fast,
To the wide, the desert waste.
But see, how swift advance and shift,
Trees behind trees, row by row,—
How, clift by clift, rocks bend and lift
Their frowning foreheads as we go.
The giant-snouted crags, ho! ho!
How they snort, and how they blow!
Through the mossy sods and stones,
Stream and streamlet hurry down
A rushing throng! A sound of song
Beneath the vault of Heaven is blown!
Sweet notes of love, the speaking tones
Of this bright day, sent down to say
That Paradise on Earth is known,
Resound around, beneath, above.
All we hope and all we love
Finds a voice in this blithe strain,

Which wakens hill and wood and rill,
And vibrates far o'er field and vale,
And which Echo, like the tale
Of old times, repeats again.
To whoo! to whoo! near, nearer now
The sound of song, the rushing throng!
Are the screech, the lapwing, and the jay,
All awake as if 'twere day?
See, with long legs and belly wide,
A salamander in the brake!
Every root is like a snake,
And along the loose hill side,
With strange contortions through the night,
Curls, to seize or to affright;
And, animated, strong, and many,
They dart forth polypus-antennæ,
To blister with their poison spume
The wanderer. Through the dazzling gloom
The many-coloured mice, that thread
The dewy turf beneath our tread,
In troops each other's motions cross,
Through the heath and through the moss;
And, in legions intertangled,
The fire-flies flit, and swarm, and throng,
Till all the mountain depths are spangled.
Tell me, shall we go or stay?
Shall we onward? Come along!
Everything around is swept
Forward, onward, far away!
Trees and masses intercept
The sight, and wisps on every side
Are puffed up and multiplied.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

Now vigorously seize my skirt, and gain
This pinnacle of isolated crag.
One may observe with wonder from this point,
How Mammon glows among the mountains.

FAUST.

Aye—
And strangely through the solid depth below
A melancholy light, like the red dawn,
Shoots from the lowest gorge of the abyss
Of mountains, lightning hitherward: there rise
Pillars of smoke, here clouds float gently by;

Here the light burns soft as the enkindled air,
Or the illumined dust of golden flowers;
And now it glides like tender colours spreading;
And now bursts forth in fountains from the earth;
And now it winds, one torrent of broad light,
Through the far valley with a hundred veins;
And now once more within that narrow corner
Masses itself into intensest splendour.
And near us, see, sparks spring out of the ground,
Like golden sand scattered upon the darkness;
The pinnacles of that black wall of mountains
That hems us in, are kindled.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

Rare, in faith!
Does not Sir Mammon gloriously illuminate
His palace for this festival—it is
A pleasure which you had not known before.
I spy the boisterous guests already.

FAUST.

How
The children of the wind rage in the air!
With what fierce strokes they fall upon my neck!

MEPHISTOPHELES.

Cling tightly to the old ribs of the crag.
Beware! for if with them thou warrest
In their fierce flight towards the wilderness,
Their breath will sweep thee into dust, and drag
Thy body to a grave in the abyss.
A cloud thickens the night.
Hark! how the tempest crashes through the forest!
The owls fly out in strange affright;
The columns of the evergreen palaces
Are split and shattered;
The roots creak, and stretch, and groan;
And ruinously overthrown,
The trunks are crushed and shattered
By the fierce blast's unconquerable stress.
Over each other crack and crash they all
In terrible and intertangled fall;
And through the ruins of the shaken mountain
The airs hiss and howl—
It is not the voice of the fountain,

Nor the wolf in his midnight prowl.
Dost thou not hear?
Strange accents are ringing
Aloft, afar, anear;
The witches are singing!
The torrent of a raging wizard song
Streams the whole mountain along.

CHORUS OF WITCHES.

The stubble is yellow, the corn is green,
Now to the Brocken the witches go;
The mighty multitude here may be seen
Gathering, wizard and witch, below.
Sir Urean is sitting aloft in the air;
Hey over stock! and hey over stone!
'Twixt witches and incubi, what shall be done?
Tell it who dare! tell it who dare!

A VOICE.

Upon a sow-swine, whose farrows were nine,
Old Baubo rideth alone.

CHORUS.

Honour her, to whom honour is due,
Old mother Baubo, honour to you!
An able sow, with old Baubo upon her,
Is worthy of glory, and worthy of honour!
The legion of witches is coming behind,
Darkening the night, and outspeeding the wind—

A VOICE.

Which way comest thou?

A VOICE.

Over Ilsenstein;
The owl was awake in the white moon-shine;
I saw her at rest in her downy nest,
And she stared at me with her broad, bright eye.

VOICES.

And you may now as well, take your course on to Hell,

Since you ride by so fast, on the headlong blast.

A VOICE.

She dropt poison upon me as I past.
Here are the wounds—

CHORUS OF WITCHES.

Come away! come along!
The way is wide, the way is long,
But what is that for a Bedlam throng?
Stick with the prong, and scratch with the broom,
The child in the cradle lies strangled at home,
And the mother is clapping her hands.—

SEMI-CHORUS OF WIZARDS I.

We glide in
Like snails when the women are all away;
And from a house once given over to sin
Woman has a thousand steps to stray.

SEMI-CHORUS II.

A thousand steps must a woman take,
Where a man but a single spring will make.

VOICES ABOVE.

Come with us, come with us, from Felunsee.

VOICES BELOW.

With what joy would we fly, through the upper sky!
We are washed, we are 'nointed, stark naked are we;
But our toil and our pain, is for ever in vain.

BOTH CHORUSSES.

The wind is still, the stars are fled,
The melancholy moon is dead;
The magic notes, like spark on spark,
Drizzle, whistling through the dark.
Come away!

VOICES BELOW.

Stay, oh, stay!

VOICES ABOVE.

Out of the crannies of the rocks,
Who calls?

VOICES BELOW.

Oh, let me join your flocks!
I, three hundred years have striven
To catch your skirt and mount to Heaven,—
And still in vain. Oh, might I be
With company akin to me!

BOTH CHORUSES.

Some on a ram and some on a prong,
On poles and on broomsticks we flutter along;
Forlorn is the wight, who can rise not to-night.

A HALF-WITCH BELOW.

I have been tripping this many an hour:
Are the others already so far before?
No quiet at home, and no peace abroad!
And less methinks is found by the road.

CHORUS OF WITCHES.

Come onward away! aroint thee, aroint!
A witch to be strong must anoint—anoint—
Then every trough, will be boat enough;
With a rag for a sail we can sweep through the sky,
Who flies not to-night, when means he to fly?

BOTH CHORUSES.

We cling to the skirt, and we strike on the ground;
Witch-legions thicken around and around;
Wizard-swarms cover the heath all over.

[They descend.]

MEPHISTOPHELES.

What thronging, dashing, raging, rustling;
What whispering, babbling, hissing, bustling;
What glimmering, spurting, stinking, burning,
As Heaven and Earth were overturning.
There is a true witch element about us,
Take hold on me, or we shall be divided:—
Where are you?

FAUST(*FROM A DISTANCE.*)

Here!

MEPHISTOPHELES.

What
I must exert my authority in the house.
Place for young Voland! pray make way, good people.
Take hold on me, doctor, and with one step
Let us escape from this unpleasant crowd:
They are too mad for people of my sort.
Just there shines a peculiar kind of light—
Something attracts me in those bushes. Come
This way: we shall slip down there in a minute.

FAUST.

Spirit of Contradiction! Well, lead on—
'Twere a wise feat indeed to wander out
Into the Brocken upon May-day night,
And then to isolate oneself in scorn,
Disgusted with the humours of the time.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

See yonder, round a many-coloured flame
A merry club is huddled altogether:
Even with such little people as sit there
One would not be alone.

FAUST.

Would that I were
Up yonder in the glow and whirling smoke,
Where the blind million rush impetuously
To meet the evil ones; there might I solve

Many a riddle that torments me!

MEPHISTOPHELES.

Yet
Many a riddle there is tied anew
Inextricably. Let the great world rage!
We will stay here safe in the quiet dwellings.
'Tis an old custom. Men have ever built
Their own small world in the great world of all.
I see young witches naked there, and old ones
Wisely attired with greater decency.
Be guided now by me, and you shall buy
A pound of pleasure with a dram of trouble.
I hear them tune their instruments—one must
Get used to this damned scraping. Come, I'll lead you
Among them; and what there you do and see,
As a fresh compact 'twixt us two shall be.
How say you now? this space is wide enough—
Look forth, you cannot see the end of it—
An hundred bonfires burn in rows, and they
Who throng around them seem innumerable:
Dancing and drinking, jabbering, making love,
And cooking, are at work. Now tell me, friend,
What is there better in the world than this?

FAUST.

In introducing us, do you assume
The character of wizard or of devil?

MEPHISTOPHELES.

In truth, I generally go about
In strict incognito; and yet one likes
To wear one's orders upon gala days.
I have no ribbon at my knee; but here
At home, the cloven foot is honourable.
See you that snail there?—she comes creeping up,
And with her feeling eyes hath smelt out something,
I could not, if I would, mask myself here.
Come now, we'll go about from fire to fire:
I'll be the pimp, and you shall be the lover.

[To some Old Women, who are sitting round a heap of glimmering coals.]

Old gentlewomen, what do you do out here?
You ought to be with the young rioters

Right in the thickest of the revelry—
But every one is best content at home.

GENERAL.

Who dare confide in right or a just claim?
So much as I had done for them! and now—
With women and the people 'tis the same,
Youth will stand foremost ever,—age may go
To the dark grave unhonoured.

MINISTER.

Now-a-days
People assert their rights: they go too far;
But as for me, the good old times I praise;
Then we were all in all, 'twas something worth
One's while to be in place and wear a star;
That was indeed the golden age on earth.

PARVENU.*

We too are active, and we did and do
What we ought not, perhaps; and yet we now
Will seize, whilst all things are whirled round and round,
A spoke of Fortune's wheel, and keep our ground.

AUTHOR.

Who now can taste a treatise of deep sense
And ponderous volume? 'tis impertinence
To write what none will read, therefore will I
To please the young and thoughtless people try.

MEPHISTOPHELES

(Who at once appears to have grown very old).

I find the people ripe for the last day,
Since I last came up to the wizard mountain;
And as my little cask runs turbid now,
So is the world drained to the dregs.

PEDLAR-WITCH.

Look here,
Gentlemen; do not hurry on so fast

And lose the chance of a good pennyworth.
I have a pack full of the choicest wares
Of every sort, and yet in all my bundle
Is nothing like what may be found on earth;
Nothing that in a moment will make rich
Men and the world with fine malicious mischief—
There is no dagger drunk with blood; no bowl
From which consuming poison may be drained
By innocent and healthy lips; no jewel,
The price of an abandoned maiden's shame;
No sword which cuts the bond it cannot loose,
Or stabs the wearer's enemy in the back;
No—

MEPHISTOPHELES.

Gossip, you know little of these times.
What has been, has been; what is done, is past.
They shape themselves into the innovations
They breed, and innovation drags us with it.
The torrent of the crowd sweeps over us,
You think to impel, and are yourself impelled.

FAUST.

Who is that yonder?

MEPHISTOPHELES.

Mark her well. It is
Lilith.

FAUST.

Who?

MEPHISTOPHELES.

Lilith, the first wife of Adam.
Beware of her fair hair, for she excels
All women in the magic of her locks;
And when she winds them round a young man's neck,
She will not ever set him free again.

FAUST.

There sit a girl and an old woman—they

Seem to be tired with pleasure and with play.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

There is no rest to-night for any one:
When one dance ends another is begun;
Come, let us to it; We shall have rare fun.

[Faust dances and sings with a Girl, and Mephistopheles with an Old Woman.]

BROCTO-PHANTASMIST.

What is this cursed multitude about?
Have we not long since proved to demonstration
That ghosts move not on ordinary feet?
But these are dancing just like men and women.

THE GIRL.

What does he want then at our ball?

FAUST.

Oh! he
Is far above us all in his conceit:
Whilst we enjoy, he reasons of enjoyment;
And any step which in our dance we tread,
If it be left out of his reckoning.
Is not to be considered as a step.
There are few things that scandalize him not:
And when you whirl round in the circle now,
As he went round the wheel in his old mill,
He says that you go wrong in all respects,
Especially if you congratulate him
Upon the strength of the resemblance.

BROCTO-PHANTASMIST.

Fly!
Vanish! Unheard of impudence! What, still there!
In this enlightened age too, since you have been
Proved not to exist!—But this infernal brood
Will hear no reason and endure no rule.
Are we so wise, and is the *pond* still haunted?
How long have I been sweeping out this rubbish
Of superstition, and the world will not
Come clean with all my pains!—it is a case
Unheard of!

THE GIRL.

Then leave off teasing us so.

BROCTO-PHANTASMIST.

I tell you, spirits, to your faces now,
That I should not regret this despotism
Of spirits, but that mine can wield it not.
To-night I shall make poor work of it,
Yet I will take a round with you, and hope
Before my last step in the living dance
To beat the poet and the devil together.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

At last he will sit down in some foul puddle;
That is his way of solacing himself;
Until some leech, diverted with his gravity,
Cures him of spirits and the spirit together.

[To Faust, who has seceded from the dance.]

Why do you let that fair girl pass from you,
Who sung so sweetly to you in the dance?

FAUST.

A red mouse in the middle of her singing
Sprung from her mouth.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

That was all right, my friend,
Be it enough that the mouse was not grey.
Do not disturb your hour of happiness
With close consideration of such trifles.

FAUST.

Then saw I—

MEPHISTOPHELES.

What?

FAUST.

Seest thou not a pale
Fair girl, standing alone, far, far away?
She drags herself now forward with slow steps,
And seems as if she moved with shackled feet:
I cannot overcome the thought that she
Is like poor Margaret.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

Let it be—pass on—
No good can come of it—it is not well
To meet it—it is an enchanted phantom,
A lifeless idol; with its numbing look,
It freezes up the blood of man; and they
Who meet its ghastly stare are turned to stone,
Like those who saw Medusa.

FAUST.

Oh, too true!
Her eyes are like the eyes of a fresh corpse
Which no beloved hand has closed, alas!
That is the heart which Margaret yielded to me—
Those are the lovely limbs which I enjoyed!

MEPHISTOPHELES.

It is all magic, poor deluded fool;
She looks to every one like his first love.

FAUST.

Oh, what delight! what woe! I cannot turn
My looks from her sweet piteous countenance.
How strangely does a single blood-red line,
Not broader than the sharp edge of a knife,
Adorn her lovely neck!

MEPHISTOPHELES.

Aye, she can carry
Her head under her arm upon occasion;
Perseus has cut it off for her. These pleasures
End in delusion.—Gain this rising ground,
It is as airy here as in a []

And if I am not mightily deceived,
I see a theatre—What may this mean?

ATTENDANT.

Quite a new piece, the last of seven, for 'tis
The custom now to represent that number.
'Tis written by a Dilettante, and
The actors who perform are Dilettanti;
Excuse me, gentleman; but I must vanish,
I am a Dilettante curtain-lifter.

the end.

[*] ?μῆ?ος, from which the river Himera was named, is, with some slight shade of difference, a synonyme of Love.

[*] The favorite song, “Stanco di pascolar le peccorelle,” is a Brescian national air.

[*] The Author was pursuing a fuller development of the ideal character of Athanase, when it struck him that in an attempt at extreme refinement and analysis, his conceptions might be betrayed into the assuming a morbid character. The reader will judge whether he is a loser or gainer by this difference.—*Author's Note*.

[*] The Author has connected many recollections of his visit to Pompeii and Baiæ with the enthusiasm excited by the intelligence of the proclamation of a Constitutional Government at Naples. This has given a tinge of picturesque and descriptive imagery to the introductory Epodes which depicture these scenes, and some of the majestic feelings permanently connected with the scene of this animating event.—*Author's Note*.

[†] Pompeii.

[*] Homer and Virgil.

[*] Ææa, the island of Circe.

[†] The viper was the armorial device of the Visconti, tyrants of Milan.

[*] This and the former poem were written at the request of a friend, to be inserted in a drama on the subject of Midas. Apollo and Pan contended before Tmolus for the prize in music.

[*] Pumpkin.

[*] This fragment is part of a poem which Mr. Shelley intended to write, founded on a story to be found in the first volume of a book entitled “L'Osservatore Fiorentino.”

[*] This fragment refers to an event, told in Sismodi's *Histoire des Republiques Italiennes*, which occurred during the war when Florence finally subdued Pisa, and reduced it to a province. The opening stanzas are addressed to the conquering city.

[*] The Antistrophe is omitted.

[*] I confess I do not understand this.—*Note of the Author.*

[*] raphael.

The sun sounds, according to ancient custom,
In the song of emulation of his brother-spheres.
And its fore-written circle
Fulfills with a step of thunder.
Its countenance gives the Angels strength
Though no one can fathom it.
The incredible high works
Are excellent as at the first day.

gabriel.

And swift, and inconceivably swift
The adornment of earth winds itself round,
And exchanges Paradise-clearness
With deep dreadful night.
The sea foams in broad waves
From its deep bottom, up to the rocks,
And rocks and sea are torn on together
In the eternal swift course of the spheres.

michael.

And storms roar in emulation
From sea to land, from land to sea,
And make, raging, a chain
Of deepest operation round about.
There flames a flashing destruction
Before the path of the thunderbolt.
But thy servants, Lord, revere
The gentle alternations of thy day.

chorus.

Thy countenance gives the Angels strength,
Though none can comprehend thee:
And all thy lofty works
Are excellent as at the first day.

Such is a literal translation of this astonishing Chorus; it is impossible to represent in another language the melody of the versification; even the volatile strength and delicacy of the ideas escape in the crucible of translation, and the reader is surprised to find a caput mortuum.—*Author's Note.*

[*] A sort of fundholder.